



Policy and Resources Committee – 4 November 2013

Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2013 - 2016

Purpose of report

To ask Members to consider and approve a Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2013 to 2016.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1: Draft Strategy for consideration and approval

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Children, young people and their families access a wide range of services across Northamptonshire everyday. Some of these services are highly specialised and of high cost.
- 1.2 Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has had to look carefully at the way these services are provided in the light of budget constraints now and in the future. Part of this has involved developing a framework to manage demand for higher cost specialist services. A fundamental part of this is assessing the needs of children and their families, so early intervention can prevent them from escalating through the tiers of need and on to high-cost specialist services.
- 1.3 A robust partnership approach is required for this to be effective. Through the Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP), of which this Council is a partner, the "Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways – early help, prevention and statutory services for children and families" has been developed and adopted. To guide our approach and response as a partner, a Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy has been developed. This is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy will sit alongside our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures. Members will recall this has recently been reviewed and updated and approved by Policy and Resources Committee 26 September 2013 (minute 191).

2.0 Early Help and Prevention

- 2.1 The Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways document is designed to provide a clear and consistent guide to the levels of need and related thresholds that apply across the county in relation to children, young people and families. Its aim is to ensure consistent approaches, use of terminology and practice across all agencies that work with children, young people and families.
- 2.2 The Thresholds and Pathways document will:-
 - Support practitioners to accurately identify the relevant level of need of children, young people and families and to enable them to access or make a referral to the most appropriate support service / provision.
 - Ensure the safety of children and young people in Northamptonshire is effectively achieved by providing clear guidance to practitioners in terms of risk identification and management, and clearly identifying the referral processes

that MUST be followed to address any risks identified.

- Identify the range of services that are available for the different levels of need, particularly in relation to Early Help and Targeted support.

2.3 Our draft Children and Families Early Help and Prevention strategy aligns with the framework of the Thresholds and Pathways document. It sets out how we as a local service provider and partner in the CYPP, will respond to the requirements of the Thresholds and Pathways document in identifying the needs of children, young people and their families.

2.4 The Thresholds and Pathways document uses a **vulnerability matrix**, which has been made a key element of the draft Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy (Appendix 1 refers). This matrix identifies the level of need rising from tier 1 (universal services for families with no additional needs) up to tier 4 (specialist services for families with complex needs and unable to cope). Early help or intervention is regarded as tier 2.

2.5 A strong focus needs to be given to raising awareness of early help and prevention across the Council and this includes both Members and Officers. Central to early help and prevention is the **Common Assessment for Families (CAF)**. The CAF process gives that vital opportunity to identify the specific needs of a child and its family, and through referral processes, aim to get tier 2 early help or interventions or tier 3 (targeted prevention) in place.

2.6 A number of officer roles are being identified as having the potential to come into contact with children and families frequently. This could be through home visits, attending events, undertaking activities in schools or they have access to sensitive information. NCC is providing free of charge, the training for these officers in the CAF process. From this we will have appropriately trained officers who can complete a CAF and make the necessary referrals required by the framework.

2.7 For officer roles identified as having little or no contact it is still important they have a good understanding of the Thresholds and Pathways framework. This also applies to Members. For this, it is proposed that internally-run awareness sessions take place.

2.8 The process by which we will run CAF cases in East Northamptonshire is set out in the strategy. We cannot of course predict how many CAF cases the Council may get involved with. NCC has appointed a CAF Co-ordinator in each district to support the process and working arrangements are now in place.

3.0 Equality and diversity implications

3.1 The Thresholds and Pathways document and the draft Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy will have a positive impact on children, young people and their families who fall into any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

4.0 Legal implications

4.1 The Council has a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act to have arrangements in place to ensure that in discharging our functions, we have due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

5.0 Risk management

5.1 The draft Early Help and Prevention Strategy supports our response and approaches to the Thresholds and Pathways framework. It demonstrates our commitments to ensuring the welfare of children and families in East Northamptonshire and sits alongside our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

5.2 Members are asked to keep in mind that should a serious case review be undertaken all partners and agencies would be required to evidence and account for their involvement and actions in that case. Both documents clearly set in place how our arrangements will be delivered.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report and the Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy. The CAF training referred to earlier in this report has been provided by NCC at nil cost.

6.2 Policy and Resources Committee would be asked to consider the financial requirements of any future activities, projects or initiatives that could not be met from existing budget provisions.

7.0 Corporate outcomes

7.1 The Early Help and Prevention Strategy contributes to our corporate outcomes as follows:-

- **A good quality of life – healthy:** We will have strong and effective arrangements to ensure the needs of children and their families in East Northamptonshire are identified and the right interventions put in place for them.
- **A good quality of life – safe:** We will work with our partners to ensure children and families live in a safe environment and avoid committing crime and anti-social behaviour.
- **Effective partnership working:** We will work with partners to ensure the Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways requirements are implemented for children and families in East Northamptonshire.
- **Staff and Councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours:** Our officers and members will understand the principles of the Thresholds and Pathways framework and relevant officers will be able to undertake the processes around CAF.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 Members are recommended to approve the draft Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy set out in Appendix 1.

(Reason: So that East Northamptonshire Council has robust and effective arrangements in place to respond to the requirements of the Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways framework, as a partner of the Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Partnership)

Legal	Power: Children Act 2004				
	Other considerations: Local Government Act 2000 Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways – early help, prevention and statutory services for children and families (June 2013) http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/children/protecting-children/Documents/PDF%20Documents/Northamptonshire%20Thresholds%20and%20Pathways%20August%202013.pdf				
Background Papers: None					
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Date: 16 October 2013					
CFO		MO		CX	



East
Northamptonshire
Council

DRAFT Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2013-16



Version 0.2 - Draft Strategy for approval

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NB: Draft versions 0.1 - final published versions 1.0

Consultees

Internal	External
e.g. Individual(s) / Group / Section	e.g. Stakeholders / Partners /Organisation(s)
Corporate Management Team	Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)
Safeguarding Project Team	

Distribution List

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CMT	NCC
Middle Managers	
CAF trained officers	

Links to other documents

Document	Link
Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures	http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/downloads/Safeguarding_Children_and_Young_People_policy_and_procedures_v3.0.pdf
Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways – early help, prevention and statutory services for children and families (June 2013)	http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/children/protecting-children/Pages/northamptonshire-thresholds-and-pathways.aspx

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As a district council we are responsible for providing a range of services to the local residents of East Northamptonshire. Some of these services are statutory, for example collecting household waste, whereas others are discretionary such as providing leisure opportunities. Northamptonshire County Council, Northants Police, the Clinical Commissioning NHS Groups and the Fire and Rescue Service each have responsibility for providing key services too.
- 1.2 We recognise that any service we, or our partners provide, could bring some officers into contact with children and young people.
- 1.3 Ensuring the positive welfare of children and young people will be important to us in achieving our vision and the following outcomes set out in our Corporate Plan:-

A good quality of life – health

We will

- Ensure that we provide opportunities for leisure and recreation including high quality leisure facilities within the district.
- Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify and protect open and green spaces and use them for active recreation.
- Work with resident social landlords and private landlords to ensure housing conditions are of high standards.

A good quality of life - safe

We will

- Seek to engage with the local Safer Community Teams to ensure children and young people live in a safe environment.
- Work closely with the local Safer Community Teams and youth providers to ensure that children and young people avoid committing crime and anti-social behaviour.

Effective partnership working

We will

- Engage with partners for best practice methods, training needs and partnership work in safeguarding and identifying early help interventions.

Staff and Councillors with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours

We will

- Have awareness training with staff and our elected members to ensure they have the right knowledge, skills and behaviours to work with children and young people and spot any concerns to their welfare.
- Ensure that contractors that run our services or organisations we fund to provide services have the right knowledge, skills and behaviours for when working with children and young people and have safeguarding measures in place.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This strategy is about how we support the integrated working and early assessment process for children, young people and their families as set out in the **Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways – early help, prevention and statutory services for children and families (June 2013)**.

2.2 As with all strategies it covers:-

Where are we now? – What have we done so far and the skills we have learnt from that work that can support early help interventions and targeted prevention.

Where do we want to be? – A picture of how the Council will work with partners to ensure families that require support have access to it which will in turn support the welfare of children and young people within those families.

How will we get there? – Our plan of action to ensure we can support early help interventions and targeted prevention in the future.

2.3 The Council is a partner within the **Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP)**. The CYPP provides the strategic lead for services to children and young people across the county.

2.4 The CYPP Board has identified Early Help as the area of care and support where the partnership has the greatest opportunity to make an impact. Early help is about helping people to help themselves, to manage their lives and families well and prevent problems from escalating into long-term issues.

2.5 The Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways, commissioned by the CYPP Board is designed to provide clear and consistent guide to the levels of need and related thresholds that apply in Northamptonshire in relation to children, young people and families. The aim of this is to ensure consistent approaches, use of terminology and consistent practice across all agencies that work with children, young people and families, thus improving the outcomes for children, young people and families of Northamptonshire. It will:-

- Support practitioners to accurately identify the relevant level of need of children, young people and families and to enable them to access or make a referral to the most appropriate support service / provision.
- Ensure the safety of children and young people in Northamptonshire is effectively achieved by providing clear guidance to practitioners in terms of risk identification and management, and clearly identifying the referral processes that **MUST** be followed to address any risks identified.
- Identify the range of services that are available for the different levels of need, particularly in relation to Early Help and Targeted support.

2.6 A **vulnerability matrix** outlines a consistent measure of the four levels or tiers of need for children, young people and families. This is set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 Outcomes

3.1 The strategy will demonstrate improved outcomes for our:-

Local communities – we will work with families to identify what their early help needs are and how they can access them, while providing efficient and effective services that meet their needs.

Council Officers – will be able to understand and have a clear direction of how we will support families with early help needs and those as part of the troubled families' agenda.

Councillors – will be able to support and develop capacity as district elected representatives of local communities.

3.2 It will contribute to our Corporate Plan outcomes as set out in section 1.

4.0 Where are we now?

4.1 Our partnership commitments

4.1.1 As a partner in the Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) we are contributing to the Children and Young People's Plan objective of: ensuring that all children and young people in Northamptonshire are healthy, safe and are able to enjoy and achieve, so that they will make a positive contribution throughout their lives and achieve economic wellbeing.

4.1.2 We have engaged with Northamptonshire County Council to introduce the **Common Assessment for Families (CAF)** process in East Northamptonshire Council. This is detailed further on in this strategy and the implementation of it at East Northamptonshire Council forms part of our action plan.

4.1.3 We are supporting the national **Troubled Families Programme (TFP)** being co-ordinated by Northamptonshire County Council in the county. This programme is running throughout the period 2012-2015. The TFP identifies those families that have household members currently exhibiting two out of the following three characteristics:-

- Are involved in crime and/or antisocial behaviour
- Have a child out of school
- Contain a person out of work

The aim of the programme is to work with these families and to turn their lives around cause by getting them back into school, into work and reduce their opportunities to commit crime and anti-social behaviour.

4.1.4 We attend and support our **Early Help Forum (EHF)**. These are monthly meetings that provide the opportunity for a multi-agency discussion about a child, young person or their family with early help or targeted level needs. A referral should be made to an EHF where a Lead Professional or Team Around the Family (TAF) feel that they need:

- Support to help a child or family meet certain outcomes or have unmet needs

- Advice on local services to meet needs.

4.1.5 We recognise the benefits of early help. It helps to reduce distress by identifying problems at an early stage. This makes the chances of resolving the problems and achieving positive outcomes is higher. Early help to reduce the pressure on specialist services by enabling the problems to be addressed more easily and with 'lower level' help and support. This in turn helps to save money and use resources more efficiently.

4.2 Safeguarding children and young people

4.2.1 The Council has in place and regularly reviews a **Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures** which directly relates to child protection issues. The Policy sets a framework for the Council to report any suspicions of child abuse to the relevant intervention and investigation body: **Northamptonshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)**.

5.0 Where do we want to be?

5.1 Our Children and Families Early Help and Prevention Strategy aims to facilitate the following:-

- Support the Northamptonshire CYPP in their multi-agency approach to providing prevention through early help access for families across our district.
- Ensure Officers are aware of the strategy and identified officers trained in the CAF process.
- Ensure Councillors are aware and support the Council's role in early help through the CAF process.
- Facilitate our own CAF cases with support from County Council's CAF Co-ordinators.

6.0 How will we get there?

6.1 A good level of understanding about early help intervention and targeted prevention

6.1.1 In order to achieve the aims of the Strategy the main focus is to raise awareness of the importance of early help intervention and targeted prevention with children and families in East Northamptonshire. There needs to be a good level of understanding of what is meant by early help and the different levels of needs and related thresholds that are used in Northamptonshire to enable practitioners to make appropriate assessments.

6.1.2 A brief awareness raising document will be included in the Induction toolkit so that all staff have an understanding of this strategy and related activities.

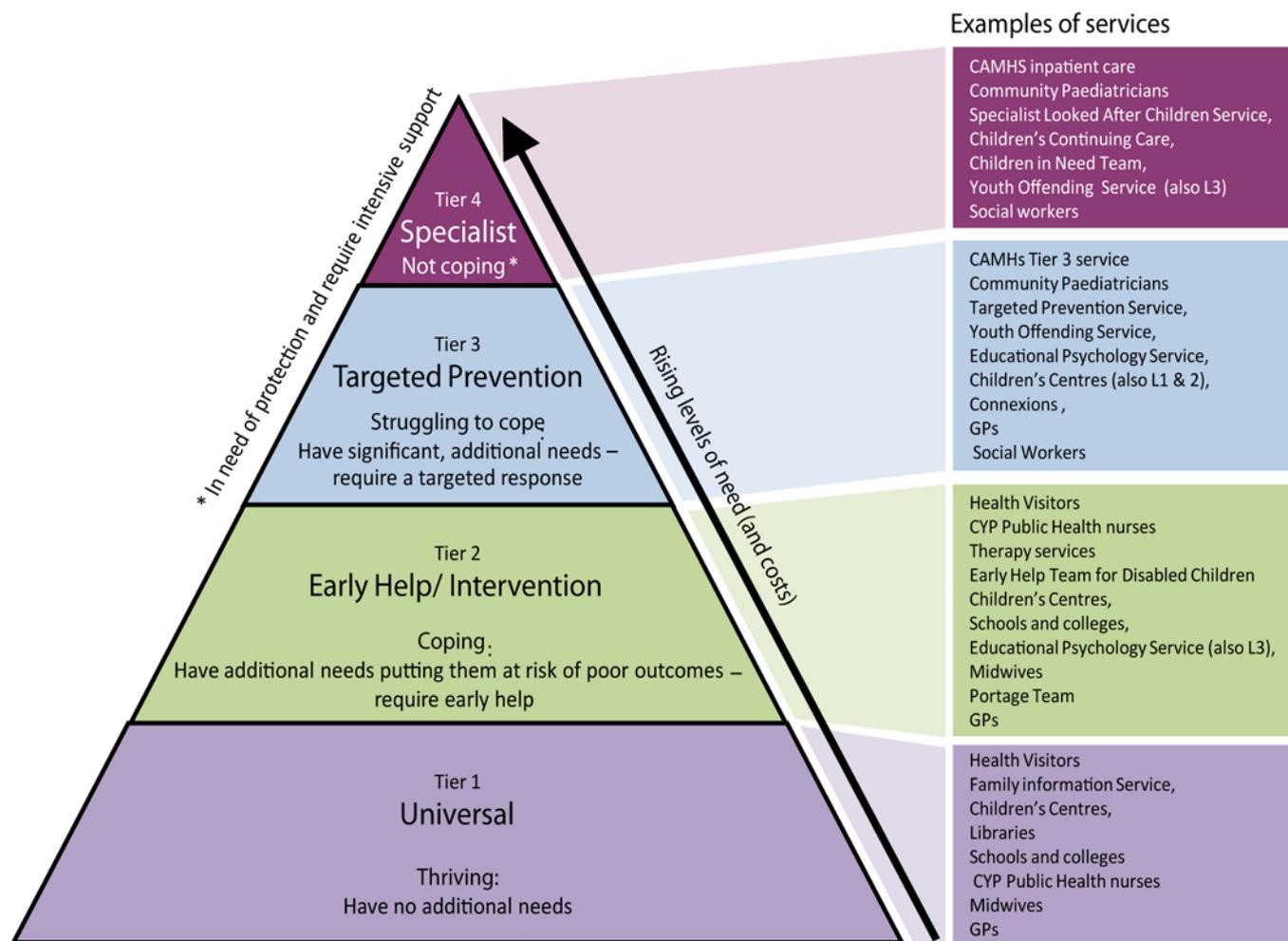
6.1.3 Our key message will focus on early help being an important factor in promoting the welfare of children rather than reacting later when families become dependent on specialist high-cost services. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Effective early help relies upon local agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help;
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help; and
- Provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes of the child.

6.2 Embedding Common Assessment for Families (CAF)

- 6.2.1 Our aim is to increase the number of CAF assessment undertaken. CAF assessments will identify where early help or intervention is required and this will generally be tier 2 (refer to Appendix 1 – vulnerability matrix).
- 6.2.2 An audit of our services has identified officer roles that come in contact with children and young people. Those that frequently come in contact with children and young people through home visits, events, school visits, meetings/forums/clubs and view sensitive information have been classed as **high risk**. It is likely that staff will come in contact with children and young people through other infrequent means such as: enforcement activities, the contact centre front desk and grant activities. These staff have been classed as **low risk**. The majority of staff will not come in contact with children and young people and will class as no risk.
- 6.2.3 High risk staff will attend CAF training – Integrated Working: Early Assessment and the CAF Process. This training will give staff the awareness and understanding of the CAF process and the confidence to initiate a CAF if they come across the need in their roles.
- 6.2.4 Low risk staff and Councillors will attend early help and prevention awareness training run internally. This will give them a good level of understanding without having to explain the CAF process in full.
- 6.2.5 We will work closely with the designated CAF Co-ordinator to ensure our arrangements are kept up-to-date and our officers are trained appropriately.
- 6.2.6 The Councils **Community Partnerships Team** will act as the Council's Single-Point-of-Contact (SPOC) for our involvement in the CAF process and will undertake the central co-ordination of the documents and meetings relevant to each individual CAF case taking place.

Appendix 1 – The Four Levels of Need (Vulnerability Matrix)



Source: Northamptonshire Children and Young People Partnership Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways - early help, prevention and statutory services for children and families (August 2013).

APPENDIX 2 – Action Plan

Outcome	Measure	Target	By (date)	Owner	Actions
Councillors and staff with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours	Number of councillors attending the briefing on early help and prevention	40	31/03/14	Mike Greenway	Set up an awareness-raising session for councillors so they understand the early help intervention and targeted prevention framework.
	All high-risk officer roles identified through the audit completing the CAF training	100%	31/03/14		Briefing included in the Staff Induction Pack Posters displaying key messages, contacts and processes in relation to CAF, early help and to include safeguarding arrangements, in place across all ENC buildings.
Good quality of life - healthy	The percentage of CAF assessments resulting in early help interventions being put in place	100%	31/03/14 31/03/15	Mike Greenway	Implement CAF assessment framework across ENC.