

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Early Help Pathway and Hub</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>2 June 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Children's Services</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Steve Barton</b>	<b>Tel: 29-5145</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>steve.barton@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the key principles underpinning the design, consultation and implementation of an Early Help Pathway and Early Help Hub for children's services as part of the Brighton and Hove Early Help Partnership Strategy 2013-2017.
- 1.2 The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and the council's children's service is consulting on three key developments to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families: the Brighton and Hove Thresholds Document (subject to a separate report to this committee); a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); and an Early Help Pathway and Hub.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The central importance of Early Help in enabling children and adults to reach their full potential has been a common theme in a number of reviews that have been commissioned by successive governments (*Working Together*; Munro Review; Allen Review; Field Review; Marmot Review). They have all independently reached the same conclusion that it is important to provide help early in order to improve outcomes for children and young people.

In Brighton & Hove the majority of children and young people are well supported through universal services. However we recognise that our outcomes for children and young people are not as good as they should be, and there are particularly challenging outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people.

In Brighton & Hove we support the principle of Early Help, which recognises that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by services which often are less effective and more expensive. We identified the need to develop an Early Help strategy to set out clearly what we plan to do, and how we intend to work, with an increasing emphasis on the value of Early Help.

The Early Help Strategy was developed through thorough consultation with key partners across the city, culminating in the Early Help Strategy Conference on 5th November 2014, which was attended by over 200 delegates, including our schools, council services working with vulnerable groups, community and voluntary sector organisations, and partners in health and the police.

The Early Help Strategy was published in January 2014:

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/childrens-services/early-help>

This includes the key priority to establish an Early Help Hub, to improve the assessment of problems facing children and families and to ensure prompt access to the right support services to create a single integrated system for identification, referral, assessment, and monitoring of effective early help interventions, and offer support and guidance to all providers of services to children and young people.

In addition we aim to ensure all adult and children's services are using a new streamlined Early Help Assessment as the initial multi-agency identification and assessment process including evidence based plans and regular reviews.

- 3.2 Attached as Appendix 1 is the consultation paper in respect of the Early Help Pathway and Hub, the MASH and the Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria.
- 3.3 The paper describes the key purpose of the Early Pathway as setting out new arrangements to manage concerns and issues that fall outside of safeguarding and child protection procedures but which currently may challenge individual organisations. The paper emphasises that safeguarding and child protection concerns will continue to follow mandatory LSCB procedures by making a referral to the new MASH. A draft, and schematic representation of the proposed early Help Pathway, is attached as an appendix to the report.
- 3.4 The paper sets out initial thinking about the functions of an Early Help Hub i.e.
  - Responding to enquiries:
    - o Provide advice, signposting, mentoring and/or case consultation sharing knowledge and expertise held by hub staff
    - o Collate and/or update information currently held in various directories or by services and initiatives such as the Family Information Service (FIS), the advice part of ACAS, youth information and advice services and the Vulnerability Index.
  - Responding to referrals:
    - o Build on Early Help/CAF assessments, cross-checking data systems, including possible home visits for complex cases, to create a detailed family profile
    - o Inform an EHH multi-agency, multi-disciplinary triage process to identify and agree services/interventions
    - o Support families/individuals to engage with services including, where appropriate, enabling the referrer to continue their input/lead professional role

- Informing commissioning and service redesign:
  - o Collate, quality assure and evaluate outcome data from interventions
  - o Support an evidence based, value for money approach
  - o Inform commissioning/joint commissioning and/or service redesign

3.5 During the extensive consultation process, and through the work of the Early Help Implementation Group, these functions are being refined and developed in much more detail. It has become clear, for example that the Early Help Hub has a fourth function which is to continue to support and strengthen inter-agency partnership and multi-professional working.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 The purpose of the consultation paper (Appendix 1) is to review our current thinking and explore alternative options. The paper concludes with a set of questions to enable us to collate responses from partners and service users.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 Details to follow

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 The Early Help Pathway and Early Help Hub has the potential, alongside the Threshold Document and the MASH to effect a significant, 'whole-system' change across children's services which will improve outcomes for children, young people and their families and the efficiency, effectiveness and value for money of the children's services.

6.2 The committee is therefore asked to consider the proposals set out in Appendix 1 as part of the consultation and development process.

#### **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

7.1 The Early Help Hub and the development of the Early Help pathway are integral elements of the children's services VFM programme. It is hoped that this initiative will result in the reduction of social care activity across the spectrum and in particular, high cost provision. At present it is not possible to gather any evidence from this authority or others as to the level of savings that can be realistically achieved. Investment in early help provision currently stands at £7.6m and it is crucial that these resources are deployed in the most effective way possible to maximise potential to improve outcomes while ensuring value for money and reducing spend in high cost services elsewhere.

7.2 Some additional costs may be incurred in setting up the early help hub, although at this stage no specific costs or commitments have been incurred. In the event that new investment is required a robust business case will need to be written identifying where and how mitigating savings will be made.

### Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Early Help Hub and the development of the Early Help pathway are integral to the capacity of the local authority and partner agencies to meet their obligations under a range of legislation relating to services for children, including:

S10 The Children Act 2004 provides that each local authority in England must make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority and other relevant partners with a view to improving the well-being of children in the authority's area so far as relating to— (a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being, (b) protection from harm and neglect, (c) education, training and recreation, (d) the contribution made by them to society, and (e) social and economic well-being.

S1&2 of the Childcare Act 2006 introduced a duty on local authorities to improve the well being of children with reference to the outcomes above, and to reduce inequalities between young children in their area in relation to those matters. Under S17 (1) Children Act 1989 it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. Under section 17(1) Children's Act 1989, a child is considered to be a child in need if s/he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the help of the services by the local Authority . Under Schedule 2 Part 1 S7 of the Children Act 1989 every local authority shall take reasonable steps designed to reduce the need to bring proceedings for care or supervision orders or any family or other proceedings with respect to such children which might lead to them being placed in the authority's care.

*Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson*

*Date: 15.05.14*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Compilation of an Equalities Impact Assessment is included in the work programme and project plan for the Early Help implementation Group.

### Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are no sustainability implication

### Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Consultation Paper: Early Help Pathway, Early Help Hub, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria



## **Appendix 1.**

### **Consultation Paper: Early Help Pathway, Early Help Hub, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria**

#### **1. Purpose of the consultation**

To involve partners in the design and implementation of the early help pathway and hub (EHH) and the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and to consult on the Inter Agency Threshold Criteria (the Threshold Document).

#### **2. Timeline**

- Publish final proposals by May
- Begin incremental implementation in June/July
- Formal launch of EHH and MASH in September.

#### **3. Why do we need to make changes?**

##### **Early Help**

Although we have a range of effective early help services, often delivered by universal services and especially schools, the needs assessment for the Early Help Strategy concluded:

- Our outcomes for children and young people are not as good as they should be, and there are particularly challenging outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people.
- Although there is some good practice and evidence of co-ordination and integration across the city this is not embedded.
- Despite a significant amount of Early Help intervention across the city it is not always clear what impact and difference it makes to outcomes for children and young people and families. We need to make sure our Early Help services target those that need it most and are of both high quality and good value for money.

We know our partners often continue to struggle with the complexity of the systems for obtaining support, especially in multi-agency situations and that some children and young people continue to ‘slip through the net’ until problems are entrenched and harder to resolve.

##### **MASH – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub**

Serious Case Reviews continue to identify missed opportunities for information sharing and effective communication between agencies. This in turn translates to missed opportunities to implement appropriate safeguarding measures before the advent of some critical (sometimes fatal) outcomes.

A new single inspection framework led by OFSTED began this year. Its remit is the joint inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children and states that “child protection does not begin at the point at which a referral is made to children’s social care”. The focus of the inspections will be on “the effectiveness of... services for

children who may be at risk of harm, including the effectiveness of early identification and early help”.

Over the last five years there has been movement nationally towards the creation of multi-agency safeguarding hubs for children and adults.

### **Threshold Document**

Children’s Social Work Services (CSW) and the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board (LSCB) recognise that there is a need to provide guidance to professionals and service users to clarify the circumstances in which to refer a child to a specific agency to address an individual need, to carry out a Family Common Assessment (CAF) or to refer to CSW.

We are therefore undertaking a major consultation on the final draft of the Brighton and Hove Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria for Children in Need document.

## **4. Strategy**

### **Ambition and Scope:**

- Improve our multi-agency identification, referral and partnership response where there are early help needs or concerns which can no longer be met by one organisation working with the family.
- Strengthen our multi-agency safeguarding and child protection response where there may be or are risks to a child’s safety or well-being as described in the LSCB Pan Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures
- Agree and publish Threshold Criteria for Children in Need

### **Governance:**

- Development of the pathway and the hubs is being led by the Director of Children’s Services and the Directorate Management Team and is one of the critical systems changes to deliver the priorities in the council’s Corporate Plan and the Children’s Service three year strategy
- The MASH is being developed under the auspices of the Local Children’s Safeguarding Board. Cross-agency Strategy and Operational Boards are in place to design and implement the MASH.
- The proposal for the early help pathway and hub flows from the Early Help Strategy, developed with partners during 2013 and which we anticipate will move forward under the auspices of an appropriate multi-agency group such as the Stronger Families Stronger Communities Partnership Board. An Early Help management team is in place to oversee the design and implementation of the pathway and hub.
- The development and implementation of the Threshold Criteria is under the auspices of the LSCB

The changes in this paper mean the current ACAS service will be replaced by the MASH and a Social Work Assessment Service and there will be a new context for multi-agency working currently described in the CAF/TAF arrangements.

## **5. What are we proposing to do?**

## **Early Help Pathway:**

Appendix 1 is a draft and *schematic* representation of what an early help pathway for the Children's Service.

The early help pathway will be firmly based on the strengths of our existing systems including arrangements across early years services, parenting programmes, community CAMHS, behaviour and attendance partnerships, the pilot Youth Early Help Pathway and the processes and relationships established by the Stronger Families Stronger Communities programme. (See Appendix 2)

The pathway is based on 4 principles:

- Early help support and interventions provided by universal services very often meets the needs of children, young people and their families
- The pathway underpins CAF/TAF arrangements i.e. when concerns, needs and/or support can no longer be held or provided by one organisation and further advice, information or services is required.
- The key purpose of the pathway is to set out new arrangements to manage concerns and issues that fall outside of safeguarding and child protection procedures but which currently may challenge individual organisations
- Safeguarding and child protection concerns must continue to follow mandatory LSCB procedures by making a referral to the new MASH (rather than ACAS)

The pathway presents both opportunities and challenges:

- An integrated system for advice, referral and the coordination of evidence based interventions will improve how all partners manage demand but will require a shared commitment to common processes and delegated decision making
- The pathway is an opportunity to develop sharing of information and intelligence about groups of children (as well as individuals) to develop responses to emerging issues but will require clear protocols to preserve the collaborative, consent based relationships that inform early help
- Data from monitoring early help interventions can inform commissioning and service redesign but may require greater clarity about partnership and funding arrangements

## **Early Help Hub**

The EHH will be based on what is works well including the strengths of our CAF/TAF arrangements, the lessons learned from the Youth Pathway and from the SFSC multi-agency triage process. (See Appendix 2)

Our initial thinking has identified the following functions for the EHH:

- Responding to enquiries:
  - Provide advice, signposting, mentoring and/or case consultation sharing knowledge and expertise held by hub staff
  - Collate and/or update information currently held in various directories or by services and initiatives such as the Family Information Service

(FIS), the advice part of ACAS, youth information and advice services and the Vulnerability Index.

- Responding to referrals:
  - Build on Early Help/CAF assessments, cross-checking data systems, including possible home visits for complex cases, to create a detailed family profile
  - Inform a EHH multi-agency, multi-disciplinary triage process to identify and agree services/interventions
  - Support families/individuals to engage with services including, where appropriate, enabling the referrer to continue their input/lead professional role
  
- Informing commissioning and service redesign:
  - Collate, quality assure and evaluate outcome data from interventions
  - Support an evidence based, value for money approach
  - Inform commissioning/joint commissioning and/or service redesign

## **MASH**

In order to address the issues set out at the beginning of this paper and make children safer, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the council's Children's Services Committee propose to establish a MASH which co-locates key agencies and their data into a secure assessment, research and referral unit for notifications regarding vulnerable children, young people and adults.

Principles underpinning a MASH:

- Strategic commitment and ownership by all agencies
- Strong accountability and leadership within the MASH
- Rotate staff in MASH to ensure in touch and connected to home agencies
- Effective referral and assessment point and outcome based interventions provided by Early Help services (the Early Help Pathway and Hub)
- Joint Information sharing protocol across adults and children's services.
- Ongoing joint training ensuring good practice shared
- Excellent communication strategy

Our initial thinking is that the MASH will consist of a co-located team of people from core agencies including: Children's Social Work services (CSW); Police; Health; Mental Health; Education and Youth Offending Team.

Staff in the MASH will work together to jointly to assess and decide on appropriate levels of information sharing required for each case – replacing the functions currently undertaken by ACAS.

Team members will continue to be employed by their own agencies but will be co-located in one office to offer an integrated service. The MASH will work to an agreed process for analysing and assessing risk, dealing with all notifications relating to safeguarding or the welfare of children.

Anticipated benefits:

- A standard risk assessment and decision making process leads to consistency and clarity of decision making

- Reduces the risk of information being overlooked as all agency information relevant to each child/family is identified and therefore needs fully assessed
- The most appropriate agency to meet the child's needs can be identified reducing unnecessary referrals
- Effective interventions can be accessed at an early stage to prevent needs escalating
- Information in the MASH is kept confidential and only disclosed on a 'need to know' basis.
- MASH performance is research based and can be monitored and evaluated
- A reduction in inappropriate referrals to children's social work services

### **Threshold Document**

The Threshold Document is not a definitive tool. The aim is to provide guidelines for decision making with regards risk factors, balancing the strengths and weaknesses in the situation for individual children. The attached threshold consultation document points out that it can appear that similar situations for children can end up with very different services. This illustrates where professional knowledge, based on evidence and an analysis of resilience factors, makes the difference. The document is also there to ensure that professionals can challenge each others thinking using the same basis for setting the conversation on equal footings.

## **6. Framework for discussion/consultation questions:**

### **Early Help Hub:**

- What works well currently in relation to Early Help?
- What are the obstacles and challenges and do you feel the EHH proposal could help overcome these?
- Would you welcome a single Early Help Pathway and would you agree to work within the system and accept advice and decisions?
- Have you any thoughts about the model of hub you would like to see?

### **MASH:**

- What works well currently when you have a safeguarding concern?
- Are there any obstacles or challenges in this area of work?
- Have you any thoughts on the MASH proposals and how they would make your role as a potential referrer easier?

### **Threshold Document:**

- What is your view of the new draft Threshold document?
- How helpful do you find the 'windscreen' diagram and the level descriptors in terms of knowing how to access the right support and advice?

### **Overview:**

- How do you think the three initiatives (EHH, MASH, Thresholds) work together in guiding the levels of support and intervention from Children's Services and other partners?
- Have you any suggestions for a communication strategy in respect of these developments or any other improvements in how they are linked and co-ordinated?
- How could your organisation contribute to and/or be part of the EHH team?

**7. Links:**

**Pan Sussex Safeguarding Procedures**

<http://pansussexscb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

**Brighton & Hove Early Help Strategy**

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/childrens-services/early-help>

**Family CAF**

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/childrens-services/family-caf-common-assessment-framework>

**Support for Families**

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/community-and-life-events/support-families>

**Brighton & Hove Corporate Plan**

<http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>

# EARLY HELP PATHWAY

Linked to Thresholds Criteria

**Emerging problem identified and assessed**

Needs met by universal / mainstream provision

OR

Needs are not clear, not known or not met

**Safeguarding**  
Refer to MASH.  
Immediate or significant risk of harm.

**Enquiry**  
Seek informal advice and / or guidance from the EHH

**Referral**  
Open Early Help Assessment / CAF and refer to the EHH

**Needs Met**  
by single or multi-agency intervention following Early Help Assessment / CAF

## Early Help Hub (EHH)

- Offer advice, guidance or mentoring
- Screen, gather information and create family profile
- Evaluate and build EH Assessment / CAF
- Identify intervention and engage services
- Escalate if necessary to MASH in consultation with referrer
- Monitor & quality assure interventions
- Inform commissioning and service re-design

## EH Intervention

- Complete EH Assessment
- Co-ordinate and deliver interventions
- Evaluate and report impact

## Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- Act as front door to child protection services
- Build intelligence via multi-agency information sharing
- Provide emergency response function
- Allocate casework, including referral to EHH
- Monitor & quality assure interventions

**Level 1**  
Universal needs

No additional support needs

**Level 2**  
Low to vulnerable needs

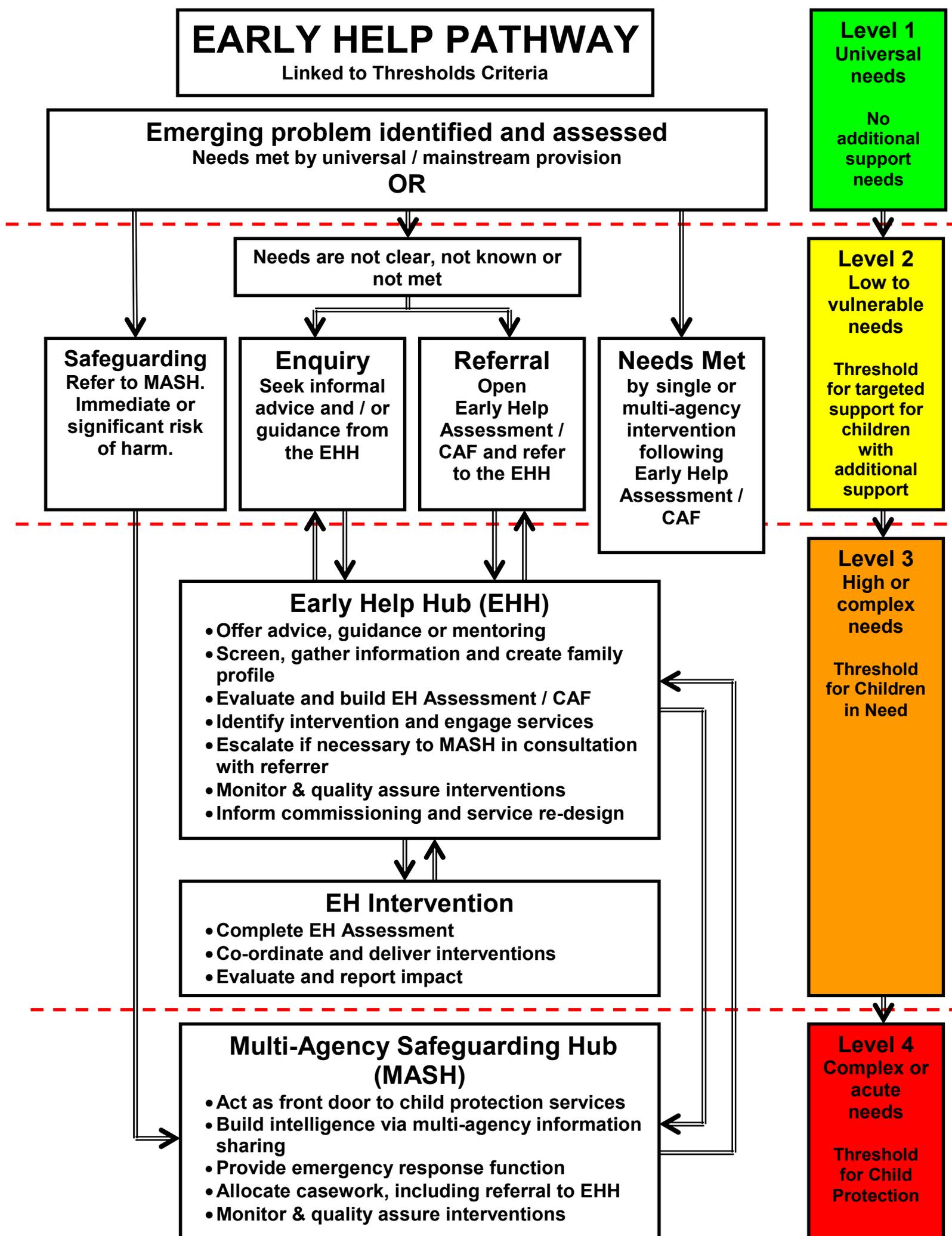
Threshold for targeted support for children with additional support

**Level 3**  
High or complex needs

Threshold for Children in Need

**Level 4**  
Complex or acute needs

Threshold for Child Protection



## **Appendix 2**

### **Current Early Help arrangements – key components of an integrated Early Help Pathway**

#### **Early Years Early Help Pathway**

Every child is assessed by a Health Visitor and if additional help or support is required then the Health Visitor will plan this with the family. The extra support levels are called Universal Plus or Partnership Plus, and are part of the Healthy Child Programme. Health Visitors are based in Children's Centres and work closely with Children's Centre staff and other professionals, including midwives, GPs and nurseries, so that the child gets the right level of support they need. Health Visitors use the Common Assessment Framework to assess needs and plan and coordinate care, and work with families so that things get better for children.

#### **Children's Social Work Services: re-direct pathway**

Initial contacts to Children's Social Work that do not meet the threshold for Social Work intervention are "re-directed" one of 3 "contact-points" in the community, depending on the age of the child / young person: Health Visiting ( for under 5's); School Nursing / Family CAF team ( for 5-11 year olds); and the Youth Early Help Pathway ( for 11 years +). These contacts currently decide which service / professional is best placed to have a conversation with the family to offer support. The outcome of the re-direct pathway varies from: an offer of support through a single agency (e.g. health visiting, school, youth service); initiation of a CAF process; or support declined by the family.

#### **Youth Early Help**

Key services for young people (the Youth Work service, Youth Offending Service, Youth Employability Service, school nursing and the SFSC Integrated Team for Families (ITF), have worked together since September 2013 to pilot a single early help pathway for school age young people (11-19). Staff work together with referrers to find the most appropriate help and support to the young person. In the first 3 months were 141 referrals with the majority coming from schools, the police and children's social work services.

#### **Stronger Families, Stronger Communities**

To be eligible for the SFSC programme, families must meet at least 2 of 3 criteria, as defined by the Troubled Families Unit. There are various routes by which eligible families are identified:

- Youth Early Help Pathway: see above
- Identification Checklists: completed eligibility checklist sent directly to the ITF
- School meetings: regular meetings between all schools and the ITF where all children known to be eligible are discussed and support and intervention agreed.
- ITF also sit on a number of multi-agency forums where potential referrals are discussed
- A significant number of cases have been identified through mapping different databases against each other.