

A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown from the chest up, looking upwards and smiling. They are arranged in a circle, with their heads tilted back. The background is bright and slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with greenery. Two text boxes are overlaid on the top left: a teal one with white text and a purple one with white text.

Strengthening Families  
Strengthening Communities

Slough Early Help Partnership Strategy  
2023-2025



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# Welcome to our Early Help Strategy

We are pleased to introduce our Early Help Partnership Strategy; Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities which sets out Slough's vision for early help services and the action we will take to ensure a robust and effective early help offer is in place for children, young people and families in all communities and neighbourhoods across our town.

This follows on from our original Early Help Strategy 2019 - 2021 and takes consideration of the changing context for children, young people and families who require additional support and reflects the strengths and ambitions of our partnership developments across the town over the past 3 years.

Put simply, this strategy lays out how we will use our collective knowledge and resources to support children, young people and families who need help. Our aim is to provide help as early as possible preventing escalation and supporting children, young people and families to achieve better outcomes. In this context, our strategy must remain dynamic to reflect the changing needs of families, communities and partnerships as they evolve.

Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of children (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018).

Our belief is that our early help offer has to be developed in collaboration with partners, with a key focus on increasing the role of the Lead Professional across partners agencies to reach more children through the **right conversation** at the **right time** leading to the **right service**.

Direct accessibility for children, young people and families to support services across the partnership spanning universal to targeted support is crucial in empowering and enabling stronger families and communities in Slough.

Our early help offer will lead to better life chances for children, young people and families, whilst reducing the demand on statutory intervention over time. Everyone needs some extra help sometimes and we want to make sure that families can seek support without fear or challenge.

This renewed strategy sets out our commitment and drive to work with communities and families to improve outcomes for our children and young people.

We know that everyone needs some extra help sometimes and want to make it as easy as possible for children and families to get that help when they need it.

In Slough, we have a wide range of voluntary and community groups who provide lots of help, and we will work alongside them through our early years and school settings, as well as our social care space to make sure that our children receive the right help, when they need it and that it makes a positive difference to their lives.

## **Strategic statutory partner sign up to be requested**

- **DCS/CEX SCF – Sue Butcher**
- **SBC CEx – Stephen Brown**
- **TVP Police Commander – Lee Barnham**
- **Health Lead - TBC**



**“Children and young people feel happy, safe and loved within their families and wider community, where they are helped to thrive, not just survive.”**

# Our Early Help Vision and Principles

As a partnership, we collectively agree that we want the best for all children, young people and families.

The development of a common vision and shared principles for our new Early Help Strategy is key to our approach if we are to work in partnership towards this common overarching goal.

Young people and parents have told us that they want early help services to be easily accessible, enabling self-referral and to offer flexibility in providing the right support before problems get bigger.

The delivery of the early help offer needs to be built on positive relationships where there is mutual respect, and children, young people and families feel heard, unjudged and encouraged to make positive changes in their lives.

In developing this strategy, we listened to our children, young people, families and partner agencies, to develop the vision and related principles for our Early Help Strategy, aligned to Slough Borough Council's Corporate priorities:

***'Children and young people feel happy, safe and loved within their families and wider community, where they are helped to thrive, not just survive'.***



**Happy**



**Safe and loved**



**Thriving**

In order for us to deliver an effective early help offer to children, young people and families, our key principles underpin our strategy;

- Early help is all of our responsibility
- Early help support will be easy to get
- Early Help starts with a strong universal offer for families
- Information about what support is available is shared with children, young people and families
- Right conversation + right time = right service
- As a partnership we will endeavour to be proactive not reactive
- Relationship and strength-based practice is key to how we interact with children, young people and families
- Whole family collaboration and empowerment is important – we work with families and don't do to families
- Partnership work is the key to success through a robust 'Team Around' approach
- A resilient workforce is needed to build resilience in families

# Local and National Context

We have seen a changing society in the last few years significantly impacted by the global pandemic and financial crisis.

This has had a significant impact on the issues facing families, as well as disrupting the provision of services to children and families.

This strategy reflects those challenges and refreshes our offer.

We acknowledge that there have also been significant opportunities and a strengthened sense of collective responsibility and a renewed commitment to working together across services.

The financial impact of the rise in food and fuel increases the risk of poverty and disadvantage and is seen as a significant issue facing children, young people and families today.

The financial context for Slough has continued to be a challenging one, with a Section 114 being declared by the Council in July 2021.

Commissioners are in place to work with the Council to ensure it can regain financial stability. It has therefore been more necessary than ever for us to work collectively to share resources across partners agencies and provided a great opportunity to ensure our systems join up to strengthen our early help offer.

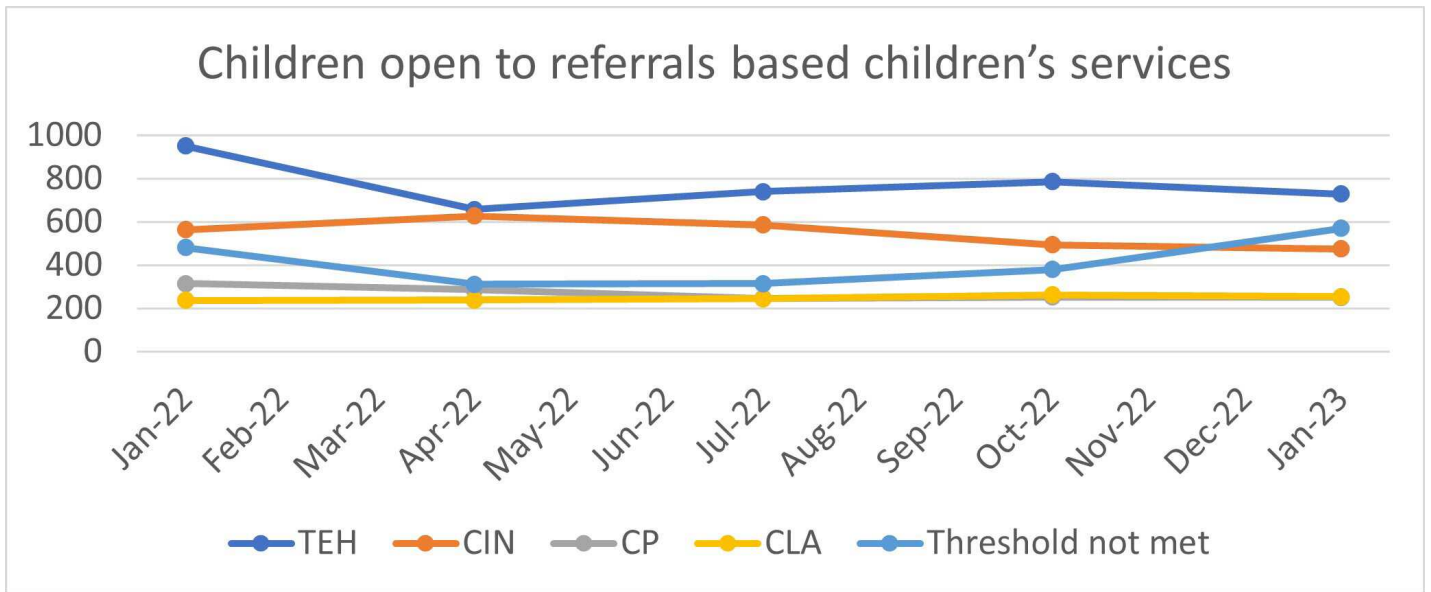
The independent review of children's social care provides us with further opportunities to develop our partnership response to early help for children, young people and families, from prevention through to targeted support. This and the review by the National Panel into the deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes have led to wide ranging recommendations being made to the Government and will feature significantly in the national development of early help services going forward.

The local context of Slough varies significantly to our neighbouring Local authorities, with levels of deprivation, geography, government funding and service transformation programmes, all being contributing factors Slough has the second youngest population in the country, high levels of deprivation and we serve a diverse population

who speak 150 languages. There continues to be a shift from issues of intra-familial harm to extra-familial harm. Many of the reasons why children and families require early help or support from social care continue to be broadly the same in Slough, but with increased prevalence and complexity being seen.










- **Societal factors:** Increased numbers of families experiencing food, fuel and hygiene poverty, as well as housing issues, due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis
- **Parental factors:** Substance misuse, poor parental mental health, and domestic abuse
- **Child development:** Insecure bonding and attachment, speech and language delay, unmet SEND needs
- **Physical health:** High levels of obesity, poor oral health, shorter life expectancy, Type 2 diabetes
- **Children's mental health:** An increase in poor mental health amongst children and young people and challenges accessing services in a timely way
- **Extra-Familial Risks and Harm (EFRH):** Radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, peer on peer abuse, trafficking, and modern slavery.





The chart above shows the number of children open to referrals based children's services over the past 12 months and those that were referred to the Front Door in Slough but were not provided a direct service.

Through an improved early help offer, we would expect to see reductions in referrals to the Front Door by offering support to children, young people and families when needs first arise.

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  <p><b>158,500 people</b><br/>3rd most densely populated town in the UK</p>   | <p><b>25% aged below 16</b><br/>2<sup>nd</sup> youngest population in the UK</p>                          | <p><b>64% of our residents are from ethnic minority groups - the most diverse local authority outside London</b></p>  |
| <p>In 20/21, over <b>40%</b> of our children lived in low income households (before the cost of living crisis)</p>  | <p><b>63.5% of households</b> in Slough are a single family households (36% with dependent children)</p>  | <p>Obesity levels in our children at Reception and Year 6 are above national local levels</p>                         |
| <p><b>27.3%</b> of Slough's residents do not use English as a main language</p>                                     | <p><b>Violent and sexual assault crimes</b> are the highest in our town</p>                               | <p>Children are less active in Slough than in other areas of the UK</p>   |



# Our Early Help Journey So Far

Understanding what works for children, young people and families in Slough has been a significant part of our journey over the past few years.

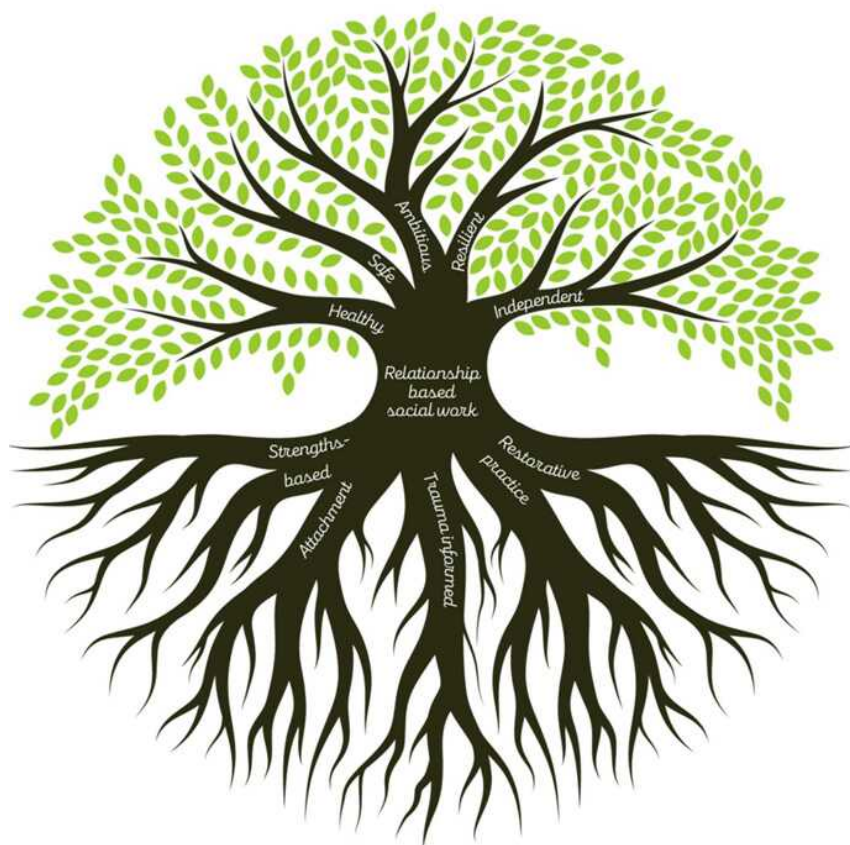
As a multi-agency partnership, we have worked hard to strengthen integrated working in a number of key areas of need for children and young people, including neglect, exploitation, parenting, mental health, domestic abuse and educational issues.

Although we have much to do to improve the quality and consistency of our multi-agency early help offer, we have made positive steps in the past 12 months to solidify the foundation on which to build our new strategy.

As part of our ongoing strategy development and action plan we will measure the impact of these developments for children, young people and families.



The quality of support and interventions provided across the children's partnership will be guided by the 'Slough Approach', our practice framework for how we will work with vulnerable children, young people and families requiring help and support from our services.



**Relationship based** - Relationships are the means through which we work collaboratively with children, families and partners to establish a shared understanding of what needs to be done, and by whom, for the concerns about a child's wellbeing to be resolved.

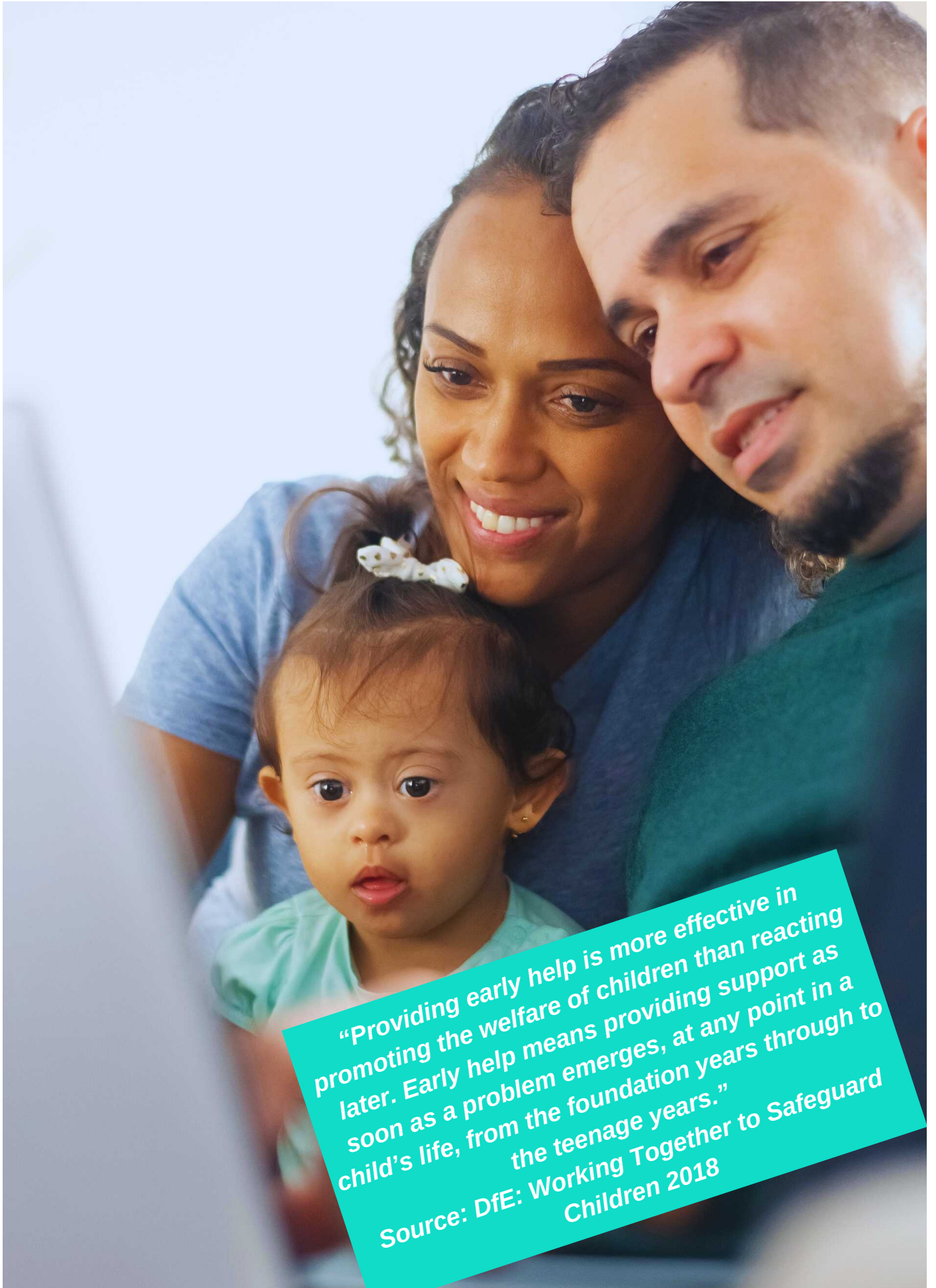
**Strengths based** - Conversations to be about the strengths of individual and families rather than deficits, enabling positive narratives about potential for change, while being clear about 'what we are worried about'. We work with people, supporting their own goals and respecting families' attempts to navigate the complexities of family life.

**Attachment theory** - Emphasising our need to engage in intimate relationships, seeking safety and protection from parent/carers when faced with threats of danger, loss and adversity. Early experiences shape our narratives and sense of ourselves and others' as well as ability to cope with stress and regulate emotions. Attention to disruptions in these connections can help to understand risk while repair can contribute to safety.

**Trauma informed** - Our practice framework identifies and addresses experiences of trauma in the lives of all family members to reduce the negative impact and encourage resilience, embedding safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.

**Restorative practice** – We will work with families to help build and maintain healthy relationships, resolve difficulties, and repair harm where there has been conflict, promoting a sense of community, understanding, social responsibility and shared accountability.

## Developing a Common Language for Early Help



“Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.”

Source: DfE: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The provision of early help is an approach which relies upon organisations and agencies working together to provide the right support at the right time to children, young people and families.

The delivery of our early help offer includes local authority services (education, housing, social care), health services, police, community and voluntary sector organisations and faith groups working alongside children, young people and families to improve their situations and build a positive future.

In our model (below), all levels of support prior to statutory and specialist services make up our early help offer.

**Universal support** – The basic provision of services available to all children, young people and families, enabling self-access and meeting general needs e.g. school education, GP, maternity care.

**Additional support** – Needs require more than the support of universal services or a single agency, requiring collaboration and a plan of support to prevent a situation getting worse e.g. school attendance issues, housing issues, low mood.




**Targeted support** – Additional support through a plan developed as part of a Team Around the Child and their family process doesn't improve the situation and/or complex and multiple needs require an early help assessment and multiple agency response via an intensive support plan.



# Early Help Priorities

The National Supporting Families Framework offers us a clear set of outcomes that meet the aims of the partnership and enable us to identify common priority areas of required support for families.

As a partnership, we have identified key priorities from the framework which we believe will have the most significant positive impact on children's lives at an early help level of intervention.

|  <p><b>Helping children to be happy</b></p>   |  <p><b>Ensuring children feel safe and loved</b></p>   |  <p><b>Supporting our children to thrive</b></p>   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Decrease in harmful parental conflict and improved family relationships</p> <p>Unsupported young carer now supported, including with change in caring circumstances</p> | <p>Expectant or new parent's capacity for positive, effective parenting is improving</p> <p>Parents / carers demonstrate improved, positive parenting (e.g., improved parent / child interactions; positive attachment etc.)</p> <p>Reduction in abuse or neglect for children and young people</p> <p>More children are in emotionally and physically safe environments</p> <p>Reduction in number of children and young people at risk of exploitation</p> <p>Domestic abuse incidents in homes where there are children reduce</p> <p>Adults are able to reduce/abstain from substance use and understand the risk / impact of the substance use on the family and children and is able to promote safety and implement actions to reduce harm</p> | <p>Children's developmental needs are met, allowing them to make progress at a pace that is suitable for them</p> <p>Increase in number of children with sustained attendance over 90%</p> <p>Improved engagement with education, employment and training (e.g. pupils no longer on report, reduction/no detentions, reduced fixed term exclusions, increase in young people who are EET)</p> <p>Young person no longer involved in crime or demonstrates significant reduction (more than 50%) in incidents of crime</p> <p>Family feels able to manage their finances and/or debt is being managed or has been resolved</p> |



"Relationships are the means through which we work collaboratively with children, families and partners to establish a shared understanding of what needs to be done"

# Delivery Plan Overview

Successful delivery of our Early Help Partnership Strategy requires us all to work together to build on our positive foundations towards a proactive, more accessible early help offer for children, young people and families.

We have outlined how we aim to do with our partners and stakeholders over the next two years, with more details in our Early Help Partnership Strategy Action Plan.

| Year 1 - 2023/24 |  |
|------------------|--|
| EH1              | Partner agencies to take on lead professional role where additional support is required for children and families or where continued support is identified through step down to the community.                                 |
| EH2              | Develop practice standards within Targeted Early Help Service which consistently feed into quality assurance processes and ensure children, young people and families are receiving the best support.                          |
| EH3              | Multi-agency refresh of thresholds in Slough with a focus on early help where additional and targeted support is required via the Safeguarding Partnership.  |
| EH4              | Raise awareness of early help and prevention services, increase access to universal provision for children, young people and families where they are empowered to seek support and find solutions when issues initially arise. |
| EH5              | Build a Team Around the School approach to support where common issues occur in schools, to add resource and expertise at the earliest point, ensuring impact for the majority of children at a collective level.              |

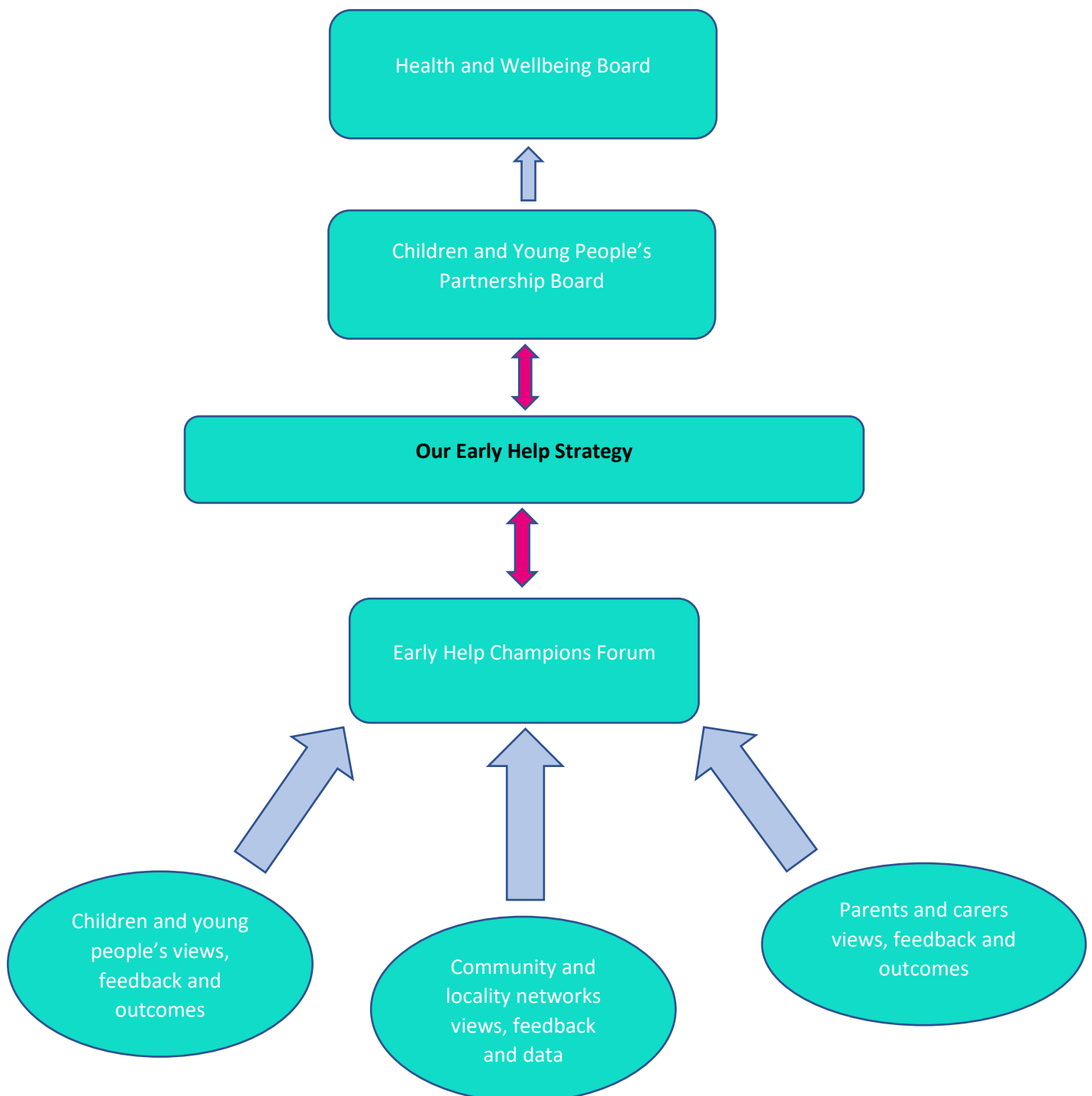
| Year 2 - 2024/25 |   |
|------------------|---|
| EH1              | Early help outcomes for children are captured across the partnership via the portal system and feed into the Strengthening Families Programme.  |
| EH2              | Slough Approach practice framework is implemented across the partnership.   |
| EH3              | Early help practice standards and quality assurance processes are embedded into multi-agency practice and audit processes to inform and develop quality of practice and outcomes for children.          |
| EH4              | Development of family network meeting offer to support and empower families to hold the needs of the child at the centre and seek solutions within their own resources.                                 |
| EH5              | Co-ordination of early help networks in localities, linked to communities and local resources (family hubs, community hubs) where multi-agency support is provided and holistic interventions provided. |

# Governance Arrangements

The delivery of Slough's Early Help Strategy has been endorsed by our Multi-agency Children and Young People's Partnership Board who will continue to monitor our early help offer and subsequent outcomes for children, young people and families.

The board feeds into the Local Authorities Health and Wellbeing Board, where strategic agreement will require final agreement at the Health and Wellbeing Board and will then be reviewed on an annual basis by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

We will seek to consult regularly on our early help offer with children, young people, families and professionals at both a strategic and operational levels, which along with data and changing local context, will support review and subsequent developments of our strategy.







**“We will seek to consult regularly on our early help offer with children, young people, families and professionals at both a strategic and operational levels.”**

