

COVENTRY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Early Help Strategy 2023–2025



Enabling children and their families to get the right help at the right time with the right people





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Foreword

From the Lead Member for Children's Services



I am pleased to present the refreshed Early Help Strategy 2023-2025 which marks the second phase of our Early Help journey. We have made excellent progress over the last three years in delivering a robust Early Help Offer, which is built around a solid foundation of the Early Help Partnership and our 8 Family Hubs.

As we move forward there will be an even stronger emphasis on building the Early Help Partnership in order to help more families earlier, and in supporting families to access the right help at the right time with the right people, to build their resilience.

We will build on the success of the Supporting Families Programme with a greater ambition to meet and support more families with earlier help for the whole family. We will also build upon our successful Family Hubs, as a trailblazer for the national Family Hub and Start for Life Programme. We are proud that Coventry leads the practice of Family Hubs, but we are ambitious to be even better and to enhance and expand the Family Hub offer (in the building, through our communities and through the virtual offer) to ensure a more comprehensive offer to all families.

The One Coventry Plan (2022-2030) prioritises improving outcomes and tackling inequalities in our communities. This Early Help strategy describes how we will collectively deliver this for our children, young

people, and their families. There is work to do to achieve our goals, this strategy sets out our ambitious plan to build and develop Early Help services within our city even further.

Our recent good Ofsted inspection shows that we have much to be proud of in Coventry. Through the delivery of this strategy partners will work together to provide a comprehensive Early Help Offer to children, young people and their families in order to achieve our collective vision.

Whilst it remains a challenging environment in public services, we continue to maximise opportunities for innovation and creativity.

I want to thank our partners, our staff and our young people who have helped to shape this strategy and all those that plan and deliver services. Your hard work is appreciated – let's make Coventry the best city in the UK for all our children, young people, and their families, to live and grow up in.

Councillor Pat Seaman
Lead Member for Children's Services

Foreword

From the Director of Children's Services



After a fantastic achievement of being judged "good" by Ofsted in 2022, we are now driven to achieve outstanding for our children. Ofsted inspectors highlighted that 'Children and families benefit from an extensive and well-developed early help offer'. This evidences how far we have come as an Early Help Partnership and is a result of the commitment of colleagues across the city to support children and families to achieve their best outcomes.

However, it is important that we continue to recognise the ongoing impact that the pandemic has had on the children and families such as missed educational opportunities, social isolation and challenges to mental health. The pandemic however demonstrated that our partnership is strong, and the children and families continued to receive the right help at the right time.

Our strategy is ambitious. It represents a commitment from all key organisations in Coventry to continue to develop an Early Help offer which puts children and their families first and strives to create a joint response to emerging needs. Our resources are used collectively to help families overcome their challenges and be the best they can be. As we begin our next journey, we will embrace the new Family Hub framework and the Start for Life programme, aimed at supporting children in the first 1001 days of their life.

This Early Help Strategy shows our commitment to ensure that Early Help in Coventry is continuously enabling good outcomes for the children, young people and their families. This strategy has been informed by the consultation activity which was undertaken by the partnership. We will continue to drive improvements to ensure children and young people receive help and support that makes a difference to their lives and allows families to be empowered.

I am committed to the Early Help Partnership and our goal of achieving good outcomes for children, young people and families. I am proud of our achievements to date and believe together we can make Coventry the best city for children, young people and their families to live, grow and work.

John Gregg
Director of Children's Services



Our Shared Commitment

All services provide an early help offer to children, young people and their families. Coventry have a responsibility to identify and assess needs, through effective conversations with children, young people and their families and planning with them to address these needs.

Early Help partners recognise that by working effectively with each other, outcomes for Coventry's children and their families can be improved further. A range of professionals from across public service organizations (statutory and VCS) have been involved in the development and completion of this strategy, and collectively we will share responsibility and accountability for its implementation.

Service	Senior officer responsible for implementation
Central England Law Centre	Emma Bates, Programme Manager
Citizen Housing	Clare Garner, Head of Allocations and Lettings
Citizens Advice Bureau	Helen Barber, Project Manager
Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust	Penny Wilson, Lead Named Nurse for Safeguarding
Coventry Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Rebekah Eaves, Business Manager
Coventry City Council / West Midlands Police	Caroline Ryder, Violence Prevention Programme Manager
Coventry City Council Adult Education Service	Judy Hallam, Senior Lead
Coventry City Council Children's Services	Chris Heeley, Strategic Lead for Help & Protection
Coventry City Council Early Years Education	Amanda King, Senior Advisor Birth – 5 years
Coventry City Council Education	Rachael Sugars, Head of Education, Improvement & Standards
Coventry City Council Employment & Skills	Glen Smailes, Business Development Manager
Coventry City Council Housing & Homelessness	Jim Crawshaw, Head of Housing & Homelessness
Coventry City Council Prevent	Viv Brosnahan, Prevent Education Officer
Coventry City Council SEND	Jeanette Essex, Head of SEND and Specialist Services
Coventry Haven	Elaine Yates, CEO
Coventry Independent Advice Service	Alan Markey, CEO
CRASAC	Jenni Muskett, Deputy CEO
Department for Work and Pensions	Amanda Williams, Supporting Families Employment Manager
Groundwork	Maddi Moon, Project Co-ordinator

Service	Senior officer responsible for implementation
Head of Libraries, Advice Health & Information Service	Peter Barnett
Integrated Care Board	Sharon Michael, Associate Chief Nurse Safeguarding
NHSE Trauma Vanguard Project	Lynette Parsons, Positive Directions Clinical Consultant Lead
P3 Housing Charity	Julie Dalton, Service Co-ordinator
Positive Choices	Sharon Bolesworth, Service Manager
Prospects	Catherine Burnham, Team Manager
Public Health	Dr Allison Duggal, Director of Public Health
Relate Coventry & Warwickshire	Susan Parkes, Service Manager
Schools (Primary, Secondary, Special) Early Help Generic Group Representatives	Louise Kelman, Stoke Heath Primary Darren Clews, Grangehurst Primary Helen Benarous, Templars Primary Pauline MacDonald, St Mary and St Benedicts Primary Isobel Rose, Mount Nod Primary Jane Frankish, Broad Heath Primary Andrew McCorville, Good Shepherd Primary Vivienne, McDonald, St Augustines, Primary Matthew Everett, Cardinal Wiseman, Secondary, Laura Morgan, Romero Academy Mark White, Corley Academy Paul Green, Lyng Hall, Secondary
South Warwickshire Foundation Trust	Charlotte Finlayson, General Manager
University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire Midwifery	Gaynor Armstrong, Director of Midwifery
Valley House	Caroline Pike, Director of Operations
West Midlands Police	Peter Henrick, Chief Superintendent
Youth Offending Service	Nicholas Jeffreys, Operational Lead

Executive Summary

The Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2025 describes how we can develop and deliver a whole system partnership offer. Coventry can collectively ensure children and their families receive the right help at the right time with the right people, to enable children the reach their full potential.

Principles and key deliverables have been collectively identified by the Early Help Partnership and form the foundation for the delivery of this whole system early help offer. This is how we will deliver the Early Help Offer together to all children, young people and their families, including the most vulnerable children who have experienced trauma in their lives.

The importance of children and their families influencing the design and delivery of the future early help offer is a key principle in the Strategy, ensuring that the voices of children are at the heart of everything we do. The Early Help Strategy defines the outcomes for children that the partnership will focus on, working together to improve children's lives and intervene at the earliest opportunity. There will be a focus on improving outcomes for children through the mobilisation of the Early Help "Doing it Together" outcome groups.

The Early Help Strategy focuses on the implementation of the national programmes that are the key drivers in the delivery of Early Help: The Family Hub and Start for Life Programme and the Supporting Families Programme. Associated annual action plans for each of these programmes will be developed and implemented by the Early Help Partnership to enable the delivery of the Early Help Strategy.

By describing key demographic data, the Early Help Strategy highlights what life is like for children and their families growing up

and living in Coventry and helps identifies the priority groups that the Strategy will support.

The Strategy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the partner agencies using the Early Help System Guide Workforce Table and aims to build on existing partnerships and develop new ones. It describes how information will be shared across agencies and the importance of the use of the shared recording platform (Early Help Module, EHM) so that families do not have to repeat their story and interventions can be provided using a joined-up approach.

Partners have collaborated in identifying the strategic priorities for the Early Help Strategic Partnership Group who, through strong governance arrangements, will oversee the delivery of a whole system early help offer. They will have a responsibility for monitor and evaluating the impact on children and their families. Services will work together to embed our understanding of what Early Help is about. This will allow the partnership to understand goals, objectives, and expectations and have a collective responsibility and ownership of the Early Help Outcomes.

Early intervention is recognised as a key principle in many other associated strategies, plans and governance arrangements across Coventry. The Early Help Strategy references the interconnectivity to help ensure a One Coventry approach is taken to support children and their families.



COVENTRY EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2023 – 2025



Our Vision

We want Coventry to be the best city in the UK for all our children, young people, and their families, to live and grow up in. We want children to be valued, feel safe, be healthy and have opportunities.

We aim to connect people together to provide the right help at the right time with the right people so that all children and families can thrive.



be & feel valued



be & feel safe



be & feel healthy



Have opportunities



Who we want to help

The Early Help Offer should support all children and families to get the help they need. We also especially want to help children and young people who:

1. are not in education or at risk of exclusion
2. may not achieve a good level of development by the end of reception
3. are physically or emotionally unwell
4. have been impacted by drug or alcohol misuse
5. may live in families with difficult relationships
6. have experienced trauma, abuse, or exploitation
7. are impacted by crime
8. have experienced the impact of domestic abuse
9. don't live in a safe or secure home that they can call their own
10. are living in poverty



What we commit to do

Family Voice and Experience – listen and act on what families tell us

Support children and families to have their say and act on what they tell us

Shift decision making from services back to families

Listen carefully and build on the strengths of families

Include people with lived experiences who can help shape delivery of the early help offer

Workforce – Develop our shared language, culture, and practice

Ensure families know how and where to access help

Increase the range of partners who act as lead practitioners for families coordinating early help assessments and plans

Develop a workforce plan to strengthen the quality of practice

Early help will be seen as everyone's responsibility

Communities – Build capacity and resilience, help earlier

Work in partnership with the voluntary, community and faith-based sector and value everyone's contribution in providing early help

Connect services to work together in the Family Hubs, in the community and by providing a virtual offer

Work with whole families to build effective teams of people who can support them

Leadership – Focus on our shared priorities

Develop an Strategic Early Help Partnership that will hold each other to account

Provide more help earlier

Establish a shared outcome framework with transparent performance measures that evidences positive impact on families' lives

Evaluate and learn what is working well and what we need to improve on

Data – Make better use of data and insights to plan and deliver better services

Use data to proactively offer early help to those that may need it

Share data so we can effectively plan, deliver, and evaluate the early help offer

All use the same case management system to record the help provided

Be innovative on how we can use data and what we know to help more families



Section 1: Experiences of children, young people and their families living in Coventry, and why they might need the help.



What is Early Help

and why it is important to children and families?

Early help, also known as early intervention, is the support given to a child, young person and their family when a problem first emerges. Help may be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth to adulthood, and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

Early help is not a service provided by one agency but is an approach that services adopt with many stakeholders working together to produce an early help offer. The Early Help Offer (system) is the network of services, processes and interactions that aim to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity.

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later and can also prevent further problems arising in the child, young person, and family's life. The help should be needs led with support and empowerment from universal and targeted services. These are designed to prevent and reduce problems from escalating whilst also helping children, young people and families move from statutory services to universal support.

Early help identifies those families that may need support and signposting to help, at any stage in a child's life when these needs cannot be met from within the family network, universal and community services alone. An enhanced single agency approach should always be considered, but at times a collaborative multi agency approach across agencies and partners will be required to prevent escalation and provide families the help that they need. Early help support should enable families to build on their strengths, promote resilience to sustain positive changes and enable them to find their own solutions in the future. Understanding a family's own support networks of family

and friends who can help and build a family's resilience will enable sustainable positive outcomes.

Early help provides place based integrated services and connecting families with their communities. Research in Practice (2022) states - 'Adopting a place-based approach with multi-agency teams or Family Hubs will tackle community issues requiring early intervention across a range of agencies and organisations. Moving beyond single service-based practice to a "whole place" approach to commissioning preventative services in response to assessments of threat, harm, risk and vulnerability"

Early help can offer children the support needed to reach their full potential. It can improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enabling them to perform better at school, support their mental health and develop skills that can prepare them for adult life. Providing timely support is vital. A quality early help offer will prevent persistent problems escalating.

Research suggests that early help can:

- Protect children from harm.
- Reduce the need for high-cost statutory services.
- Improve children's long-term outcomes.

Early help provides opportunities to make lasting and sustainable improvements to the lives of children.

Our Shared Values, we will

everything we do by utilising genuine co-production.

- Ensure that partners work together to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Recognise and share examples of good practice so that these can be replicated across the system and drive positive cultural change.
- Be innovative and brave in our practice.
- Be open and honest about barriers that may be preventing improvement so that we can collectively agree how these barriers can be overcome.
- Ensure that poor practice is challenged appropriately to lead to improvement of the early help offer.
- Ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right service, at the right time with the right people.
- Help connect children and young people to their communities for ongoing support.

Coventry in Figures

'If Coventry were 100 children'



Living and Growing up in Coventry

Population

Coventry's population is growing, changing and increasingly diverse, it is the seventh fastest growing local authority in the West Midlands region.



There were 345,300 (2021) people living in Coventry. Within the last 10 years the population has grown by 8.9% from 317,000 (2011). This is higher than both the overall increase for the West Midlands (6.2%) and for England (6.6%).

Coventry is a young city with a median age of residents of 35 years and is falling over time, this is notably lower than the England median of 40 years. An estimated 68,300 children under the age of 16 live in Coventry, which makes up 19.5% of the population.

The city's population has grown particularly amongst younger adults with the success of the city's two universities in attracting students locally and internationally. Birth rates have been decreasing by 9% in Coventry for the last 10 years however the number of children aged 5-14 living in Coventry has increased by 22% notably over the last 10 years.

Whilst there is a natural growth in Coventry's population, with more births than deaths each year, migration now accounts for a larger portion of the city's expansion.

The largest movements of people are from and to other parts of the UK, with students attending the two major universities in the city contributing to this. Coventry welcomes many new residents from other parts of the world and international migration is a key factor in population growth. More people have moved to Coventry from overseas annually in the last 10 years (less so in the last 2 or 3) than those who move from Coventry abroad.



Ethnic Diversity

Coventry is an ethnically diverse city, with around one-third (34.5%) of the population from minority ethnic groups, compared to 20% for England with just under half of its school-aged population from an ethnic minority background in 2021, up from around one-third in 2011.

The largest minority ethnic group are Asian/Asian British communities, making up 16.3% of the city's population, including 8.8% with an Indian background. The next largest minority group are people with a White Other background, who make up 7.2% of the population. Coventry's population with a Black African background has grown to 4%, which is now more than double the English average (1.8%). The largest numbers of new communities are from Polish, Nigerian, Somali, Cameroonian, Chinese and Roma communities. The number of residents born outside of the UK has increased, highlighting the increasing diversity of the city.

Coventry is proud to be a city of sanctuary to many asylum seekers and refugees, including those from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria and British Nationals from Hong Kong.

Languages spoken

Coventry has increasing diversity of languages spoken.

In 2021, 82.5% of Coventry's residents had English as a main language, compared to 86.1% in 2011. The school Census (Spring 2023) data shows that 68.4% of all children are learning English as an additional language (across all phases) Within Coventry, Polish (2.3%), Panjabi (2.3%) and Romanian (2.1%) are the three most spoken languages after English.

Impact of COVID 19

The impact of COVID 19 on children, young people and families is significant, varied and still emerging. School closures, social distancing and lockdown measures have had a long-term effect on children and young people's emotional well-being and lived experiences.

During the pandemic the Family Hubs adapted the environments to continue to provide services to children, young people and their families in safe spaces. The legacy of this continues and will be built upon as the National Family Hub Framework and Start for Life offer is expanded.

Although it was a difficult period for so many, there were positive consequences of the pandemic to be built upon:

- Increase in collaboration across the Early Help Partnership.
- More flexible approach to delivering help and support, in more agile and innovative ways.
- Enhancing digital skills and digital platforms to offer "virtual" help.
- Use of technology in order that the family received the support they need.



Health Inequalities

Inequalities in health arise out of inequalities in society. These inequalities are not inevitable.

Reducing inequality in society has shown to lead to improvements in a person's wellbeing, mental health, community and social relations, reduced levels of violence and better educational attainment. As a Marmot City, Coventry is working to address the causes of inequalities by resourcing and delivering universal services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degrees of need. This Early Help Strategy is therefore one of the key enablers in the delivery of the One Coventry plan and the key strategic priority of improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities.

Children are getting a good education

In Coventry, uptake of funded early years childcare for all children aged two, three and four has increased.

The 2-year-old up take has increased to 74.8% in 2022, compared to 72% nationally and 67% regionally. Similarly, the 3- & 4-year-old take up increased from 86% to 88% but was still below national at 92% and regional 93% averages.

Quality of teaching and learning in schools has rapidly improved in the city, with 89% of primary and 86% of secondary students now attending a school rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

In 2022, the higher performing children in key stage 4 for Maths and English include pupils from Chinese backgrounds, followed by pupils from Asian backgrounds. The pupils doing less well in key stage 4 are Black Caribbean ethnic backgrounds. Key Stage 2 highest performing pupils for Maths and English are Asian pupils followed by black and white pupils. Pupils who have an Education Health and Care Plan or those receiving free school meals are still the least performing children at school.

93% of school leavers aged 16 achieve a sustained destination and only 3.9% of Coventry 16–17-year olds are Not in Education, Education or Training (NEET), which is an improvement on the last four years' performance, and remains below national and West Midlands figures.

Employment is improving

The number of Coventry residents in employment has been increasing strongly for last few years. In 2022 there were 80% of people in paid work.

The balance between male and female is reasonably equitable with 94,400 males and 86,300 females. However there remains a gender gap in pay with males receiving £100 a week on average more than females.

Coventry has made significant progress in becoming a higher-skilled city in the last 5 years. Coventry has driven down the numbers of residents with no qualifications by 14,700. We have achieved a substantial increase in the numbers of residents qualified at NVQ2 with 43,700 more residents qualified to NVQ2 or above. We have also made significant progress in becoming a more highly skilled city with 37,000 more residents qualified to NVQ3 or above.



Children living in poverty and deprivation

The percentage of Coventry neighbourhoods that are amongst the 10% most deprived in England reduced from 18.5% to 14.4% between 2015 and 2019.

Based on this measure, Coventry ranked 64th nationally in 2019 (with 1st being the most deprived), an improvement in ranking from 46th in 2015. However living in these areas of significant deprivation limit resident's opportunities to succeed in life; transforming life chances require us to address the social inequalities that are established from children's earliest years. The latest available data, for 2020/21, suggest that 23% of Coventry children aged 0-15 live in relative low-income families compared to 19% nationally. Following COVID-19 pandemic the economic outlook for the city remains challenging and uncertain. While spending and other economic activity rapidly bounced back in 2021-22, employment has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Additionally, rapid inflation in 2022 threatens the city's recovery, with rapidly increasing energy prices and cost-of-living impacting the finances of households and businesses.

Cost of Living

Across Coventry, more and more people are feeling the pressure from the increasing cost of living. Many families are living in homes that do not meet modern efficiency standards, meaning that too many Coventry residents live in damp, poorly insulated homes, and are paying too much to stay warm.

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, it is expected that the proportion of households paying more than 10% of their household income to stay warm will increase from around 24% in summer 2022 to an estimated 62% by winter 2022; with around 12% of households in the city spending one-quarter of their household income to stay warm. This will disproportionately affect the most deprived families in Coventry. Without state intervention, this is expected to plunge many more households and families, including some previously well-off households, into abject poverty, with associated negative impacts on health and wellbeing, and associated increases in crime and violence. The role of advice services in the early help offer is therefore core to the response in helping families mitigate the impact of the cost of living, both by helping families to maximise their income, reduce costs and receive practical help and support.

Some children are not getting the best start in life

Infant mortality rates in Coventry are higher compared to England but similar the regional rate.

The infant mortality rate in Coventry is 5.7 per 1,000. This is similar to the rest of the West Midlands (5.6) however more than for England (3.9). This is partly due to a relatively high number of premature babies born in Coventry leading to a higher number of babies born at low weight.

Inequalities in reaching a good level of development within Coventry have already established themselves by the age of 5.

Whilst 61% of the city's five-year-olds achieve a good level of development at age 5, this is 4% lower than the national average. Not only do fewer of the city's children achieve a good level of development than the national average, but the most disadvantaged five-year olds in Coventry are also further behind. Amongst disadvantaged children, 46.3% achieve a good level of development, compared to 63.4% for non-disadvantaged children, a 17-percentage point gap.



Children and young people's mental and physical health

The need to highlight the importance of addressing mental health and resilience of individuals is particularly important due to the influences and impact that COVID 19 has had on children and young people.

All services need to help change peoples' perceptions of mental health and help to make sure that children are treated early, supported by the relevant services, recover well, and get back on their feet – exactly in the same way in which they would if they were presenting as physically unwell. The partnership must provide the community support in helping children to be able to be equipped to continue with their lives with reduced barriers and easy access to services. Fundamentally, good mental health is good for our children and young people, the society in which they live and in the future economy of Coventry.

Children experiencing abuse and exploitation

There are higher number of families with complex needs that meet the criteria for the Government's Supporting Families programme in Coventry than our statistical neighbours.

The 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse are significant issues for Coventry parents, which impacts on their children. Some families have deeply entrenched multi-generational problems. Some families encounter problems that put their children at risk outside of their families, such as child sexual exploitation or gang influences. Therefore contextual safeguarding is a priority for Coventry. The aim is therefore to intervene earlier and redirect resources from high cost, high intervention services to prevention and early intervention support and services.

Children who may have experienced harm from substance or alcohol misuse

In March 2020, the prevalence of any drug use in the last year was highest amongst 16- to 19-year-olds and 20- to 24-year-olds (21.1% and 21%, respectively).

In Coventry, there is a disproportionate amount of harm caused by alcohol use. Alcohol-related mortality and hospital admission rates are higher than the national average. Despite a decrease in admissions between 2020-21 and 2019-20, alcohol-related hospital admission rates are still high among males and females. Parental problem drug use can cause serious harm to children at every age, from conception to adulthood. Within Coventry, there were 327 parents in treatment out of a projected number of 3780 (9%). Analysis of hidden harm showed opportunities to develop the Early Help response in Coventry.

There has been a significant decrease in the number of young people in treatment. There has been a drive from services to provide earlier preventative interventions.



Children affected or involved in crime

The crime rate in Coventry is 12,043 incidents per 100,000 population (ONS, 2022). In the year ending July 2022, there were 41,347 incidents of crime, a 7,250 increase in incidents when compared to the previous year.

In 2021/22, Children Youth Justice Service was aware of 118 offences which resulted with a substantive disposal (i.e., one that forms part of a person's criminal record) and 136 non-substantive. The most common categories that resulted in non-substantive outcomes were: Violence Against the Person (46%), Criminal Damage (16%) and Drugs (11%); and, by a substantive outcome were Violence Against the Person (32%), Robbery (14%) and Domestic Burglary (13%). Comparing to previous years (2017-2022) all proven offence groups have reduced largely in line with reductions overall with notable exception of motoring offences that has reduced by 90% and knife/weapon offences that have increased from 25 to 32 overall proven offences. Different ways of recording may give an appearance of a rise in crime however this does not necessary reflect that more children are involved in crime. The number of reoffences in Coventry is 2.64 on average, versus 3.58 for the Family Group; showing for children or young people who do reoffend commit fewer offences. The number of presenting at A&E due to them being a victim of crime has reduced however admissions for 'fist used' as a weapon' saw a spike in Sept/Oct 2022 believed to be as a result of an increase number of assaults taking place within schools resulting in injuries which required an X-ray.

Children impacted by domestic abuse

There has been an increase in domestic abuse incidents in Coventry. There was a total of 9,280 domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police during 2020. This is a 33% increase on the previous highest number over the period which was 7,000 during 2019.

There has been an increase in referrals to Muti Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in 12 months to June 2021. The 613 referrals in the 12 months to June 2021 is the highest in any 12-month period. There has been a 69% increase over the past 5 years. This is similar to the West Midlands. 45% of the referrals to MARAC in the 12 months to June 2021 were repeat cases. This is slightly higher than the previous 2 years.

Children not living in their own home

There are increasing number of families at risk of/experiencing homelessness and may be living in temporary accommodation.

There has been an increase in households seeking support from the Housing & Homelessness Service in Coventry. Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 to March 2023 there were over 11,000 households who were owed Prevention or Relief duties from the service as they were assessed as either homeless or threatened with homelessness. In March 2023 there were over 500 families in temporary accommodation provided by the council. The most common reasons for families losing settled accommodation include the end of a private rented tenancy, being asked to leave by family members, or fleeing domestic violence. Coventry Homefinder has over 7,000 applicants live and able to bid on the register (as at March 2023) who have all been assessed as having a housing need. 13.5% of live applications have been assessed in the most urgent housing need category, including those who have been assessed as statutory homeless and those who are severely overcrowded. The 2021 census shows that 24.7% of properties in Coventry are Private Rented (increase from 20.6% in 2011) and 17% of properties are Social Rented (no % change from 2011).



Section 2: The Strategy – how we will help more families earlier



Coventry's Vision for Children, Young People and their Families

Child Friendly Cov: Coventry is a child and young person friendly city – a place where children and young people feel valued, supported and enjoy themselves.

The aspiration of Coventry to be the best place in the UK for children and young people to live and grow up is a holistic view across the partnership. To achieve this we must reach children, young people and families when their needs first emerge and intervene when services have the most impact.

Early Help services can make a real difference to a child's life from providing opportunities to give every child the best start in life, and enabling all children, young people, and parents to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives. Early Help services must work collaboratively to ensure that every child, young person and family have relevant support and interventions delivered at the right time, in the right place, by the most appropriate professional and service. Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood and adolescent years, to grow up to be responsible citizens, contributing to the city, and develop independent skills which allows them to be fulfilled and resilient adults. Children and young people are important to the city now and in the future.

Embedding Coventry Family Valued Approach in Practice

Coventry Family Valued is our way of working with children and families. Empowering families to find their own solutions and make changes in their lives

At the heart of Coventry Family Values is how we work with families through relationship-based practice, doing with, not to. There is a desire to empower and enable families to find solutions, to build their own networks and for families to make changes, build resilience and most of all to remain together. In Coventry we believe that families are the experts into their own lives, and we want to embrace this and create change; by supporting families to take the lead in their plans, in their support package and in decision making. We want to build relationships with families and partners whilst using approaches in practice that are respectful, non-discriminatory, unbiased and non-judgmental. We can use Family Group conferencing and family network meetings as part of the Early offer.

The Voice of Children and Families

It is important that the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the early help offer are co-designed by children, young people and their families. Being included in these processes helps to ensure that services understand and support the needs of local communities and adapt responsively to emerging themes.

Child Friendly Cov

Child Friendly Cov is a campaign to make Coventry a child and young person friendly city, ensuring that Coventry is a place where children and young people are valued, supported, and enjoy themselves.

Together, with children and young people, the following themes have been identified as priorities for how to make Coventry a child friendly city:



Children and young people in Coventry should always:

Be and feel valued

- Children and young people have opportunities to share their views, feel like their voices are heard, and participate in decisions that impact them.
- Children and young people have all basic rights met to prevent poverty, discrimination, and injustice.
- When decisions are made which impact children and young people, organisations will ensure that these decisions are clearly explained and made accessible to read/watch.

Have opportunities

- Children and young people are aware of and have access to training, employment and apprenticeships.
- Children and young people and their families are aware of the activities taking place.
- Children and young people have access to spaces and resources to enable them to learn, have fun and be inspired.

Be and feel safe

- Children and young people feel safe when walking and travelling around the city.
- Children and young people are aware of the potential dangers when using the internet and know how, when and where to report these issues
- Children and young people have access to and can enjoy child friendly spaces within the city

Be and feel healthy

- Children and young people know how to access mental health and well-being support and services.
- People in Coventry have the means and the knowledge to take care of their physical health.
- Everyone contributes towards making Coventry a more environmentally friendly city and reducing the impact of climate change.

Children and young people who have received services have said they want:

- Practitioners that are trauma informed and understand our story.
- Practitioners to take time to get to know us and what we like and what we are good at.
- Practitioners that are relatable.
- Practitioners and resources that are accessible and that connect us back with our community.
- Don't label us as bad.
- Don't diagnose us as mad.

How will the Voices of Children and Families continue to influence the design and delivery of services?

As part of the One Coventry Plan, a series of engagement activities with children and young people and their families will take place.

A range of methods will be used to collect feedback from children, young people and their families, including the youth inspector programme.

Parent Carer Panels

As part of the national expectations within the Family Hub and Start for Life programme, Coventry will establish a city-wide Parent and carer panel which will drive the work of co-design of integrated services. The parent/ carer panels will provide opportunities to gather the views and perspectives of local families and to harness the assets, skills and experiences of parents, carers and other residents in the co-design and co-delivery of early help offer.

Family Feedback, including that of young people, is collected from every family that is supported through an early help assessment and an early help plan. Users of the Family Hub are also surveyed annually regarding satisfaction of the service they received and how this can be improved.



Embedding a shared language across the Partnership

It is essential that communication between partners is transparent and clear. This includes having a shared vocabulary so that every member of the partnership understands what the other is saying and what they are referring to. Having a shared language allows teams and agencies to understand and agree common goals, objectives, and expectations. It is then possible to create trusting relationships and understanding by embedding language that's unified, consistent, clear, and supportive and avoids assumptions or misinterpretations.

Within early help there are many terms and phrases used to describe practice, processes, and systems. These terms will be used consistently in this Strategy and within the partnership when describing the following:

- **Early Help:** is taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth to adulthood, and it applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own. This will include those who have experienced trauma and adversity or be from a single or cumulative event/s.
- **Early Help Offer (System):** is a network of services, processes and interactions that aim to empower and assist children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity.

- **Early Help Module (EHM):** is a recording system available to the Early Help Partnership to record the Early Help practice undertaken with children, young people and their families in Coventry. The system is hosted by Coventry City Council but can be used by any agency that works directly with children, young people and families. Having a shared system is recognised as being the most effective way to share information securely and avoid agencies working in isolation.
- **Universal, Targeted, Specialist** are services that are available to families that have different levels of needs. Families may need to access one, two or all three types of services at any one time. Universal services are those available and accessed by all families, targeted services are developed and aimed at children, young people and families with specific needs, and specialist services are those delivered by practitioners with specialist knowledge and expertise which only some families may need, or at specific times.

Importance of Partnership working

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2022) statutory guidance emphasises the crucial role of effective early help. This has a focus on the collective responsibility of all agencies to identify, assess and provide effective early help services. The early help offer 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.

Partnership working is at the heart of Coventry's Early Help Offer. By ensuring an effective partnership approach, leaders and practitioners will work together to focus on improving outcomes for children and families. The early help offer available to children and their families is made up of different types of services that collaborate to form the local early help offer which includes universal services, community support and targeted and specialist services.

When partners work together to deliver an early help offer:

- Families receive the right help at the right time.
- Families tell their story once.
- Individual family members needs are not seen in isolation (whole family approach).
- Resources are maximized and shared.
- Families receive support without delay.
- Duplication is reduced and needs are met.
- Data and insights are shared.
- Partners learn from one another and help one another.
- Families' needs are met and the need for statutory services is reduced.



How the Early Help Partnership will work together

Learning how partners can work together is integral to achieving the best possible outcome for the child, young people and their families.

Early help is recognised as being important across a range of multiagency strategies and plans. Opportunities for partnership working will be maximised and enhanced through a variety of strategic and operational means including the Early Help Strategic Partnership (Subgroup of the CSCP), the multiagency “Doing it Together” Early Help Outcomes Groups, the Team Around the Family Approach, Family Hubs and the Parenting and Relationships Strategy.

Early Help Strategic Partnership (Subgroup of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership CSCP)

The Early Help Strategic Partnership (EHSP) has the accountability for the whole family system approach of the early help offer, working across all agencies that support children, young people and their families in Coventry. It will have a strategic oversight of the delivery of the Family Hub & Start for Life programme and the Supporting Families programme in Coventry. By operating as the effective data governance board, it will provide accountability for the use of data and ensure progress is made regarding the integrated data transformation required within the early help offer. The EHSP is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of this strategy and will ensure

that the strategic and operational priorities are shared, understood and implemented. It will provide a governance and leadership forum in which agencies encourage and challenge each other to deliver positive outcomes for the children, young people and families in Coventry.

“Doing it Together” Early Help Outcome Groups

There are 10 Doing it Together Outcome Groups; one for each of the Early Help Outcomes. These groups will provide opportunities for integrated strategic and operational discussion. These are focused on early help outcomes delivered through a shared action plan, measuring progress and impact using a set of key performance indicators. This approach will ensure that local services are joined-up, flexible, responsive to new challenges and sustainable for the long term; allowing them to work together to understand local trends, predict emerging need in their local area, and identify and respond to those needing extra help.

Team Around the Family approach

Teams around families (TAFs) are groups of practitioners, volunteers, community members and family and friends who work alongside the family to improve outcomes as part of an Early Help plan. They are led by a Lead Practitioner; all members are active participants and their contribution is equally valued. The team will demonstrate good communication and co-ordination based on the family’s plan and this should be reflected in the family’s feedback on the support provided.

This approach may also be supported using the Family Group conferencing approach or convening family network meetings.

Improved Family Relationships

There is a wide and varied parenting offer delivered across the partnership, delivering a Parenting Strategy and overseen by the Parenting Strategic Group. The Local Authority provides evidenced based formal structured parenting programs in addition to a universal online resource offer that is accessible to all parents who require support, advice and guidance.

Coventry continues to further embed the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme at both a strategic and operational practice level. We continue to build on the practice of working in a whole family approach, particularly focusing on the engagement of fathers and male carers, as we have identified that they have been under-represented in assessments, plans and interventions

Aligning the workforce development and practice strands of the RPC program enables the provision of the right help and support to families who face multiple and complex needs and may require support to develop positive and supportive relationships within the family, to provide strategies to deal with conflict in a healthy way and build family resilience. Changes are sustained and as a result do not escalate to meet a domestic abuse threshold. Families should be able to access this help and support from a range of partners they meet.



Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

Coventry opened 8 Family Hubs in 2018, and since that time the Family Hubs have been supporting children, young people and families. The space and buildings remain at the heart of the Coventry Early Help offer with further aspiration and opportunities to enhance and expand the Family Hub offer.

The maturity of the Family Hub offer in Coventry is fundamental in delivering the improvements and the change needed to deliver the Early Help Strategy. Coventry has pioneered the Family Hub approach and will now align the offer to the National Family Hub and Start for Life Programme 2022-2025 as well as acting as a trailblazer for other Local Authorities. There will be an associated Early Help Partnership Family Hub Offer delivery plan which will ensure the continued implementation of this programme.

A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services. Family Hubs deliver these services to families from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities). The Coventry Family Hub model provides a universal 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive Start for Life offer for parents and babies at its core. This is the universal offer for all families in the first 1001 days which brings together critical services for every new family:

- Midwifery.
- Health visiting.
- Perinatal mental health support.
- Infant feeding advice with specialist breastfeeding support.
- Services related to special educational needs and disabilities
- Safeguarding.

The Family Hub offer includes services delivered from a building, support delivered in communities, and virtual and digital help and resources.

Three key delivery principles underpin the Family Hub offer:

- 1. Access:** there is a clear and simple way for families with children of all ages to access help and support through a Family Hub building and a Family Hub approach.
- 2. Connections:** Services work together for families, with a universal 'front door', shared outcomes and effective governance.
 - Professionals work together through co-location, data-sharing and a common approach to their work. Families should only have to tell their story once, the services are more efficient, and families receive more effective support.
 - Statutory services and voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners work together to get families the help they need.
- 3. Relationships**
 - The Family Hub prioritises strengthening relationships and builds on family strengths.
 - Relationships are at the heart of everything that is delivered in Family Hubs.

Each Family Hub provides a core offer to all children, young people and their families as well as bespoke tailored services to the local community it served, based on robust data and insights.

Our Family Hubs aim to provide family support services early, when families need them and enable access to universal and targeted services, (Right Help Right Time level 1 & 2) and enable access to the intensive support of the Supporting Families team (Right Help Right Time level 3) when required.

Supporting Families Programme

The new Supporting Families Programme was launched in March 2021 and builds on the previous Troubled Families programme.

As set out in 'Supporting Families 2021 to 2022 and beyond', it is a nationally funded government programme which requires Coventry to co-ordinate early help support and track the impact with families with multiple identified needs. Early help should be delivered through a 'whole family approach' with a range of partners working together with the family to prevent needs escalating, helping to bring about sustainable changes and reduce the demand of services.

The approach must include an assessment of need which considers all family members, followed by a coordinated family plan, led by an identified lead practitioner from one of the members of the team around the family. Families who have at least three identified needs within the 10 Family Outcomes Framework (see figure A) should receive intensive and individualised multiagency early help.

Each year Central Government provides Coventry with a target on the number of families they should offer support to. By achieving sustainable outcomes with the family a payment by Results Claim can be made. This is reinvested into the early help offer and secures ongoing national investment to provide intensive family support and increase the maturity of the early help offer. There will be an associated with the Early Help Partnership Supporting Families delivery plan which will ensure the continued implementation of this programme.

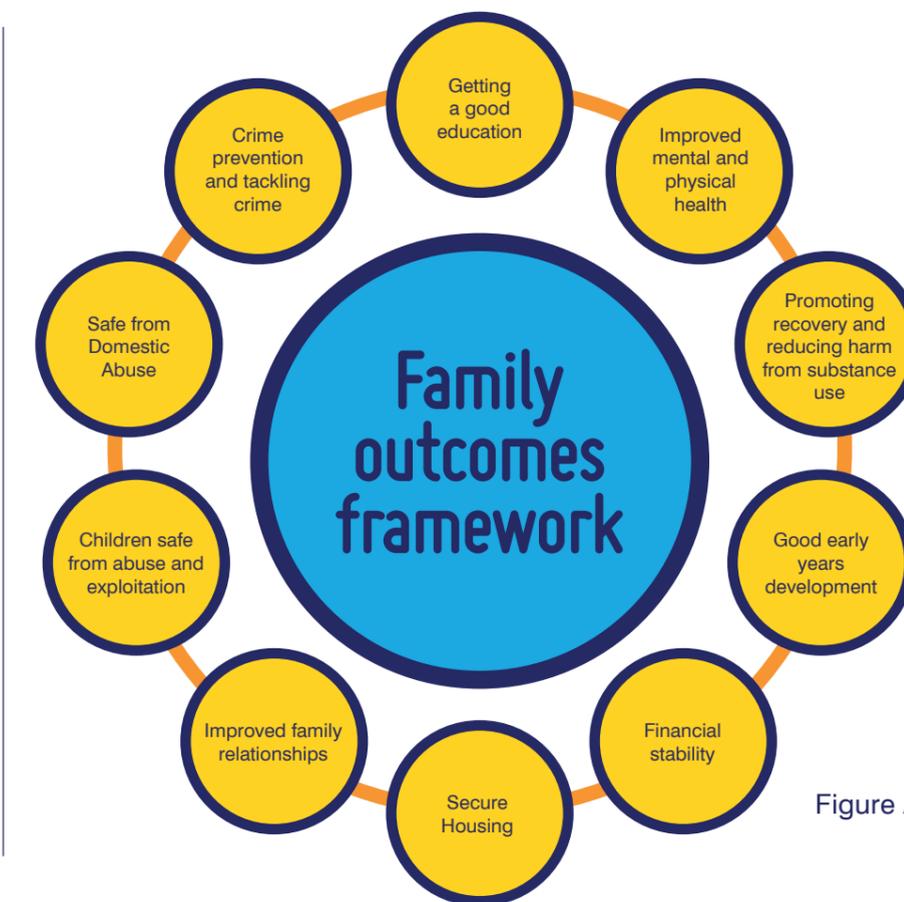


Figure A

Shared Early Help principles

The following principles will guide the way in which the Early Help Strategic Partnership endeavours to work together, we will;

- Capture the experience, wellbeing and voice of children, young people and their families to ensure that children and families are at the heart of everything we do.
- Take a whole family approach that recognises the uniqueness and diversity of each family.
- Work with families to support positive involvement that includes extended family and community networks.
- Work with families to identify needs at the earliest opportunity to ensure a plan of support is established that meets the individual need of a child and their family.
- Apply the Right Help Right Time guidance to ensure the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Regularly review the difference we are making to the lived experiences of children, young people and their families.
- Involve children, young people and their families in shaping, designing and delivering support and services and will ensure that feedback to families is provided as part of the “you said, we listened” approach.
- Work together as a partnership to ensure that children and families in Coventry receive the best possible support and intervention that builds a team around a family that supports manageable long-term change and enables families to thrive.

Membership of Coventry’s Early Help Partnership

The Early Help Partnership brings together a range of organisations to work alongside one another to support children and families across the city.

Any organisation, service or team which is committed to supporting children, young people and their families can be included in the partnership. The partnership is underpinned by its shared vision and its collective aspirations to improve outcomes for children and families. The graphic below depicts the breadth of services that make up an effective Early Help Partnership, across statutory and commissioned services and voluntary, community and faith-based organizations. Opportunities for partners to work in collaboration to deliver the Early Help Strategy is through connecting with the 10 “Doing it Together” Early Help Outcome Groups.

There are also several partners and collaborators such as Public Health and Advice Services who act as strategic systems support and/or connectors, who may not work in a frontline capacity but play a critical role in making the Early Help system work.



Early Help Multi-Agency Workforce

A strong Early Help System is made up of many different types of practitioners and services who operate together to provide a coherent and coordinated offer.

This table defines the likely role of different types of practitioners in the Early Help System when contributing to that early help offer. As part of

the implementation of the Strategy and the early help system guide, a Workforce Development plan will be created to support practitioners in the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver the aspects of the workforce table below:

Role in delivering Early Help and whole family working	What does this look like?	Expectations	Who is likely to be in this group?
Frequent and Modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These practitioners support families with multiple needs and act as Lead Practitioner for most families they meet. They provide whole family, sometimes intensive, support for families often in their home, being proactive to reach out to families where needed. They are experts in processes to support families with multiple needs and help families, other professionals, commissioned organisations, and voluntary and community groups to understand those needs, advocating where necessary. These practitioners may support others with undertaking the lead practitioner role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a lead practitioner for a family and convene the team around the family. Identify children in need of early help. Undertake Early Help assessments. Develop Early Help plans. Record on EHM, evidence early help and successful outcomes. Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Social Workers. Supporting Families Practitioners. Family Nurses Practitioners. Pastoral Leads/ Learning Mentors in Education Settings.

Role in delivering Early Help and whole family working	What does this look like?	Expectations	Who is likely to be in this group?
Regular and Promoting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These practitioners are often the first to identify a family's need for help or support, are able to assess the needs of all members of the family, and form the core of a team around the family (TAFs). They connect families with support in their community. They are well versed in processes to support families with multiple needs and help families to understand them. They may be the Lead Practitioner to start the Early Help process and regularly retain this role if they are the most appropriate person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. Identify children in need of early help. Initiate early help assessments. Deliver single agency early help and record as a key agency on EHM. Make an early help request if more support is required. Be part of the Team around the family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Hub practitioners. Health visitors. School nurses. Safeguarding leads and SENCOs, in education settings. Early years settings including nurseries – nursery SENCOs and designated safeguarding leads. Community children's nurses. Family Hub and School Police Community Support Officers.

Role in delivering Early Help and whole family working	What does this look like?	Expectations	Who is likely to be in this group?
Sometimes and Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These practitioners bring specialist expertise and therefore need to be part of a team around the family when required / involved. They connect families with support in their community but also know how to start the process to bring wider support around a family where there are several needs. They may act as the Lead Practitioner if they are the most appropriate person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be part of a team around the family and update the Lead Practitioner on progress towards identified actions. Communicate confidently the Early Help offer to children and families. Identify children in need of early help. Make an early help request if more support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing / tenancy officers and homelessness advisors. Young people's substance misuse services. Adult substance misuse workers. Child and adolescent / primary mental health workers. Midwives. Youth Justice Team. Neighbourhood police officers. Supporting families employment advisers. SEND practitioners. Attendance and Inclusion Officers. Members of the youth partnership. Allied health professionals. Debt/finance and legal advice services. Prevent Service. Specialist domestic and sexual abuse services. Family relationship and advisory service.

Grouping – Early Help and whole family working	What does this look like	Expectations	Who is likely to be in this group?
<p>Occasional and Aware/ Connected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These practitioners or volunteers understand they are part of a system of support which ‘helps’ people. • They know how to ask questions to explore the wider needs families may have. • They know how to connect to other support for families. • These practitioners bring specialist expertise and need to be part of a team around the family when required / involved They don’t usually act as a Lead Practitioner unless this is in the family’s best interests. • They are active users of the local on-line directory of services to identify the right help for a family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate confidently the Early Help Offer to Children and Families. • Identify children in need of early help. • Make an early help request if more support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation officers. • Adult mental health workers. • Adult social workers. • Faith community leaders. • Work coaches. • GPs, practice nurses and safeguarding leads. • Library staff. • Social prescribers. • Positive Parenting Team. • Uniformed services. • Family Learning/ Adult Education. • A&E staff. • Community Initiative to Reduce Violence Navigators (CIRV). • Voluntary and Community sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Club leaders - School club providers - Sports coaches - Community staff and volunteers - Stay and Play leaders - Foodbank Teams - Social supermarkets

Our Strategic Priorities

Early Help services will collaborate to deliver on the Supporting Families Outcomes and the Family Hub and the Start for Life Programme, and through partnership working together we will:

- Identify earlier children, young people, and their families that require intensive help and support.
- Increase the number of families who receive whole family support leading to better outcomes for children, and evidenced by successful Supporting Families claims.
- Identify the most appropriate service for a family, to be the Lead Practitioner for families in undertaking Early Help assessments and plans that meets the needs of individual families.
- Develop a shared outcomes framework to evidence the difference made for children and families.
- Support children and families to have their say and learn from what they are telling us about how services can be improved.
- Establish and progress actions linked to the 10 “Doing it together” outcomes groups.
- Build on multi-agency partnerships and work together with Family Hubs and other community venues to extend the offer of support to families at a local level.
- Develop a comprehensive virtual offer where families can access advice, support, information and help digitally.
- Meet the expectations of the National Family Hub and Start for Life and Supporting Families Programmes.

- Further embed a trauma informed approach to practice across the whole Early Help system.
- Adopt “Child Friendly Cov” principles across all services who support children and young people.
- Reduce health inequalities for children and young people in Coventry.



Early Help Outcomes

The collective endeavours of services working together in the Early Help Partnership, including the Family Hubs, will deliver against the following shared Early Help outcomes.

1. **Getting a good education** - I have access to a good education.
2. **Good Early Years development** - I have good early years development and the best start in life.
3. **Improved mental and physical health** - My family are healthy and emotionally well.
4. **Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance misuse** - I am safe from the impact of substance misuse.
5. **Improved family relationships** - My family are thriving, and our relationships are positive.
6. **Children safe from abuse and exploitation** - I am safe and protected from abuse and exploitation.
7. **Crime prevention and tackling crime** - I am safe and protected from the impact of crime.
8. **Safe from domestic abuse** - My family are safe from the impact of domestic abuse.
9. **Secure housing** - I live in secure and suitable housing.
10. **Financial stability** - My family are financially resilient.

The delivery and progress of these outcomes will be mobilized through the ten 'Doing it Together Early Help Outcome Groups'. Each group will be made up of several organisations that will work together to deliver on a shared action plan, which will be underpinned by a set of key performance indicators that are reported quarterly to the Early Help Strategic Partnership. The responsibility of monitoring these groups will be with the Early Help Strategic Partnership who will report to the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership and will help to resolve any issues that affect their progress. The governance structure can be seen in the diagram opposite:



Governance structure

Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Early Help Strategic Partnership (Sub-Group)

Doing It Together Outcome Groups



Who we want to help the most – the priority groups

Coventry's Early Help Strategy aims to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families by ensuring they receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, certain groups of children and young people have been identified as especially vulnerable, including those that have complex and multiple needs as identified by the Supporting Families Programme, and should receive focused support from the Early Help offer.

Through the 'Doing it together outcomes groups', the partnership will focus on the needs of children and families associated to each of the 10 Early Help Outcomes. The 'Doing it together outcome groups will also determine the cohorts of children and young people with unmet needs to target intervention, including:

- Children who are not in education and those at risk of exclusion.
- Children who are not accessing their early years entitlement and may not achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Year Foundation Stage.
- Children who require intervention to support their physical and emotional health and well being.
- Children who have been impacted by substance or alcohol misuse.
- Children who have been impacted by negative family relationships.
- Children who have experienced abuse and exploitation including sexual abuse.
- Children who are impacted by crime and antisocial behaviour, particularly black and mixed heritage young men who are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

- Children who have experienced and been impacted by domestic abuse.
- Children who are not living in secure housing or temporary accommodation.
- Children who live in poverty.



How will we know when we have achieved the desired aspirations?

The overall aim is to develop a cohesive early help offer embedded within a whole family approach that builds protective factors and family resilience, enabling and empowering families to help themselves, and one another.

The Early Help Partnership will also undertake an annual self-evaluation using the Early Help System Guide. This Early Help Systems Guide includes five work strands which enable the progress from a "Developing" to a "Maturing" and finally a "Mature" partnership. An annual self-evaluation of the Early Help System is completed against the following and this is submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and reviewed across government departments as an indicator of our collective progress to transform and mature the Early Help offer. The following statements describe what this will look like when this has been achieved:

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, 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, where early help is seen as everyone's responsibility.
2. Public services work together in place-based or hub-based environment, where partners are integrated virtually or physically.
3. We invest in our workforce with a workforce development plan. This is 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, the 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, 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.



Section 3: Shared tools and methods for our partnership approach



Providing the Right Help at the Right Time (RHRT) with the right people

The Right Help Right Time Guidance describes the roles and responsibilities of partners within the Early Help offer based on children and young people's needs.

RHRT1 (Universal Offer) – Families access services and get advice.

Children and young people make good overall progress in most areas of development and are able to access the universal services that they are entitled to.

This level of help focuses on the provision of universal services for families that are available to all and will support all children and families to be healthy, safe, achieve and make a positive contribution to society.

Services will work closely with each other, have a good understanding of each other's 'offer' to support children and families in the community by providing access to the information, advice, guidance and services appropriate to their need. These services will also identify children, young people and families who may need early help and be fully confident in how to request early help and support, through local referral arrangements and in connection with the Family Hubs.

RHRT level 2 (Targeted Early Help) – Families get help

Children, young people and their families may have a higher risk of achieving lower outcomes than their peers and will require

additional help with accessing service delivery. Children, young people and families have a low risk to poorer outcomes than their peers and require some help with a particular issue and so need an early help offer to access a service or provision of help.

This level focuses on services delivering a timely response that can be delivered by a single additional agency. Families may need access to an enhanced offer from one service, whilst others may need to access more than one and would benefit from receiving these through the Family Hub Offer. Other families may need advice to understand who can help and how to access this help.

Completion of an early help assessment is recommended to help inform a targeted response, or a single agency may choose to complete their own assessment. This should then be recorded using the Early Help Module (EHM) as evidence of providing Early Help.

Services will work closely with each other, have a good understanding of each other's 'offer' in order to support children and families in the community by providing access to the additional support services as well as information, advice and guidance appropriate to their need. These services will identify children in need of early help, assess these needs, provide early help, and record this Early Help to help ensure children's outcomes are improved. Single agency services will also be able to request additional support if the child, young person, or family's needs require additional support to what the single agency is able to provide, or if the child's needs are likely to require a multi-agency coordinated response.

RHRT level 3 (Intensive family support/ Specialist services) – Families get more help

Children, young people and families have identified needs that are increasingly complex or unmet and are at risk of harm and poor outcomes.

This is when services must work together with the child, young person or family and a coordinated /targeted integrated response is required to support these families. This level of support focuses on a multi-agency, coordinated support for children, young people and families where needs are complex and a whole family approach is required. Services should work together with clear systems and processes for recording the help provided by the team around the family.

An Early Help Assessment identifies the holistic needs of the family, this must be completed by an appropriate lead professional to coordinate and deliver the support required. This family support should be intensive and focused to enable families to address the difficulties they are experiencing and to prevent them escalating. Services will bring together their Early Help resource into an Early Help Plan. Services will be required to identify, assess, provide, co-ordinate and record early help at this level. Services that already know the child, young person or family are usually in the best position to initiate the early help assessment and may then need to include other services in the assessment of need.

Children Service's Supporting Families Team can also be accessed through an early help assessment to contribute to that assessment and/or to the Early Help plan to meet the needs of children and young people when appropriate. The Supporting Families team may also initiate and co-ordinate the Early Help assessment and/or plan when there are at least three presenting issues when there is no other service currently supporting the family, or it is appropriate for children's services to do so based on the presenting needs. Families should be encouraged to access the activities and services within the Family Hub offer to complement the intensive bespoke family support, to help their family thrive and to continue to access universal services.

RHRT level 4 (Statutory Services) – Families get risk support

Children, young people and families have identified needs that are increasingly complex or unmet, and/or are enduring.

Children and young people who require statutory intervention or support from Children's Social Care require this level of support because they are at significant risk of harm and their outcomes being significantly affected. Children's Services work closely with partners to ensure that children identified as being at risk of harm and those with the highest needs in Coventry are protected and supported. They have specialist teams who work with children, young people and families offering focused social work interventions and where needed with the support from key universal partners such as schools, youth services, health visitors and GPs.

All practitioners working in Coventry with any contact with children and young people have a responsibility to identify children at significant risk of harm and refer to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the police if they are in imminent danger or are subject to crime.



Approaches to assessment and measuring impact

The Early Help Partnership recognises the importance of undertaking whole family assessments to identify the needs of children and young people.

Signs of Safety

The Signs of Safety approach is based on the use of strength-based interview techniques and techniques drawn from Solution Focused therapy.

Partners and professionals to work collaboratively and in partnership with families and children to help identify any risk, produce action plans which aim to increase safety and reduce risk and by focusing on strengths, accessible resources, and available networks. All practitioners working within the Early Help offer will receive training and support to use Signs of Safety as their key practice model.

We will talk to families about what you are worried about, what is working well and what needs to happen next to help children, young people and their families.

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Early Plan

The Early Help Assessment recognises the importance of undertaking whole family assessments to identify the needs of children and young people. It provides a framework for professionals and families to work together to improve outcomes for children, utilizing the Signs of Safety approach. The Early Help Assessment is embedded in the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership's safeguarding procedures (Right Help, Right Time Guidance) and assists professionals in understanding the causes of difficulties and to identify and deliver the best and most appropriate support to the family.

An Early Help Assessment requires a high-quality whole family approach that:

- Is child-centred and focused on action and outcomes for children.
- Is holistic and considers the needs of the whole family.
- Addresses the needs within the family and any risks the child faces from within the wider community/contextual safeguarding.
- Ensures that the voice of the child is heard.
- Identify risks to the safety and welfare of children.
- Builds on strengths as well as identifying presenting needs.
- Is integrated in its approach by working multi-agency and multi-disciplinary to meet complex needs.
- Is a continuing process which focuses on sustainable changes.
- Leads to relevant action, including the provision of services.
- Reviews interventions on an ongoing basis.
- Details a transparent intervention plan which is owned by the family.

Once a lead professional completes an Early Help Assessment and

has understood and identified the level of need a child, young person, or family have, the professional is responsible for taking appropriate action. They should work together with the family in devising an Early Help Plan and decide the most appropriate agencies to be involved to support the family to address the identified needs. The plan is reviewed regularly to recognise progress and areas that require further attention with an aim to ensure sustainable changes have occurred for the child and their family.

Tool to measure impact

As an Early Help Partnership it is important that we have methods to measure the impact of intervention and support delivered to children and their families through the delivery of family support. It is also important that children and families can see the positive changes they made in their own lives, however small they might be.

Being able to measure the changes in families lives also supports our understanding of which services and interventions have the most impact, allowing services to do more of what makes a real difference. The ability to measure impact and progress has been embedded into the local case management system (Early Help Module). A baseline scale is identified in the assessment for each area of need and these are reviewed and rescaled. The review and re-scaling continue throughout the family's journey to closure helping practitioners and the family understand when there is enough progress and resilience built to end the targeted help.



Information Sharing Agreement (ISA)

Effective sharing of information between practitioners, local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe. Serious Case Reviews have highlighted that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for the safety and welfare of children.

Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. Whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to local authority Children's Services (e.g. they are being supported as a child in need or have a child protection plan). Practitioners should be alert to sharing important information about any adults with whom that child has contact, which may impact the child's safety or welfare.

Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children, which must always be the paramount concern. This is described in the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2019 report.

Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR). To share information effectively:

- All practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UKGDPR which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

- Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information.

Profesionals can override consent when being able to demonstrate in the persons best intrest that a safe guarding concern is present.

All members of the Early Help Partnership, including those delivering in the Family Hub offer, must sign the Information Sharing Agreement, 2023 and are provided with the Privacy Notice for Children's Services. This ISA will be reviewed every three years and as required.



Key documentation and associated strategies & plans

Working together to safeguard children (2020)

Including the need to offer an early help assessment to families when appropriate; to enable information sharing, effective planning for families and a co-ordinated service response.

The key enablers of developing an effective partnership-based Early Help Offer: Final Research Report 2019

Commissioned by the Local Government Association, this research explores the enablers of and barriers to developing and sustaining an effective local early help offer.

Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Arrangements 2022

This sets out how the safeguarding partners, and other organisations, will work together to safeguard children and young people in Coventry.

Keeping children safe in education 2022

should be read alongside **Working together to safeguard children (2020)**. Statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment, and was updated.

Right Help Right Time

Guidance produced by the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership for practitioners in all agencies working with children, young people and their families in Coventry. This guidance will assist professionals to identify the support that a child, young person or family might need and how best this support can be provided.

Coventry Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2019

The JSNA brings together evidence about the health and wellbeing of Coventry residents, to help leaders across health and care understand and work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Coventry. This JSNA contains a full range of evidence to provide decision-makers with an understanding of local people and communities.

Health visiting and school nursing service delivery model (2019)

This guide sets out details of a modernised health visiting and school nursing service delivery model that is 'Universal in reach – Personalised in response'. This revised model has been developed with a range of stakeholders to reflect changes to how services are commissioned and provided locally, and aims to provide a greater emphasis on the assessment of children, young people and family's needs and the skills mix to respond.

One Coventry Plan (2022 – 2030)

One Coventry is the narrative that outlines the Council's objectives, key strategies and approaches. It encompasses the long-standing principles of the organisation (most notably 'working together to improve people's lives by being globally connected and locally committed'), new ways of working and core areas of activity.

Coventry Children and Young People Plan 2021 / 2022

The plan sets out the outcomes organisations in Coventry will work together to deliver and provide the best support possible for children, young people and their families.

Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme 2022 (DfE)

All families need support from time to time to help their babies and children thrive, whether that's from friends, family, volunteers, or practitioners. Our ambition is for every family to receive the support they need, when they need it. All families should have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing.

Supporting Families Programme 2022 – 2025

The Supporting Families Programme focus is on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on driving system change so that every area has joined up, efficient local services which are able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

Coventry Youth Justice Strategy and Plan 2021 – 2023

The 2021-23 Plan outlined the priorities and vision for Youth Justice Services in Coventry for a two-year period. This plan provides an updated picture on how the vision is being realized, priorities addressed, and provides a Service analysis and overview using the template mandated by the Youth Justice Board.

Early Years Service Integrated School Readiness Service Area Plan August 2021

The Early Years Strategy and plan aligns with the Marmot policy objective of 'giving children the best start in life.' The objectives include: Reducing inequalities in the early development of physical and emotional health, and cognitive, linguistic, and social skills. Providing provision which is of high-quality maternity services, parenting programmes, childcare and early years education meeting the level of need across the social gradient. Achievement of strong and sustained resilience and well-being in young children across the social gradient.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023

The Coventry Health and Wellbeing Strategy is the city's high-level plan for reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing for Coventry residents. The Strategy is owned by the

Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board, which brings together senior leaders from Coventry City Council, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, voluntary sector organisations, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, acute and community NHS trusts, and local universities.

Coventry Skills Strategy

Coventry has made significant progress in becoming a higher-skilled city in the last 5 years. This Strategy plays a pivotal role in delivering on the ambitions of the 'One Coventry 2022-2030 Plan' in helping to increase the economic prosperity of the city, addressing climate change and tackling inequalities within our communities

Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment

This needs assessment was completed in the Summer of 2021. The data included in the needs assessment covers the time period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to recognise that this period was an exceptional time and had an impact on the data for all services

Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027

This Economic Development Strategy is one of the key strategies for delivering the One Coventry Plan's approach of enabling people to live their best lives in a vibrant and prosperous city. The actions within this strategy will be central to achieving the One Coventry Plan objective of "Increasing the Economic Prosperity of the City and Region".

Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024

The Housing and Homelessness strategy, aims to deliver to all of its aspirations, so that the people of Coventry can enjoy the far-reaching benefits of accessible, affordable and decent housing today and for years to come

NHS Inequalities Strategy – core 20 plus 5

www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/core20plus5-cyp/

