

Dudley Health & Wellbeing Board

Dudley Early Help Strategy 2021-2024

**HELPING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE
AND FAMILIES THRIVE**

- **RIGHT APPROACH**
- **RIGHT PLACE**
- **RIGHT TIME**

Foreword

PUTTING CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

We are delighted to introduce our refreshed Early Help Strategy for Dudley.

It is the commitment of our joint partnership to ensure we work in the most effective and co-ordinated way as early as possible when children and families need our support. This will enable us to prevent our children requiring statutory intervention and supporting families to resolve any issues before they escalate or multiply.

We have made excellent progress over the last three years in delivering a robust Early Help Offer which is built around a solid foundation of five family centres that act as local, community-based hubs that serve to coordinate the effective and timely delivery of Early Help Support in Dudley.

Our fortnightly Multi Agency Action Meetings (MAAM) take place at all of our family centres and are held in high regard by all professionals that attend, and ensure that all of the key agencies that are supporting families come round the table to discuss suitable support to be provided.

As we move forward with the refreshed Early Help Strategy there will be an even stronger emphasis on building family resilience and enabling a more "self-serve" approach which families had told us that they want. We want the children and families we work with to be able to find the services and help they need themselves, without having to request support from another professional.

In this next phase, our 2021 - 2024 Early Help Strategy is also going to have an early years focus. We are proud to say that Dudley partners have already been working nationally with the Early Intervention Foundation through the Early Years Transformation Academy to develop our approach to children's first 1001 days. This transformation plan provides a crucial opportunity to bring together a range of support systems in maternity and for young children and their families, focussing resources on those who need them the most and where the impact can be the greatest. This strategy is going to build on this work.

We also know the importance of education in Dudley and for the next 3 years we will also have a clear focus on school readiness for young children starting school, ensuring they get the best start. We will continue to work hard to make sure children can benefit from mainstream education as far as possible, to give our young people the best possible chance of success as they grow into young adults.

We are really excited to launch this strategy and look forward to making a difference and delivering the best possible outcomes for our children and families lives in Dudley.

Dr Catherine Driscoll - Director of Children's Services

Cllr Ruth Buttery - Lead member Children's Services

Cllr Nicolas Barlow - Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Useful Links and Contacts

There are five Family Centres around the borough that can offer early support to families, and to professionals delivering Early Help.

Information and support is available by calling the centres below between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday:

Stourbridge Family Centre, Forge Rd, Stourbridge, DY8 1XF,
01384 818780

Halesowen Family Centre, Lye By-Pass, Stourbridge, DY9 8HT,
01384 813954

Brierley Hill Family Centre, 18 Parkes Street, Brierley Hill, DY5 3DY,
01384 813322

Dudley North Family Centre, Bayer Street, Bilston, WV14 9DS,
01384 813096

Dudley Central Family Centre, Selbourne Road, Dudley DY2 8LJ,
01384 812440

Further Information and links to services are below:

**[https://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/media/17566/
threshold-guidance-and-framework-march-2021-final.pdf](https://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk/media/17566/threshold-guidance-and-framework-march-2021-final.pdf)**

Local safeguarding partners are duty bound to publish a threshold document which sets out the local criteria for action in a way that is transparent, accessible and easily understood. This should be read in conjunction with the Dudley Early Help Strategy.

<https://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk>

Dudley Safeguarding People website, providing information about Safeguarding Children in Dudley.

<https://dudleyci.co.uk/services/dudley-family-information-service>

The Family Information Service provides free, up to date information, advice and contacts for families across Dudley Borough.

<https://dudleyci.co.uk/>

The Dudley Community Information Directory provides information about local groups, support, activities, health and care services, and much more for Dudley families.

<https://www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/>

Dudley's Health & Wellbeing Board provides strategic leadership for Dudley Borough's health and wellbeing system.

www.localoffer.dudley.gov.uk

Dudley's Local Offer is a one stop resource of information and services available to children and young people (aged 0-25) with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), their parents, carers and families.

<https://izone.org.uk/>

iZone is a website listing local trusted organisations aimed at young people and organisations who support them.

<https://holidayactivitiesindudley.com/>

This website is aimed at Income eligible free school meal families to share support available to help them through holiday periods and the organisations that support them.

<https://lets-get.com/>

Let's Get Healthy Dudley supports people to make healthy lifestyle changes.

<https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/>

Dudley's community safety partnership's website has lots of useful information on topics such as community safety, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, community cohesion, hate crime, mental health, bullying, modern slavery, online safety and more.

<https://dudleyconnect.com/need-a-lifeline/>

Lifeline is aimed at families in Dudley Central who may find themselves in crisis and staff that support them to signpost to local trusted organisations who we know will do their best to help.

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/childfriendlydudley>

Dudley Council is working with partners, stakeholders, community groups, schools and residents to build a new 'Child Friendly Dudley'.

Our Early Help Steering Group drives our strategy forward and has a wide and committed membership.

The group is made up of the following:

- Service Director - Early, Schools and SEND
- Head of Family Solutions, DMBC
- Service Manager - Strategic Partnerships, DMBC
- Head of Service for Children & Young People's Public Health, DMBC
- Joint DSPPB Manager, DMBC
- Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Commissioning Manager, Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS
- Team Leader, Dudley School Nurse Team, SCPHN
- Head of Education Outcomes, DMBC

- West Midlands Police
- West Midlands Fire Service
- Strategic Commissioning Manager, Performance & Partnerships, DMBC
- Pre-school & Specialist Nursing Service Manager, BCPFT
- Voluntary Sector Representative
- Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Dudley and Wolverhampton
- Black Country Troubled Families and Support for Schools, DWP
- Performance Team Manager, Integrated, Performance & Policy, DMBC
- Head of Housing Options and Support, DMBC
- Head of Community Safety, DMBC
- Communications & Public Affairs, DMBC
- Headteacher, Primary School
- Headteacher, Secondary School
- Headteacher, Special School
- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Primary School
- Chair of Dudley Central Cluster Connect

“Cheryl is a young mum to be whose midwife identified she needed support. The Midwife completed an Early Help Assessment and sent it to the Family Centre. Cheryl was homeless and sofa surfing. She had no extended family to support her and had financial issues due to having no fixed abode. She was struggling with her mental health and she had attempted suicide.

The Early Help Assessment was taken to the Multi Agency Action Meeting at the Family Centre. It was agreed at this meeting that a Family Support Worker would be allocated. The Family Support Worker arranged a Team Around the Family meeting bringing agencies together to support with housing, finances and Cheryl's mental health.

Cheryl now has a place to live, her finances have been sorted and she is receiving support with her mental health and wellbeing.”

Dudley Early Help Strategy 2021-2024

PLAN ON A PAGE - HELPING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES THRIVE

- RIGHT APPROACH
- RIGHT PLACE
- RIGHT TIME

OUR VISION

Working together to help Children, Young People and Families thrive

To make the vision a reality we will ensure we all provide:

THE RIGHT APPROACH - Friendly, reassuring, down to earth conversations and a self-serve ethos helping families to help themselves

IN THE RIGHT PLACE - All our partners are alert and willing to offer Early Help where children young people and families ordinarily go day to day

AT THE RIGHT TIME - Help at an early stage of the problem, or early in a child's life.

1. DEVELOP OUR CULTURE AND PRACTICE

The Early Help Steering Group will hold all partners to account for their contributions to Early Help

We will ensure there is good and consistent understanding of needs and thresholds

We will include Early Help in induction of new staff

We will clarify our governance arrangements

We will ensure there is clarity about who can and should act as a lead professional

2. BUILD OUR CAPACITY – HELP EVEN EARLIER

We will support the roll out of Cluster Connects across the borough

We will develop a Volunteers Strategy and Action Plan to increase our Early Help workforce

We will seek the support of our community workforce to prevent issues escalating

We will seek to pool financial resources across the partnership to increase our Early Help Enabler workforce

3. MAKE BETTER USE OF INFORMATION

We will develop a performance management and outcomes-based quality assurance framework commissioners and Service Leaders will use performance reports to hold services to account for the delivery of Early Help

We will seek to find better IT solutions to our partnership working

We will create an online portal for partners to submit Early Help Assessments, check on progress of an assessment or delegate work to colleagues

4. THE FAMILY EXPERIENCE

We will make sure that families can self-serve where possible

We will make our pledge to families meaningful in our day-to-day practice

We will develop an engagement strategy - reassuring families about the approach

We will use feedback from families to inform everything we do

We will work on ways to build on family strengths and resilience in our work

5. FOCUS ON PRIORITY AREAS

We will focus on children in the first 1001 days of their lives

We will focus on making sure all children can benefit from education and will focus on inclusion, in mainstream education where possible

OUR PLEDGE

- ✓ We will make every contact count
- ✓ We will listen to you and not judge you
- ✓ We will 'work with' you – and not 'do to you'
- ✓ We will give you one point of contact

- ✓ Our assessments and plans will be uncomplicated and robust
- ✓ We will take care of your information
- ✓ We won't 'pass the buck'

Our Vision

'WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES THRIVE'

TO MAKE THE VISION A REALITY WE WILL ENSURE WE ALL PROVIDE:

THE RIGHT APPROACH

IN THE RIGHT PLACE

AT THE RIGHT TIME

So that children, young people and families thrive

'Early Help runs as a core theme in school - we make sure everyone is aware. It's a genuine partnership approach. We go to the MAAMs - It's a fantastic system. We make sure everyone understands their role' (School)

Our vision means

- **Parenting Matters**
- **Growing up Matters**
- **Health & Wellbeing Matters**

1. Parenting Matters

We want babies and young children to have secure attachments to capable, confident parents, to be warm, well fed and be supported in their development, ready to start school.

2. Growing up Matters

We want primary school children to develop friendships and enjoy learning and play, to reach their full potential, and be ready for secondary school.

In secondary school we want engaged, emotionally resilient adolescents, achieving their ambitions and setting goals for the future, and understanding how to get there.

We want engaged young people aged 16+ who are in education, employment or training that matches their ambition and ability, who have respectful relationships and good friends, have skills for independence, and are able to see the future positively.

3. Health and Wellbeing Matters

We want all our children and young people to be healthy and safe from all forms of harm including exploitation and bullying, to have secure warm attachments to people who care for them and look out for them, and are enabled to make good choices in their lives.

Our Pledge to Children, Young People and their Families

WE WILL MAKE EVERY CONTACT COUNT

The first conversation is often really important and we understand the importance of handling this well. Whoever is chosen to be the person the child, young person or carer talks to, is the one who has the responsibility to make sure the response is a helpful one.

WE WILL LISTEN TO YOU AND NOT JUDGE YOU

We will show you we are listening and not judging you. We will care about the issues you share and will do our best to help.

WE WILL 'WORK WITH' YOU... AND NOT 'DO TO YOU'

We will not tell you what to do. We understand you know yourself and your family best. We will enable you to help yourself and won't make you feel 'done to'.

WE WILL GIVE YOU ONE POINT OF CONTACT

We will work with you to identify a lead professional. That may be the person who first understands you need help, or it maybe someone better placed to help you, but there will be one point of contact. This person will be your first point of contact who will help make sure the right support is in place.

OUR ASSESSMENTS WILL BE UNCOMPLICATED AND ROBUST

We will make sure we understand your situation and will write it down. We will share it with you to make sure you agree. We will talk to family members and sometimes other professionals with your agreement to make sure we have understood your situation.

WE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOUR INFORMATION

We will look after your personal information and make sure you give us consent before we share it or store it. We will only share it without your agreement if we feel a child or young person is at risk and the law says we must share it for safeguarding reasons.

WE WON'T 'PASS THE BUCK'

We will help you at the point of enquiry and won't pass you to someone else until we know they will help you. We will do our best to draw in the support needed rather than just refer you on, not knowing whether help will follow.

What do we mean by Early Help?

Early Help has been defined in Dudley as follows:

'Early Help is taking action early and as soon as possible in order to provide support where problems are emerging for children, young people and their families, or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early Help may occur at any point in a child or young person's life.'

As set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, 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 for the child.

In Dudley, **we believe in taking the right approach** when families need some help. We have asked families what this means for them, and they have told us they want a friendly, reassuring, down to earth conversation about what is happening for them. We know families want to help themselves where they can and so we are working to ensure, as far as possible, we develop our self – serve ethos, to enable families to find the help they need.

We know families also want the least intrusive but most effective help, offered in a way that is enabling and positive. We recognise some families will need reassurance about having Early Help – we know some families worry about accepting help for all sorts of reasons.

We want to offer help in the right place. We know that often the first person families feel able to talk to when extra help is needed is often someone they already trust – and they will often be in a place they know – this might be in school, nursery or with a health professional in a local GP Practice, or in their own home, for example. We will make sure all our partners are alert and willing to offer Early Help where children young people and families are comfortable.

We want to help families in their local communities and at the right time - at the earliest possible stage so things can get better before they get worse. Early Help means at an early stage of the problem, or early in a child's life.

Early Help is not a provision but is a collaborative approach by all the relevant partners, and relies on local agencies working together effectively with families to identify who needs help and then to work with families to help them to help themselves. We know families in Dudley have great resilience, and we want to help to build on this – but also to reach out to families when their resilience is low. We know everyone needs a hand sometimes. Our Early Help Offer is designed to ensure families get help at the stage that problems are more readily solved, to prevent things getting worse. The work we have done already in Dudley shows this works. Families are telling us so.

SUPPORT

“We had concerns with managing our 4-year-old child's behaviour and anger at home. My child had outbursts which include kicking, punching and biting. He had difficulty sleeping and would wake regularly through the night. He was hyper all the time and not aware of danger.

Nursery completed an Early Help Assessment with us, and they were asked to lead on Team Around the Family meetings with Early Help Enabler support.

Nursery, Health Visitor, and Early Help Enabler attended the Team Around the Family Meetings. They gave us strategies and suggestions to support with behaviour and routines.

We can't thank them enough for all the support they have given us, it has been the small changes that have made the difference. It feels like we have a different child. I feel that everyone coming together to support our family has really helped. Practitioners were really helpful and understood the difficulties we were having.”

Parent

Supporting Families Programme

The Early Help Steering Group has main-streamed the national Supporting Families Programme into our Early Help Offer, which provides targeted support for families experiencing multiple challenges, including; domestic abuse, crime and antisocial behaviour, low levels of school attendance, unemployment, mental and physical health and children in need of help and protection.

The programme is overseen nationally by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The four key principles of the Supporting Families Programme are outlined below:

- **Whole family working** – Challenges experienced by family members are often interconnected. A key worker builds a relationship with the whole family. They complete one assessment for the whole family, coordinate services around a single plan and offer support and challenge.
- **Multi-agency working** – Multiple professional agencies work together and share information in a joined-up approach to supporting families and protecting children.
- **Focus on outcomes and data** – The programme requires Dudley to establish an outcomes framework across multiple services and encourages us to achieve family outcomes by tracking success over time.

- **Earlier intervention** - The programme helps to fund Dudley's Early Help services, i.e, services that support families requiring a lower level of intervention than statutory services such as children's social care or the criminal justice system. It encourages services to support families to address their challenges before they reach crisis point.

Funding for the national programme is currently in place until 31 March 2022 with a review taking place in late 2021.

“Angela split up with her husband due to domestic abuse. She has 2 children aged 10 and 11. Her children were having contact with her husband but she really worried about this as she didn't think the children would be safe. They had witnessed the abuse.

A Family Support Worker from the Family Centre completed an Early Help Assessment and as a result was put in contact with a range of services including Women's Aid. The team around the family meetings helped her to understand all the help that was available. Her confidence grew. She stopped the contact with her husband until a Risk Assessment could be done. Angela could see this was a relief to the children.

She feels since she has had Early Help life has got a lot better for her and for her children.”

Why do we need Early Help?

THE CHALLENGES IN DUDLEY AND WHAT WE ARE DOING TO HELP.

HELPING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Since 2018, over **6500** families in Dudley have had an Early Help Assessment and Plan

We have **5** Family Centres across the borough, which act as hubs in our communities enabling families to readily access a wide range of early support services, and professionals can get advice and support with Early Help Assessments and Plans

Over the last 3 years Early Help have worked with **1843** parents/carers on supportive approaches to parenting, through 1:1 work and through parenting programmes, seminars and online work

Early Help works - **84%** families closed to Early Help in the past **12** months did not need a referral to children's social care

HELPING TO TACKLE DOMESTIC ABUSE

In the past **3** years there have been **2,482** Contacts into Early Help regarding domestic violence from the Police.

Barnardos and Women's Aid offer early support services to Children and Young People witnessing domestic abuse

The most common risk factors identified in assessments by the almost 22% of Children's Safeguarding Assessments identify Domestic Violence as a risk factor

Early Help Practitioners are trained to identify and work with families who have experienced Domestic Abuse.

HELPING FAMILIES BACK TO WORK

Most recent data shows Dudley has an unemployment rate of **18.9%** for 16 – 24 year olds, almost **5%** higher than all England.

Specialist Troubled Families Employment Advisers are based within Family Centres to assist families in getting back into work.

Just under a quarter of families with dependent children live in lone parent households - and the proportion of those where the parent is not working is **43.7%** - in Dudley Central this is over **50%**

HELPING TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

Dudley is estimated to have **1,700** 5 - 10 year olds and **5,000** 11 -16 year olds with a mental health disorder.

CAMHS Positive Steps Team work with young people early, to prevent mental health needs escalating.

Education mental health trailblazer programme in place. CCG commissions School Health Advisers to provide support and advice on mental health issues

HELPING TO TACKLE THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

Within the Dudley borough, **13,543** children aged 0-15 live in households that are income deprived. That is **22.4%** of all 0-15 year old children.

During the Covid-19 pandemic Winter Warmth funding provided to Cluster Connect enabled **11** organisations, over 16 weeks to support, **2855** households with **7522** meals and food parcels

Dudley's Community Pantry provides a holistic support package to move people on from Foodbank – families being able to buy **£15** of fresh food for **£3**

Dudley Holiday Activity Fund (HAF). During Easter 2021 HAF funding provided **1500** Free School Meal families with edible pots to grow their own vegetables. They worked with **40** schools across the borough.

The Dudley Approach to Early Help

In Dudley, our five cluster areas are now well established. They bring together a range of universal and targeted Early Help services in each local area, including schools, health services and services provided by the voluntary and community sector.

The five family centres sit within the heart of each of the clusters. The centres are coordination hubs for families and professionals to approach when Early Help is needed. Our Early Help Enablers work with our partners to support them to deliver high quality Early Help.

The family centres coordinate our cluster based Multi Agency Action Meetings (MAAMs), where family needs are discussed, lead practitioners identified, and help is coordinated. The meetings regularly take place every 10 working days in all of our family centres. These are well attended and well regarded across the partnership as an effective and efficient means of coordinating support. Since the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions the meetings have become virtual – which has provided an opportunity for partners to make more efficient use of their time and is likely to be the approach for the future.

“The fortnightly MAAMs (Multi agency Action Meetings) are really important. we have now got additional resources for Early Help with five extra officers dedicated to Early Help, and so in future we can go to all the meetings”

(Police)

“We join up with children's services and the police through our Safer Places initiative. With Anti-Social Behaviour for example we don't jump to enforcement. but to working with our partners to help with the underlying issues”

(Community Safety)

“My nurses are extremely committed to Early Help. We have worked hard at this over years now. We work in partnership with the family centres. Health Visitors are trained to complete the assessments where there is the need. We make sure we promote Early Help to families really well. it isn't easy for all families to accept they need help so it's our role to make sure that we keep offering it in the right way”

(Specialist Nursing)

Our Early Help Steering Group is our strategic partnership forum, where we continue to strategically develop our approach and monitor progress of our Early Help Strategy. We take action in areas we recognise will improve our approach and effectiveness. We use all available data to assess our progress and ensure we are on the right track to deliver the best help and support to the families who need it. We know we can improve the way we collect and use our data and so we plan over the next 3 years to develop an outcomes-based quality assurance framework so that we can monitor even more closely how we are doing and see where we need to improve. Moving forward, we will build on our strengths and the strengths of our families, taking a positive asset based approach to our work.

Our Early Help Process is clear for all professionals working with children and families to follow.

“Phil was admitted to hospital after taking LSD and Cannabis. He had recently suffered a bereavement when father died. Phil was unclear on what he wanted to do when he left College. His mother was struggling to manage his behaviour and concerned about what he is accessing online. An Early Help Enabler supported College to complete Early Help Assessment with family and arranged a Team Around the Family meeting.

At this meeting an Early Help Family Plan was created to identify what support was needed and who would complete the actions. Phil's mum accessed Teen Triple P parenting programme to increase her confidence with parenting.

Phil accessed Here4Youth to support him to make positive changes. Support was provided from Edwards Trust with bereavement and how he is feeling. College Careers Advisor was able to support with looking at options when leaving College. Phil and his mum report positive changes in their lives. Phil has finished College and is looking at career options.

The family were grateful for the support they have received with this multi-agency approach and feel more confident about the future.”

OUR VISION MEANS

1. PARENTING MATTERS

We want babies and young children to have secure attachments to capable, confident parents, to be warm, well fed and be supported in their development, ready to start school.

2. GROWING UP MATTERS

We want primary school children to develop friendships and enjoy learning and play, to reach their full potential, and be ready for secondary school. In secondary school we want engaged, emotionally resilient adolescents, achieving their ambitions and setting goals for the future, and understanding how to get there.

We want engaged young people aged 16+ who are in education, employment or training that matches their ambition and ability, who have respectful relationships and good friends, have skills for independence, and able to see the future positively.

3. HEALTH AND WELLBEING MATTERS

We want all our children and young people to be healthy and safe from all forms of harm including exploitation and bullying, to have secure warm attachments to people who care for them and look out for them, and are enabled to make good choices in their lives.

DUDLEY'S EARLY HELP NINE STAGE PROCESS

OUR 9 STEP 'EARLY HELP PROCESS'

We work with our partners, using a strong multi-agency and community-based approach, with the child at the centre.

1. WE NOTICE HELP MAY BE NEEDED

1. A professional identifies that a child, young person or family may need help.

2. WE HAVE THE RIGHT CONVERSATION

2. The professional talks to the child and family member or carer to try to understand the issue.

3. WE UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND

3. Once the professional understands the problem better they check Dudley's Threshold Guidance and decide the level of need and response required.

4. WE COMPLETE AN EARLY HELP ASSESSMENT (FOR LEVEL 3)

4. For all children and families, who meet level 3, the professional completes an Early Help Assessment (EHA) with their consent, and continues to support the family.

5. WE IDENTIFY THE RIGHT SUPPORT

5. The Family Centre staff receive the assessment and review to make sure it meets the Early Help Threshold, and consent to share information has been gained.

6. WE DECIDE THE NEXT ACTIONS WITH OUR PARTNERS

6. At the Multi-Agency Action meeting the Lead Professional for the family is confirmed, and the next actions are agreed.

7. WE AGREE THE EHA WITH THE CHILD AND FAMILY

7. The Lead Professional updates the Early Help Assessment and agrees it with the child and family.

8. WE CREATE AND IMPLEMENT THE EARLY HELP SUPPORT PLAN

8. The Lead Professional creates an Early Help Support Plan, in partnership with the family and relevant agencies, setting out the support the family will receive.

9. WE COMPLETE THE PLAN AND PROVIDE ON-GOING SUPPORT

9. When all the actions in the Plan are completed and the needs have been met, it is agreed that Early Help is no longer needed and the Family Centre is notified by the lead professional.

The Early Help Enabler is available at any stage if required.

OUR PLEDGE

- ✓ We will make every contact count.
- ✓ We will listen to you and not judge you.
- ✓ Our assessments will be uncomplicated and robust.
- ✓ We won't pass the buck.
- ✓ We will 'work with' you - and not 'do to you.'
- ✓ We will give you one point of contact.
- ✓ We will take care of your information.

How are we doing?

WHAT IS GOING WELL?

- ✓ We have good clear, ambitious leadership and a clear vision
- ✓ Partnership wide ambition, commitment and collaboration
- ✓ Since 2018 6584 families have had an early help assessment
- ✓ We have successfully supported a lot of families already and their feedback is great
- ✓ A good range of programmes and interventions have been made available to support families
- ✓ Early help training is highly regarded and well attended

- ✓ Our cluster areas are well established, and our processes are clear and are working well
- ✓ Our early help works - only a very small number of families (2%) need social care services when early help has been tried

Holiday Activity Fund

HAF is an activity programme for children across the borough. During the year of lockdowns and hardship during the pandemic, HAF funding provided 1500 families who have Free School Meal with edible pots to grow their own veg. The scheme worked with 40 schools within the borough. Each pack contained a brightly coloured pot or hanging basket, herb and vegetable seeds, soil, seed trays and instructions. Families could have fun together, growing their own vegetables to feed the family, and providing a great sense of community togetherness and achievement.

Winter Warmth Funding

In Dudley, 10 community organisations received £10,600 between them to continue the great work they were doing to support families over the Christmas 2020 period and beyond into January 2021 around food poverty. Its been a tough year for families, coping with the pandemic and the hardship this has brought.

Roughly 3,635 people were supported through £10,600 worth of funding for a 6 week period. Over 317 food parcels and hampers were provided and over 5,878 meals were delivered. This equates to about £2.92 per person working out at £0.49 per person, per week for the 6 week period.

A further £354.00 was spent to print Lifeline leaflets to distribute with the food that gave families crisis information help and support.

WHERE DO WE FEEL WE CAN DO EVEN BETTER?

- ✓ We can do even better in making sure everyone is offering early help who is well placed to do so
- ✓ We need to make sure the pledge we have made is meaningful to families - and that we all follow it
- ✓ We need to make sure we all offer help in a way that families feel able to say yes
- ✓ We need to make sure families all know how to get early help themselves - and that services available are easy to find online and in local communities
- ✓ We could increase our early help workforce through more volunteers and more enablers
- ✓ We could make better use of shared information and know how we are doing more accurately - and know where we need to do even more
- ✓ We can focus more on our youngest children to make sure they all get the best start, and making sure children are included and can thrive in mainstream education

Whilst we have made great progress, we recognise we have more to do, to galvanise every team, school and setting to be part of our Early Help Offer. We know families aren't always ready to take up the offer when it is given, and so we know we have to keep asking families in the right way when we recognise they need help. We also know families often want to get the help they need themselves and so we want to make this easier for them.

We want to make sure when we say early, we mean early, and so we want to support further our community and voluntary sector to ensure Dudley Cluster Connect is rolled out across the Borough. Cluster Connect is about bringing together residents and partners who care, and are invested in the area to see collectively how we can bring about positive change that improves the lives of people who live there, working at population level. The three Cluster Connect priorities are - Tackling Poverty, Loneliness and Isolation, and Keeping Children Safe and Active.

We understand the importance of children's earliest years. We know from all the research, including the Government's recent early years healthy development review and report, 'The best start for Life - A vision for the 1001 critical days' March 2021, that '.....what happens to an infant in the 1,001 critical days is all about prevention'. We also know the importance of education and the stability it provides, and the role it plays in helping young people to grow into successful, happy adults. We have decided therefore to focus on the first 1001 days in our refreshed strategy, and on making sure all children in our borough can benefit from their education, with a focus on inclusion

What are we going to do for the next three years

BELOW IS OUR STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS - WE WILL TAKE A PROGRAMME APPROACH TO OUR WORK AND WILL HAVE PROJECTS IN PLACE TO MAKE SURE WE DO WHAT WE SAY WE ARE GOING TO DO:

Our Dudley Early Help Strategy 2021 - 2024

1. Develop our Culture and Practice

The steering group will hold all partners to account for their contributions to Early Help, ensuring all agencies make proportionate contributions and fulfil their responsibilities

We will ensure there is good and consistent understanding of thresholds by all practitioners, to ensure families across the borough get the help they need

We will ensure all agencies who work with children young people and their families include Early Help in induction of new staff, and will require all partners to report progress to the steering group

We will clarify our governance arrangements to maximise our strategic capacity and oversight to drive this work forward

We will ensure there is clarity about who can and should act as a lead professional, and what this means

2. Build our capacity – Help even earlier

We will support the roll out of Cluster Connect across the borough

We will develop a Volunteers Strategy and Action Plan to increase our Early Help workforce

We will seek the support of our community workforce to help families whose needs are at level 2 on the continuum to prevent issues escalating

We will seek to pool financial resources across the partnership to increase our enabler workforce

3. Make Better Use of Information

We will develop a borough wide performance management and outcomes-based quality assurance framework

Commissioners and Service Leaders across the partnership will use performance reports to hold services to account for the delivery of Early Help and will report to the Steering Group how they are making a difference

We will seek to find better IT solutions to our partnership working and will work to identify systems which talk to each other to ensure work is seamless

We will create an online portal for partners to submit Early Help Assessments, check on progress of an assessment or delegate work to colleagues

4. The Family Experience

We will make sure that information about the support services which are available to children, young people and families is available in an accessible and easy to navigate form, so that more families can self-serve

We will make our pledge to families meaningful in our day-to-day practice, and in particular through use in reviews and evaluations

We will develop an engagement strategy to ensure all families understand what early help is and how to access it – reassuring families about the approach

We will use feedback from families to inform everything we do

We will work on ways to build on family strengths and resilience in our work, rather than focusing on deficits

5. Focus on Priority Areas

We will focus on children in their Early Years in phases over the next 3 years, starting with the first 1001 days of children's lives

We will focus on making sure all children can benefit from education and will focus on inclusion, supporting all children to reach their full potential, accessing mainstream education where possible

“You don't want to be seen as the parent who's having problems – you want to be seen in a good light, but I've realised we all have problems some of the time – I'd recommend to anyone to say yes to Early Help”

“Im not sure why I had to talk to the school to find out about what services were available - Im a private person and would have preferred just to find the services and go there direct”

[www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/
earlyhelpstrategy](http://www.dudleyhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/earlyhelpstrategy)

Dudley Health & Wellbeing Board

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of this text, the original documentation should be relied upon as the true and accurate version.