



The West Sussex Think Family Partnership



Early Help



Smarter



Sooner



Safer

Stronger

The Early Help Action Plan
for West Sussex 2014-17



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In this document we use terms that you may be unfamiliar with or require a definition.

Resilience - The ability to deal with stressful situations, adversity or challenge, and to bounce back or cope without significant or long term harm

Commissioning - The process of understanding, specifying, securing and monitoring services to meet people’s needs at a strategic level - making things happen for children young people and families through, and with, others

Family - In this context the use of the word family is in its broadest sense including foster and caring placements. Reference to children and young people in families covers age groups 0-19, and in addition, 20-21 years old for young people who are disabled

‘Whole family’ approach - This means working in a way that recognises there may be an impact on other members of a family, other than the person involved in a service directly – it is about ‘Think Family’

Early Help Offer – one singular view of all Early Help services (irrespective of who delivers them) available to families in West Sussex

FOREWORD



In West Sussex, we have strong ambitions for children and young people to have the best possible start in life. Our aim is to enable all of them to aspire to and achieve their full potential, helping to give them the foundation for a successful future.

However, some families experience difficulties which, if identified and ‘nipped in the bud’, can be prevented from escalating. There are a range of services currently being provided across the County; however the challenge for us is to understand what early help can do for families with children and young people in West Sussex and to co-ordinate and deliver these more effectively.

This Early Help Action Plan gives a strategic and common vision that is shared by different organisations providing services to families with children and young people in West Sussex. We are determined to help families who need it by intervening early and tackling the root cause of their problems with them so that all members of the households, especially children, reach their full potential. Our approach is this, that we will be **smarter** in the way we do things; children, young people and families will get what they need **sooner**; we will ensure children live in strong protective families where they are **safer** and that outcomes for them will be **stronger**.

This is our Action Plan – all organisations in the County own it. In fact whoever is delivering a service to children, young people or families. It is no longer acceptable to say ‘no’ to giving help to someone early on, only to see their problems escalate to a crisis, causing more harm to them and more cost to another agency. We can only solve this by working together.

Early help is a new way of working with families but the truth is we have been doing it and we need to do more of it, more effectively and achieve better value for money from our joint investments. Our Think Family Programme is one example of this and will remain a cornerstone of how we deliver a more strategic approach to Early Help.



This is a clear, decisive way forward which is why we are calling this document an Action Plan. The organisations who have signed up to it pledge to work collaboratively to overcome barriers so that we can achieve better outcomes for our communities, not just in the immediate future but in the long term. This Action Plan is a foundation for the next 25 years and all of us must play our part.



Louise Goldsmith
Leader of West Sussex County Council
On behalf of children, young people and families in West Sussex

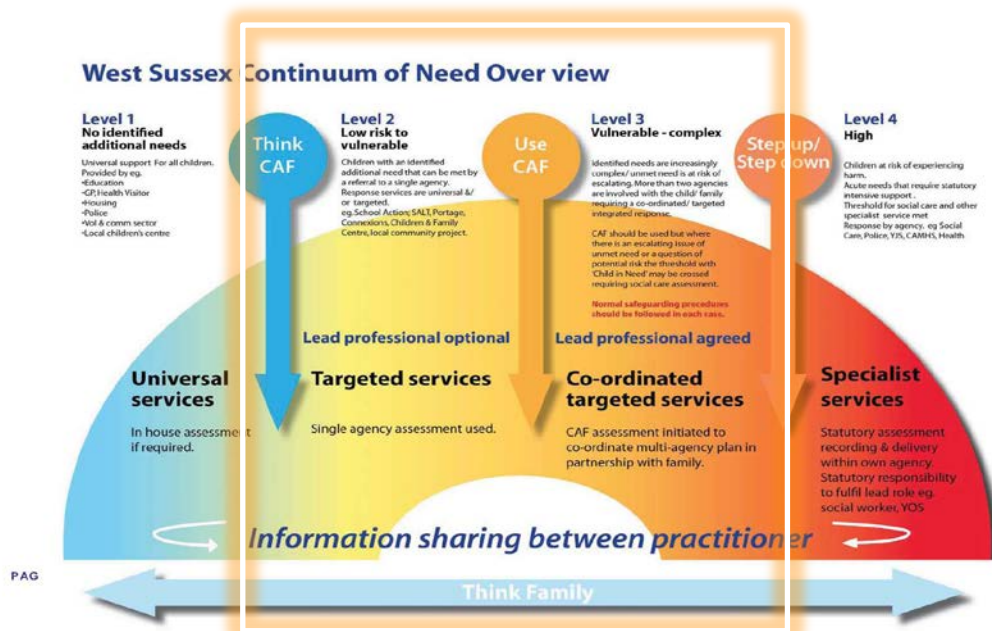
1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Purpose of the Action Plan

The purpose of this Action Plan is twofold:-

1. It will be the basis for transforming services for families who need Early Help and driving the work that we all do.
2. It will inform and guide all services commissioned for families and children ensuring an Early Help approach is built into them.

The diagram below shows how this Early Help Action Plan maps onto the continuum of need currently used in West Sussex i.e. it will target families who need early help at levels 2 and 3. This is a well-known tool that practitioners use to make sense of services on offer and the needs of the families who use them.



We believe that this forms the basis of learning and understanding how Early Help can be delivered more effectively across the County.

What is Early Help in West Sussex?

‘Early help’ means intervening as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or working with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early help (sometimes known as early intervention) reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than respond when difficulties have emerged and intervention can be less effective and often more expensive.

Although research shows that the greatest impact can be made during a child’s early years, early help is not just for very young children, as problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence; and at particular times in a family’s journey – as part of their ‘life events’ such as bereavement or homelessness.

Early help approaches can be delivered through both providing services to all children and families (i.e. universally), or targeted support offered to those more likely to suffer poor outcomes at any stage of childhood or adolescence.

Early help can give families the opportunity to regain control of their circumstances without formal statutory 'interventions' such as Social Care. If help early on is not available this can, in the worst cases, result in children's social and emotional development being impaired with potential for family breakdown and children being taken into care.

Why now?

The benefits of implementing an Early Help Action Plan have been reinforced by many current national and local drivers. These include statutory requirements from OFSTED and the West Sussex Local Safeguarding Children's board. There is a significant national evidence base that proves early help works – it reduces cost to the public sector and better long term results for families.

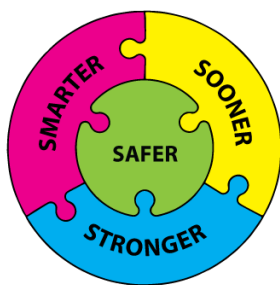
Challenges

The delivery of the Early Help Action Plan requires all organisations in the County to work together differently. From the extensive consultation and feedback we have had whilst developing this Action Plan, we know there is a huge commitment to the concept. If we are to deliver this Action Plan we need to overcome a number of challenges, the most pressing of which are set out below.

- Whilst many services are delivering good outcomes, they are fragmented and uncoordinated.
- More pooling of funds is required.
- Collecting data and information on Early Help is difficult because systems don't talk to 'each other'.
- Data is still not shared as well as it could be.
- Mapping the cost of Early Help and understanding how this approach saves money is contentious because of the array of methodologies used and that much spending is 'invisible'.

Overcoming these barriers is a key priority. They will be objectives in our implementation plan. We will constantly check we are overcoming them by asking those people overseeing the Action Plan to scrutinise our progress. We will also ask families what they think and if their experience of services has changed.

2. IMPLEMENTING THE VISION



“Early intervention is a force for transforming the lives of children, families and communities, particularly the most disadvantaged.”

Grasping the nettle – C4EO¹

The vision is this – that we will provide help and support at the earliest opportunity to families experiencing problems. We will make sure our approach will be: **smarter** in the way we do things; children, young people and families will get what they need **sooner**; we will ensure children live in strong protective families where they are **safer** and that outcomes for them will be **stronger**.

Good universal services such as health visiting are the bedrock of effective Early Help. We expect that universal services will deliver quality and value for money, supporting families in ensuring that every child has a good start in life. This Action Plan builds on this universal foundation by targeting services and support at the earliest opportunity to families, children and young people who need extra help, so that emerging problems can be ‘nipped in the bud’ and do not escalate further. Early Help gives families the opportunity to regain control of their circumstances, ensuring that their children stay safe and achieve their full potential.

To deliver this vision all organisations commit to a set of **overarching principles** set out below. These will guide commissioning and delivery of Early Help services.

1. Early help and intervention is everyone’s job.
2. Most families with a little support can and do overcome difficulties.
3. The best outcomes are often achieved when people are enabled to sort out their own problems, rather than us doing it to them or for them.
4. Barriers that stop families getting the Early Help they need must be identified and removed.
5. The voice and experience of children, young people and families should influence service design and delivery.
6. Make best use of reducing public sector resources.

Aim of the Action Plan

The Action Plan provides one common vision across different organisations providing services to families, young people and children in West Sussex. It embeds our need to understand and share collective safeguarding responsibilities in all approaches to Early Help. The Action Plan will provide the context for organisations to align and prioritise services around early help, to be clear on and identify their early help ‘offer’, and for both commissioners and providers to show how their early help activities will be outcome driven and evidence based. The challenge for all is to develop Early Help services that are:

Early help services that are:	
Targeted	focused on clearly identified need
Co-ordinated	working together on commissioning and planning
Local	locally responsive
Empowering	enabling families to take responsibility and be involved
Outcome focused	clearly demonstrating an impact on outcomes
Multi-agency	integrated early help across organisations and agencies to ensure a continuum (or pathway) of support for families with children and young people

3. WHAT THIS ACTION PLAN MEANS FOR WEST SUSSEX

1. What this means for organisations

It means high level political leadership and a leadership commitment across all organisations and partnerships, to achieve our common goal.

Organisations who commit to this Action Plan will:

1. Support the development of the action plan and align priorities with their individual organisational plans.
2. Invest in areas where the benefits are clear, but may be realised by others and resolve the financial implications of this.
3. Take responsibility together to stop family problems becoming more entrenched and so cease to practice in ways that transfer costs to other areas of service in the public sector that are more expensive.
4. Use and share data more effectively across partners.
5. Create effective integrated early help screening approaches that transcend traditional boundaries. This may mean redesigning our services.
6. Stop resources from being wasted by lack of collaboration
7. Have a long term vision and stay committed to it.

2. What this means for families, children and young people

It means helping families to be independent and able to cope with and solve problems for themselves and where this is not possible, to take decisive action to protect children.

Families will:-

1. Be able to access early help services that are integrated across organisations and agencies.
2. Not have to get to a crisis before help is available - If you ask for help to avoid a serious problem that is getting worse or a crisis that is emerging, that you get help to try to stop it escalating.
3. Become more resilient. This includes helping families to:-
 - Work hard to stay together – including wider family support networks.
 - Take responsibility for problems, and help to solve them where they can.
 - Find help in their own local and known networks, family and friends, where possible.
 - Build strong attachments and where they have been broken help to rebuild them.

3. What this means for communities

The activity that this Action Plan will initiate will always be delivered as close to families in their communities as possible.

For communities this Action Plan means that: -

1. Universal services will deliver effective support and help.
2. Communities will be part of the solution.
3. Local provision of early help and family support will be based on evidence and need.
4. Local networks and partnerships are nurtured and are a focal point for service delivery.
5. Sharing local information about what's available for families will be easier.
6. Recognising the critical role that volunteers and 3rd sector organisation can contribute.

4. What this means for the early help workforce

This means commitment across organisations to a new kind of workforce that is 'whole family' (looks at the family as a whole) and early help focused. This will require us to break down actual and perceived barriers to effective working between professionals providing services.

For staff working in these services and for new services that are commissioned we expect:-

1. Sharing of data, e.g. Families needing help and support are more 'visible' to other services and not 'hidden' until a crisis happens.
2. Workforce development – helping staff to reassess what they do and do more of what families need earlier on.
3. The use of a common vision and language about early help.
4. Different services and teams will work better together, holding risks appropriately and delivering the common aims of the Early Help Strategy.
5. Skills and knowledge to be stretched and developed to meet family's needs.
6. Services designed for adults who are parents, to take a whole family approach.

4. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The implementation plan for this Strategy will be developed in early 2014. It will focus on the 4 key themes of our vision.



Early Help Action Plan	
Smarter	How we structure and build our services
Sooner	Making sure that the right help is available at the right time for families
Safer	Promote and develop families that protect children from harm
Stronger	Knowing we are making the right impact

The next few pages of this document lay out the high level themes that will be expanded on in the implementation plan.



1. SMARTER

How we structure and build services



What we need to do to be smarter

1. **We need to have effective governance and accountability for delivering this Action Plan.**
 - We will develop the Think Family governance structure and the accountabilities of the West Sussex Local Safeguarding Childrens Board so that there is strong guidance, direction and scrutiny of the delivery of this Action Plan.
 - The Governance structure will include local geographically based delivery groups (Appendix B).
2. **We will create a co-ordinated and integrated approach to commissioning services.**
 - Agencies across West Sussex will co-ordinate the commissioning of Early Help Services by:-
 - a. Agreeing shared commissioning standards.
 - b. Embedding Early Help outcomes in relevant service specifications.
 - c. Putting the voice of families, children and young people at the heart of our commissioning approach.

d. Maximising the opportunity to save money by forging new alliances with commissioners and service providers from all sectors.

- We will create a commissioning approach that identifies and manages demand appropriately and that supports the development of an effective early help market place.

3. We will value partnership working

- To align and design services that offer effective and 'visible' Early Help services and support across relevant organisations we will:-
 - a. Continue to work together and build trust and partnership working such as between local authorities, public health, NHS, police, CCG's (clinical commissioning groups), schools and local communities.
 - b. Develop a 'family focused' approach across different organisations and agencies that is assertive and 'child centred'.
 - c. Maximise opportunities to share data and IT that means that, irrespective of which organisation they are in contact with families that need early help are 'visible' across services.
 - d. Focus on Early Help and stretching the boundaries of our traditional responsibility.
 - e. Focus on early identification of families in need of Early Help.
 - f. Build and support organisational capacity to confidently and appropriately manage risk.

4. Workforce - Early Help skills development

- Prioritise and focus on supporting our workforce so that they have a shared understanding of what Early Help Means and the implications for their role.
- We will deliver a programme of skills development and training across the early help workforce regarding early intervention practice that:-
 - a. Encourages and promotes robust, supportive management capacity and networks that enable staff from across different agencies to confidently manage anxiety.
 - b. Embeds the Signs of Safety approach across the whole system, supporting a consistent approach in our conversation and engagement with families.
 - c. Ensures that thresholds relating to risk are clearly communicated and understood between professionals so that families can move between early help and specialist statutory intervention at the right time.
 - d. Continues to evaluate the impact of Think Family Keyworker services and join them more effectively with existing services.



2. SOONER

Making sure that the right help is available at the right time for families



Making sure support at the right time is available to the right people in the right place is the key to the success of Early Help.

What we need to do to provide help earlier

1. Evidence and needs

- Improve our knowledge and understanding of the data and information so that we can:
 - a. Target resources at those most in need of extra help.
 - b. Locate families who need help who do not necessarily identify themselves.
 - c. Build on the opportunity to understand the breadth of support families who need Early Help may require in order to move forward successfully: e.g. public health and emotional wellbeing data.

2. Early Help culture

- Develop a culture of taking responsibility for helping early where we can:
 - a. Promote and encourage early intervention signposting and co-ordination within local communities to improve families awareness of services available
 - b. Agree thresholds across the spectrum of intervention so that partners understand and have confidence in working with families and appropriately manage risk
 - c. Make it easier for professionals to assertively and proactively offer Early Help service to the families they are working with.
 - d. Understand the impact that life events can have on families and where possible, intervene before it occurs e.g. not waiting for a family to become homeless.



3. SAFER

Promote and develop families that protect children from harm



'Children's attainment, wellbeing, happiness and resilience are profoundly affected by the quality of the guidance, love and care they receive during the first years of their lives.'

Dame Clare Tickell

Confident and positive parenting, resilient families and secure attachments are amongst the most powerful protective factors for children and young people. Where these things happen in families the likelihood of children developing significant problems in later life is reduced.

1. Attachment

We want children, young people and families to be able to access early and effective support that helps children develop secure attachments and helps parents repair disrupted attachments. Where that's not possible, we will intervene quickly and effectively to minimise harm to the child.

There will be a focus on strengthening the role of parents. We will:-

- Develop and implement a strategic approach to parenting support across the county.
- Help develop stronger, safer parenting particularly:-
 - a. amongst vulnerable groups such as very young parents.
 - b. at key times of disruption such as parents of children with problems at school.
 - c. at significant 'life' events or circumstances such as a family with a child with a disability who may be struggling.
- Help children at the outset of their life, develop secure attachments, particularly vulnerable parents with young children.

2. Safeguarding

We will not compromise our safeguarding responsibilities; however through a shared early help approach, we will:

- Build a 'safe culture' which means resilient agencies and professionals who are aware of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
- Actively work with partners to generate shared understanding what 'safe' looks like.
- Develop operational partnership approaches where risk is actively shared and understood.



4. STRONGER

Knowing we are making a difference



What will be stronger

We will agree with partners a set of clear indicators for measuring the difference this Action Plan makes. Further work is required to ensure we are measuring the things that really count and not that just those things for which data is available.

We will have a set of indicators that will include system wide, organisational and local measures. Broadly speaking those indicators fall into one of the four categories listed below and a number of targets and measures will be used to ensure we deliver these 'big outcomes'.

'System wide' outcomes (overarching outcomes)

1. Children will have a better start in life.
2. Children will be ready for school.
3. Young People will be ready for the transition to adulthood and work.
4. Keeping families together.

In order to achieve the above outcomes, we will focus on the following targets.

1. What will reduce

- a. Demand on intensive and 'crisis' services such as taking children into care.
- b. Families moving into crisis when it could have been averted through earlier support, such as emergency housing, unmet needs for adolescent mental health support.
- c. Barriers for families with emerging problems so they are no longer 'hidden'.
- d. 'Inputs' in to families that have no purpose for them.
- e. Unnecessary expenditure on uncoordinated or inefficient early help services.
- f. The intergenerational negative patterns of behaviour that children inherit and go on to mirror and repeat in their own lives e.g. anti-social behaviour, truancy and exclusion from school, worklessness.
- g. Families who fall through the gaps between services e.g. if they do not meet 'criteria' or 'thresholds' for help.

2. What will increase

- a. The number of families who can cope independently with adversity and challenge.
- b. The number of vulnerable families who are contributing to the West Sussex economy.
- c. The engagement and capacity of communities so they can solve their own local problems.
- d. Parents, Young People and children engaged and enabled to have a voice as fully as possible in all aspects of their lives.
- e. Effective partnership working and multi-agency approaches to information sharing and professional practice.

3. The cost of Early Help

Fundamental to achieve our commissioning aims and delivering the Action Plan outcomes will be an understanding of the social and economic impact of what we currently do and intend to do. We will:-

- a. Map, understand and evaluate the resources currently available for Early Help including budget and staff.
- b. Evaluate the impact of current services.
- c. Understand the value that services deliver and how we can get more value from them.
- d. Have a way of predicting where efficiencies can be delivered showing where and how cost saving can be achieved.

5. NEXT STEPS

This Action Plan has set out an ambitious plan for transforming services for families so that help is offered at the earliest opportunity. However, this Action Plan is the start of a journey. There are many challenges we need to face up to and a host of tasks that now need to take place. This will be focused on the four themes of safer, sooner, stronger, smarter.

The bullet points below set out the proposed activities over the next six months to implement this Action Plan.

January 2014

- I. Build a common vision for early help and gain the collaboration of the partners required.
- II. Release resources to lead the Action Plan implementation team.
- III. Create an effective multi-agency governance model to take this Action Plan forward.
- IV. Develop and robust economic understanding of Early Help and articulate the business case for Early Help in West Sussex.
- V. Recognise what's working well and pilot projects that build on this and 'test out' the Action Plan.
- VI. Benchmark nationally and explore good practice examples.
- VII. Define broad proposals for phased development of Early Help.
- VIII. Develop base line measure and a broader needs analysis.
- IX. Have a universally understood 'Continuum of need' for families with children aged 0-19, and up to 21years for families with a disabled child.
- X. Align this Action Plan with other strategies across the county so that planning and delivery is joined up e.g. localities and county wide.
- XI. Explore how to develop whole system service specifications and common commissioning standards for Early Help.
- XII. Identify 'pilots projects' in West Sussex and learn from them.

April 2014

- I. Action Plan publically launched – with 'family friendly' versions of the strategy, and what it means for families.
- II. Explore the financial and structural implications – phased and piloted approaches where there will be the most significant impact.
- III. Governance structure and programme team in place with detailed implementation plan for 2014 – 2017 based on:
 - o Financial modelling and review of Early Help.
 - o Comprehensive data and evidenced needs analysis
- I. Engagement activities with stakeholders including families to develop more detailed actions plans and co-design.
- II. Encourage and facilitate partnership working to build a greater understanding of problems that families experience; and from this

understanding, develop an integrated approach to helping them improve their future opportunities.

- III. Explore the financial and structural implications – phased and piloted approaches where there will be the most significant impact.
- IV. Build on joint frameworks that promote better information sharing, both for agencies and for families.
- V. Understand Early Help pathways and journeys.
- VI. Explore issues such as:
 - Joint locations for transforming CAF into Early Help plans.
 - Joint training and development including the voluntary sector and the community.
 - Demand reduction; preventing families requiring statutory specialist intervention through effective Early Help or supporting de-escalation from higher tiers of need.

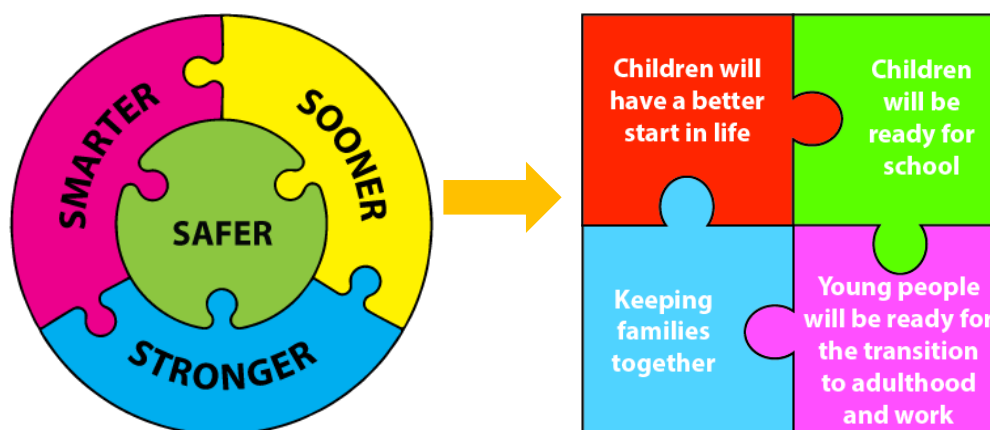
APPENDIX A – OUTCOME MEASURES AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

The Early Help Action Plan is underpinned by the evidence that some families and children are more at risk of achieving poor outcomes for their future than others. Identifying families that are at risk both quickly and early is essential to improving outcomes for families in West Sussex through the plan.

National and local data provide 'baseline measures' of the current condition of West Sussex, as well as helping to give measures for 'meaningful outcomes' for the plan across the county and at districts and borough level. The outcomes of the Early Help plan centre on:

1. Giving children the best start in life
2. Ensuring children are ready for school
3. Ensuring children and young people are ready for the transition to adulthood
4. Keeping families together

Overarching approach and outcomes for Early Help Action Plan



The evidence provided in the data summary in the appendix offers some baseline information that can be explored further to ensure the development of measures that will align to these outcomes. Through analysis of local data and information, for example from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 'Tackling child poverty', West Sussex Annual Public Health Report 2011 and other population and performance data, we will understand what the evidence is telling us about the priorities for investment and outcomes for early help.

The evidence shows that a number of groups, locations and characteristics of families, children and young people are more at risk than others and therefore in need of early help, including:

Vulnerable groups such as, or data sets that will be used to provide evidence:

- Families living in areas of higher relative poverty
- *[reducing child poverty]*
- *[reduce number of children requiring intervention from statutory services]*
- *[reduction in number of children dealing with issues related to obesity who are receiving early help]*
- *[Increasing the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grade A* – C, including English and mathematics, who are in receipt of free school meals]*
- *[reducing persistent absence from school for children living in families with multiple problems, who are receiving our help]*

Homeless families such as those who are intentionally homeless

- Families who are impacted by domestic abuse
- *[reducing the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people]*

Parents with multiple children subject to care proceedings

- *[Preventing children becoming looked after]*

‘NEETS’ – those young people Not in Education, Employment or Training

- *[improved engagement in education, work and training and increasing % thereof]*

Young people who are at higher risk of teenage pregnancy

- *[reducing the rate of teenage conceptions among girls particularly in some areas]*

Parents and parents-to-be, who have complex issues such as (but not limited to):

- mental health problems
- substance misuse issues
- disability or accessibility issues affecting their parenting
- *[a reduction in number of ‘troubled families’]*

Parents with a child or young person that is considered ‘under the criteria’ for specialist help but have

- a disability that may need help with the impact on the family
- emerging mental health problems
- emerging behaviour issues

Young people

- leaving care who are at risk of becoming parents and not being able to care for children effectively
- for those supporting them in finding opportunities, early help is important (for the young people to achieve their full potential and integrate within society such as employment, training and education)

- increasing % of children in care achieving five or more GCSEs grade A* - C including English and mathematics

Families of offenders

Parents, especially mothers, who have had children removed

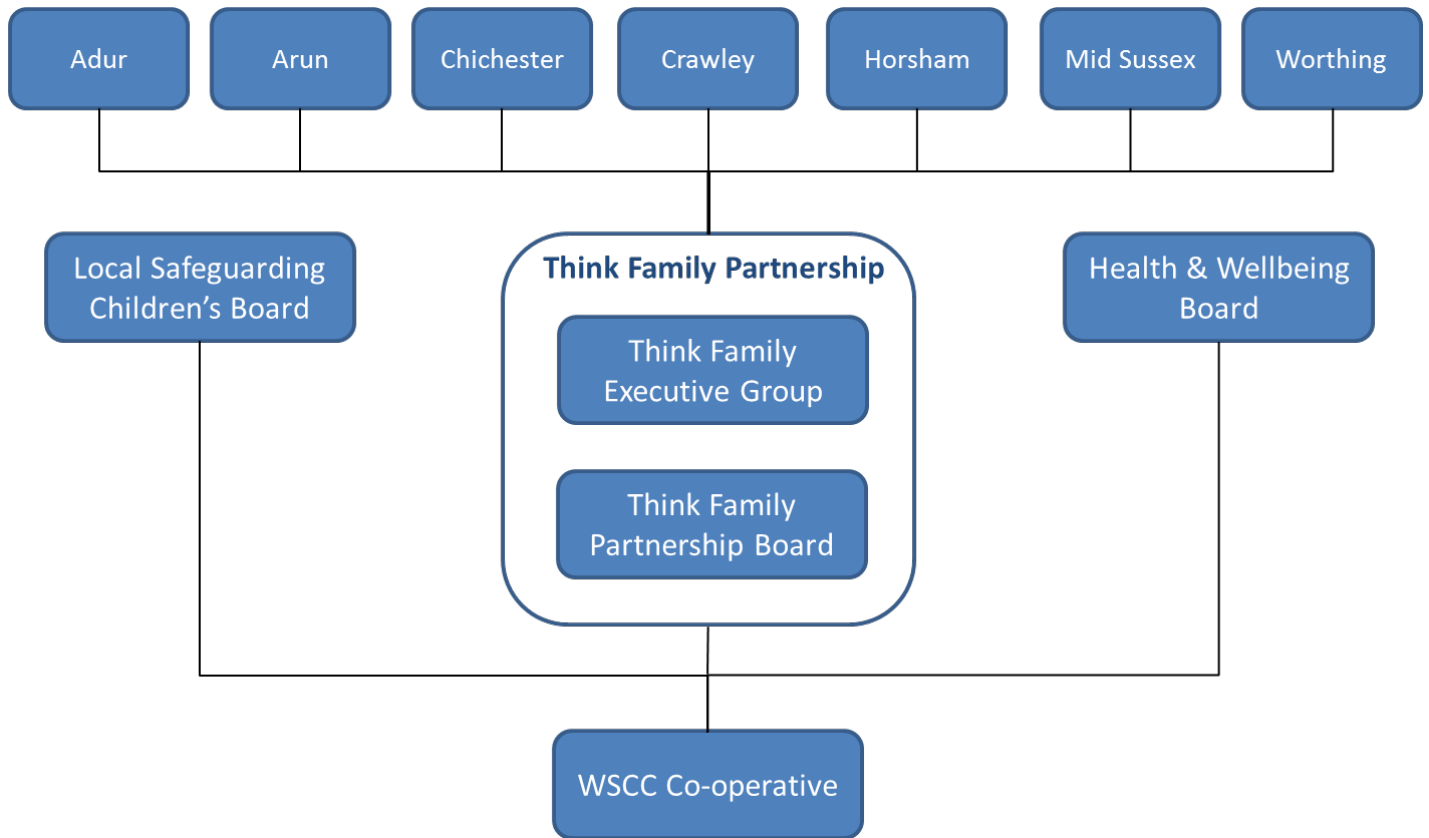
- Female offenders
- Women who have their 2nd and 3rd babies taken into care

Some examples of what we are concerned about:

- The availability of support services for families where English is not their first language
- Availability of help for children developing early behaviour problems, but under current thresholds
- Challenges for families around the use of translators and interpreters supporting family work
- Access to specialist therapeutic support
- Improved engagement with communities and families from ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Young carers and children with parents facing accessibility or mental health issues
- 'Hidden need' – families who need early help, but who do are not identified through normal channels
- Other safeguarding issues such as internet safety

B. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The following illustration is a potential governance model showing that locally based boards will inform and deliver the Early Help Action Plan.



C. REFERENCES

- Consultation summary - www.westsussex.gov.uk/smartersoonerstronger
- West Sussex Early Help Plan - background data - www.westsussex.gov.uk/smartersoonerstronger
- Summary of National policy and context - www.westsussex.gov.uk/smartersoonerstronger
- West Sussex Continuum of need - http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/living/social_care/children/west_sussex_childrens_trust/integrated_tools.aspx