

# Families First

# Families First 2024 to 2027

## Early Help Strategy





# Message from Early Help Strategic Board Chairs

As joint chairs of the Early Help Strategic Board, it is a privilege to introduce this strategy.

Firstly, we would like to thank all the children, young people, families, and partners who helped us reach this point.

Your voice was heard, and as a partnership we will continue to work with you to help and support you when you tell us you need us. What was clear from your feedback was that you wanted us to provide the right help, in the right place, at the right time, and sometimes we could do this earlier and in a more seamless and coordinated way.

This strategy shares our commitment, values, the outcomes we are seeking to achieve, and the ways we will work together. Therefore, across the partnership, we will all have a common understanding of where we are going to and how we will work together collaboratively to achieve this.

What we now need is everyone's collective action to help us make a real difference for all children and their families or carers who are looking for help and support in Surrey.

I am confident that we can do this together. Early Help is critically important to our partnership, it unites us in our ambitions for families, and we all want to help and support children and families as early as we can, so all children and families in Surrey can thrive.

**Matt Ansell, Director for Family Resilience and  
Safeguarding and John Downing, CEO of Surrey Care Trust**  
**Joint Chairs of the Early Help Strategic Partnership Board**





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## Introduction

The Early Help Strategy **Families First** sets out our vision, principles, and priorities for 2024 to 2027. It describes how the partnership will work together to provide responsive and effective support to families in Surrey. It seeks to empower children and their families to overcome difficulties and become increasingly resilient, so they can manage future life challenges independently.

Early help is support that is provided as soon as needs emerge. It can be in the critical years of a child's life (including pre-birth and pregnancy) and in later childhood and adolescence. As a partnership, we seek to offer support at the earliest opportunity, to best meet the needs of families and to prevent these escalating.

Parents and carers are generally the best people to understand their child's needs, and asking for help is a sign of responsibility and not of failure. Parents say that support works well when they are respected and listened to by those working with them, and in most cases, it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice.

Early help requires a diverse partnership and includes support from wider family, friends, and the local community. By working together and including all family members, we can empower families to lead happy, full lives and to achieve their goals and aspirations.





## Our Vision

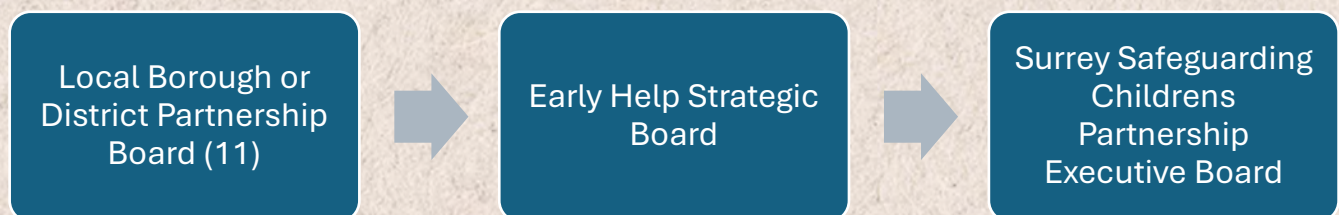
In Surrey, we all believe that every child should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and that children are best supported to grow and achieve within their own families.

By working together, we will be responsive to children's and families' needs, supporting them with the right help at the right time. This will shift focus away from managing short-term crises, and towards effective help and support for children, young people and their families at an earlier stage, with sustained impact.

The early help [Service Map](#) encourages practitioners to work collaboratively with each other and demonstrates how supporting families is delivered in partnership in Surrey.

## Our Governance

The delivery of our strategy is the shared responsibility of all partners from Health, Children's Services, Police and Education, involved in supporting children and families. This is overseen and governed by the Early Help Strategic Board, which includes representatives from across the partnership and is co-chaired with a leader from the voluntary sector. The Partnership Board is accountable to the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP) Executive Board.





## The Early Help Systems Guide

The Early Help Systems Guide is a national guide from the Department for Education. It provides key descriptors of a mature Early Help System and is a self-assessment and planning tool. It is designed to provide a clear and shared understanding of the current maturity of the local Early Help System and the actions required to develop services.

This annual assessment forms the basis of our refreshed Early Help Strategy in Surrey. It has allowed us to identify our priorities for the next three years to bring maturity to our Early Help System, informing the key drivers and priorities.

## Priorities for the Partnership 2024 to 2027

The partnership in Surrey has identified the following priorities for 2024 to 2027. These have been identified through the annual Early Help Systems guide self-assessment review, and the Written Statement of Action in response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in 2023.

This strategy seeks to drive the transformation in early help in response to these needs. It highlights the governance through the Surrey Safeguarding Partnership Executive Board and seeks to create a more cohesive early help system through improved partnership, data, and effective communication.





## Priority 1: Strengthening Local Partnerships

Partners in each District and Borough will be supported to work together where there are shared priorities. This will enable families to receive support that is joined-up, accessible, and responsive to their needs.

To achieve this, we will develop a systemic partnership model in each District and Borough. We will build on prototype work completed in 2023 and establish 11 local early help partnership boards. These forums will enable partners to come together in local communities to collaborate and review ways to improve the impact of their work for families.

This work is supported systemically by aligning commissioned services to work within local boundaries. Family Centres from April 2024 are now being delivered by one Lead Provider per District and Borough, matching the Family Support Programme and MindWorks services for childrens mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Underpinning effective partnership working are our **Families First principles**. These six principles enable everyone in the partnership to adopt a consistent approach. They encourage holistic support for families, to always prioritise the needs of children, and to engage families in a way that will best meet their needs.

As a partnership, we all:

- Prioritise the wellbeing, wishes and feelings of children.
- Include everyone, supporting whole families, in their communities.
- Empower families in their choices, never assume or judge.
- Promote family strengths and value the family's experience.
- Communicate simply and clearly, with no surprises.
- Respect families and be reliable and trustworthy.

These principles are further supported through the [Time For Kids](#) approach, which has been adopted by the early help partnership.



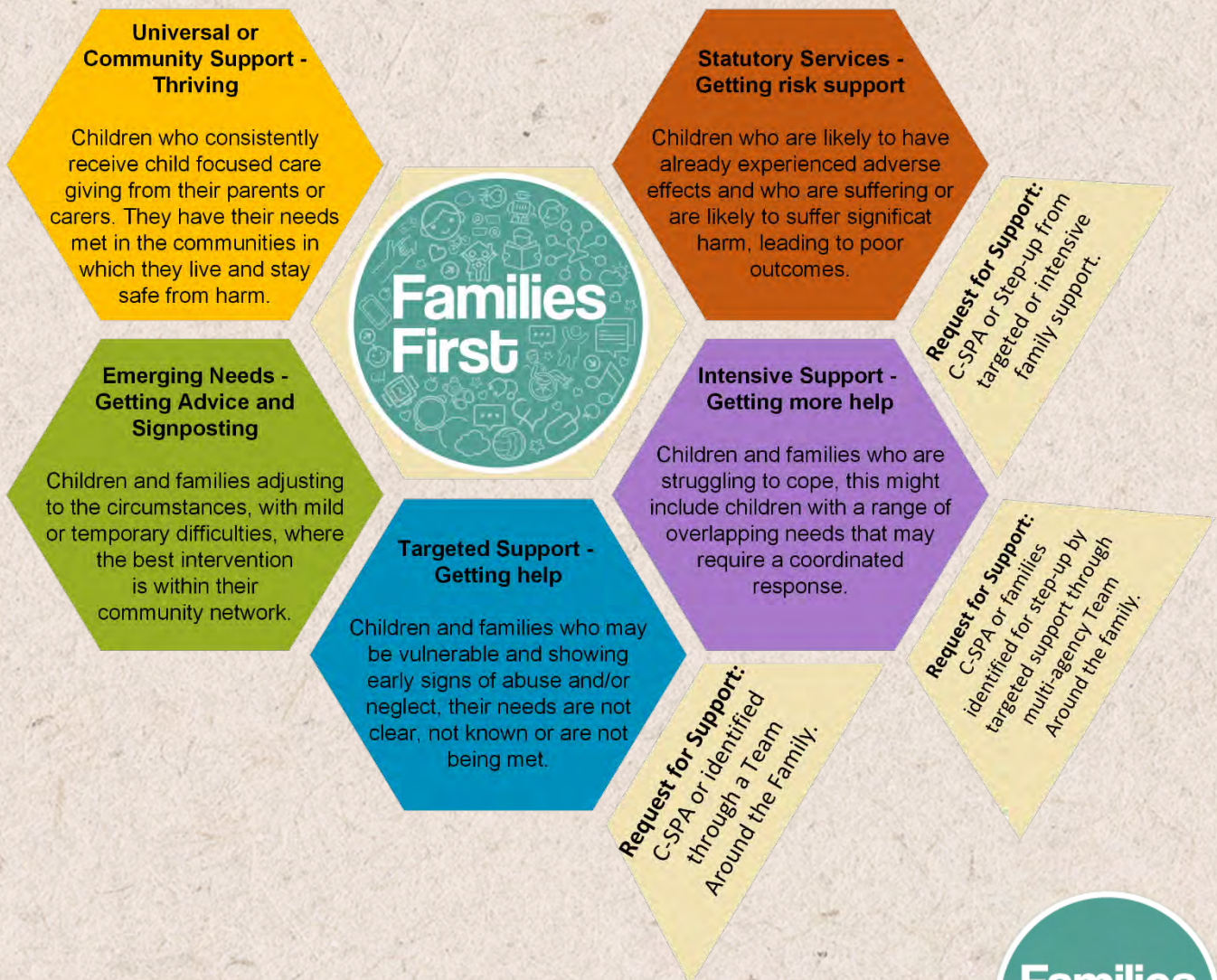


## Priority 2: Practice, Policies and Procedures

The approach to early help is embedded within the [Continuum of Support for Families](#). Within this model we have identified five types of support: Universal, Emerging Needs, Targeted Support, Intensive Support, and Statutory services.

Further information on the [Family Safeguarding Model](#) (statutory children's services) can be found on the Surrey County Council website.

The below diagram aligns the Continuum of Support with the [Thrive Framework for System Change](#) which is a framework for communities supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families. By integrating these approaches, we have promoted shared problem solving and provided a common language for partners. This encourages the partnership to work in a consistent way with families, to identify strengths and needs, and to find practical and achievable solutions, providing the right amount of information, advice, and support at the right time.





In 2024 a new Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) is being introduced to enable more families to receive support when they most need it. This team will work across Surrey supporting families that have interconnecting needs across a range of family members, as per the above Intensive Support domain in the Continuum of Support. Through this service, the early help offer in Surrey is expanded to bridge the gap between existing targeted support and statutory services. It enables families to receive help in their homes and communities, accessing intensive and specialist support that will meet their needs and avoid unnecessary escalation.

### Priority 3: Workforce Development

Staff across the partnership will be adequately skilled, equipped, and motivated to best support families. This means that staff will know the training and development opportunities that are available to them, and access what they need.

We will ensure the learning and development offer is differentiated according to the needs of the whole workforce; from those working intensively with families to those who can help by signposting and connecting children and families to support within the local community. This will be through a new Workforce Development Pathway developed in 2024.

### Priority 4: Data and Systems

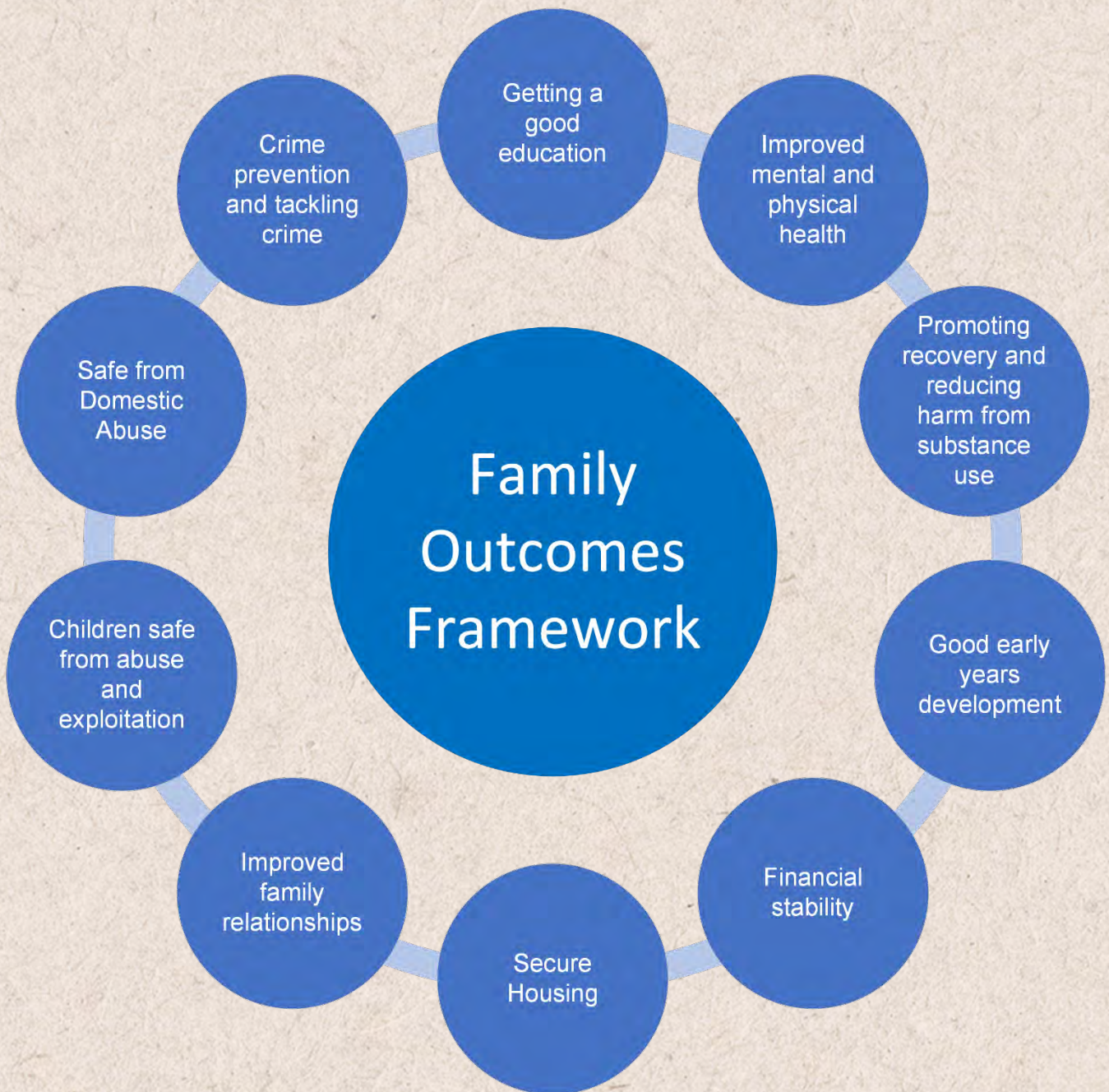
We will develop a cohesive early help data set that clearly evidences the difference our support is making for families. This will enable us to be responsive to local needs and to continually review, develop, and improve the partnership offer.

We will share data on children's needs across the early help system through partnership boards and to the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive.

We will use the [Supporting Families Outcomes Framework](#) as a baseline to measure the impact of our services. This includes ten outcome domains as per the below image and highlights the interconnecting needs of families, and the collective partnership involvement:







Use of wider tools such as the Outcomes Star, actions completed from Family Plans, and the feedback families give us will enable us to measure our impact. We will also work with partners to share and analyse wider locality and demographic data, including from Health, Police, Domestic Abuse, Education Services, Substance Misuse, District and Borough Housing teams, and data and insight from communities and the voluntary sector (charities).



# Wider strategies that support families early

Families First is a key component of several different transformation strands and strategies including:

- [Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Strategy 2023 to 2026](#)
- [Community Safety in Surrey](#)
- Parenting strategy including [Families in Harmony](#)
- Communities and Prevention: Team Around the Community approach, linking with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board sub-groups
- [The Thrive Framework for System Change](#)
- [Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership Children Strategic Plan 2022 to 2024](#) and [key documents](#)
- [Surrey safeguarding adults policy and procedures](#)
- [Best Start for Surrey Strategy 2022 to 2027](#)
- [Neglect Strategy 2024 to 2026](#)

Each one of these important strategies have at their core the ambition to help families early and prevent the need for late and often high-cost intervention. The priorities within this strategy will complement these by focussing on an effective workforce, access to support and evidence impact and outcomes.

