



Prevention & Early Help Strategy

2021 – 2025

Part of Flourishing in Norfolk



Foreword

I'm privileged in my role to work with so many people determined to make Norfolk a great place to live and grow up. Through working together, our strategy will further the opportunities for children, young people and families. In Norfolk, we are ambitious for our children and young people to flourish. The strong commitment we have from all key stakeholders to operate a prevention and early help system that puts children and their families first means that we are confident that we will realise our ambition.

This strategy sets out our joint approach to prevention and early help through a number of agreed priorities, and a shared commitment to values and principles across the partnership that will result in sustained change and increased resilience for children, young people and their families.

We know that the need for prevention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life, and the importance of intervening early and supporting individuals and families to address issues as soon as possible.

The message is clear, effective prevention and early help services maximise life chances for children, improve outcomes for families and prevent more complex problems emerging. We believe that supporting families at the earliest opportunity and taking action to prevent the likelihood of adverse outcomes is an essential part of helping children **FLOURISH**.

Sarah Jones
Chair of the Prevention & Early Help Board

Director of Commissioning, Partnerships & Resources
Norfolk County Council – Children's Services

Our Vision

We want children, young people and families in Norfolk to receive support at the earliest opportunity so that they can flourish. By acting together, as a prevention and early help system, we can enable families to receive the right support, at the right time. This strategy sets out our collective approach to prevention and early help in Norfolk. This is a priority for Norfolk's Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and our shared ambition that Norfolk is a place where every child can flourish:

Family and friends

Children and young people are safe, connected and supported through positive relationships and networks

Learning

Children and young people are achieving their full potential and developing skills which prepare them for life

Opportunity

Children and young people develop as well-rounded individuals through access to a wide range of opportunities which nurture their interests and talents

Understood

Children and young people feel listened to, understood and part of decision-making processes

Resilience

Children and young people have the confidence and skills to make their own decisions and take on life's challenges

Individual

Children and young people are respected as individuals, confident in their own identity and appreciate and value their own and others' uniqueness

Safe 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

Healthy

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 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.

It is important that our prevention and early help strategy is aligned to the national vision for early help set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

With this in mind, our focus is on ensuring we have an early help system that provides for:

Families

Where they tell their story once, have the tools and resources to help themselves and get offered help earlier by trusted professionals who appreciate their strengths and provide support to reach shared outcomes.

Communities

Where people look out for how they can help each other and are part of a neighbourhood that is connected with support services.

Workforce

Where whole family working is the norm, with services working together to help identify and support families early, using restorative approaches that 'work with' and not 'do to'.

Leaders

Who share responsibility to improve all outcomes for the population of Norfolk, underpinned by strong governance and an ambitious strategy that transforms support systems and reduces the need for acute services.



What is Prevention and Early Help?

Our approach to prevention and early help in Norfolk aims to promote good long-term outcomes for families and prevent the need for more intensive and costly interventions.

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 asset-based 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 in care health screening, youth work and promoting services for particular cohorts 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 is about providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. In Norfolk, we are committed to 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.

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. This reflects the expectations for whole-system working set out within the national Early Help System Guide.

The Children Act (2004) also sets out the collective responsibilities we have 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.



Norfolk's Context and Drivers

In Norfolk, the majority of children, young people and families thrive and do well, but everyone needs help at some point in their lives. We also know that there are some individuals and families who are more vulnerable than others for a wide range of reasons and are more likely to experience difficulties and need some additional help.

In this context, our prevention and early help approach is focused on increasing the protective factors and reducing the risk factors in people's lives. This is vital to supporting children and young people to secure positive outcomes, especially for individuals and families who are less likely to do so.

Prevention services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services.

(The Munro Review)

The importance of prevention and early help in supporting children, young people and their families is well evidenced and embedded within national guidance and reports. These include the Munro Review of Child Protection (2011), the Allen Report (2011), the Early Intervention Foundation's report: Realising the Potential of Early Intervention (2018), and Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 critical days (2021).

Norfolk is well placed to deliver effective prevention and early help as a result of the strength of our partnership working to provide support to children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. This includes our work within schools and early education settings which provide a curriculum that supports children's relationships, health and social development, through to the more targeted support delivered by Children's Services Family Support Teams. Our city, district, and borough councils operate all-age help hubs within each place based locality to offer practical support, advice and resources to professionals supporting families.

We also commission a range of prevention and early help services such as the Early Childhood and Family Service, Youth Advisory Boards, and the Children and Young People's Health Service which delivers Norfolk's Healthy Child Programme.

Norfolk's offer extends even further through the support provided by voluntary and community sector organisations and grass root community led groups, through the work they do with us to undertake Early Help Assessments and Plans using a family networking approach.

Even though we have much good work to build on, there is more we can do if we are to strengthen the opportunities for all children and young people in the county to flourish. For example we know that in Norfolk:

- **48%** babies breastfeed 6-8 weeks (Eng: 48%)
- **73%** at age 5 reach good level of development (Eng: 72%)
- **92 per 10,000** hospital admission for injury (Eng: 91 per 10,000)
- **63%** achieve English & Maths 9-4 / A*-C (Eng: 66%)
- **20%** Year 6 children are obese (Eng: 21%)
- **17.1 per 1000 girls** 15-17 teenage pregnancy (Eng 16.7 per 1000)

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2021



Key Achievements: Early Help Strategy (2017-2020)

Our new strategy focuses on both prevention and early help so that we plan and deliver as much activity as we can to support children, young people and families to have resilience, whilst recognising when and how they may need extra help. Our previous Early Help Strategy (2017–2020) was focused on developing multi-agency arrangements to create our Early Help Hubs and strengthen partnership working to address six priorities. Much progress has been made on these priorities, as highlighted below:

To jointly plan and commission early help services and provision

- We have transformed our early childhood services to develop a system partnership approach to support families with children aged 0-5 years.
- We have transformed and continue to develop services to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing based on the Thrive model.
- We have jointly commissioned our speech and language services, integrated with our Healthy Child Programme.

To co-ordinate and join up our service delivery

- We have strengthened locality responses to family needs through multi-agency collaboration in help hubs, introducing pathway advisors, and increasing the capacity of our Family Support Teams.

To improve how we share data and intelligence across agencies and teams

- We use multi-agency data to match assets and resources to local demand when commissioning services.
- Our Supporting Families programme utilises data to claim payment by results funding that supports the resourcing of preventative and early help services.

To improve how we co-produce services with children, young people and their families

- We have used insight and co-production to redesign and develop some of our services.
- We are developing our participation offer that supports children and young people to have a voice in Norfolk through Youth Advisory Boards, the In Care Council, the SEND Youth Forum, and the Youth Parliament.
- We have established a Stakeholder Insight and Engagement group to support the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance.

To publicise our wider early help offer

- We have set up a specific Partner and Community Focus Service to develop opportunities for networking, collaboration and information sharing about the Norfolk Early Help offer.
- Our digital offer provides information about early help through Just One Norfolk, Norfolk Community Directory, the Local Offer and the Family Information Service.

To focus on delivering preventative activities

- We have introduced the Family Network Approach as part of our early help offer.
- Social Prescribers are now embedded within help hubs.
- We have worked with partners to develop new preventative activities including detached youth work, reducing parental conflict, and health and wellbeing services.



What Needs to Happen Now...



Our ambition is to continue to develop the maturity of our prevention and early help approach as a system, so that children, young people and their families can flourish. The actions we have identified are focused on developing whole-system approaches to further strengthen partnership working in order that children, young people and families are supported at the earliest opportunity.

To achieve this, we will focus on delivering the following four priorities:

Priority 1: Building Resilient Communities

We will be successful when: Children, young people and families are enabled and provided with the tools to help build their resilience, so when they encounter difficulties they are more able to overcome these issues with the resources available in their communities. Equally, the prevention and early help system identifies the inequalities that families face and works towards reducing these.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide access to information and advice that supports families to thrive and flourish.
- Offer self-help and early help resources and services that provide families with the support they need, when they need it.
- Work collaboratively to develop opportunities for families to access community resources, and support for well-being and parenting.
- Through family networking, develop approaches that help families be resourceful and connect with networks of support within their community.
- Further embed a strengths-based framework of practice that promotes resilience and increases awareness of responding to adversity, trauma and reducing parental conflict.

Early Intervention is an approach which offers our country a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children. (Allen 2011)

Priority 2: Improving Early Identification

We will be successful when: The prevention and early help system identifies families that require support at the earliest opportunity. The workforce knows how to respond to emerging vulnerability and provide the right support, at the right time, for the right duration. Children, young people and families will tell us that they've been supported early enough to prevent the problems they face worsening.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop a shared language that is used across the system to describe need.
- Improve the maturity of our systems that share data and information, which help us to identify inequalities and families and communities that require prevention or early help support.
- Have a shared focus on improving outcomes and inequalities within our communities.
- Use behavioural insights and intelligence that helps us know what digital advice and guidance needs to be promoted and made available for families to access.
- Make every contact count, where everyone is inquisitive of supporting families to achieve positive outcomes.

“An effective early help offer brings together local partners to provide good quality early support for children and families that builds their resilience, prevents difficulties from escalating and leads to better outcomes that are sustained.”

Source: Developing an effective local early help offer for children and families - Local Government Association (2019)

Priority 3: Strengthening Whole Family & Whole System working

We will be successful when: The prevention and early help system is underpinned by an integrated, skilled workforce that responds to the needs of the whole family, no matter what their professional background. With a joined-up early help approach, families are only having to tell their story once and are working with trusted professionals.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop our system response to work with families as a whole to understand their needs and develop holistic support.
- Develop a shared commissioning approach based on identified needs with a focus on outcomes.
- Secure a common approach to case management that provides the opportunity for the early help system to share information easily, allowing families to tell their story once.
- Co-ordinate system responses to families and communities who require prevention and early help support.

Priority 4: Building Collaboration & Capacity

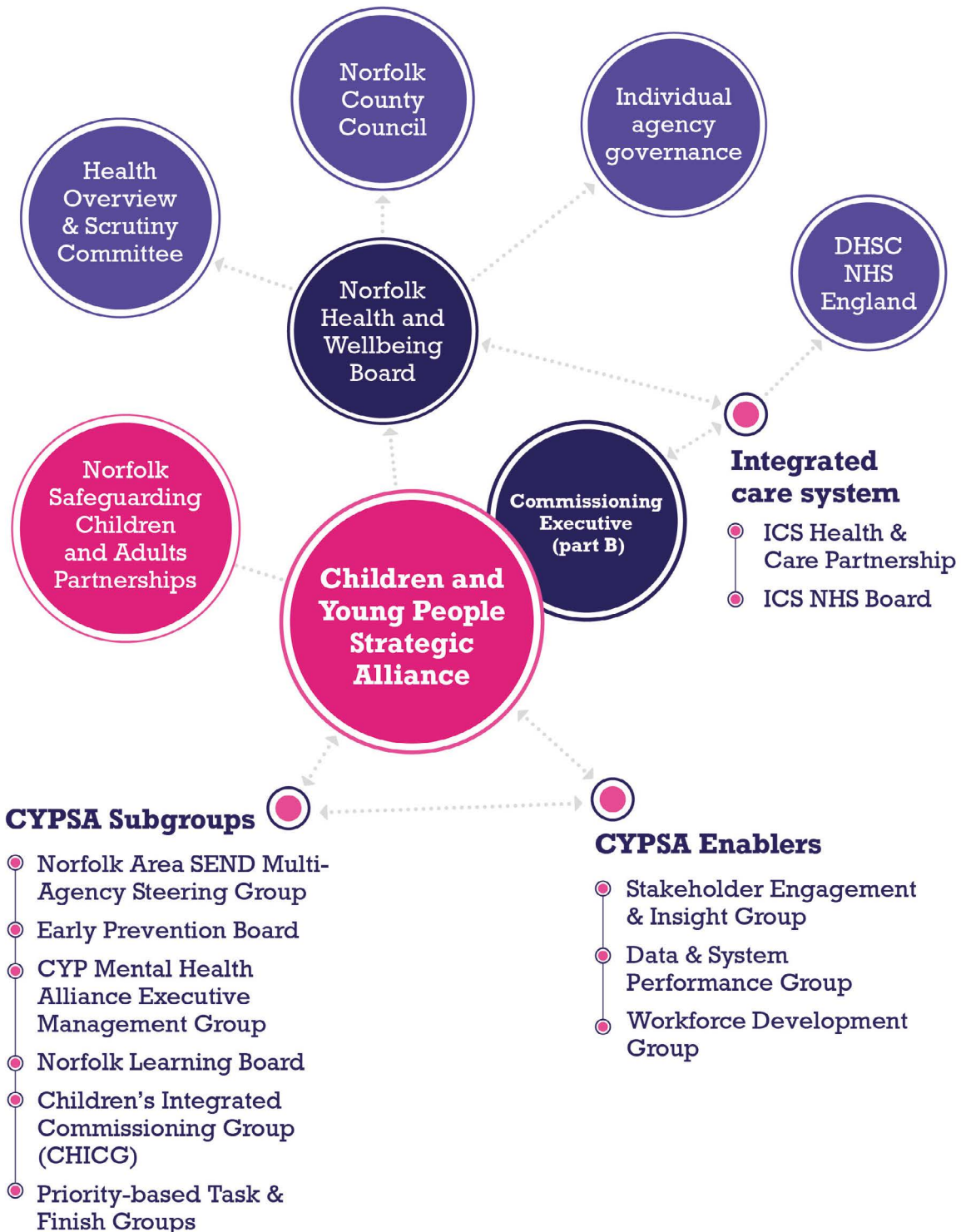
We will be successful when: The workforce across services for children, young people and families articulates a shared vision for prevention and early help. They have a shared approach to working with families and understand their role in delivering prevention and early help.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop a culture of practice where prevention and early help is everybody's responsibility.
- As a system take collective responsibility to improve outcomes for families so children can flourish.
- Build capacity through developing communities that are connected to the prevention and early help system.
- Develop integrated locality arrangements such as 'Team Around the School' approaches providing early conversation opportunities that focus on prevention and early help.

Governance

The Prevention and Early Help Board, which is a subgroup of the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, will oversee the delivery of this Prevention and Early Help Strategy. The board is composed of senior representatives from local authorities, police, health, voluntary and community sector and schools, 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.



The governance structure of the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance.

- The Alliance reports to the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board, which in turn reports into the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The work of the Alliance is also governed by individual agency governance, including that of Norfolk County Council.
- The Alliance works closely with the Integrated Care System for Norfolk and Waveney and the Norfolk Safeguarding Children and Adults Partnerships, which have their own governance structures.
- The Alliance is supported by several priority subgroups, which are the Norfolk Area SEND Multi-Agency Steering Group, the Early Prevention Board, the CYP Mental Health Alliance Executive Management Group, the Norfolk Learning Board.
- The Alliance is also supported by the Children's Integrated Commissioning Group and three enabling subgroups which are the Stakeholder Engagement and Insight Group, the Data and System Performance Group and the Workforce Development Group.

The Prevention and Early Help Board is responsible for:

- The oversight, production, publication, delivery, and review of the Prevention and Early Help Strategy.
- Supporting the continuous improvement of multi-agency early help arrangements across Norfolk.
- Reviewing and improving the quality and effectiveness of prevention and early help arrangements.
- Supporting the delivery and evaluation of the Supporting Families programme.
- Reporting on the prevention and early help agenda to the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance and Safeguarding Children's Partnership.



Our Shared Values and Principles...

We have a strong set of guiding principles that inform our approach to prevention and early help across our partnership. These are:

- Always putting **children and families** at the heart of everything we do – including how we develop and shape services
- **No child or family left behind** – we will strive for equity of outcomes for our children, young people and their families
- **Prevention and early help is everybody's responsibility** – we will not wait before problems become unmanageable before we offer help
- Focusing on early intervention and prevention, aiming to help early in the life of a problem and provide a graduated response to need – **the right help, in the right place, at the right time**
- Working restoratively, **doing things with families** instead of to them, for them or doing nothing
- **Thinking family** and working together so that children and families receive a joined-up response and good transitions
- **Focusing on strengths** within families and communities, understanding the lived experience of children
- **Staying with families** until outcomes are delivered, embedded and change is sustained
- **Being inclusive** – we want our children and young people to be able to get the help they need in the county that is their home
- **Empowering young people and families** to use the information we give them to make decisions for themselves
- **Being trauma informed** – supporting the workforce and families to manage and respond to the impact of adversity
- **We build capacity, not create dependency**, working with children, young people and families to develop skills to solve problems and create resilience
- Delivering 'Together for Norfolk' - spending the Norfolk £ on the things that get the best outcomes for **children and families to flourish**

How We'll Know We Have Made a Difference.

In addition to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families, we anticipate that, over time, adopting a whole-system approach to prevention and early help will lead to a reduction in the need for statutory services.

A number of key performance measures will be routinely monitored to track the progress and impact of our strategy.

What success will look like for children, young people and families:

- Children and young people's needs are collectively understood, action is taken to proactively address identified inequalities and needs are being identified earlier to enable the right help to be put in place before problems escalate
- Parents and carers have the help, advice and information to be able to build the skills they need to best support their children
- Children, young people, families and professionals understand their needs through the use of common language and approaches to assessment
- The proportion of children and young people attending school with 90% attendance or more has increased
- The number of parents and carers in continuous employment has increased
- The number of outcomes achieved through the Supporting Families programme has increased
- Young carers are identified and supported
- The number of early help assessments undertaken by the partnership has increased
- Increased take-up of 2-year-old early years funding entitlement
- The proportion of families receiving early help prior to entering specialist/statutory services has increased
- The number of families making progress against the goals in their early help plan has increased
- The uptake and delivery of family networking within early help practice where families develop their own solutions to presenting issues has increased

- Positive feedback from children, young people and families
- More parents/carers are being supported to address parental conflict
- There is a reduced risk of homelessness for families
- There is a reduced risk of financial exclusion for families due to unmanageable debt or ability to meet basic family needs
- The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions from education has reduced

What success will mean for organisations working with children, young people and families:

- Professionals working with children, young people and families are more confident in enabling children, young people and families to access self-help, direct help, and additional joined-up support when it is needed
- The demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has reduced where children and young people's needs can be met through early help and inclusive provision
- The demand on Children's Social Care (including family support and social work teams) has reduced
- The need for crisis mental health interventions has reduced, with children and young people's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing being supported earlier
- Unnecessary re-referrals have reduced, with needs being met at the earliest opportunity
- Planning and decision-making is based on evidence about what is important to children, young people and families
- An increased proportion of funding is spent on prevention and early help support
- Prevention and early help has a clear partnership focus and governance, including working as part of a locality operating model with district council Help & Community Hubs

