

Hertfordshire's EARLY HELP STRATEGY

2022-2026



Foreword

Our Early Help Strategy is ambitious and represents a continued commitment from all key organisations in Hertfordshire to deliver and continue to improve our early help system, known as **Families First**.

Prevention is at the heart of what we do. Our Families First approach focuses on providing assistance as needs emerge, so that our resources are used to their best advantage, families are supported to become resilient and the challenges they face do not escalate.

This strategy sets out our vision, ambitions and how we will continue to develop our local systems to be the very best service for families, and ensure that resources are targeted for those children, young people and families that really need our help and guidance.

The Hertfordshire approach to early help reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with needs earlier rather than to respond when difficulties have become complex, requiring action by intensive or statutory services. By helping families to sustain improvements, demand for more costly support is reduced. Preventative services are also more effective in improving the longer-term life chances of children, young people and their families. Success is dependent on partners and

communities working effectively together to deliver early help to families, minimising the impact on the lives of children, the family and the communities around them.

A key area of focus across the Partnership will be how we respond to the recent Schools White Paper '[Opportunity for all. Strong schools with great teachers for your child](#)' and [SEND Review](#). We want to focus on enabling collaboration between all partners so that every child is supported to realise their full potential, receiving the right support, in the right place, and at the right time based on their needs. This must be underpinned by effective, joined-up support, working in a whole family approach to enable access to education, delivering the right support if they fall behind and giving them the tools to lead a happy, fulfilled and successful life.



Jo Fisher, Executive Director Children's Services
Chair, Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)
Executive

Introduction

This four-year strategy has been developed by the Families First Partnership and is a key element of our overall vision to improve outcomes for and in partnership with Hertfordshire's children, young people and their families to enable them to achieve their full potential. We have engaged our staff, partners and families to help shape and develop the Strategy through workshops, consultation and feedback.

What is Early Help?

“Early Help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, ideally as soon as it emerges.

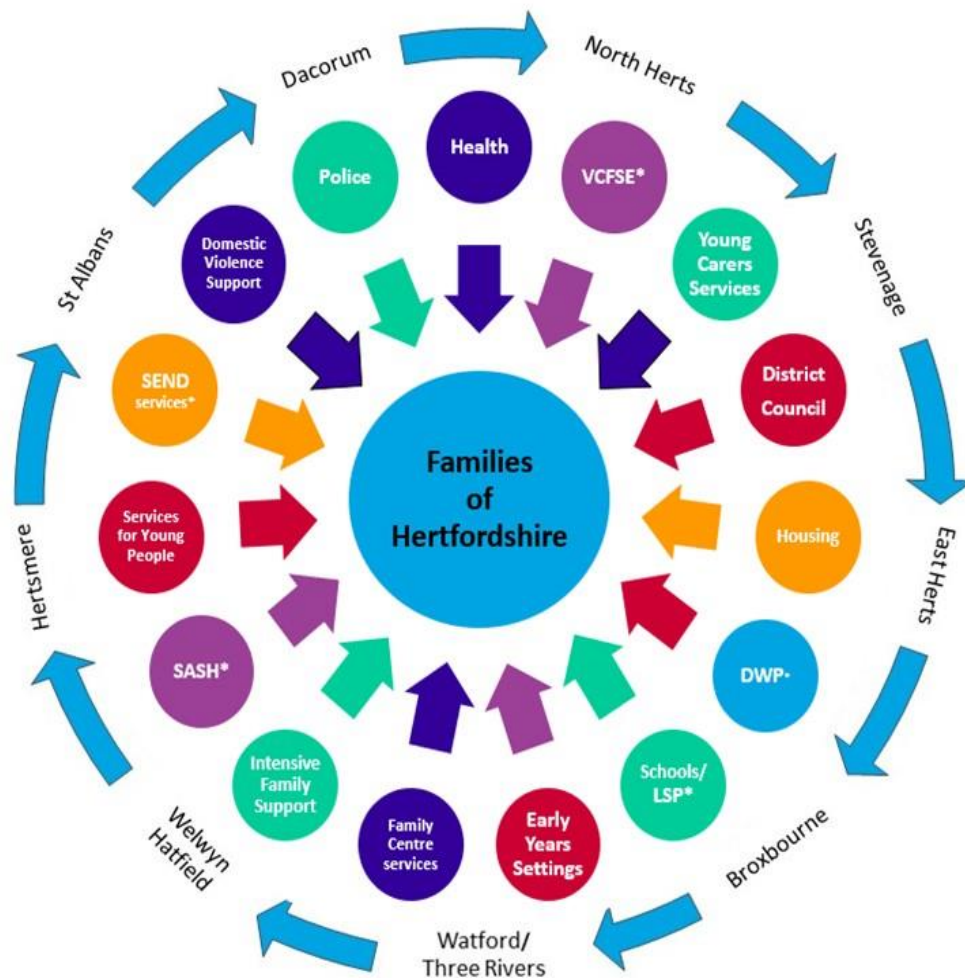
It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth to adulthood, and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own”

Families First Model

Families First is an approach, not a service. It is the term used in Hertfordshire for all services that work together to deliver early help services. It brings together all organisations, who provide early help in the county under the 'umbrella' of Families First.

There is a strong commitment to the Families First model from partners. Multi-agency contributions from Health, Police, District Councils and voluntary sector partners help shape the design, development and delivery of Families First, building a strong partnership approach.

Early help covers a wide range of interventions offered by a variety of different organisations and partner agencies as well as services within the County Council and beyond including Early Years Service, Intensive Family Support Teams (IFST), Services for Young People (SfYP), Specialist Adolescent Services Hertfordshire (SASH), Family Centres, Local School Partnerships (LSPs), Delivering Special Provision Locally (DSPLs) and many more support services shown in the diagram below.



- * LSP - Local School Partnership * VCFSE - Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise
 * SEND – includes 0-25, ISL, DSPL * SASH – Specialist Adolescent Service Hertfordshire
 * DWP – Department for Work & Pensions

The provision of early help services forms part of the Hertfordshire's [Continuum Of Need](#) which responds to the different levels of need children, young people and their families have. We recognise that families will likely have a combination of needs which are constantly changing, requiring differing levels of involvement from a range of services, from universal, targeted and specialist support services at various points.

Early help is co-ordinated at a local level through the eight Families First districts which align all partners delivering early help, based on district council boundaries (Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere are combined as one).

Local partnership groups oversee the details of how Families First is set up locally, providing opportunity for networking, strategic planning and ongoing governance.

Families First Triage Panels provide a multi-agency space in each area where professionals come together weekly or fortnightly to use available knowledge to identify innovative solutions and local resources to support the needs of individual families. Progress with families is managed and overseen by an accountable agency, through an identified Families First keyworkers.

For more information about Early Help and the Families First model visit our [Families First Portal](#).

Hertfordshire in Context

Population



Hertfordshire POPULATION

1.19 Million

Under 18 Population

272,558



Hertfordshire population growth in under 19s will increase until

2024

up by

0.8%



[compared with 1.3% nationally]

SOURCE:

Population data: Office of National Statistics 2019-2020
Other data: Local Authority Interactive Tool

Deprivation

10.8%

Of Children in Hertfordshire are in **low income** families

[national average is 18.4%] [2019]



10.9%

Of children in Hertfordshire **Primary Schools** are entitled to and claiming free school meals

[national average is 17.7%] [2020]



8.5%

Of children in Hertfordshire **Secondary Schools** are entitled to and claiming free school meals

[national average is 15.9%] [2020]

Education

2.4%

Of pupils in Hertfordshire schools have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

[national average is 3.3%] [2020]

12.4%

Of pupils in Hertfordshire have Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support (all schools)

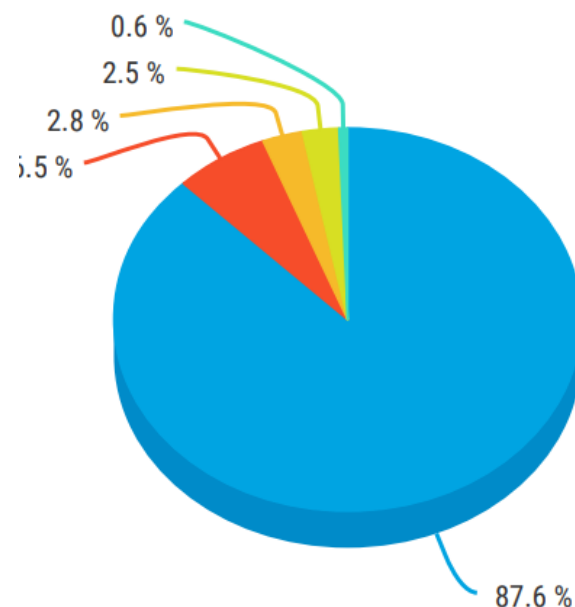
[national average is 12.1%] [2020]



73%

Of children achieve a **Good Level of Development** by the end of reception year

Diversity



Ethnic Groups of Residents

- White
- Asian
- Black African/Caribbean/Black British
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups
- Other Ethnic Group

COVID 19

The top three negative impacts experienced by those clinically extremely vulnerable who 'shielded' are **physical health (44%)**, **mental health (42%)** and **loneliness (30%)**
[ACS, June 2021]

An increased prevalence of **domestic abuse** was noted in referrals to Early Help and Social Care within Children's Services as well as reporting from Police and Health settings
[Children's Services]

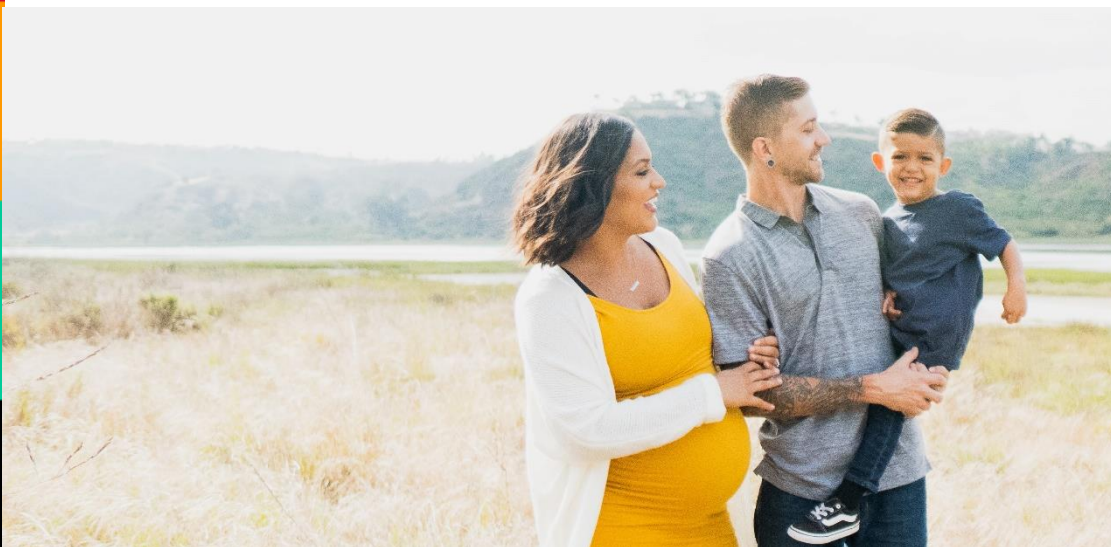
The unemployment rate rose from around 2% to 5%, between March and May 2020. It has since reduced to 3.8% but this is still nearly double the pre-pandemic figure
[Building Life Chances]

Public Health carried out a food poverty needs assessment for Hertfordshire in 2020-21, estimating that **10.3%** (123,112 people) of the total population are at highest risk for food poverty
[Public Health]

Vision

Hertfordshire's [Plan for Children & Young People](#) sets out a vision to support all children and young people to be happy, loved and thrive in their family and community. An important part of this vision is a strong and effective 'whole-system' approach with the ambition of tackling inequalities and giving children and families the support they need.

Our well established [Outcome Bees Framework](#) provides a common set of outcomes that all organisations are inspired by and committed to achieving for children, young people and their families, regardless of their role in the organisation. The outcomes are interlinked – all the "bees" are important for the whole person; we would rarely expect to look at one outcome in isolation from the others.



Our Ambitions

To achieve our vision this Strategy sets out some aspirational ambitions, aligned with the Outcome Bees, that as a partnership we want to strive to achieve for all our families in Hertfordshire. We recognise that these are aspirational outcomes and that everyone may not be all able to achieve all of them.

Be Independent

- Families are empowered to make positive choices in life
- Families are supported to develop the skills needed to manage their money to ensure they are financially stable
- Families are supported to work and make a positive contribution to society

Be Ambitious

- All children and young people receive a suitable and inclusive education
- All children and young people are supported so that they can regularly attend their educational setting and have the best chance at reaching their full potential
- Adults and young people are supported and encouraged to work towards their career ambitions

Be Safe

- The needs of the families are identified as early as possible and addressed through holistic family working so that children stay safe and remain living with their family

Be Healthy

- Families are supported to adopt healthy lifestyles
- Families feel empowered to manage and improve their own health, including mental health and emotional wellbeing and engage with support

Be Resilient

- Families know where to go for information and advice, and are confident to ask for further support when needed
- Families feel equipped to deal with life's challenges

Be Included

- All families and individuals can access support, regardless of their background, race, gender, sexuality etc

Be Happy

- Families feel like they belong, have a sense of purpose and are part of a community/family network
- Families are stable, have their needs met and make sustained progress towards outcomes that are important to them

Delivering Our Ambitions

This section sets out how we will work as a partnership to deliver our ambitions

Be Independent

- The Partnership will work in collaboration to align practice including supporting families to progress into work, reduce debt and therefore reduce the risk of homelessness
- The Partnership will ensure that professionals are aware of what services are available or where to find information on services to enable them to signpost families requiring support with finances or housing

Be Ambitious

- The Partnership will work in partnership with early years settings, schools, colleges, and other educational settings so that children and young people are able to make progress and achieve their potential
- The Partnership will work collaboratively to identify children and young people at risk of missing out, or not reaching their potential, due to barriers such as school attendance by delivering the right combination of academic, pastoral and specialist support needed to thrive
- The Partnership will ensure that professionals are aware of what services are available or where to find information on services for adults and young people requiring support with employment

Be Safe

- The Partnership will reflect a holistic family approach in our practice, enabling a robust understanding of the needs of the whole family and provide a safe and responsive service

- The Partnership will continue to implement our quality assurance framework to regularly undertake case audits, sharing and celebrating best practice and learning
- The Partnership will enable strong partnership working and joined up working approaches between Community Safety Partnerships, identifying and supporting those identified as vulnerable

Be Healthy

- The Partnership will strive to identify and tackle health inequalities and access to appropriate services with our partner agencies
- The Partnership will identify and ensure appropriate support is in place for those who have caring responsibilities, including young carers

Be Resilient

- The Partnership will continue to develop the Families First portal, working collaboratively with our partners to ensure it provides a robust self-service online hub
- The Partnership will continue to embed strength-based practice across the workforce
- The Partnership will work with local communities to build a whole-system approach to supporting children and families to develop resilience

Be Included

- The Partnership will continue to develop services with our families to ensure that they are accessible to all
- The Partnership will ensure professionals recognise the barriers and bias that families may face and ensure that support is flexible and tailored based on their communication, cultural needs etc
- The Partnership will capture the voice of all family members and involve families in plans for support
- The Partnership will engage with children, young people and parents/carers using their feedback to design, develop and continuously improve our services
- The Partnership will embed the [Hertfordshire Professional Promise](#) in our workforce
- The Partnership will ensure our workforce are SEND informed and empathetic when working with children and young people and parents/carers with additional needs

Be Happy

- The Partnership will work in together to identify and facilitate positive connections and networks with families and ensure, where relevant, significant individuals are included in support plans

Other key planned developments include:

- developing Hertfordshire's Family Hub delivery model to provide integrated early help to ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19 (25 for young people with SEND) receive early help to overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships.
- delivering Building Life Chances, a multi-agency programme seeking to mitigate the ongoing impact of the COVID 19, working together to improve life chances of the most vulnerable residents whose situations may have worsened during the pandemic.
- continuing to increase the SEND lens in our Early Help work to align with the [SEND Strategy 2022-25](#).



Partnership Pledge

In Hertfordshire we have a shared vision that strong partnership working is a key component to our early help system. This Pledge explains Families First partners' commitment to families and how we will work with them.

- 1.** Be empowering and trauma-informed, focusing on building resilience and drawing on family strengths
- 2.** Promote personal responsibility, rather than dependency
- 3.** Be flexible in the way we support families, adapting our delivery depending on the needs of the family
- 4.** Work holistically with the whole family, including fathers and other family members
- 5.** Leave parents, children and young people feeling that the situation has improved for them
- 6.** Involve families in decision-making and activities which shape the support they receive
- 7.** Continue to develop a localised approach to understand the most important issues and opportunities in our communities, to make the biggest impact at a local level
- 8.** Work together to provide seamless support, reducing the risk of duplication
- 9.** Develop opportunities for sharing knowledge and experiences
- 10.** Measure the impact of our approach to ensure that what we do is making a difference and a good use of resources

Measuring Our Impact

An annual review of the Strategy will be undertaken by the Families First Partnership Board and will be driven forward through the annual updates of local Families First Partnership Groups against their action plans.

We will use appropriate tools such as Outcome Star, performance data, feedback from children and families, operational insight as well as case audits to regularly monitor progress, measure success, evidence impact and subsequently inform ongoing service development.

We will continue to build on our evidencing impact cost benefit analysis to ensure it reflects the breadth of support being provided to families and the range of outcomes being achieved, ensuring our early help system continues to be a sustainable model.

We will continue to regularly scrutinise our progress and performance by monitoring family outcomes in the areas of need shown here.



Our Early Help Strategy has been developed within the context of broader policies and strategies. Hertfordshire strategies relevant to this document can be found at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/csstrategies

If you need an accessible version of this document, please contact FamiliesFirst.Support@hertfordshire.gov.uk

