

# Early Help Approach Recommendations Report

*“From willingness to action”*

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## 1. Background

*“We all need a little help sometimes”*

The development of an integrated process for practitioners across agencies similar to the Common Assessment Framework [CAF/Early Help] in the UK has been discussed in Jersey since 2010. The need for a mechanism to enable agencies to work together effectively is referenced in strategic plans dating from this time. For various reasons the development and implementation of an Early Help process has not happened.

The implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] in 2013 and the review of the Multi Agency Support Teams [MASTs] in 4 Secondary schools in 2014 again highlighted the need for a co-ordinated multi agency approach to Early Help for families in Jersey. The MASH had received a high volume of enquiries and the MAST Review showed the need for a shared, consistent and transparent way of working that met good professional standards of partnership with families, accountability and a demonstrable focus on outcomes.

This led to a joint proposal from 3 states departments [ESC/Children’s Service/SoJ Police], to develop an island wide early help approach based on learning from other jurisdictions. The Early Help Project<sup>1</sup> was ratified by the SoJ Children’s Policy Group and is located as part of the Safeguarding Partnership Board arrangements.

The Early Help Project Sub Group [EHPSG] of the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board is multi agency<sup>2</sup>. The group began work in September 2014 and have been supported by a local consultant, who has previous experience of implementing the original UK Common Assessment Framework and its subsequent revisions.

The work of the EHPSG has progressed at pace and this report details recommendations for moving into the implementation phase of the project.

The Early Help Approach is suitable for use from conception to 18 years, for a single child or siblings and includes parents/carers. It is for when children have emerging additional needs that are unclear or broader than a service can address. It is not for use when there are concerns a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm as inter – agency child protection procedures must be followed.

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<sup>1</sup> Project Overview – appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> EHPSG members – appendix 2

Early Help as part of a whole system approach to meeting children and young people’s needs.

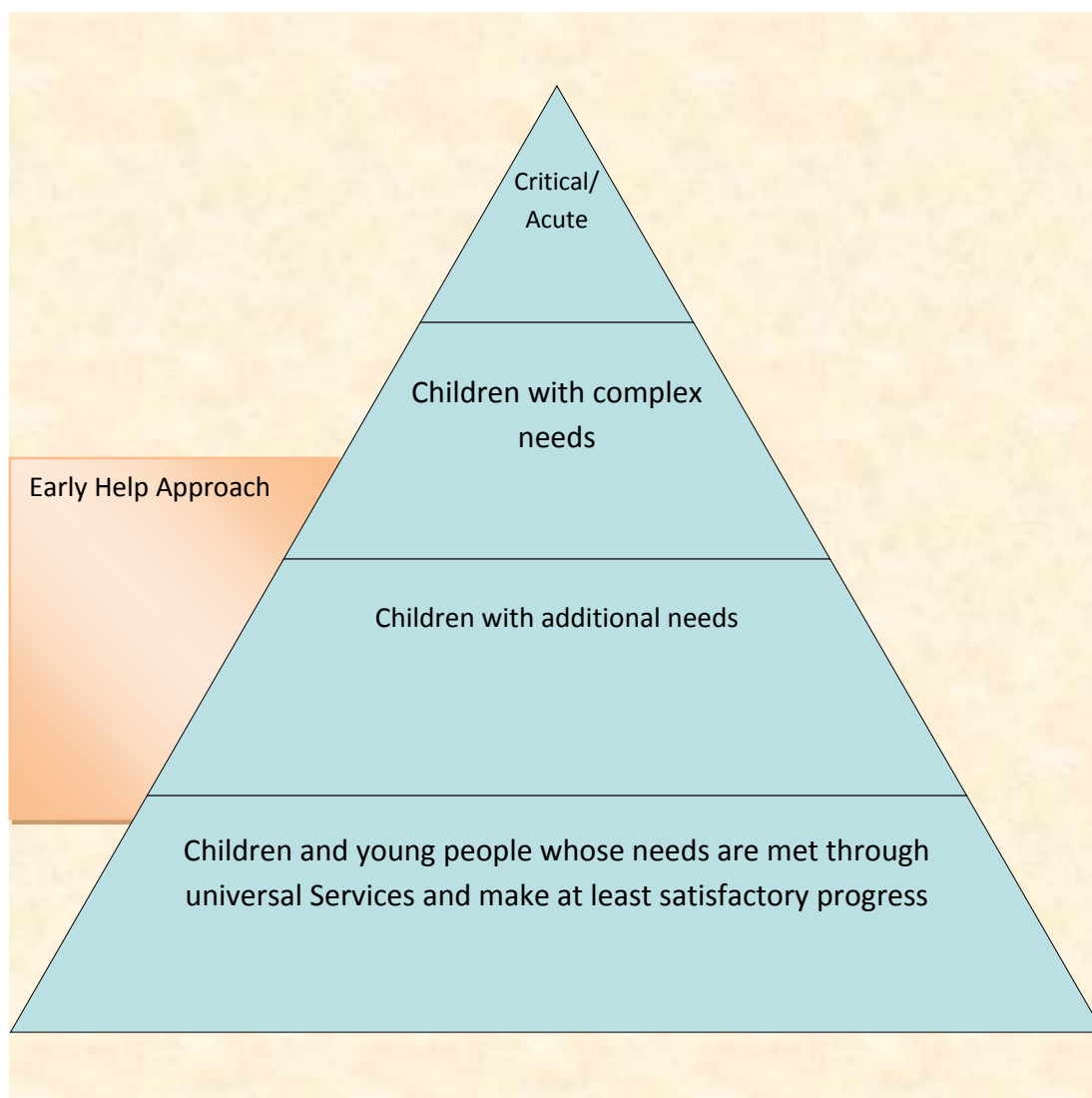


Figure { SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC } Whole System Approach

*“We should have been helped from day one.” Findings from LARC5 National Foundation for Educational Research 2013*

The Early Help Approach is designed to make sure children and young people do not “get stuck” in the system waiting for concerns and needs to become so great they can access specialist or statutory services. This is early intervention/help.

Without an Early Help Approach there can be a “vortex” effect which pulls children, young people and families into specialist or statutory services that are working to remedy often entrenched issues or crisis situations. This can result in services becoming overloaded and unable to respond effectively to children and young people with critical or acute needs.

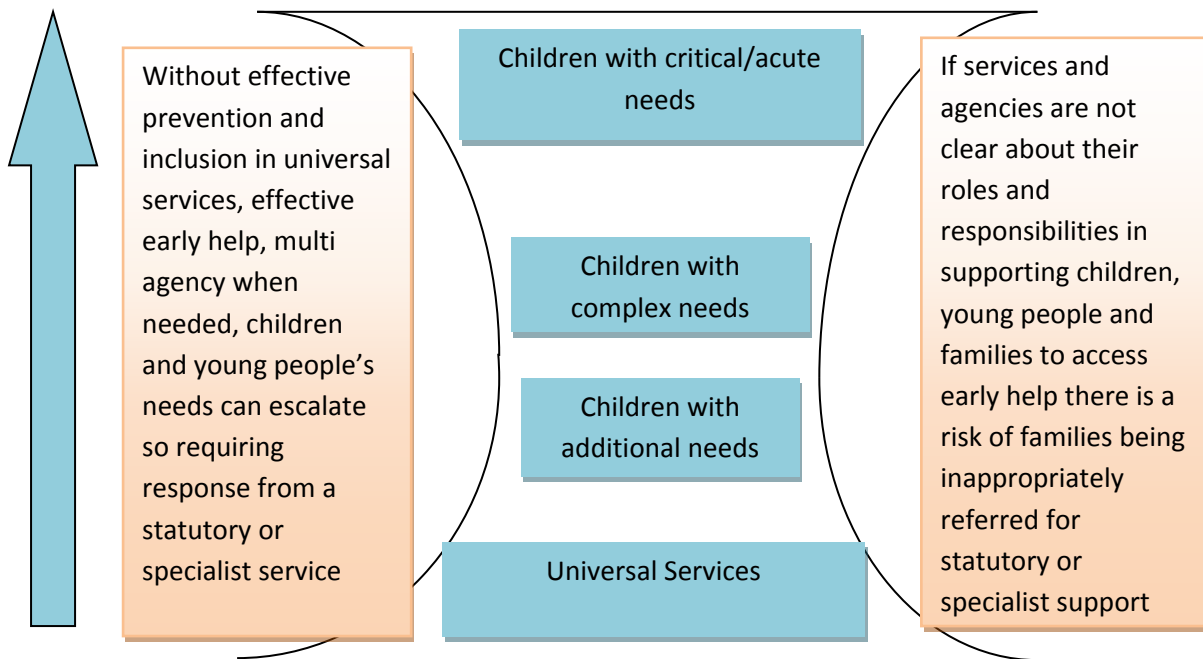


Figure 2 the Vortex

## 2. Early Help Project Considerations

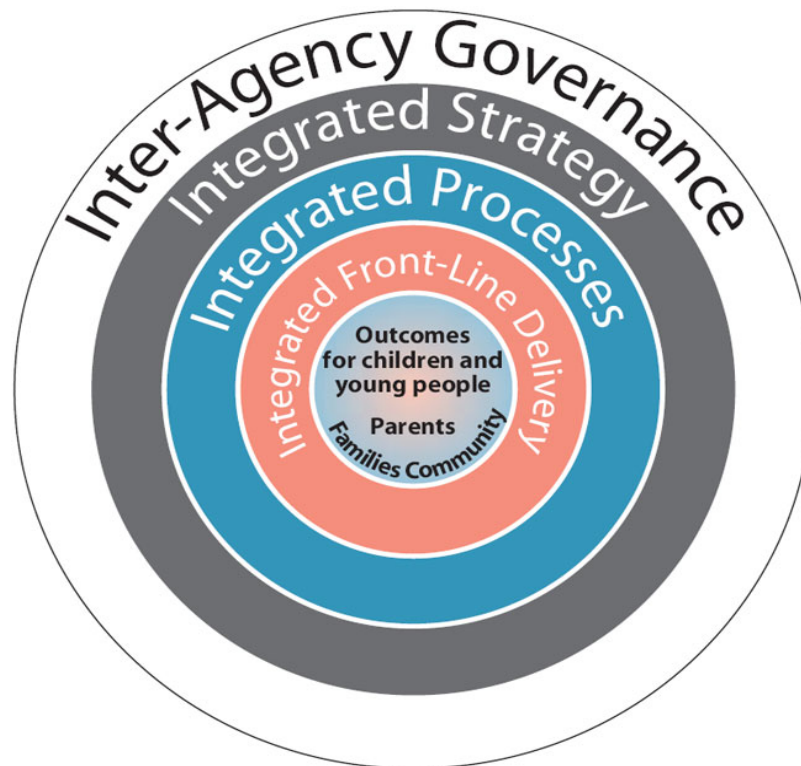
The EHPSG has worked to ensure the following:

- Families, children and young people tell their story once
- Focus on improving outcomes for children and young people [effective assess, plan, do, review approach].
- Identified role [Lead Worker] to act as key contact for the family and other professionals
- Whole family approach
- Quality assurance and performance management , including the families perspective, is embedded within the process
- Strengths based and solution focused approach to working with families
- Congruence with existing multi agency structures such as MAST and MASH
- Better shared understanding of services that are available to support families
- Better understanding of need
- Consultation across multi-agency workforce, parents/carers, children and young people, including use of existing consultation messages from research

## 3. Developing a Whole System Approach

The Implementation of the Early Help Approach can offer additional opportunities to Jersey. The original concept of the Common Assessment Framework was as one component of the Every Child Matters Framework [ECM] or as in Scotland, Getting it Right for Every Child [GIRFEC].

Partner agencies working with children and families also worked on the following aspects locally to ensure the most value could be obtained from the integrated working processes such as CAF. It is part of a whole systems approach. This diagram illustrates.



At the centre, **outcomes for children and young people** mean a focus on improvement and importantly a recognition that outcomes for children and young people are mutually reinforcing. Therefore all agencies that work with children and young people have a shared accountability and responsibility for better outcomes for children and young people.

**Integrated frontline delivery** is a focus on the importance of locally accessible services, personalised around the needs of children and young people, multi disciplinary where appropriate. Some local examples are in evidence here such as the pilot Children’s Centre and the Child Development Team.

Workforce Development supports the integrated frontline delivery by ensuring all who work with children and young people are trained in a common core of knowledge that are the foundation to any work with children, young people and families, such as communication and engagement, child development, safeguarding and child protection, working with parents.

**Integrated processes**, encompasses the work of the **SPB Early help Project** and includes a

- Straightforward holistic assessment tool
- Shared planning and review process
- Defined role for a lead worker [key contact]

The above will result in better and earlier identification of need, the right agencies working with the family at the right time, with a shared understanding of the goals and outcomes needed and a lead worker, acting as a key contact for families and professionals, maintaining an overview of the families situation.

**Integrated strategy** ensures a focus on needs assessment and a shared plan, identifying key priorities across partner agencies and services, similar to the **Children and Young People's Strategic Framework** in Jersey. In other jurisdictions it often forms part of an improvement cycle. Information from the needs assessment collated with performance information, including outcome data and triangulated with the shared plan to ensure a focus on improving outcomes. This process is often achieved through the use of the Outcomes Based Accountability [OBA]<sup>3</sup>.

**Integrated governance** ensures the responsibility for developing the shared vision and plan with partners is located within a single role ultimately accountable for the outcomes and activity as defined within the plan. Directors of Children's Services in the UK have been given responsibility for ensuring this partnership approach happens. In addition a number of agencies have also been given a statutory duty to co-operate to promote the welfare of children and young people. Part of this function is perhaps, the vision behind the **Children's Policy Group** in Jersey.

The Early Help Project is focused on ensuring staff across a range of different agencies know when and how to work together as soon as needs emerge and before problems become entrenched or a crisis happens. This can happen without robust overarching strategy and governance arrangements and these areas are beyond the remit of the safeguarding Partnership Board. However, this will mean that over time the full potential of the implementation of the Early Help project may be lost, in terms of the quality assurance and performance information that will be available in the future and impact on outcomes for children and young people. This is particularly relevant to ensuring best use of resources to promote better outcomes.

There are a number of key questions for strategic leaders.

- How is the Children and Young People's Strategic Framework used to inform service/business planning processes?
- Is there a strategic mechanism/partnership by which you can join with partners to increase the efficacy of your services, commission or deliver services differently to meet identified need?
- What is the shared vision and priorities for services that work with children and families in Jersey in 2015 and beyond? Where have these been agreed, where are they written and do we know what success will look like?

#### 4. Conclusions

The delivery of effective early help to children, young people and families needs to be understood within a commissioning or planning cycle and from the perspective of a whole system approach to meeting children and young people's needs. The implementation of integrated processes through the Early Help Approach is one part of the Early Help jigsaw.

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3 OBA Framework

The implementation of the Early Help Approach will promote better outcomes for children and young people. Over time it will begin to provide data that could be used to improve services to respond to local need more efficiently and effectively. It will bring information about the presenting concerns and the views and experiences of families that use our services. Service activity will be measured in terms of effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes.

Simply, the implementation of the Early Help Approach will ensure that families in Jersey:

- Tell their story only once
- Have their needs better and more consistently identified
- Access multi agency help earlier, more quickly and consistently
- Are confident that professionals share information about them swiftly and appropriately
- Are involved in finding solutions to their challenges
- Aren't passed between services for different assessments with no resulting support
- Can influence the reshaping of services to meet local need
- Can ask for an Early Help Assessment from any agency they are working with, there will be no "wrong door" into services.
- Will have a lead worker when they need one, who will know what the support plan is and act as a key contact for the family

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## 5. Recommendations

### Tools

1. The draft Early Help Process and forms are agreed for use<sup>4</sup>
2. The draft Early Help Guidance for Practitioners [to include step up/step down from specialist/statutory services ] is agreed for use
3. SPB Thresholds, Benchmarks and Indicators are reviewed [Subject to MASH review 2015]

### Communication and Training

4. Web based and paper information is developed for children, young people and families and professionals.
5. Soft launch of Early Help from end of May 2015 with formal launch in October 2015
6. Training package is developed for May 2015, workforce leads across agencies engaged in designing rollout.

### Resources and Quality Assurance

7. Interim data collection is maintained
8. Work continues on the development of the Early Help IT system solution

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 4

9. A post is agreed to support continued strategic and operational development of Early Help. Draft job description attached at Appendix 5
10. Part time administrative post agreed to support implementation of early help processes across agencies where appropriate
11. Early Help Sub Group continues to operate, moving over time from implementation to quality assurance/performance management on behalf of the SPB

### Leadership

12. Strategic leaders [Chief Officers and Ministers] give further consideration to refining the CYPSF and strategic partnership arrangements beyond the SPB.
13. Consider a sharper focus on a few key priorities as part of an annual planning/commissioning cycle
14. Develop as part of the CYPSF an Early Help Strategy that ensures the congruence of the SoJ commissioned functions of the Children’s Centre, Parenting Services, Brighter Futures, MESCH, Parent Partnership, MASTs for example, working to refine service delivery to meet need, eradicate any silo working.
15. Research<sup>5</sup> indicates that family support workers working in families’ homes have a very important contribution to make in improving outcomes for children and young people and preventing abuse and neglect. Urgent consideration should be given to ensure this is available consistently as this is a significant gap in the local early help offer.

### Risks and Mitigating Factors

	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigating Factors</b>
1.	<b>Strategic ambivalence to the Early Help Project leads to fragmented implementation</b>	Strategic commitment gained through the SPB and CPG. Agencies engagement in Early Help monitored, reported and challenged appropriately
2.	<b>Funding for posts to support implementation not agreed</b>	Essential tasks could be subsumed into existing roles and posts
3.	<b>Early Help IT system solution not achievable within current resources</b>	SOJ Police IT development engaged in support. Could consider external procurement alongside Children’s Social Care, extending to Children’s

<sup>5</sup> A guide to what works in family support services for vulnerable families, Kieran McKeown [October 2000]

National Evaluation Summary. Outreach and Home Visiting Services in Sure Start Local Programmes by Maggie Ball and Lisa Niven. [2006]



		Centre and Parenting Support Services
4.	<b>Lack of frontline support to Early Help Approach</b>	<p>Consultation across agencies ensures some engagement with project. Provide briefings and information for managers.</p> <p>Ensure adequate advice, guidance and support is provided for staff undertaking Early Help Assessments</p> <p>Share good practice examples</p>
5	<b>Threshold for accessing social care services/raising a MASH enquiry unclear</b>	<p>Review of MASH being undertaken. Clear step up/step down protocols developed</p> <p>Close communication and co-location with MASH of the Early Help posts.</p>