



Suffolk
Safeguarding
Partnership

Our Approach to early help

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Foreword from the Independent Chair of Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

Many children, young people and their families need early help and preventative services, and support should be defined by the person who needs it. Early help is the support given to a child, young person, or family when a problem first emerges. It can be provided at any stage in a child or young person's life, and 'providing timely support is vital as identifying needs early on can reduce risk factors and increase protective factors in a child's life' Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), 2018.

In speaking with young people, they tell me that early help means getting help before it is too late, before they give up, or do something they might live to regret, or a crisis turns into a disaster. It's essential that children, young people and their families benefit from the best quality professional help, at the earliest opportunity, as for some families, without early help difficulties escalate: family circumstances deteriorate and children and young people are more at risk of suffering significant harm.

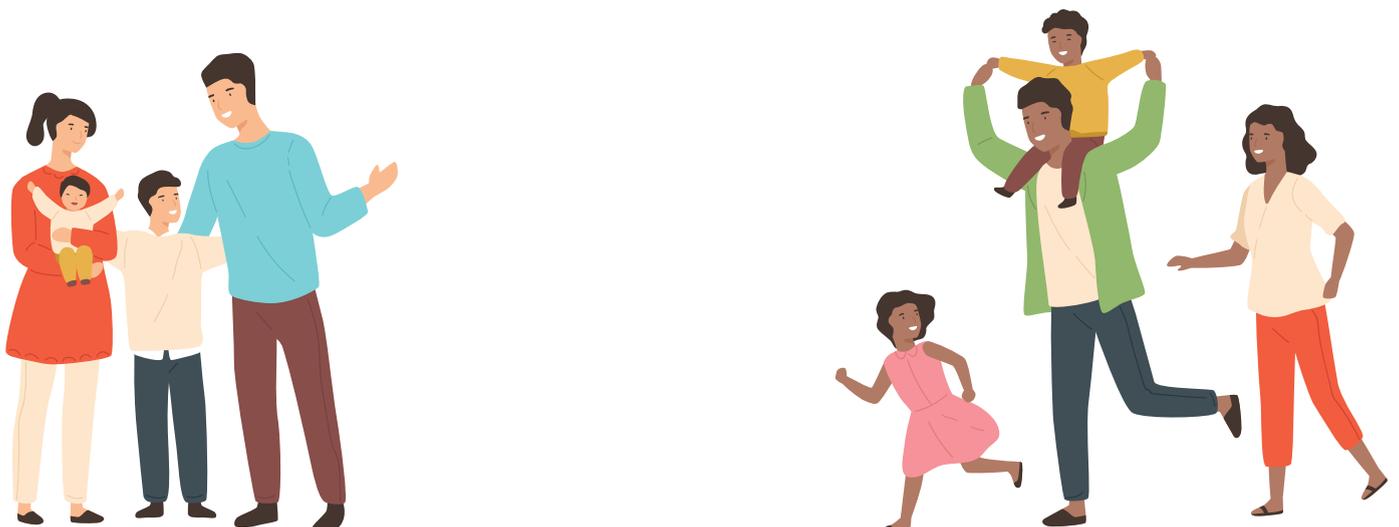
At times early help is delivered too late, as one child said to me about being removed from home - 'I've already been removed'. He meant that his life at home was so awful he had switched his emotions off years before. Effective early help can turn an adverse childhood experience into experiences which bring hope for the future. Professor Eileen Munro highlights this in her review of child protection, 'preventative services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services' Munro review of Child Protection May 2011.

We have early help services we can be proud of in Suffolk, once a need is identified, but our greatest challenge remains recognising opportunities to identify concealed need and the effects of harm on children caused by parental drug use. Whilst this is obvious at times, concealed and hidden need can only be detected by constant awareness that all of us might be feeling desperate inside and that it is only on rare occasions that we are in a 'reachable moment'.

Early help services are provided by a great number of organisations including schools, voluntary, community and social enterprises and the local authority. They offer a range of help from universal advice, guidance and support, through to targeted interventions like intensive family support for families on the edge of care or in crisis. Local services also play a crucial role in early help as access to friendship groups and the use of social media like WhatsApp groups help people create a strong sense of membership and belonging.

Great early help makes all the difference, and we hope the SSP's early help approach which has been co-produced with young people will make a significant difference through developing a greater understanding of the importance of early help and of receiving it at the point of need.

Anthony Douglas, CBE
Independent Chair,
Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership



What SSP Want to Do



We want to listen to and work together with children, young people and families to ensure that all children and young people in Suffolk get the right help for them to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. We want to listen, to explain where things are unclear, to act on concerns and worries and ensure we are consistent in providing the help and support.

What is early help?



Developing Resilience and Strength



Schools and Workers Helping Children, Young People and Families before Things get Worse



Finding People to Help You Where You Live

Early help means recognising and noticing when children, young people and families may need extra support. It is better to provide support as soon as a problem arises. This is particularly important for any children and young people who may be at risk of poor outcomes whether that be at school or at home. The workers and services will encourage the development of strengths and skills that prepare a child and young person for their adult life.

Early help Provision in Suffolk



Early help is offered through a wide range of services and agencies. A lot of early help support is available in schools. Early Years settings and schools offer programmes to develop children's social and emotional skills and some schools have counsellors available for children to talk to. Mentoring support for children and young people is another way many schools offer early help. Schools also work with other services such as the Police and an example is where schools invite Police Liaison Officers to deliver awareness raising sessions to children, young people and their parents to develop awareness of how children can be groomed or exploited.

Midwifery and Health Visiting services offer early help to parents to support them in the care of new-born babies, and families can also get support through attending parenting programmes and from Health and Children's Centres. Many charities in Suffolk provide early help services ranging from drop-in sessions, advice and guidance on health and wellbeing, housing, finance, getting a job, counselling services and much more. Schools and early years settings will offer support for children with special needs, and Suffolk County Council has a service to support children with a special educational need or disability. SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) is an impartial information, advice and support service for children, young people and families which is free, easy to access and confidential. District and Borough Councils give help and advice with finding somewhere to live. They also provide cultural and sport and fitness activities which all play their part helping families to develop their own solutions and support networks.

The Local Authority in Suffolk has an Early Help service that offers a range of support including parenting groups and programmes, a school nursing service which includes a confidential chat service, support to encourage school attendance and the take up of childcare and early years entitlements at ages 2, 3 and 4, Health Visiting support, Family Hubs, support for young people with employment, education and training, support for children and families via a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) through a multi-agency approach.

What's Important to SSP and Children, Young People and Families?



It's important to Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership that workers and services can improve and change things for children, young people and families in Suffolk. Young people said that the most important thing to them was to have a worker who listened to them and acted on what they say they will do. They also said they wanted workers to be consistent, to explain things to them and to help create positive outcomes for them. They want to be supported by workers who want to help children and young people.

Below are some quotes from young people and parents about the early help and support they have received.

"It was good to have someone there to listen to me" (young person).

"The worker who helped me was really easy to get on with and helped me sort out what to do next" (young person).

"I was able to access the right service at the right time and in good time" (parent).

"The staff at my child's school were really helpful in suggesting services to help us" (parent).

Information about the Situation in Suffolk



Suffolk is an interesting and diverse County to live in and life for children, young people and families varies across the County. For many children, young people and families, their experiences of living in Suffolk are good, however, we know for some, it is not so good. For example, we know that there are over 27,000 children in poverty in Suffolk (before housing costs). We know that there is a need to focus more on emotional wellbeing support for children and young people. The number of referrals into the emotional wellbeing hub (a service for referrals and advice about wellbeing and mental health services) in the first eleven months of it opening in May 2018 demonstrates that. There were nearly 6400 referrals. We need to ensure services and help are available early for all children, young people and families living in Suffolk.

What Suffolk Can Offer Children, Young People and Families



The support and help that is offered to children, young people and families will vary according to the agency and service, however, early help is very often initially worked out through the use of a CAF (Common Assessment Framework). The CAF process will usually be started because something is worrying parents/carers about their child or because something is worrying people who are working with a child or young person.

The worker can be from any agency or service and will use the CAF and have a conversation with the parent(s)/carer(s) where they will map out what's working well, what the parent/carers and child are worried about and what is causing difficulties. The CAF process will clarify if extra help is needed.

If it is clear and is agreed that extra help is needed, the worker will work with the family to decide and agree what kind of support is needed.

A Family Network Meeting (FNM) will take place, usually in a school or in the family home, which will bring together the child (depending on the age) or young person, parents or carers, any workers already working with the child and/or family and a family network, who will be identified by the family to help support them with their plan.

A person to lead on the work will also be put in place.

What SSP Want to Achieve to Best Support Children and Young People In Suffolk



“Early Intervention can help children and young people to develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives. It can improve the quality of children’s home lives and family relationships, increase educational attainment and support good mental health”.

The Early Intervention Foundation 2020.

In Suffolk we want to:

- Minimise the impact of economic disadvantage.
- Increase social mobility.
- Prevent some of the risks that can damage children and young people’s futures.
- Support children and young people to live happy, health, positive and successful lives.
- Support parents/carers to parent their children.
- Identify children and young people who may be most vulnerable from a range of risks or concerns regarding their physical or emotional development.

What Good early help Can Achieve

Intervening early in children’s lives has shown that it can lead to better outcomes and improve their lives. Good early help protects children and young people from harm. It helps to reduce the harm being done through neglect and can be significant in bringing about change at critical moments for children and young who are at risk of exploitation.

Who Is Responsible?



The Suffolk Safeguarding partnership is there to oversee the quality of early help work across all agencies and services. The Safeguarding Partnership’s purpose is to monitor and evaluate the safeguarding work and practice of all agencies to ensure they safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and adults with care and support needs.

How Will SSP Check for Success?



Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership will ask children and young people and their families about their experiences of early help. For example, how helpful was it, how supportive was their worker, did the worker or service help them to meet the actions and outcomes agreed on their plan, what difference do they feel it made to their lives, what changes have they put in place? Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership will want to know what impact early help has had on children, young people and families lives and how they think services and support can be improved.

The Safeguarding Partnership will also undertake audits of service or agency provision and practice and collect performance data to check for improvements. The SSP will have discussions with services to ensure that the early help they are offering is leading to positive changes for children, young people and families.



Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership



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