

# Early Help in Newcastle

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## Early Help in Newcastle

Partners in Newcastle, led by the Wellbeing for Life Board, have a shared ambition:

*“People who live, work or learn in Newcastle equally enjoy positive wellbeing and good health”*

Our strategic vision for Children and Young People:

*“Newcastle is a great place to grow up where every child and young person is safe and loved, healthy and happy, and free from harm and has the chance to make the most of their talents to fulfil their potential.”*

(Draft Children and Young People’s Plan 2015-2020)

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## What do we mean by early help?

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from foundation years through to the teenage years.

(Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board vision & priorities 2014-16)

### [The Continuum of help and support](#)



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## The continuum of help and support

We use a model of help and support which helps us to identify the level of need for children and young people.

- **Level 1: Universal** - Children with no additional needs
- **Level 2: Additional** - Children with additional needs requiring support
- **Level 3: Integrated** - Children with additional needs requiring specialist support
- **Level 4: Specialist** - Children with complex or acute needs requiring specialist support

The need for early help can arise at any of these levels and it is the responsibility to assist families and young people to access the help they need, where possible, in order to support our vision for children and young people.

Regardless of which level a child is at, the aim of early help is to prevent escalation to a higher level and where possible, to return children and young people to a lower level.

[See the diagram](#)

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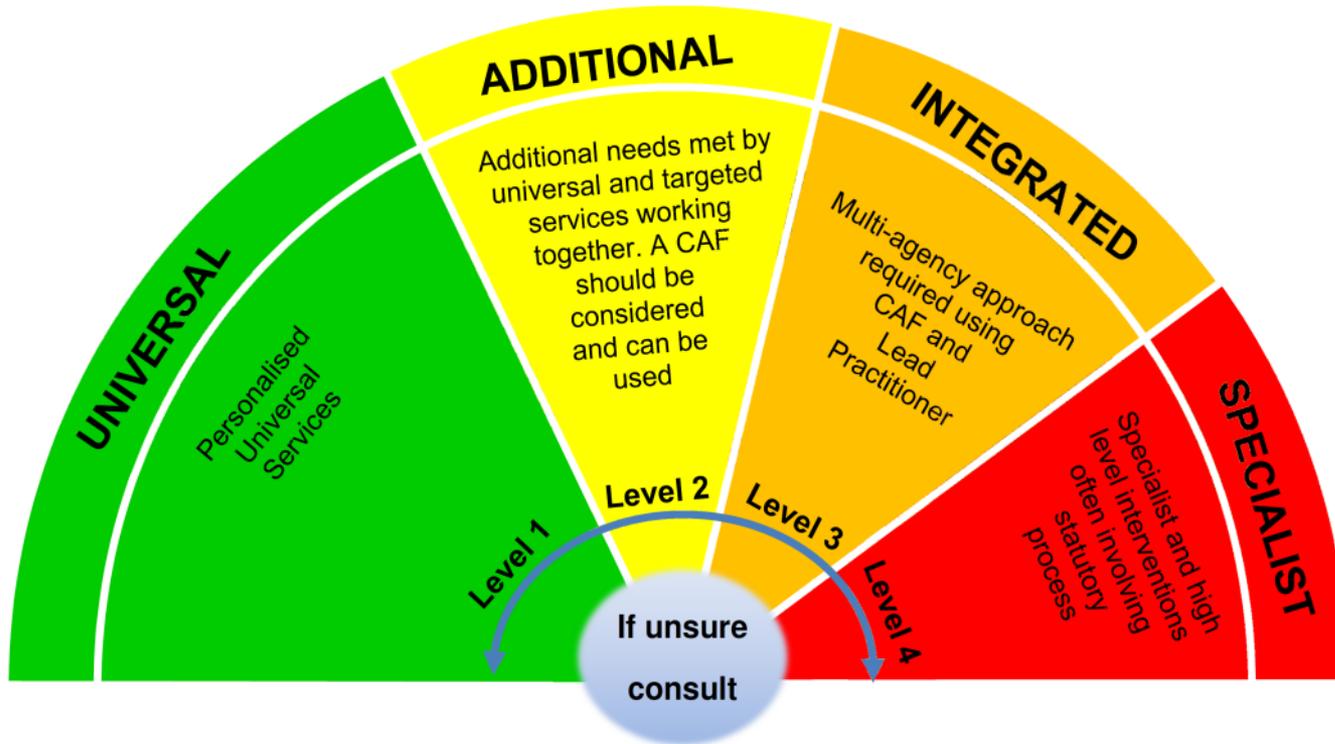
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## The continuum of help and support



For more information on each of the levels, click below:

[Universal](#) - [Additional](#) - [Integrated](#) - [Specialist](#)

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## Why do we need to provide early help?

Providing support as soon as a problem emerges means we can:

- strengthen family skills, resilience and protective factors to reduce the risk of problems escalating or recurring
- improve outcomes and life chances for children, young people and families
- reduce the risk of problems transmitting within families from one generation to the next
- reduce the risk of significant harm to a child
- reduce the need for costly specialist services

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## Who is responsible for making sure families get the early help they need?

[Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board](#) is the statutory multi-agency partnership with responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. NSCB monitors and oversees the implementation and effectiveness of the early help offer in Newcastle with twice yearly reporting into NSCB Business Group on progress. NSCB will also work in collaboration with the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board on actions to improve the effectiveness of joint working between adults and children's services in cases where domestic violence and abuse, parental substance misuse and mental ill health are prevalent.

[Read More about others](#)

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## Who is responsible for making sure families get the early help they need?

The CAF Team and Early Help Advisors work alongside each other to ensure quality. The CAF Team monitors service delivery and the quality standards and outcomes. This will include audit activities, the roll out and impact of the CAF framework and the application of the CAF process. The CAF Team is responsible for the quality and consistency of assessments and ensure assessments take account of all family members.

Practitioners across the children's workforce are responsible for identifying those who could benefit from early help and for following the procedures that are in place at their agencies. If a child or family needs help from a number of different agencies, they should use the CAF process to agree a [Lead Practitioner](#) and create a CAF. The Lead Practitioner is the first point of contact for the family and is responsible for coordinating the services provided by different agencies, making sure the interventions are effectively delivered and regularly reviewed.

The majority of families where additional support is required will be supported through an integrated team around the family drawn from universal services, for example schools and health visitors. Where the family and team need more support, the skills of the CAF Team or an early help advisor can be drawn upon. Early help advisors are allocated to different geographical areas of the city and work with universal support practitioners in universal services. For example, they could:

- Signs of Safety consultation with the team around the family
- Facilitating information sharing between agencies to support the family
- Support and challenge to teams around the family
- Direct work with families until a TAF is in place
- Identifying where intensive support is required

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## How do children, young people and families get access to early help when they need it?

### Principles of access to early help

- **There is no ‘wrong’ door for families:** when a family member is engaged with one service and other problems are identified which they cannot address, the service follows an agreed process. It is not expected that one agency can address every problem identified in a family, but there is an expectation that they complete a CAF to ensure an appropriate team is established around the family.
- **Whole family approach:** when a service is engaged with one member of the family whether a child, young person or vulnerable adult, a whole family approach is adopted. This means that the individual is considered as part of the family unit and steps are taken to address all problems in the family unit.
- **Building capacity in universal services to offer the best response to families** and supporting those services to establish a multi-agency response where this is required.

[Pathways to accessing early help](#)

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## How do children, young people and families get access to early help when they need it?

### Pathways to accessing early help

- **Self-referral:** a child, young person or family member requests help or support for a need that is not being met by universal services.
- A **universal service** identifies a need which cannot be met by that service alone and brings a Team around the Family together to identify the best way to meet the family's needs.
- A **child or parent meets the criteria for a whole family targeted intervention** (for example the Newcastle Families Programme or Family Nurse Partnership).
- A **referral to Children's Social Care does not meet the threshold** for social care intervention but does require an early help response.

A diagram setting out the Early Help & Supporting Families pathway can be accessed here:



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## What does 'early help' look like for families?

Sometimes children and their families need extra help and support to sort out a problem. If families need extra help, they can ask:

- At their child's school
- GP
- Health Visitor
- their Sure Start Children's Centre in the Community Family Hub

One of these agencies may offer to do an assessment to check that the family is getting the support they need.

It may be that the family will need additional help from more than one agency. All of the agencies that work with children and families in Newcastle have agreed a way of working together to help families to understand and solve their problems. This way of working is called Early Help and we use a Common Assessment to make sure that everyone is working together to one agreed plan.

A CAF is an assessment which will identify what kind of help is needed and who should provide it. A CAF happens with the consent of your child and the family and they would be fully involved in the assessment

If the family needs help from a number of agencies the CAF will bring them all together in a 'Team around the Family' and put a single plan in place to make sure that the family gets the right sort of help. The agencies will share information and regularly review the plan to make sure it is working.

Case Study

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## What does 'early help' look like?

### Julia

Julia lives with her sister Claire, her mum Susan and her mum's dad every weekend. She has Tourette's Syndrome. Julia's mum is worried about Julia's behaviour at home. Julia is verbally abusive, unpredictable and threatened to get a knife and hurt herself or a member of the family. She is very possessive and struggles to make friends. Susan is worried about her daughter so she doesn't sleep well and feels exhausted.

Julia has nightmares about her family getting hurt. She says she and her mum don't get on so well. She feels things have changed since Andy moved in. Julia feels self-conscious about her size. She would like to go to a friend's house but she is worried about what people might think.

Julia sees a Paediatrician about her Tourette's Syndrome. On the Paediatrician that Julia has threatened to harm herself or other people. The Paediatrician felt the family needed some support, so she made a referral to Eileen at the Children and Young People's Service – a service for young people with mental health problems. The family and Eileen agreed that and an assessment was helpful for the family. Eileen contacted the CAF team as she had never completed a CAF and they agreed to support her with the process. A CAF practitioner asked each family member what they were worried about, what they thought needed to happen to make things better.

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## What does 'early help' look like for families?

Susan and Julia's sister Claire said they were worried about Julia and wanted her behaviour to be better and home. Julia said she would like to change how she eats and to be fitter. Julia also wanted to be less angry towards her mum. She enjoyed spending time with her dad and felt this gave her mum a break from her. As well as talking to each member of the family, the CAF Practitioner talked to the Paediatrician who had made the referral and to the welfare worker at Julia's school to find out if they had any concerns about Julia. The school said that Julia is doing well.

Susan and Julia agreed for Eileen to refer them to the North East Special Needs Network. Sally from the Special Needs Network is helping Susan to deal with Julia's behaviour and helping Julia to be less angry. Sally has also referred Julia to a place called Youth Link who are helping Julia to understand how she can eat more healthily and get fitter. All of the practitioners working with the family had a meeting with the family to make sure everyone knew what everyone else was doing and that the family were happy with the plan and it was working well. The meeting was called the 'Team around the Family'.

Four weeks later the Team around the Family all met again. Susan said Julia has been less angry at home since she has started getting support from her Mentor at Youth Link. Susan feels that meeting other people at the Special Needs Network with similar issues has helped her to feel less stressed and they have given her useful advice and tips on managing Julia's behaviour. Julia said she knows what she needs to eat in order to be healthier and feels optimistic about losing weight. Her mum has stopped giving her fizzy drinks at home and Julia has started going to a Zumba class with her dad's girlfriend. The Team around the Family will meet again in eight weeks to review how things are going and to make sure things are progressing for the family.

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## What does 'early help' mean for practitioners?

Children and young people are more likely to reach their potential through organisations and practitioners working effectively together. Positive outcomes for children, young people and their families cannot be achieved by any one agency working in isolation. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is the key assessment and planning tool used to underpin an integrated approach to Newcastle's early help offer.

[CAF procedures](#) are to be used by practitioners across the children's workforce (public, third sector, private sector) and they detail the processes and ways of working that have been agreed by all the key partner organisations involved in supporting children, young people and families in the city.

[The CAF Team](#)  
[Early Help Advisors](#)

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## What does 'early help' mean for practitioners?

Practitioners may access a range of support from the CAF Team. This may consist of case consultancy to support practitioners new to the role, or where cases are not progressing. The CAF Team will monitor the quality of CAFs and subsequent interventions and provide support to practitioners and Team around the Family as appropriate.

The CAF Team offers training to practitioners around the use of the CAF. They will also hold thematic workshops around specific areas where practitioners may feel they need development such as capturing the voice of the child. CAF monitoring information informs the training and workshops.

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## What does 'early help' mean for practitioners?

The Early Help Team is comprised of five experienced practitioners from a variety of backgrounds with a broad range of experience of whole family working. This includes practitioners from Children's Social Care, Youth Offending Team and specialist intensive therapeutic support services. The Early Help team will support practitioners to develop the most appropriate response to families you have identified as having additional needs.

How can the team help?

- Support to initiate and implement an appropriate multi agency response and ensure there is a robust plan in place to support a family.
- This could include; supporting the development of a whole family CAF assessment, facilitating information sharing and identifying appropriate referrals.
- Peer support in unpicking what is and isn't working for a family, and support you in exploring a way forward.
- Support to reach hard to engage' families

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## How do we know it is working?

On a case by case basis, early help provision is routinely reviewed to ensure individual children's outcomes are improving and risk is reducing. The CAF audit process enables us to measure achievement of outcomes.

We have developed a [Newcastle Family Outcomes Plan](#) which clearly sets out the goals we want to achieve within families who have additional needs. The framework is based on our assessment of need and the priorities we have established for families eligible for the Newcastle Families Programme. The Newcastle Family Outcomes Plan will be used to measure the impact of our early help and supporting families offer

Commissioned services are also required to work towards these outcomes and we monitor this through our commissioning function.

In relation to the early years, we are required to demonstrate a narrowing of the gap at population level against a set of criteria defined by Ofsted.

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## How do we know about the early help needs in Newcastle?

Partners in Newcastle, led by the [Wellbeing for Life Board](#), have committed to working together through a single policy approach, called the [Newcastle Future Needs Assessment](#) (NFNA). As a process, the NFNA provides an integrated, coherent and evidence-based means of partners working together to determine priorities in the city.

A key element of the Newcastle Future Needs Assessment is [Know Newcastle](#) - a web-based city information resource - that includes statistical insight about people in the city and acts as a repository of narratives and other reports. This is a 'live' repository of intelligence which is added to as new data, information and analysis becomes available.

[Read more](#)

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## How do we know about the early help needs in Newcastle?

In July 2014 the City Council undertook a comprehensive review of a range of indicators for children, young people and families. The review was shaped by the Council priority of 'reducing inequalities'. Ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life is a key priority to tackling inequalities, based on the strong evidence in support of this.

The analysis covered a range of indicators (e.g. health, education, employment) and outcomes across the majority of indicators are improving throughout the city, with poorer outcomes and deprivation. The overwhelming majority of children with early help needs reside in those parts of the city that are among the 30% most deprived areas of the country as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. For example, 70% of children with child protection plans live within these areas.

The review resulted in the creation of a new service model, which will provide an integrated early years' service, together with support for children aged over 5 (up to the age of 18) who have additional needs, in Newcastle's most disadvantaged communities. This model will deliver the Council's commitment for the provision of Sure Start Children's Centres and Troubled Families. The new model will provide an early help offer to children and young people at risk of poor life outcomes. In addition, a citywide family support offer to provide early help to families living outside the Community Family Hub area.

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## How do we know about the early help needs in Newcastle?

The children and young people's plan sets out a call to action for an agreed way of working with children, young people and their family; with the explicit aim of continuing to improve outcomes through the impact of evidence based practice.

It provides a clear outline of needs of children and young people recognising that services and individual staff across agencies agree to work together to support improvement.

You can read the plan by clicking on the icon below



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Newcastle  
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# Families Outcomes Plan

April 2015

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