

Supporting Families - Early Help System Guide

Purpose of This Guide

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The Early Help System is not a single service. It is a network of services, processes and interactions that aim to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. Improving this system requires clarity of what success looks like, shared across a range of partners, and informed by the voices of managers, practitioners and families.

This is the second iteration of The Early Help System Guide. This second version outlines a national vision and descriptors for a mature Early Help System that is shared by DLUHC and DfE. It has been widely consulted upon across other government departments and local areas and is based on what is working around the country. It is a living tool that will adapt as new and better ideas are implemented.

The Guide is intended for the local strategic partnership responsible for the Early Help System. It aims to provide a framework for local workshops, partnership conversations and strategic planning and to support prioritisation. The Guide provides a self-assessment tool to support discussion, reflection and action planning against key areas that influence the effectiveness of Early Help. It does not dictate what needs to be done; but is a dynamic tool designed to focus the system on common goals, and progress towards these. Your reflections with partners and communities on the Early Help System Guide should lead to an improved local early help strategy which, in turn, will help your local partnership improve families' outcomes and reduce demand on acute services.

The Guide is designed to help you use local and research evidence to deliver an effective approach to early help. It asks you to consider what organisational and community data you use to understand your current position, as well as which evidenced-based interventions and practices you use to support families across the partnership.

Background and Context

This Guide has been produced by the national Supporting Families programme (formerly the Troubled Families programme) within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in partnership with the Department for Education.

Since 2012, the programme has been supporting and challenging local areas to transform services and systems to achieve significant and sustained outcomes for families facing complex challenges and problems. The programme promotes a whole family approach and has been evaluated as successful in improving outcomes. The programme invests significant resource into local areas in order to support the transformation this Guide sets out.

The Supporting Families programme places a specific expectation on all areas to use the Guide to self-assess the maturity of the Early Help System and to identify priority descriptors to work towards. More detail on this can be found in the Supporting Families programme Guidance.

System transformation: Supporting Families, Family Hubs and Start for Life

During the budget 2021, the Government announced increased investment in the Supporting Families programme alongside new investment to transform Start for Life and family help services by creating a network of Family Hubs, investing in tailored breastfeeding services, infant and parent mental health, parenting programmes, and establishing a clear Start for Life Offer in half of upper tier local authorities.

Supporting Families drives high standards of continual improvements to local partnership working and data use, while funding intensive keywork support for those families facing multiple complex problems. Family Hubs are one way of delivering the Supporting Families vision of an effective early help system.

Where Family Hubs exist, they provide a single access point – a 'front door' – to universal and early help services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core. Family Hubs involve co-location of services and professionals to make it easier for families to access the services they need, including Start for Life services, and this can include both physical locations, outreach support and virtual offers. Many services offered in a Family Hub network will be for families who do not need intensive, whole-family Lead Practitioner support; however, hubs will ensure seamless access to a whole-family Lead Practitioner where needed.

Supporting Families' outcomes align with the Best Start for Life vision of achieving good early years outcomes for babies and young children, and practitioners, services and families all benefit from expanded core services which ensure that children have the best possible start in life.

Many local authorities have already adopted hubs as their leading model of delivery with the help of Supporting Families funding. These programmes can be entirely complementary and together they form a strengthened local family help and support offer, led by the Department for Education, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Health and Social Care working in close partnership across government.

How to use this Guide

This guide provides the key descriptors of a mature Early Help System. It is a self-assessment and planning tool, the outcome of which should lead to a clearer and shared understanding of the current maturity of the Early Help System in an area and what steps need to be taken to progress. This could form the basis of a refreshed Early Help Strategy in a local area and a plan for implementation.

The guide contains:

Contents	Description	Section
The Early Help vision	A summary of our vision for the Early Help System of support for families.	Section 1
The Early Help system	A diagram demonstrating which services have a role to play in the Early Help System.	Section 2
The workforce table	A table which defines the likely role of different types of practitioners from different agencies in the Early Help System. The contents of this table were developed with local areas and relevant Government Departments.	Section 3
The self-assessment scoring system	An outline of how to use the 0-5 scoring framework.	Section 4
The self-assessment descriptors	Structured as five sections focussing on family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data.	Section 5-9

Conducting a self-assessment

There are a number of different ways the self-assessment can be conducted:

- 1. A series of multi-agency workshops** – using the themes in the guide as a structure, workshops could explore different perspectives on what is working well and what needs to improve linked to each descriptor. Evidence from family feedback along with population, cohort and family level outcome measures should be used to inform discussion.
- 2. Individual interviews with stakeholders from different agencies and services** – this approach could yield more insightful responses from individual stakeholders, the results of which could be used to draft the self-assessment with stakeholders, or used as one of the evidence sources for a multi- agency workshop.
- 3. Peer review** – a number of stakeholders from 2 areas may wish to work together to complete the self-assessment to enable benchmarking and comparison of activity and progress.

The Guide can be used by any partnership to assess and plan for maturity in the Early Help System.

1. The Early Help vision

The Early Help vision (Plain Text)

Early Help is the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

Family voice and experience

1. There are well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.
2. Families say they know how to navigate local services and how to get help.
3. Families who have several needs say they know who their lead practitioner is, that all their needs were considered individually, and as a whole, and they only needed to tell their story once. They also say all the professionals work together to one plan in a team around the family.
4. Families say that those that helped them listened carefully, cared about them and told them about their strengths.
5. Families say that the help they have received addressed all their problems and they are better connected to their own support network and local community.

Workforce

1. There is a professional family support service. Whole family working is the norm for all people-facing public services through a shared practice framework. And early help is seen as everyone's responsibility.
2. Public services work together in place based or hub-based working where partners are integrated virtually or physically, based in the community with a common footprint.
3. We invest in our workforce with a workforce development plan to embed the shared practice framework and there is direct support for professionals to improve their practice through a quality assurance framework.
4. The response to different presenting needs are aligned or integrated to ensure there is always a whole family response.

Communities

1. We are improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and formal early help activity.
2. Our relationship with community groups and voluntary organisations embodies a culture of valuing the contribution of all.
3. We are building capacity in communities and harnessing the talent of parents, carers and young people with lived experience to help one another.
4. We are shifting decision making about local services and facilities towards families and communities.

Leaders

1. There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.
2. Our system is balanced, so that more appropriate support is provided for children and families earlier to avoid unnecessary or costly statutory intervention in the children's social care system.
3. Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System.
4. There is a culture of using evaluation and evidence to inform development of the Early Help System.

Data

1. There is a senior strategic group with representation across the partnership, which is accountable for developing and driving the use of data for the whole Early Help System.
2. All data feeds are shared safely and robustly across the partnership, brought into one place and used to identify family needs.
3. Case management systems are accessible to all partners working with families and allow us to quantify all issues affecting the family and report on all issues and outcomes in a quantifiable way.
4. Working with our strategic partnership group we are developing innovative approaches to the use of data. We are using technological solutions to match data, present information to family workers and strategic boards and analyse these data to prevent the escalation of needs.

2. The Early Help system

The Early Help System (Plain Text)

The Early Help System available to children and their families is made up of three types of services that combine in different ways to form a local area's Early Help offer to its citizens. These are universal services, community support and acute and targeted services.

Community support includes Family and friends, local places and environments, online support services, voluntary, faith and community services, local members of the community and local businesses

Universal services includes Post-16 education, schools, early years settings, family hubs, children's centres and youth centres, GP surgeries, libraries, maternity services, specialist public health or community nurses and community co-ordinators

Acute and targeted services includes Family support, social care, accident and emergency departments, allied health professionals, mental health services, special education needs support services, jobcentre plus, school attendance and exclusion support, domestic abuse services, alternative provision, housing services, police, probation and prison services, family court and family court advisory services, substance misuse services, fire and rescue, youth offending and targeted youth services.

3. Multi-Agency Workforce

A strong Early Help System is made up of many different types of practitioners and services who operate as one. This table attempts to define the likely role of different types of practitioners in the Early Help System. The contents of this table were developed with local areas and relevant government departments. We recognise this is not a complete or exhaustive list, and the identified roles may have different names. This should be seen as a 'minimum' level of activity for how workforces should operate, for example how often they may act as lead practitioner. The lead practitioner (defined along with other aspects of whole family working in the family voice section) should always be the right person for the family at the right time, with the family having a say in who they are. In some circumstances specific professional groups or VCS organisations may have greater involvement as lead practitioner or as part of the team around the family following needs or risk assessment or because of specific contracting arrangements. The grouping terms relate to how often these workers would likely act as lead practitioner (e.g. frequent) and what role they have in whole family working (e.g. modelling)

Use this table to assess the current status of activity within your local workforce

4. The self assessment

This self-assessment section is structured as five sections focusing on family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data. Areas should work as a partnership to identify on average their score for the individual descriptors, what is working well and the evidence that shows this, and plans for what will be prioritised next.

SCORING SYSTEM:

5. Family voice and experience

5.1 - Family engagement: We have well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Feedback from children, young people and families is regularly received by Early help providers and Slough Children First and will continue to be sought directly as part of the Early Help and Social Care processes through the Targeted Early Help Team including Targeted Youth Support and wider children's services such as the Exploitation and Youth Justice Service. This feedback is captured as part of initial assessment to understand the lived experiences, TAF processes and when work with a family is being concluded and/ or transferred to another service.
- Range of ways that children, young people and families can provide feedback including survey monkey, directly to professionals, through outcome star, online and hard copy feedback forms about 'your experience' and suggestions boxes in community spaces such as Children's Centres. In addition to this, there are opportunities with a number of partner services for focus groups, workshops and the inclusion of children and young people in processes such as interviews of key roles within services.
- Forums for children and young people including the Children's Council and Young Inspectors, provide the perspective of children and young people about services and feed into the Children and Young People's Partnership Board so that their experiences are understood and impact on future planning.

What are you prioritising next?

- There needs to be a whole system approach to capturing feedback from service users, enabling collation to inform strategic service design. Currently much of the information is held at individual service level unless a TAF approach is being utilised.
- Consistency of approach to capturing feedback, linked to identified aims and objectives with CYP Plan and EH strategy
- Develop mechanisms for capturing the voice of those who may not have accessed help through choice or lack of accessibility and those where they may have been dissatisfied with a service, through analysis of Corporate complaints at a system wide level
- Commissioning of services will be influenced by the voice of children and their families and will be an integral part of the offer

5.2 - One Lead Practitioner: We have evidence that families say they know who their Lead Practitioner is and they have a good relationship with them.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- The co-ordination of the Team Around the Family approach in Slough is an integral part of Early Help support provided for all families
- Referral is through a single point of contact, consent is sought and an onward referral to the Targeted Early Help service is identified as an appropriate action to meet the needs
- Once an allocated Lead Professional is identified from the Targeted Early Help Family Support Team, a holistic Early Help Assessment is completed with the family, a plan is co-produced, and a regular review of the plan via TAF meetings is followed. Records are maintained on our EHM system.
- Feedback is regularly sought from families open to support from Slough Children First via 'Your experience' cards
- Early help Surgeries in place for partner agencies to support around managing the Lead Professional role and multi-agency support via the TAF process
- We use the outcome star for distance travelled

What are you prioritising next?

- Introduction of portal system to enable capture of Lead Professional role within the community
- Review of EH strategy to clarify and enhance the role of Lead Professionals within the overall Early Help System
- Multi-agency training and development of Lead Professional role in line with portal system roll out
- Increased responsibility of multi-agency professionals to undertake LP, enabling family choice in Lead Professional roles based on relationship strengths

5.3 - One assessment: We have evidence that families say the assessment process considered their needs individually and as a whole, their views were reflected throughout the process and the assessment meant they told their story once.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- The Early Help Assessment sets out 3 key areas which impact on the lives and outcomes of children and young people; Child development and wellbeing; Parenting capacity and relationships; and Family and environmental factors including community influences. The assessment takes the strengths and challenges into consideration for all family members as an expected standard. Chronology and historic information known are taken into consideration as part of the assessment. All EHA's are recorded on the EHM system as part of the set process map.
- The aim is to ensure that the child and their families only tell their story once
- Direct voice of all children, young people and parents/ carers are captured following direct work to understand the relationships and dynamics within the family, what is working and well and what areas need to be focussed on

What are you prioritising next?

- Improving analysis of information to develop working hypothesis and professional curiosity as part of the assessment process
- Consistent use of Genograms to support mapping and visualisation of family relationships to aid analysis and assessment
- Increased regularity of utilising Ecomaps where appropriate to explore wider community impacts and influences
- Lead Professionals to undertake EHA's in the community

5.4 - One family plan: We have evidence that individuals and families say their needs are reflected in one family plan which the whole team around the family work to. Families and professionals agree outcomes together.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Holistic action plans are developed in partnership with the whole family and professionals as part of the initial assessment process and reviewed through the Team Around the Family process
- Identified actions for all are clearly recorded as part of the record keeping on EHM, with clear records of completed actions and updates, with the plan used as an active, evolving document for the period of intervention
- The use of outcomes star provides a clear picture of the incremental improvements for children and families, with evidence of step down to community partners from the internal Early Help Service.

What are you prioritising next?

- Lead Professionals within the community to co-ordinate delivery of family plans
- Increase ownership of action plans with children and young people, to empower them to impact positive change in their lives, developing skills for resilience and sustaining change in the future
- Strengthen description of exit strategies and contingency plans

5.5 - One team around the family – we have evidence from families about how well services work together to co-ordinate support to meet the needs of their family.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- A Lead Professional who co-ordinates the EHA and TAF process is identified following referral to the Targeted Early Help service, which is clearly documented on the EHM system
- The Lead Professional primarily from Slough Children First takes the lead in managing communication between all parties and families are aware of who is involved

What are you prioritising next?

- Clearer accountability for wider TAF professionals, reducing focus on Lead Professional to ensure action is taken through a refreshed Early Help strategy and related workforce development plan

5.6 - Access to support: We have evidence that families say they know how to navigate local services and how to get help.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Family Information Service website is hosted by the Local Authority, covering all services including the voluntary sector
- Reconfiguration of the Family information Service website 'Slough 4 You' following feedback and focus groups within the community, improving navigation and accessibility
- Communications plans delivered through LA and wider partners as agreed through strategic and operational boards based on local knowledge and emerging need e.g. support with finances; risk indicators of child exploitation; support for DA victims
- Social Prescribers working in GP surgeries supporting access to wider community support in relation to family needs

What are you prioritising next?

- Enhancement of the FIS to enable increased self service with an updated service directory which is inclusive
- Development of family Hubs to provide direct access within the community to support services for children, young people and families at a universal early help service level
- Update Slough's Local offer to identify gaps in accessible services and inform future planning

5.7 - Sustainability: We have evidence that families say their needs including underlying issues have been addressed. They will be better equipped to cope when support from services ends because they have identified their own support network and feel connected with their local community and the support network it provides.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Family and environmental factors are explored as part of Early Help Assessment to identify key sources of support
- Initial contact with families by the Targeted Early Help Team explore current services and professionals providing support
- When appropriate families are signposted and engaged with community assets

What are you prioritising next?

- Introduce Family Network Meetings as part of Early Help process where a wider network of support is identified
- Increasing the knowledge of all practitioners through the enhancement of FIS
- Development of the Family Hubs as a locally accessible resource to support families

6. Workforce

6.1 - The workforce in our area operates effectively to deliver whole family working and is aligned with the levels set out in the workforce table (section 3 above or page 11 of the published document).

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Partners are actively included in delivering the Team Around the family approach, with those identified with the workforce plan involved to a greater or lesser extent, in line with the suggested frequency and input
- Effective whole family plans and multi-agency work are evidenced through TAF meeting records, progression of holistic family plans and recorded outcomes for individual families
- Multi agency practitioner training regarding working together to safeguard children is open to all groupings of the workforce and accessed by voluntary sector partners as well as statutory partners as evidenced in the safeguarding partnership annual report

What are you prioritising next?

- Lead Practitioner roles need to be reflected across all multi-agency partners, with expectations and responsibilities made explicit through the renewed EH strategy
- The Keeping Children Safe in Education group has recently been re-instated to bring together members of the workforce to prioritise whole family working

6.2 - Early help is understood and seen as everyone's responsibility across the partnership of services working with children, adults and families. We have a shared culture and set of core principles that underpin the wider Early Help System.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Local partnership work is developing out of children missing (in) education and a review of LSCPR's over the last 4 years has helped the workforce identify Early help as everyone's business across agencies, however this is at an early stage of development and focused on one area of vulnerability
- Our Early Help Champions approach enables us to regularly network with a wide-range of multi-agency partners, upskilling them to recognise and work in a preventative way, building networks across services and ensuring this learning is fed into whole organisations

What are you prioritising next?

- Development of a Slough-wide training and communication plan which reaches across Multi-agency Public Services within the Local Authority. Our strategy will support Early Help system to improve their knowledge in this area and recognise the role they play in early help with families
- Utilising the Slough Children and Young People's forum to drive the necessary cultural and system changes

6.3 - We have a shared practice framework and locally agreed processes for professionals in partner agencies working across the wider Early Help System which is known, understood and consistently used.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- A Practice Framework 'The Slough Approach' has been developed which focusses on Relationship based practice across Children's Services as the core strand, which is underpinned by 4 further approaches; Trauma informed; Attachment theory; Restorative Practice; Strengths-based approach. Training for Children's Services practitioners is being rolled out across cohorts of professionals with a current plan to deliver a trauma informed whole school approach across the Primary and Secondary phase.
- Multi-agency training delivered via the Safeguarding Partnership has relationship based practice as a core element of all learning objectives

What are you prioritising next?

- 'The Slough Approach to be embedded as part of the renewed Early Help strategy across all partners and services
- Increasing access to training opportunities for the whole Children's Services sector, with a view to deliver more widely in the longer term across other departments including housing
- The re-established Keeping Children Safe in Education group has identified transitions for children as a key area for an early help focus
- Embedding the practice framework across the whole system

6.4 - We have a multi-agency workforce development plan based on workforce development needs, to help embed the shared practice framework and culture. This equips the workforce with appropriate levels of understanding and skills to enable early identification of and response to family needs and the implementation of a whole family approach.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- A multi-agency workforce development plan is in place across Children's and Adult's services via the Slough Safeguarding partnership and is accessible to all online. Priorities are identified via a range of means including audits, SPR, professional feedback, intel and emerging needs identified through JSNA and other data sources
- Through our partnership work we have been able to identify an increasing need to focus on earlier intervention, this has led to development of multi-agency tools developed in response to specific theme, recent examples being the children's wellbeing tool
- Individual agencies are supporting each other to use these tools through delivery of workshops

What are you prioritising next?

- Wider promotion of tools and resources to services beyond the immediate children's and adults services to include front facing services within the community assets e.g. faith groups, housing associations

6.5 - We know the quality of early help practice across professionals listed in the workforce table. We directly support professionals in our partnership to improve their practice, including around whole family working, through a quality assurance framework, e.g. through audit, supervision and guidance.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Early Help Advisory role supporting partners, providing monthly surgeries open to the whole workforce
- Early Help Champions identified and meeting regularly as evidenced by minutes and regular attendance
- Regular programme of multi-agency audits led by the Safeguarding Partnership based on thematic issues, which identify areas of learning and feed into the multi-agency training plan
- Robust internal processes are in place for supervision, auditing, dip-sampling and record keeping

What are you prioritising next?

- Further focus on developing a system wide quality assurance framework
- Thematic focus of next multi-agency audit on Early Help
- Support partners agencies to develop their QA processes which will contribute to the system audit

6.6 - We have a model of place-based or hub-based working in the community with a common footprint. Partners are integrated either virtually or physically in e.g. family or community hubs. The model helps underpin the principles of whole family working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- As a geographically small but complex Local Authority, we have many well established relationships across partners, with many able to network through regular multi-agency partnership meetings which improves communication
- Local data and feedback from local residents has highlighted specific areas where additional support and resources have been needed which has led to the development of specific area projects, bringing together a number of services across the partnership e.g. Chalvey Can project

What are you prioritising next?

- Development of a specified number of children's centres into Family Hubs in 2023 to offer co-ordinated local services for 0-19 (upto 25 with SEND) and whole family support

6.7 - The response to different presenting needs (pathways) are aligned or integrated to ensure there is always a whole family response. This could take the form of a 'team around the school' approach where all relevant professionals work together to anticipate and respond early to for example school engagement, mental health or special educational needs of children and young people in the school.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- The recognition of the increasing needs of emotional and mental health support for children and young people has been responded to by introducing mental health support teams in 26 of Slough's schools to offer additional support and form a more holistic service for children and families
- Work is in place with the educational Psychology service and virtual school, along with a wide range of other local authority services to develop a whole school approach to Trauma

What are you prioritising next?

- Keeping Children Safe in Education group using case studies to understand pathways and develop whole family response
- A focus on Emotionally Related School avoidance, to identify specific interventions that can be delivered as part of the Team Around the family approach
- Implementation of our Written Statement of Action to improve our services for children with additional needs
- Ensuring that there is a graduated approach for early identification of children's needs

7. Communities

7.1 - Public services partner closely with voluntary and community groups to maintain up to date information about local community assets, community groups, voluntary sector support and faith groups and have made this information accessible to local staff and residents e.g. through a website.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Family Information Service offers a directory of service for local residents to access. Recent reconfiguration of the website has enabled better accessibility with a dedicated space for children and young people and a professionals area for Lead Professionals, including access to tools and resources
- Regular monitoring in place to identify levels of access to key areas of information, informing where local need may be highest and where families are accessing self help
- Social prescribers are present in GP surgeries, supporting the local community to access a range of services through signposting and referrals

What are you prioritising next?

- Marketing of FIS website, and to increase awareness, self-service, and monitoring the effectiveness and impact on children and families
- Build links with faith and community groups through localities team to promote access to services through Whatsapp and social media groups, expanding reach to include some of our more 'hard to reach' families
- Utilising the effective 3rd sector umbrella groups to enhance the reach and impact of service

7.2 - Our relationship with community groups and voluntary organisations embodies a culture of valuing the contribution of all, prizes creativity, collaboration, and local solutions; alongside quality and inclusivity. We are building a culture and system where our communities understand that everyone helps to deliver a whole family approach.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Through the strategic localities plan, the vision for working with our local communities has been strengthened and enabled focus on key projects which meet local need as identified through a range of data, intel and community feedback.
- Projects focussed in key communities where need has been identified are seeing an improvement in services working with communities to respond to their needs. This has included the work between local police, community safety team, youth services and residents to reduce anti-social behaviour and to build a better understanding of marginalised groups within those areas.
- We have seen success in the use of sport and physical activity alongside motivational coaching delivered in local communities as a tool to improve connections between families with the wider community whilst also improving health outcomes.

What are you prioritising next?

- Access to data and outcomes from key community projects to further understand how we better engage with our communities, informing the wider Early Help strategy
- Work with community and voluntary sector to deliver holistic family support

7.3 - We are building capacity in communities and making the most of the refreshed sense of community which grew through COVID-19 . We harness the talent and contribution of parents, carers and young people with lived experience to help one another.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Community groups are feeling empowered to contribute positively to the community and deliver much needed services to families. There has been a significant increase in new groups setting up around the family needs including Activity and Food Funded projects, new parent and toddler groups, small community groups and primary schools.
- Young Health Champions are now in place across a number of Slough schools, offering peer support to others who may be struggling with emotional and mental health needs

What are you prioritising next?

- Development of a plan through collaboration between Family Hubs and Slough CVS to support parents and young people interested in delivering support services within the community to identify areas of opportunity and provide initial support to develop the skills and knowledge required.
- Support the development and harness the volunteers who were mobilised through Covid 19 pandemic
- Working alongside children, young people and families to build resilience and self-help safely at a community level.

7.4 - We are improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and formal early help activity.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Health agencies and partners such as social prescribers who are working on a holistic approach around improving health inequalities and recognising the whole family approach to better and improved health

What are you prioritising next?

- Further enhancement of the JSNA to ensure more granular detail of the local needs
- Development of Family Hubs to provide a point of co-ordination between services, communities and families – offering support within each locality and development of programmes of delivery informed by local need

7.5 - We are shifting decision making about local services and facilities towards families and communities.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- JSNA and other local data feeds into service design and delivery at an individual service level, with increased join up seen between services via local partnership working. Thematic planning demonstrates this
- Feedback from Resident Forums, Young People's Forums and Carers Forums are feedback through a number of mechanisms across services but often in response to service design and delivery, rather than co-production

What are you prioritising next?

- Ensure the design and delivery of Early Help is explicit in co-production strategies across partner agencies
- Develop frictionless information and data sharing

8. Leaders

8.1 - There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- The Senior Strategic Children and Young People's Partnership Board has oversight of outcomes across Children's Services and feeds into the Wellbeing Board, taking accountability for the early Help strategy
- Well established multi-agency relationships via the Slough Safeguarding Partnership have enabled key areas of focus led by task and finish groups to co-ordinate and deliver a whole system approach to key areas of such as Child Exploitation, Children Missing Education and Domestic Abuse. We have seen increased changes to systems, process and service design as a result of these key multi-agency groups which continue to develop based on identified local need
- Increase in focus on need for Early Help and Preventative services through Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews
- The vision for a robust Early Help system is central to Strategic and Corporate plans across Slough Borough Council and Slough Children First

What are you prioritising next?

- Reinvigoration of current Children and Young People's partnership Board to focus on the development of a new Early Help Strategy which sets the expectation for whole family, whole system working across agencies
- Further work required to ensure Well-being Board focuses on driving the children's agenda
- Senior system leaders developing a commitment to focus on the impact of poverty on children and families

8.2 - Our system is balanced, so that more appropriate support is provided for children and families earlier to avoid unnecessary or costly statutory intervention in the children's social care system.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Review of current needs of children and families, along with increasing pressures on statutory services, has led to a refreshed vision for the continuum of care for children. This incorporates the development of Family Hubs, increased investment on the Family Information Service and Local Offer and the reorganisation of the current Early Help service to deliver more targeted interventions.

What are you prioritising next?

- Progression of Children's Services Business Plan as part of an invest to save model to ensure early intervention and help
- Development of a new Early Help Strategy which sets the expectation for whole family, whole system working across agencies

8.3 - Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of whole family practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System. The performance against these measures shows that outcomes for families are improving.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Measurement of outcomes and related to individual children and families where Slough Children First are the Lead Professional is well documented and evidenced, with outcomes criteria fully embedded into Liquid Logic Systems
- Internal Performance Board in place to support and challenge data and performance linked to outcomes for children and families where Slough Children First is the Lead professional
- Input from all partners involved in supporting the family via a Team Around the Family approach feeds into identified outcomes, co-ordinated by the Lead Professional

What are you prioritising next?

- High level KPI's to be agreed in line with Early Help Strategy and Outcomes Framework with the expectation for all partners to contribute to a shared set of measures
- Roll out of Children's Delegation portal to enable multi-agency partners to feed into current internal Liquid Logic systems to ensure impact of interventions can be systematically measured
- The re-established Keeping Children Safe in Education group has identified transitions for children as a key area for an early help focus

8.4 - There is a culture of using evaluation and evidence to inform the development of the Early Help System and the quality of whole family working. Where appropriate to local and individual needs, evidence-based services are used.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Individual child and family level outcomes with the ability to report to show impact on specific groups within the community
- Evidence informed group based delivery in line with local and individual needs is increasing following a reduction during Covid, with improved processes for capturing impact on children and families
- Single agencies are able to evidence impact from their service delivery

What are you prioritising next?

- Co-ordination and collation of evidence of impact from across multi-agency service delivery to evidence collective impact and inform further development needs across the Early Help system
- Improved analysis of cohort/ group impact and outcomes based on specific characteristics as identified through multi-agency data, local knowledge and intel

8.5 - Working towards a shared culture, principles, practice framework and set of processes within the Early Help system is a standard feature in all commissioning processes and decisions.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Services are commissioned by individual partners responding to children and family's needs identified at the time of commissioning, adhering to the procurement, monitoring, and review processes of the host organisation
- Contracts are reviewed but not in the context of the overall Early Help System

What are you prioritising next?

- Agree standards and principles for future commissioning of early help services
- Effective joint commissioning of evidence informed interventions, informed by the needs analysis, from locally based providers where appropriate, with contracts which are regularly monitored and managed

9. Data

9.1 - We have regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership to support whole family working. These are open feeds and underpinned by strong data sharing agreements.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Here in Slough we have agreed to the updated terms in the Digital Economy Act (DEA). We have attempted to in the past establish regular data feed with our partners and are in the process of identifying what type of data we require from them. The DEA will allow us to remove potential obstacles in terms of legislation. This action will be one of our key descriptors as we look to bring back data feeds from our partners. The setting up process will involve data managers from across services as well as Information Governance Officers to ensure there is no 'red tape' preventing or blocking the sharing of information.
- We have existing data feeds from our services within the local authority where we will embed with Supporting Families data to create a holistic internal data picture, at the moment shared data is being used for statutory reporting purposes only.
- We are also talking and looking to partner with Reading Council over their 'Better Together Project' based on the Data Accelerator Fund. The project will aim to provide support to families with a range of needs, changing lives and services for the better. It will help us in Slough to transform the way public services work for/ and with families to take an integrated 'whole family' approach.
- This will lead Slough to having a centralised data source for multiple systems which are able to translate data in bulk giving a rich picture to social care using a highly scalable BI User Interface.
- This will improve our data matching individuals across multiple systems into inclusive record. It will help in relation to Family Building – familial relationships used to build cliques/ families for related individuals living at the same address.
- There is currently a plan to increase investment in the IT infrastructure which will allow for better communication between systems used within the local Authority as a key starting point

What are you prioritising next?

- Identifying staff, departments and services we wish to work with as we look to open our data feed process. Identifying key data leads from our partners and local services and to outline and explain why data sharing will be beneficial to all services when it comes to our families and their needs.
- Longer term plan for a localised 'flag' system which would support front facing teams to recognise family needs and link with relevant professionals to ensure holistic family working across all services

9.2 - Our case management system allows all partners to securely access all relevant cases and record whole family assessments.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

2

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- In house practitioners/ professionals/ keyworkers are able to view our case management system and are able to record/ complete C&F and EHA assessment. MASH responses are also fed into the assessment giving a more accurate picture of the whole family and their needs, and the history of interventions. One caveat is that most services only specialise in working with individuals and therefore are not concerned with the needs of other family members because the nature of their speciality may not extend to the needs of others. Therefore the keyworker in Social Care of Early Help will have an overview of issues prevalent in the family and disseminate actions to services who are able to work with adults and/or CYP leading to successful outcomes.
- These outcomes are fed into our case management system by the keyworker once a service notifies them usually by email.
- We are looking to advance this method of contributions and feeding through development of a 'Delegation Portal' which will allow our multi agency partners to access, assess and address support needs of vulnerable children. In addition, we will be able to utilise the Delegation portal to obtain feedback on outcomes for children and families supported by wider early help services within the community, providing us with a richer picture of support and need within Slough.

What are you prioritising next?

- Testing and completion of the delegation portal as well as taking into account feedback from partners and ensuring that Supporting Families has a large presence in the final version

9.3 - Our case management system allows us to record all issues affecting the family and outcomes in a quantifiable way and run reports on these.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

3

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Our Outcome Plan is embedded into EHM and ICS systems at various points of the intervention in order to take account of changing family circumstances and interventions
- For EHM the indicators/ headline criteria are part of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) where the allocated worker is asked to identify the prevalent issues identified following completion of the EHA. At this point the allocated worker is also asked to list the current school attendance for each child – in order to determine if there is an issue or not (in line with our current indicators in our Outcome Plan). Updates and progress made with the family, adults, child or children on the case is captured on the case notes with evidence of direct work, forms, reports (internal/ external) uploaded to the case.
- At Case Closure the outcomes of the issues identified at the EHA are presented to the allocated worker asking them if the outcomes were achieved or not and to add the evidence which has made sustained and significant progress against each identified outcome.
- This template is replicated on ICS however the headline criteria is also available in various other stages such as the C&F assessment, Referral, Core Group Meeting and the Closure Record – this is to take into account the complex nature of statutory cases whose pathway to closure can vary.
- All cases close to closure have management oversight and sign off by senior staff ensuring that the outcomes achieved have made sustained and significant progress, continuous employment/ progress to work and that these outcomes are effective and lessens the chance of a regression or re-referral.
- We were able to produce reports on caseloads and outcomes which enabled us to give a rich picture of the families we work with, including geographical data as well as other demographic information. However this was more for in-house purposes and needs to be widely shared once improvements are made.

What are you prioritising next?

- Re-building the reports and embedding the new Outcomes Framework changes going live in October into our case management systems and using Supporting Families data more effectively to assist at senior level in terms of planning and understanding the needs of families.

9.4 - We have an effective data governance board that is accountable for our progress on data transformation. It supports us and our partners to unlock and resolve issues with data sharing and direct how we use data both for performance and analytics and how we consult on system changes that would impact across the partnership. Data are used by the partnership to support resourcing, planning, whole family working and early intervention. An identified member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership team has responsibility for driving forward actions from this board.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- We did have an existing data governance board however these never progressed or developed to the point we wanted it, largely due to not receiving the suitable data from partners due to certain variables not being recorded and lack of buy-in long term. We did receive data from services within the council and Children's services which are now used for performance and reporting overall for the council and Children's services. The data we currently have is able to feed into those reports mentioned previously. We will use the previous infrastructure, (ToR, Action Plan etc) and upgrade it to create a new Data Governance Board.

What are you prioritising next?

- Increasing Strengthening Families presence in the Slough Borough Council (SBC) and Slough Children First (SCF) Analyst Network which is in its infancy with long-term plans to involve more data analysts from other services. Overall aim of this meeting is to have a better understanding of what we're all working on and how we can support each other and share good practice. This would involve clearing up any roadblocks towards data sharing and tools being used to enhance performance and analysis.
- Re-establish effective communication with the Performance Team in SCF where performance is being analysed and performance is being monitored and is driving planning towards our service being more proactive. We will look to appoint a representative at senior level which will help gain more influence from a data perspective.

9.5 - We have a system that allows us to pull together all data, analyse these data and ensure practitioners can see results.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- We are producing analysis which is monitoring the output of keyworkers in Early Help and monitoring the outcomes achieved at the end of case closure. We have yet to produce analysis that practitioners are able to view as we need to determine how the data will be used by practitioners. At the moment our whole family assessments identify the family need with partners feeding in and being informed by the keyworker of the progress made, this seems to be working well and with the addition of the portal will allow partners greater scope and insight into the working being done with families as this data will be extractable which will enable it to be analysed.

What are you prioritising next?

- Obtaining the data feeds from partners which will assist us greatly in starting to capture and use their data in line with ours creating a rich picture of our families. This will be done in line with the ongoing work with the 'portal'

9.6 - We are using data to inform performance across the Early Help partnership, demand and resourcing (including commissioning), operational delivery and workforce development.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- Existing reports are being produced which do help inform areas what more can be done around resourcing, operational delivery and workforce development. The advantages of using data to help make informed decisions at senior levels is an issue the local authority is on board with. Current reports generated do help highlight/ point out areas of improvement as well as identify gaps in areas we are lacking which helps understand current methods of working and issues around corporate structure. We do appreciate more input is required from a Supporting Families stand point which is why we're in early stages of creating a report that uses key data criteria from the programme and feed into the wider reporting arena. The aim is to produce a detailed analysis report for senior staff to sit alongside once for keyworkers.

What are you prioritising next?

- Identifying what key Supporting Families data is required to feed into regular performance reports that will inform senior leadership and building a database where that data can be extracted from.

9.7 - We have developed innovative analytical products. This could be needs analysis, place-based analysis, individual or family level risk analytics, apps or systems to improve information available to practitioners and partners, quantifying qualitative case notes or other documentation or any other product or system that has changed/improved our ways of working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Self-assessment score - Answer 0 to 5 – see scale above

1

What is working well and what evidence do you have?

- For Strengthening Families to get to this level of maturity we will need to focus on the previous questions and ensuring that a framework is in place in terms of creating analytical products. There is already existing analytical products available across the local authority and children social care (Slough Children First) which is being used to evaluate services, keyworker performance and identify areas of improvements or identify areas of concern which allow the service to understand the issue and therefore how to improve it. These reports need to be embedded with Strengthening Families data however we are planning our own report to sit alongside the reports currently being disseminated.

What are you prioritising next?

- Our descriptors 1, 2 and 3 which will set us on the pathway to developing analytical products in line with Supporting Family gauging the effectiveness of whole family working and the various facets within which will help the way we work.

10. Earned Autonomy criteria and eligibility - for information only

This section is to communicate the minimum thresholds for each descriptor that need to be met before the national team may invite you to apply for Earned Autonomy status. This has been published in the Earned Autonomy prospectus.

Early Help System Guide descriptors used for Stage 1 (for both prospective and existing EA areas):

Family voice and experience:

Family engagement - We have well established mechanisms to gather and act on feedback from families and engage people with lived experience in service design, governance and quality assurance.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Workforce:

The workforce in our area operates effectively to deliver whole family working and is aligned with the levels set out in the workforce table (section 3 above or page 11 of the published document).

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Workforce:

We have a shared practice framework and locally agreed processes for professionals in partner agencies working across the wider Early Help System which is known, understood and consistently used.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Leaders:

There is a senior strategic group accountable for the Early Help System and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Leaders:

Partners have agreed a shared set of measures at family, cohort, demand and population level, including quality of whole family practice and family voice, which collectively represent the effectiveness of the Early Help System. The performance against these measures shows that outcomes for families are improving.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Data:

We have regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership to support whole family working. These are open feeds and underpinned by strong data sharing agreements.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Data:

Our case management system allows us to record all issues affecting the family and outcomes in a quantifiable way and run reports on these.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Data:

We have an effective data governance board that is accountable for our progress on data transformation. It supports us and our partners to unlock and resolve issues with data sharing and direct how we use data both for performance and analytics and how we consult on system changes that would impact across the partnership. Data are used by the partnership to support resourcing, planning, whole family working and early intervention. An identified member of the Children's Services Senior Leadership team has responsibility for driving forward actions from this board.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

Data:

We have developed innovative analytical products. This could be needs analysis, place-based analysis, individual or family level risk analytics, apps or systems to improve information available to practitioners and partners, quantifying qualitative case notes or other documentation or any other product or system that has changed/improved our ways of working.

(Please click on the 'i' icon for more information)

Minimum score:

11. Selection of descriptors

All areas are required through the Supporting Families programme to choose three specific descriptors they want to work on and progress during the coming year. Areas should use the following methodology to choose the three descriptors:

If the area is **data model 2** or below, **choose ONLY descriptors from the data section**;

If the area is **data model 3**, **choose one descriptor from the data section and two from the servicedescriptors** (family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders).

If the area is **data model 4** or above, **choose ONLY service descriptors**.

After applying this methodology, areas are free to choose any descriptor across the 5 sections (family voice and experience, workforce, communities, leaders and data). You can select more than one from individual sections of interest if preferred.

If you need to reference the full descriptor explanation or associated guidance in order to make your selection, these can be found in the relevant sections above (**Section 5 - Family voice and experience, Section 6 - Workforce, Section 7 - Communities, Section 8 - Leaders and Section 9 - Data**)

Slough's data model (as submitted in the September 2021 data survey):

Here is a reminder of the different data models:

Data Model 1: Manual – Receiving data from other partners which is stored in separate files, and which is unmatched to case management systems. The local authority Supporting Families Outcome Plan is not quantified and there is no reporting from the case management system to keyworkers.

Data Model 2: Basic – Some data sources are brought together in basic data software, which is used to match and store data, identify families who may need support and to monitor progress. The Supporting Families Outcomes Plan is embedded in the case management system and receives manually inputted reports on outcomes and key indicators.

Data Model 3: Building blocks – Bringing most data sources together including early help case management data. The data is visible to keyworkers in a spreadsheet or form which is only provided once or twice during a case.

Data Model 4: Early maturity – Using a data warehouse or data lake where data is accessible to workers automatically in the case management system and which is updated when new feeds are received. More advanced data system software is used with automated matching and calculation of whether Payment by Results outcomes are met is built in. There are likely to be some open feeds.

Data Model 5: Mature – Data warehouse or data lake model as in the early maturity model but where primarily open feeds are used and where data is used to conduct needs analysis.

Data Model 6: Advanced – Sophisticated data model with open feeds as in the mature model, but where the system has been expanded beyond Supporting Families services and includes whole children's services or whole of council solutions.

Do you think that Slough's data model has changed since you submitted the data survey in September 2021?

Descriptor one

Descriptor two

Descriptor three

12. How the DLUHC will use the Early Help System Guide self-assessment submissions

The central team will use the EHSG self-assessments and chosen priority descriptors in the following ways:

1. Areas who have scored highly on individual descriptors may be approached for information around the practice in place, for this to be shared with other local areas. This could be developed into national good practice material to be linked to the individual descriptors.

2. Areas who have chosen the same priority descriptors will be supported to come together in action learning sets to support one another with the development of their work. The beginning of these action learning sets will be facilitated by the national team but handed over to local areas to support continued networking and learning.
3. The narrative text that areas submit in their EHSg self-assessments will be analysed by the national team to inform support and challenge conversations with local areas.
4. The analysis of the narrative will also be used to understand common areas for development and inform national policy making.

If you require further information, please contact families.team@levellingup.gov.uk

13. Permission to share

As a result of our partnership working with specifically DfE on the programme, we will share the full results including narrative with DfE.

Please acknowledge that you understand that your Early Help System Guide scoring, the self-assessment content and your chosen priority descriptors will be shared with DfE:

To enable and encourage peer support and joint planning of development activity, we would like to share the scoring (not narrative) for each descriptor and the chosen priority descriptors from each area with all SF Co-ordinators during July 2022.

Please confirm that you are happy for your Early Help System Guide scoring and chosen priority descriptors to be shared with Supporting Families Co-ordinators to enable networking, joint planning of development activity and peer support:

Yes

To facilitate joint working across Government, we would like to share the scoring (not narrative) for each descriptor and the chosen priority descriptors from each area with Other Government Departments.

Please confirm that you are happy for your Early Help System Guide scoring and chosen priority descriptors to be shared with Other Government Departments:

Yes