



Prevention & Early Help Strategy

2026 – 2030

Part of Flourishing in Norfolk



Foreword



Norfolk is united by a bold ambition: to be a place where all children and young people can flourish.

Our partnership is driving real change, and our frontline teams across agencies and the Prevention and Early Help Board have delivered significant progress, but we're not stopping here. With unwavering commitment from all stakeholders, we're building a system that puts children and families first.

Why does this matter? Because delivering effective prevention and early help transforms lives. It boosts children's life chances, strengthens families, and stops problems before they escalate. Acting early isn't just best practice, it's essential.

This refreshed strategy sets out four shared priorities for 2026–2030, shaped by what children and young people have told us, local needs and national policy. In Spring 2024, over 9,000 young voices spoke through our Flourish survey. Most are thriving, but a small but growing number face real challenges, especially those with SEND, young carers, and those eligible for Free School Meals. Barriers like money, access, and information still stand in the way.

Their feedback is clear: we must make it easy to get help, improve access to activities, and tackle disadvantage head-on. Our September 2025 partnership workshop brought together over 60 staff from across agencies and organisations to sharpen our prevention and early help focus. The message? Partnership is our strength. We must keep children and families at the heart of everything, embed prevention, empower individuals to seek help, and build trust through inclusive, relationship-based practice.

Together, we're committed to a whole-system approach, integrated and operating across school and community zones, aligned with initiatives such as the Families First Partnership Programme. Our Prevention and Early Help Strategy for 2026–2030 is shaped by these insights and ready to deliver a best start in life for Norfolk's children and young people and enable them to flourish.

Sarah Jones

Director of Safeguarding, Partnerships and Opportunity
Norfolk County Council – Children's Services

1. Our shared vision

Norfolk is committed to ensuring that children, young people, and families have timely access to the support they need to thrive. Through a coordinated prevention and early help system, we strive to work with children, young people and families to enable them to flourish and when needed, deliver the right assistance at the right time, empowering families and achieving positive outcomes. This strategy articulates our unified approach to prevention and early help across the county, reflecting the priorities of the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and our shared ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can flourish.

-  **f**amily and friends
Children and young people are safe, connected and supported through positive relationships and networks
-  **l**earning
Children and young people are achieving their full potential and developing skills which prepare them for life
-  **o**pportunity
Children and young people develop as well-rounded individuals through access to a wide range of opportunities which nurture their interests and talents
-  **u**nderstood
Children and young people feel listened to, understood and part of decision-making processes
-  **r**esilience
Children and young people have the confidence and skills to make their own decisions and take on life's challenges
-  **i**ndividual
Children and young people are respected as individuals, confident in their own identity and appreciate and value their own and others' uniqueness
-  **S**afe and secure
Children and young people are supported to understand risk and make safe decisions by the actions that adults and children and young people themselves take to keep them safe and secure
-  **h**ealthy
Children and young people have the support, knowledge and opportunity to lead their happiest and healthiest lives

Produced with children, young people and families, Flourish captures aspects of children and young people's lives that they have told us are important to them and their families. As such, Flourish provides us with a framework for the sustainable change we want to secure for all children and young people in Norfolk.

2. What is Prevention and Early Help?

We often use the terms 'prevention' and 'early help' interchangeably and whilst they are obviously linked, it is helpful to define what we mean by these terms:

Prevention is about taking action to reduce the chances of something happening or to stop something already happening getting worse. We see this as a way of working that spans a whole range of needs. Prevention is not a single act – it's helpful to think of it as a continuum of action:

- **Primary Prevention** which focuses on universal activity to keep people well, such as facilities encouraging exercise, childhood vaccinations, and community development to build social networks and self-help.
- **Secondary Prevention** which targets those at risk of becoming unwell or needing additional support services, such as children's health screening, youth work and promoting services for particular groups of people.
- **Tertiary Prevention** which focuses on those needing support services, helping them to limit the impact of their circumstances and reduce the need for high levels of intervention. This is when early help may be required where children, young people and families need extra support to stop any problems from getting worse.

Early Help, whether universal or targeted, is about supporting children and families earlier so that we can stop any problems they are facing from getting worse and help them to find the solutions that will make their lives better in the future. We do this by working together, building on children's and families' strengths, and supporting them to develop their capacity to make positive changes for themselves. To ensure that we achieve this we need to work together, early help is not an individual service, but a wider system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners, who, by sharing resources and taking a collective responsibility ensure that families receive the earliest offer of help.

Norfolk's approach to safeguarding and supporting families is structured around a continuum of need ensuring that children and young people receive the right help at the right time.

3. Whose Responsibility?

In Norfolk, our approach to prevention and early help is not about the delivery of a single specific service. It is about all services and partners working together with children, young people and their families to prevent needs from emerging, and when they do to provide earlier support.

This means that everyone working with children, young people and families in Norfolk has a responsibility to support the delivery of effective prevention and early help.

Working Together (2023) and The Children Act (2004) set out our collective responsibilities including in regard to prevention and early help, through the placing of duties on police, health and local authorities to work together with other partners, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. Together, our partnership pledge to children, young people and families will ensure that:

- **We make every contact count**
The first conversation is crucial, and we recognise how important it is to handle it well. Whomever families choose to speak with has the responsibility to make sure the response is helpful and supportive.
- **We will listen to you and not judge you**
We'll show that we are listening and not judging you. We will care about the issues you share and will do our best to help.
- **We work with you & not do to you**
You understand your family better than anyone, and we want to help you make decisions that feel right for you. Our role is to guide and support, not to take over.
- **We won't 'pass the buck'**
We'll help you straight away and won't pass you on unless we're sure the next person can really help. We'll do our best to get the right support involved, not just send you somewhere else without knowing what happens next.

4. Norfolk context

Norfolk's distinctive geography, encompassing rural landscapes, coastal areas and vibrant communities, shapes the daily experiences and opportunities available to families. Access to green spaces and strong community networks supports physical and mental wellbeing, offering families places to connect, be active and build resilience together.

Family and community networks are central to Norfolk's approach, with strategies such as the Family Networking Approach and 'team around' models empowering families to take ownership of their support. A strong parent peer support offer provides trusted local help, reducing reliance on formal services and fostering belonging, identity and positive outcomes for children.

The county's economy is diverse and growing, with strengths in clean energy, agri-tech, advanced manufacturing and digital technology, alongside a thriving tourism sector, and there are ambitious plans to create further growth. Historically, employment levels for the county have exceeded national averages, although this varies across districts, and overall, Norfolk's wage rates are lower than national.

Whilst there are particular geographical and/or groups experiencing significant need/harm, Norfolk remains one of the safest counties in England. Over half of its population lives in areas with the lowest 20% crime incident rate nationally. Violent crime rates are significantly below the national average for England and Wales and have declined year-on-year. Violence, including knife crime, a major concern in many urban areas, is less prevalent.

Despite these strengths, Norfolk faces challenges shaped by its geography and demographics. An ageing population and rural isolation increase risks of loneliness, poor health outcomes and delayed access to support. Transport and digital connectivity gaps make it harder for residents to reach services early, particularly in coastal and rural communities. Positively the county has secured significant funding to transform transport across Norfolk over the next few years.

Some children and families experience significant pressures, with rates of child poverty and educational disadvantage above national averages and demand for mental health support among young people rising sharply. Norfolk has higher levels of children living in low-income households (22.3%) compared to regional (17.8%) and national (22.1%) rates. Additionally, children experience issues such as parental and child mental health challenges, lack of trusted adults and increasing vulnerability especially for children receiving Free School Meals or those with SEND. These trends underline the need for proactive prevention approaches that build protective factors, targeted interventions and collaborative responses to address underlying causes.

Strong prevention and early help support improved health and wellbeing and avoid more individuals reaching crisis before support is available, reduce costs and improve outcomes. Statutory services are under strain from increasing complexity of need, known national challenges of recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, and financial pressures.

As a result of long-established strong partnership working, agencies across Norfolk recognise the importance of collaboration in delivering effective support to families that reflects the county's unique context. As national challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have impacted, multi-agency working has continued to strengthen, bringing together health, education, social care, police and criminal justice, commissioned providers, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

This collaborative approach, focused on understanding needs, shaping services, and improving delivery, provides a strong foundation for an ambitious vision: ensuring that children, young people, and families in Norfolk receive the support they need to thrive, and that Norfolk is a place where every child and young person can flourish.

The following infographic highlights Norfolk as the context for our prevention and early help activity:

Norfolk context

5th largest county in the Country **5,371km²**
With Urban, rural and coastal communities

94.7% of population from white ethnic group
(England 81.0%)

Population **931k**
Predicted to exceed 1m by 2036



238,000 people aged under 25 in Norfolk

167,000 people aged under 18 in Norfolk

170,254

Contacts with families through the **Start for Life and Family Hubs** programme
(Jan 2023- Sept 2025)

Early Help Support

13,903

Early Help Consultations
(2023 - 2025)

165

Staff part of the **Start for Life & Family Hub** Core Workforce

8,945

Children supported through Early Help Plans
(2022 - 2025)



27,712 Children eligible for Free School Meals
(2024/2025)

135,000 or 15% residents live in areas classified as among the 20% most deprived in England

30,132 Children and Young People with SEND
(aged 0-25) in 2025

Main languages

English **95%**

Lithuanian **0.8%**

Polish **0.8%**

Portuguese **0.6%**

Another way to understand the context for our prevention and early help response is to consider what it would mean **if Norfolk had just 100 children and young people:**

51 would be boys and 49 would be girls.	→	0%	The same as in 2021
79 would be white/British	↘	-4%	Compared to 83 in 2021
11 would be from minority ethnic groups	↗	3%	Compared to 8 in 2021
14 would have English as a second language	↗	3%	Compared to 11 in 2021
9 would have mothers who smoked during pregnancy	↘	-4%	Compared to 13 in 2021
3 would be born with a low birth weight	→	0%	The same as in 2021
80 would have reached all developmental milestones at age 2	↘	-2%	Compared to 82 in 2021
67 would have reached a good level of development at age 5	↗	3%	Compared to 64 in 2022*
49 would be physically active	↗	12%	Compared to 37 in 2021
22 would be classed as obese in Year 6	→	0%	The same as in 2022*
21 would have dental decay 5-years-old	↘	-3%	Compared to 24 in 2022*
3 would start smoking before they are 18	→	0%	The same as in 2021
1 would be receiving Family Support	→	0%	The same as in 2021
2 would have a social worker	→	0%	The same as in 2021
1 would be in care or have a Child Protection Plan	→	0%	The same as in 2021
22 would live in low-income households	↗	3%	Compared to 19 in 2021
24 would receive Free School Meals	↗	5%	Compared to 19 in 2021
2 school students would be a young carer	→	0%	Compared to 1 in 2023*
21 would have a Special Educational Need or Disability	↗	4%	Compared to 17 in 2021
13 would be persistently absent in Primary education	↘	-2%	Compared to 15 in 2021
24 would be persistently absent in Secondary education	↗	9%	Compared to 15 in 2021
65 would achieve expected standard in GCSE English & Maths	↘	-6%	Compared to 71 in 2021
92 would stay in education, apprenticeships or employment for at least 6 months after leaving school	↘	-1%	Compared to 93 in 2021
5 would not be in education, employment or training at 16	↗	1%	Compared to 4 in 2021
5 would be claiming unemployment assistance aged 18-24	↘	-3%	Compared to 8 in 2021

*Figures not available for 2021 due to the data not being published, not being collected then, or because of a pause in data collection due to the Covid pandemic

What children and young people are telling us

The Norfolk 2024 Flourish Survey, completed by more than 9,000 pupils across primary and secondary schools, provides an encouraging picture of the lives, health and wellbeing of children and young people in the county. Commissioned by Public Health and supported by local schools, the survey reflects the Flourish outcomes and shows progress since previous surveys in 2015 and 2017. It underlines Norfolk's commitment to creating environments where children, young people and their families can thrive.

Responses reveal the importance of support within schools. Almost half of pupils agreed that their achievements both in and out of school are recognised, an improvement on previous years. A significant majority reported receiving the help they need from teachers and other adults, and more than half felt that sharing their views in school makes a difference. These findings point to the value of participation and respect, where pupil voice is valued and acted upon.

Beyond the classroom, despite the number of children living in low-income households, most pupils take part in activities outside school, demonstrating that Norfolk offers opportunities for engagement and personal growth within the wider community. Positive trends across most thematic areas reinforce the county's commitment to supporting children and young people. Schools have found the feedback helpful for planning and improvement, and thematic reports are informing prevention and early help.

However, the survey also highlights significant challenges. Some children and young people face barriers to accessing support, including lack of time, uncertainty about what to do, cost, and not knowing where to go. Mental health concerns are growing, with a marked decline in positive wellbeing across all age groups and clear impacts on school attendance. Of note, one in ten pupils do not have a trusted adult to turn to, and fewer feel comfortable talking about their feelings.

Experiences of harm are evident: one in ten primary pupils reported witnessing violence between adults at home, and online safety risks such as cyberbullying and exposure to explicit material have increased. Education concerns are also rising, with more pupils believing regular attendance is not important and fewer feeling prepared for life after school compared to previous surveys. Young carers are particularly affected, with one in five missing school due to caring responsibilities. Additionally, many older pupils lack awareness of where to seek help for unhealthy relationships, and some would not seek help at all.

Overall, the Flourish Survey demonstrates that Norfolk is making tangible progress in recognising achievements, providing support, encouraging participation and promoting wellbeing. By building on these positive developments and addressing the challenges identified, particularly around mental health, safeguarding and access to support, we can ensure that every child and young person in Norfolk has the opportunity to flourish.

5. Key achievements during 2022 – 25

Over the past four years, significant progress has been made against the four priorities set out in our partnership Prevention and Early Help Strategy, as summarised below.

1. Building Resilient Communities

- Family networking prioritised within NSCP, Early Help training, and practice roadmap.
- Published *Start for Life* offer and new self-help tools (e.g., FLOURISHING Families).
- Established a Parent Champion network which has been nominated for and won multiple national awards.
- Developed peer support mechanisms, providing parents with parenting, parent-infant relationship and infant feeding support.
- Family hubs brand: recognisable, accessible, and collectively owned.
- Expanded family hub network with outreach in libraries, food banks, and community venues; seven local hubs coordinating delivery.
- Digital family hubs: Developed NCC and JON web pages as front doors for advice, guidance, and support.
- Parent & Carer Panel embedded co-production, shaping *Start for Life* offer.
- Delivered targeted campaigns/events to boost uptake among disadvantaged and minority groups.
- Effective work in schools on promoting positive relationships and tackling prejudice, e.g. Pol-Ed, a whole population police led approach to reducing harm, providing consistent and age appropriate PHSE, RSE and citizenship education resources and lessons for schools, alongside the Bystander programme, and White Ribbon in schools.
- Crucial Crew, run by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in collaboration with other emergency services (Norfolk Constabulary, St Johns Ambulance, RNLI etc), has delivered safety packages to 7,000 Year 6s across Norfolk over the last year.
- Launched Family Hubs Community Fund for local grants.
- Delivered Big Norfolk Holiday Fun (HAF) countywide, reducing isolation and promoting healthy lifestyles for FSM-eligible children.
- Space Youth Fund, led by Police & Crime Commissioner's Office, NCC, and the Norfolk Community Foundation, which has funded 8 community groups to provide open access youth provision across Norfolk.

2. Improving Early Identification

- Implemented single Early Help Assessment (EHAP) tool across agencies.
- Data-driven outreach: Used real-time intelligence to identify at-risk families (e.g., proactive contact with pregnant women in IMD 1/2).
- Published and refreshed *Start for Life* offer covering antenatal care, infant feeding, and perinatal mental health.
- Increased the number of babies reaching health visitor reviews

- Shifted from Threshold Guide to Continuum of Need for earlier intervention.
- Adopted parent-infant relationship assessments within health visiting and family support services.
- Launched and embedded shared use of data through Norfolk Family Connect to identify families who need help earlier.
- 164% increase in early help consultations providing children, young people and families with advice, guidance and support, preventing the need for more statutory support.
- Four years of successful Supporting Families outcomes and earned autonomy status.
- Introduced new early help services focused on adolescents: Youth Early Support Service (YESS) and For Your Information (FYI) online offer for 11–24-year-olds.

3. Strengthening Whole Family & System Working

- Refreshed Early Help Assessment & Plans to focus on practice.
- Built core family hubs workforce and strengthened partner collaboration.
- Improved access to 0–25 mental health support via Norfolk’s Mental Health Access and Support Service.
- Embedded FLOURISH framework in commissioning; jointly commissioned services.
- Integrated multi-agency workforce through joint training on relational practice and safeguarding.
- Established Reducing Parental Conflict Programme.
- Effective joint agency response to support children and families experiencing domestic abuse
- Rolled out evidence-based interventions (Triple P Baby, Solihull, PEEP, Video Interaction Guidance).
- Expanded wraparound childcare linked to schools and settings.
- Developed a core family hub workforce who can advise, provide guidance and signpost families to support available across health, education, housing, and social care.
- Joined up our partnership working through our CYP System Collaborative and a wide range of partnership boards.

4. Building Collaboration & Capacity

- Strengthened governance via Prevention & Early Help Board, Family Hub Steering Group, and CYP System Collaborative.
- A shared geography of school and community zones supporting effective collaboration at a place level.
- Delivered countywide training on trauma-informed and whole-family approaches (55 courses, 3,750 delegates).
- Embedded “You Said, We Did” and initiated local evaluation for sustainability post-2025.

- Increased capacity including developing new school and community teams and a SEND and Inclusion Support model.
- Built capacity for shared delivery of parenting and parental conflict interventions.
- Embedded family networking as a core practice foundation.
- Joint commissioning, training and focus on co-production through the Norfolk Children Safety Partnership and the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership.

The following infographic provides a highlight of the impact of our work, as reported to the People and Communities Select Committee (now known as Children, Families and Community Select Committee) in March 2025.



100% of government Supporting Families targets achieved for the last 3 consecutive years



Norfolk is one of the 21 Local Authorities (14%) having reached Earned Autonomy Status, demonstrating a high standard of Early Help Partnership



90% of Early Help Assessment & Plans do not step-up for Social Work Assessment

Children, Young People and Families Supported

97% of families accessing our Early Childhood & Family Service said the support received made a difference to their lives.

98% of young people supported through the Youth Early Support Service said their worker gave them the right amount of time and support.

23,000

Young people have been reached by our Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) through surveys, events, consultations and social media.

86% of young carers worked with showed progress on the outcomes they required support with.

60% increase in the number of fathers now accessing the NHS Talking Therapies service.

Community support

624 New community groups have been established to support parents to connect to local networks of support.

50 New parent champions recruited in their local communities, providing friendly advice and connecting families to support when needed.

18,000

Individual children and young people aged 4-16 have taken part in Big Norfolk Holiday Fun with 71% of participants reporting increased physical activity after the holidays.

Preventing the need for statutory intervention



Re-referrals for children requiring statutory social work intervention remain low at 16% (below the national average of 21%)

985

Children are looked after by the local authority, down from 1046 in 2023. The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years looked after for Norfolk is 68, below the national average of 70.



Rate of children aged under 18 years subject to protection plans remains low at 28.5 per 10,000, compared to the national average of 42 per 10,000.

4769

Children have been subject to Child in Need support, down from 4852 in 2023. The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years who are CIN in Norfolk is 281, below the national average of 333.

Cost Benefits

£1.2M

Estimated cost benefit attributed to the enhanced Talking Therapies Service delivered through Start for Life & Family Hubs, where families have been supported early to avoid the costs of treating an adult for anxiety or depression.

£3.3M
23/24

Income generated through evidencing where early help has delivered successful outcomes through the supporting families programme.

£300,677

Estimated cost benefit attributed to delivering parenting support interventions over 9 months, where children have not then required a statutory social care intervention through becoming a child in need or subject to child protection.



Late intervention costs more: for every £1 reduction in spend on early prevention there is a £2 increase in spend on late intervention. (National Children's Bureau)

6. Developing our Prevention and Early Help Strategy for 2026-2030

In developing and delivering our Prevention and Early Help Strategy for 2026-2030, in addition to the importance of listening to what children, young people and families are telling us and building on what we have achieved so far, we need to continue to take account of national and local policies and drivers.

Current national policy and drivers

a) Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) (commenced 2021)

HAF provides free holiday clubs offering meals and enrichment activities for children eligible for free school meals. It aims to tackle holiday hunger, promote physical activity and support family wellbeing.

b) National Drug and Alcohol Strategy - From Harm to Hope (Dec 2021)

The strategy is a 10-year plan aimed at cutting crime, saving lives, and reducing the harm caused by illegal drugs. It is the government's formal response to the Independent Review of Drugs by Dame Carol Black, accepting all key recommendations.

c) Serious Violence Duty (Dec 2022)

Introduced under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. It places a legal obligation on local areas to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local areas.

d) Children's Social Care National Framework (Dec 2023)

This framework sets out the purpose, principles and outcomes for children's social care, emphasising keeping families together where safe and prioritising kinship care. It promotes whole-family working, strong multi-agency collaboration and a skilled workforce to achieve better outcomes for children and care leavers.

e) Wraparound Childcare and Breakfast Clubs (commenced Sept 2024)

Rollout of Wraparound childcare (8am to 6pm) commenced in Sept 2024, aligned to the DfE ambition that every parent who needs wraparound childcare will have access to it by Sept 2026. Universal free breakfast clubs launched in April 2025, with more provision expected to be available in 2026, supporting the Government pledge to introduce free breakfast clubs in every state-funded primary school.

f) Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive (Nov 2024)

This policy statement outlines reforms to strengthen child protection and family support, including mandatory Family Group Decision Making and improved data sharing. It also prioritises kinship and foster care, regulates the care market and invests in workforce development.

g) NHS England Guidance on Neighbourhood Multidisciplinary Teams (Feb 2025)

The guidance introduces integrated neighbourhood teams for children and young people to deliver holistic assessments and coordinated care. It aims to

reduce hospital reliance by linking health, education and social care services at community level.

h) Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Mar 2025)

This Bill combines social care and education reforms, embedding family decision-making and multi-agency safeguarding in law. It also introduces universal free breakfast clubs, a register for children not in school and updates to the National Curriculum.

i) Families First Partnership Programme (Mar 2025)

This programme drives implementation of Family Help and child protection reforms by merging targeted early help and Child in Need services. It promotes multi-disciplinary teams, lead practitioners and mandatory family decision-making at key stages.

j) Fit for the Future NHS 10-Year Plan (July 2025)

The plan sets out a long-term vision for shifting care from hospitals to communities, embracing digital services and focusing on prevention. For children, it includes a move to a neighbourhood focused approach, driving forwards digitalisation and expanded mental health support.

k) Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life (July 2025)

This strategy focuses on early years reform, expanding family hubs and funded childcare from nine months. It aims to improve early years workforce quality and ensure most children achieve good development by age five.

l) Expansion of Funded Childcare for working parents (commenced Sept 2025)

Funded childcare has been extended to 30 hours per week (term time) for working parents of children from nine months to school age. This policy reduces cost barriers, supports employment and improves early learning opportunities.

m) Young Futures Hubs and Prevention Partnership Panels (Sept 2025)

Young Futures Hubs will unite services to improve access to opportunities and support for children and young people at community level, helping them thrive and achieve positive outcomes. Young Futures Prevention Partnerships will identify those at risk of crime and ensure they receive appropriate support through Young Futures Hubs and other interventions.

n) Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy (Dec 2025)

The government’s 10-year vision: every young person, regardless of background, has the skills, opportunities, and connections to thrive and shape their lives and communities. It focuses on giving all young people a safe place, someone who cares, and a sense of belonging.

o) Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (Dec 2025)

This strategy employs a coordinated, multi-agency approach to reduce gender-based violence by 50% over the next decade. It focuses on prevention, victim support, perpetrator accountability, and system improvement, with an emphasis on early risk identification, public awareness, and trauma-informed care.

p) SEND Reforms and Schools White Paper (expected 2026)

Planned reforms will strengthen early identification, fair funding and integrated education, health and care services for children with SEND. The proposals seek to improve local provision and legal protections for families.

Local drivers

In addition to national policy drivers, there are a number of local priorities and drivers. Our Prevention and Early Help Strategy is not a standalone programme; rather, it is deeply interconnected with a range of other strategies, frameworks, and initiatives that collectively shape the support system for children, young people, and families in Norfolk.



This interconnectedness ensures that our approach is holistic, avoids duplication, and maximises the impact of every intervention. It reflects:

1. The need for alignment with local and national strategies

The Prevention and Early Help Strategy is closely linked to local initiatives (such as the Flourish ambition, Children’s System Collaborative, the Norfolk Learning Ambition, and the Safer Norfolk Plan) and is shaped by national and

local policies including the Families First Partnership Programme and Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life. This ensures prevention and early help are embedded in wider education, health, and community work, and that statutory requirements and best practice are met.

2. The importance of integrated working across sectors

The strategy promotes joined up working with a focus on reducing risk and promoting protective factors across health, education, social care, housing, policing and community safety, and the voluntary sector. Programmes like Best Start Family Hubs and the Families First Partnership make it easier for families to access timely support, reducing fragmentation and ensuring a seamless experience.

3. The need to focus on vulnerable groups and inclusion

By aligning with strategies like ‘Flourishing in Norfolk’ and the Vulnerable Children and Education programme, the approach focuses on reducing inequalities and prioritises children with SEND, those at risk of exclusion, those with poor mental health or neurodiversity, and disadvantaged families, helping to close gaps and promote equity across local communities.

4. The opportunity for continuous improvement and shared learning

The strategy is dynamic, using feedback and learning from ongoing work and partners, and wider evidence on what works. Partnership mechanisms such as the Prevention and Early Help Board, the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership ensure regular evaluation and adaptation, keeping our approach relevant and effective.

5. The need for system-wide impact

The strategy acts as a unifying thread across all support for children and young people. Its success relies on strong collaboration and shared commitment to prevention and early help, aiming to build a more resilient and inclusive system for all children and families to flourish.

By working together and operating in this way, we can make it as easy as possible for children, young people and their families to access the right help at the right time. Our multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working arrangements, across a continuum of need, enable us to collectively provide a joined up and coherent response, wrapping support around individuals, families, schools and communities:



7. Our prevention and early help focus going forward

Our Prevention and Early Help Strategy for 2026-2030 is focused on four shared priorities:

1. Supporting Children's Early Development and Wellbeing

This priority is grounded in national strategies such as 'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life,' the Early Years Strategy and early identification of SEND, and the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, all of which emphasise the importance of early years development, universal access to quality childcare, and improved outcomes by age five. Locally, our emphasis on secure parent-infant attachment and perinatal support reflects national policy on whole-family working and multi-agency collaboration, as set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework and NHS England guidance.

Early identification and intervention are proven to improve lifelong wellbeing, reduce later demand on statutory services, and address disadvantage from the outset.

2. Developing Simple Connected Pathways and Neighbourhood Working

Nationally, the NHS England Guidance on Neighbourhood Multidisciplinary Teams and the Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life programme advocate for integrated, community-based support, holistic assessments, and seamless service access. Locally, Norfolk's strategy is to develop neighbourhood working through school and community zones across agencies and integrate 'front doors' to make it easier for families to access help quickly and efficiently.

Integrated pathways reduce fragmentation, improve outcomes, and ensure families experience a seamless journey through support systems.

3. Strengthening Communities

National drivers such as Best Start Family Hubs, the NHS 10-Year Plan, and the importance of building strong community cohesion and safety stress the value of community-led solutions, resilience, digitalisation, and self-help. Locally, Norfolk's strategy involves co-designing needs-led preventative solutions with families and communities, unlocking trusted networks, and supporting youth provision in line with the recently published national strategy. This aligns with the need for continuous improvement and shared learning, as well as the aim for system-wide impact, e.g. in tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence, and our partnership response to Prevent and our serious violence duty.

Empowering communities fosters resilience, builds capacity for self-help, and creates sustainable solutions that improve wellbeing and outcomes for children and families.

4. Tackling Inequalities and Closing the Gap

Nationally, policies such as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), SEND reforms, and expanded funded childcare target disadvantage and promote equity. Locally, Norfolk's strategy uses shared data and intelligence (e.g., Family Connect, population health insights) to identify and address gaps, improve opportunities, and provide targeted support for disadvantaged children and young people. The focus on vulnerable groups and inclusion is reinforced by alignment with local strategies such as the Vulnerable Children and Education programme or our perinatal mental health work.

Addressing inequalities ensures that all children and families have the opportunity to flourish, regardless of background or circumstance, and supports Norfolk's ambition for system-wide impact and equity.

What this means for children, young people and their families

We want every child and young person to have the best possible start in life, and for families to feel supported every step of the way. Here's what we're saying to children, young people and families:

- **Having the best start:** We recognise the importance of the first 1001 days, and we will support you as a family from conception and through the first few years of life.
- **Getting ready for school:** We'll help you get off to a great start at school, making sure you have the support you need to learn, grow and feel confident.
- **Support for families:** If you need help, it should be easy to find. We're making it simpler for families to identify need and get advice and support quickly, whether it's about health, learning, or wellbeing.
- **Healthy lives:** We want you to be healthy and happy, so we're promoting things like good nutrition, exercise, and mental health support from the very beginning.
- **Inclusive communities:** If you have special educational needs or disabilities, we'll work to make sure you get the right help early on, and that you feel included wherever you are.
- **Feeling accepted:** We want you to live in a community that celebrates everybody for who they are regardless of your background.
- **Having places to go:** We want you to have places in your neighbourhood where you can go for support, activities, and advice – not just for little ones, but for all children and young people up to age 19 (or 25 if you have SEND).
- **Listening to you:** We want to hear your voice. There will be more chances for you and your family to share your ideas and help shape the support you receive.
- **Fun and opportunities:** We want you to be able to join in with holiday activities, youth projects, and community events, especially if you face extra challenges.

What this means for professionals working with children, young people and families

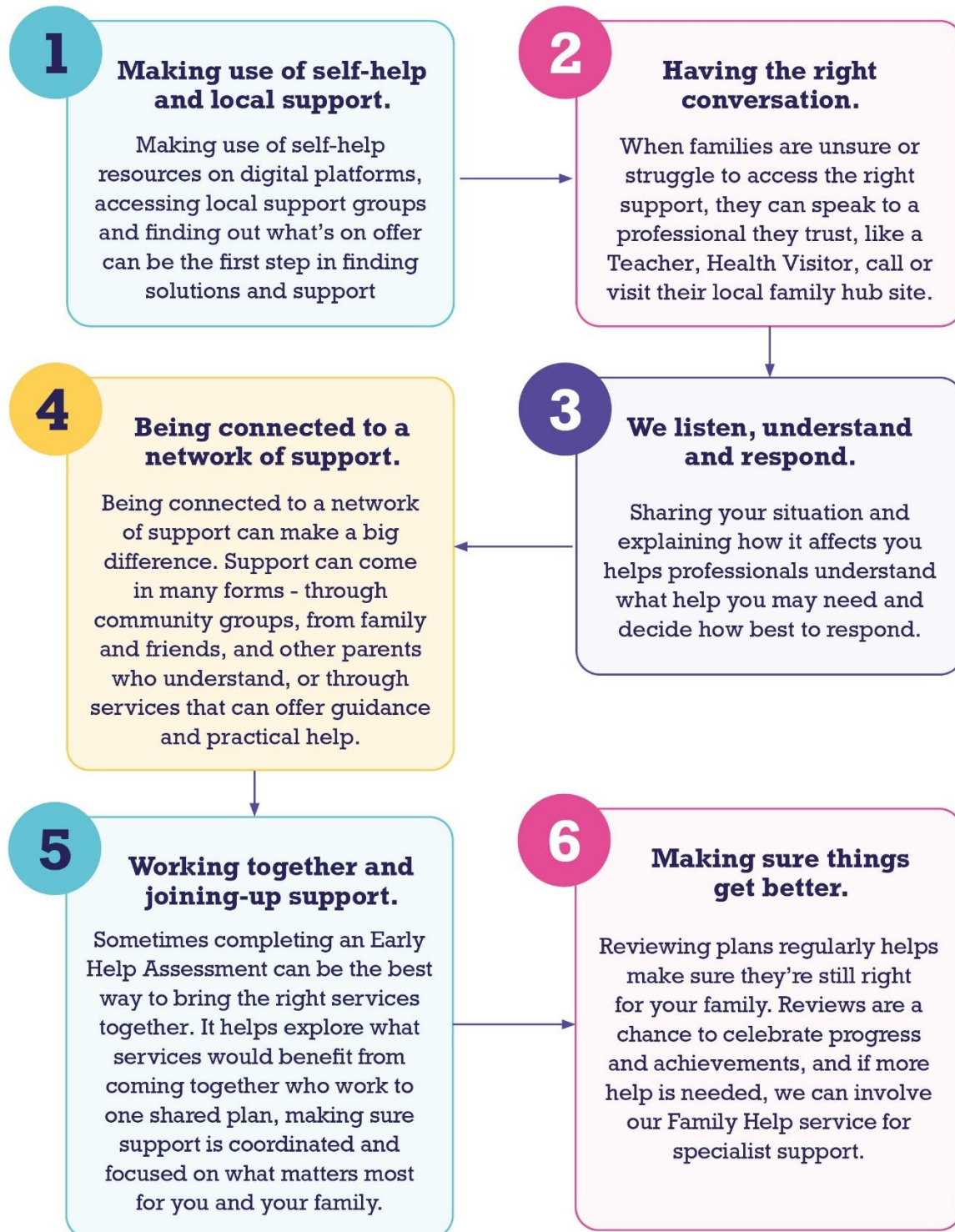
As we move into 2026 and beyond, our shared priorities focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families through collaborative, integrated approaches:

- **Focusing on prevention:** Sharing information to help families understand what provision is available to everyone in their local communities.
- **Early development and wellbeing:** Prioritising early identification and intervention, especially for SEND, ensuring children achieve a good level of development and families access high-quality early years provision.
- **A move from a system that is diagnosis driven to one that is needs led:** Identifying, understanding and meeting needs earlier and better.
- **Integrated pathways:** Building on what is already developed within the system; simplified access and shared validated resources responsive to needs as part of a true 'no wrong door' approach, with the development of simple, connected pathways and neighbourhood working.
- **Single Plan approach:** Adopting a 'one story, one plan' model, providing coordinated support across agencies and reducing duplication.
- **Community engagement:** Strengthening community-led solutions by co-designing preventative approaches with families, parent carer panels, youth forums, and local groups.
- **Data and intelligence:** Using shared data and insights (e.g., Family Connect, use of a single unique identifier etc.) to target disadvantage and reduce inequalities, improve opportunity, and close the gap for vulnerable children and families.
- **Evidence based practice:** Using interventions supported by strong evidence of impact.
- **Tackling inequalities:** Focusing on outreach to marginalised families, addressing racism and prejudice, supporting uptake of entitlements, and promoting inclusive access to local services and activities by reducing barriers and making it easier to access support.
- **Professional collaboration:** Working across sectors and partnership boards – education, health, social care, criminal justice and community safety – to deliver joined-up support, end stop/start practices, and ensure continuity for families
- **Lead professionals:** Coordinating support for individuals and families through adopting a lead practitioner approach.

Everyone's role is vital in building resilient communities, enabling children and young people to flourish, and ensuring every family receives the support they need, when they need it.

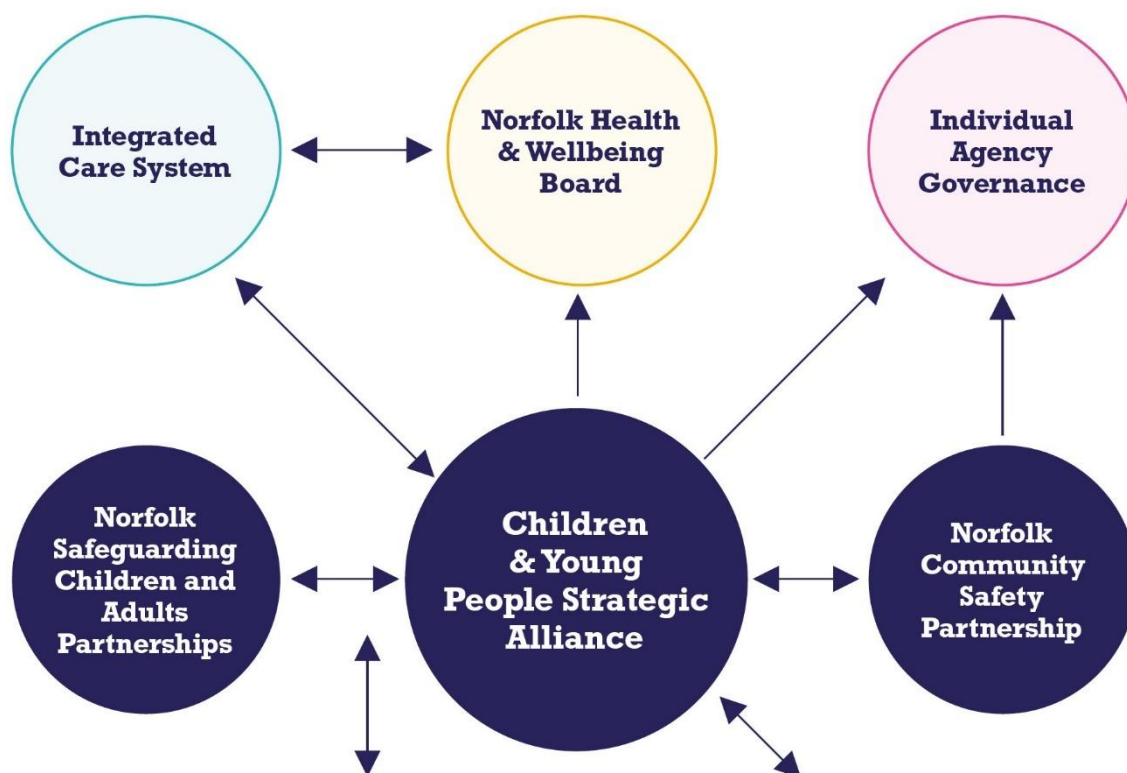
8. Putting prevention and early help into practice

Asking for early help can feel difficult. It often takes courage to reach out and share personal challenges, especially when families are trying to do their best. Many people worry about being judged or losing control. Seeking help is a positive step and professionals in Norfolk are committed to making sure that when families seek support the process is as easy and respectful as possible. When asking for support we expect the experience for families to be like this:



9. Governance

The Prevention and Early Help Board, which operates as a subgroup of the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, will oversee the delivery of this multi-agency Prevention and Early Help Strategy.



NSCP / CYP SA Enablers:

- Stakeholder Engagement & Insight Group
- Data & System Performance Group
- Workforce Development Group

CYP SA Subgroups:

- Norfolk Learning Collaborative
- Prevention & Early Help Board
- Local Inclusion Partnership
- CYP Mental Health Executive Management Group

The Prevention and Early Help Board is composed of senior representatives from local authorities, police, health, education, DWP, voluntary and community sector partners and commissioned providers, all of whom provide services for children, young people and their families. We share a joint commitment to partnership working and improving the life chances of children and young people through delivering this strategy.

There are several partnership working groups that feed into the Board, reflecting key strands of work that currently include: Best Start Family Hubs, Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, support for children affected by domestic abuse, Early Years and Childcare, Partnership Youth Strategy and our Children's System Collaborative.

10. How we'll know we have made a difference

In addition to the monitoring of outcomes already taking place across a range of programmes of work, we will track a number of indicators, including, but not limited to the Flourish outcomes framework:

Family and Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be an increase in the % of children and young people reporting positive relationships with trusted adults • More families are supported through prevention and early help, reducing the reliance on statutory support (e.g. Child in Need, and Child Protection)
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of children in Norfolk achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 76.3%; and • Disadvantaged children have benefited at least equally from this improvement; that is, that the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and achieving a GLD at the end of the 2027/28 academic year is at least 55.7% • There is an overall increase in school attendance rates across the county and a reduction in the percentage of children persistently absent • There is a reduction in the number of children that are permanently excluded from school • There is an increase in the percentage of early years staff with a level 3+ qualification and/or who have access to Continuing Professional Development, particularly specialist training such as relating to speech and language development and supporting children with SEND
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increase in the take up of funded childcare, including take up of the 15 hours of early education and childcare support for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds, particular the number of low-income families, children with SEND and children in care receive the support they are entitled to • There is an increase in the take up of Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged children • There is sustained take up of HAF places from children with SEND and those living within disadvantaged areas • More young people access youth provision, such as that developed locally by Youth Advisory Boards (YABs)
Understood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people, and families are active within service review and co-design • Young people play an active role within the development of youth support through YABs and the Youth Parliament

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and families tell us they are clear about the support they are receiving, including who is supporting them and the role they play
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More families are supported through early help which supports parent/carer and/or child/young person mental health, and/or supports the parent-infant relationship from conception through early childhood • There is an increase in the percentage of children and young people reporting confidence in decision making
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increase in the percentage of children and young people feeling respected and confident that incidents of bullying/discrimination are being addressed • There is a reduction in the number of prejudice-based incidents in schools
Safe & Secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an increase in the percentage of children and young people feeling safe • There is a low rate of children and young people being rereferred to social care for safeguarding concerns • There is a reduction in the number of children witnessing parental conflict and/or domestic abuse • There is a reduction in the number of women and girls experiencing violence • There is a reduced risk of homelessness for families
Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families will benefit through their children receiving mandated health reviews, with the uptake of 2-2.5-year health reviews remaining on or above the target of 79.4%, with and an improved uptake of reviews within those groups less likely to engage • Improved alignment between the 2-2.5-year health visitor health review and the early years 'being 2' developmental assessment, and the development review completed for 5-year-olds at the end of Reception • More children, who are assessed via the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) at the 2-2.5 health reviews will reach a good level of development, to enable the trajectory towards achieving the GLD target for children at the age of 5 • There will be an increase in breast feeding initiation and sustained rates at 6-8 weeks • More children will have good oral health, measured by a decrease in the number of children aged five with tooth decay • More children will be a healthy weight, as measured in reception year and year 6 in school



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