



# Wigan's Early Help and Prevention Partnership Strategy 2024-2027



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# 1. Foreword from Early Help & Prevention Partnership.

Providing early help to children and their families is not only a priority for the Wigan Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and our Integrated Delivery Board but also aligns with the National Supporting Families Outcome Framework. Ensuring the right help and support is available at the right time for all our families ensures confident, healthy and thriving communities.

We understand as a system and Early Help and Prevention Partnership, the importance of taking a strength-based approach to the delivery of effective prevention and early help by ensuring support is accessible, co-ordinated, and provided early enough, families can build resilience.

This Early Help and Prevention Strategy 2024 - 2027, sets out our commitment to a shared vision and will be the focus for the early help and prevention partnership over the next three years to ensure the delivery of even more effective and preventative support.

Whilst most children and young people in Wigan will live a happy and healthy life, this strategy recognises that an increasing number of children and families require help and support to address a number of issues and challenges in their lives and to achieve their full potential as a family. This investment in early help and prevention not only provides support at the earliest stage it also reduces the risk of families requiring high cost, and more intensive, support at a later stage.

This strategy provides a framework for our plans over the next three years, but it is only the start – children, young people, families, local partners and the wider community will need to come together with a real focus on prevention through our family hub model, if we are to be successful in changing the demand for our services.

Building on our successful partnership approach to early help, the commitment and principles of prevention identified in this strategy will strengthen this further – putting prevention at the heart of what we all do and ensuring when there is a need for a statutory intervention that the Child Protection “Family Safeguarding” approach reinforces this prevention ambition.



Colette Dutton  
Director of Children's Services



Stephanie Whitelaw  
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## 2. Our vision and commitment to children and families.

Under Section 10 of the [Children Act 2004](#) Local Authorities have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children which makes Early Help everyone's responsibility.

In line with the principals of [Progress With Unity \(wigan.gov.uk\)](http://wigan.gov.uk) Wigan is committed to ensuring that our Early Help offer is consistently supported through our co-produced partnership vision for Early Help which states,

*"We want all children in the Wigan Borough to be happy, healthy, and safe; to be listened to and to reach their full potential and thrive. Early Help is everyone's business. When children, young people or their families need help and support, together, we will provide that support at the right time, by the right people and in the right place, taking into consideration the needs of the whole family."*

Wigan's Early Help & Prevention Partnership is committed to:

- Early Help as everyone's responsibility.
- A shared vision.
- Providing the support that children, young people and their families need, as soon as they need it, when they need it and by the people who are best placed to help.
- Enabling a mature early help system supported by Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Strengthening our shared focus and approach on prevention and Early Help.



### 3. Why do we need Early Help, challenges and context?

Evidence shows that providing timely early help is much more effective at improving outcomes for children and families than reacting later. There is also evidence that this approach has a positive impact in reducing the demand and costs associated with more intensive safeguarding and crisis support at threshold level 4. In a context of rapidly reducing resources and the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic yet to be seen, effective early help is more important than ever. We believe that we need to rethink how early help is provided and the role of our partnership and communities to create a sustainable and resilient early help offer. We intend to build on our current offer to provide help at the earliest opportunity and where and when families need it, through our family hub model.

In line with other local authorities across the country Wigan is committed to the development of a mature early help offer and completes an annual self-assessment through the [Early Help System Guide](#). Gradings from this self-assessment tells us that Wigan started from an immature system in 2022. Following significant development and investment, our early help transformation programme is starting to show increased levels of maturity as we develop our early help and prevention offer across the partnership aligned to the criteria set out in this guidance.



## 3.1 Family voice and experience

The voice of children and families is central to our early help and prevention offer and key to ensuring that the support we agree with the family meets their needs and that they are engaged in the offer of support to achieve long term, sustainable, change. This work is outlined in Wigan's [Participation Strategy 2022-2025 \(wigan.gov.uk\)](https://wigan.gov.uk/participation-strategy-2022-2025) Our children and families in Wigan have told us:

**If someone had helped us to know what the issues were that stopped him going to school, we could have done something about it**

**Give us services that we will use near to where we live**

**Services are not easy to navigate, been difficult to get agencies to communicate with each other**

**Going through homelessness, drug addiction, and Lyndsey dragged me out of a hole I never thought I'd come out of. She gave me hope for the future and helped me change to a person I didn't feel I was capable of**

**Better referrals between services to avoid dropping through the cracks and helping to avoid having to repeat the story countless times**

**Community Interest Companies and charities are amazing, local authority level good but patchy and disjointed."**

**It would be good to have guidance on what services are available and how to access them**

**Don't give me something then take it away because money has run out**

**Co-ordinated approach with named key worker that can support with health, social and education needs**

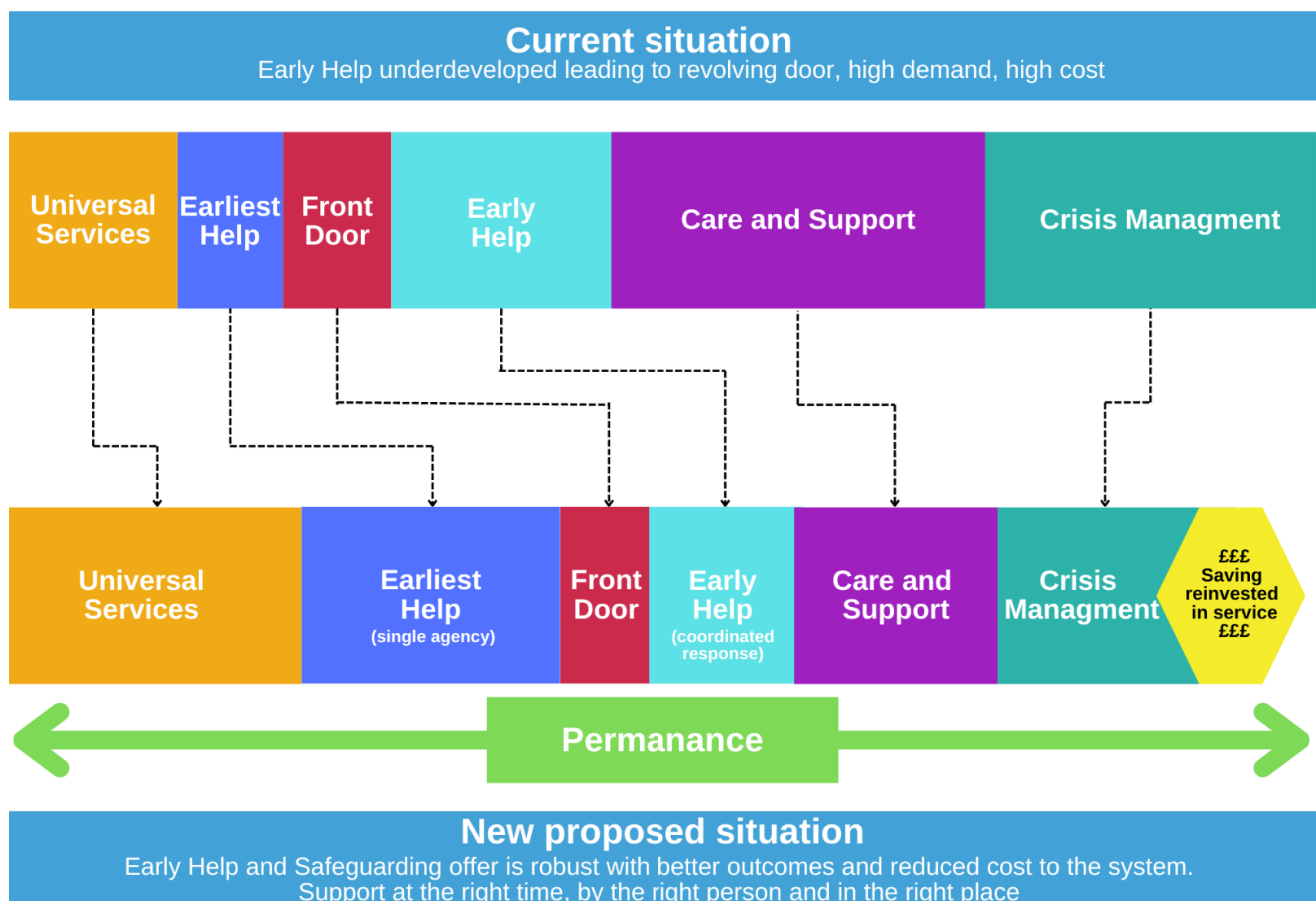
**Every part of a child's negative behaviour communicates a need**



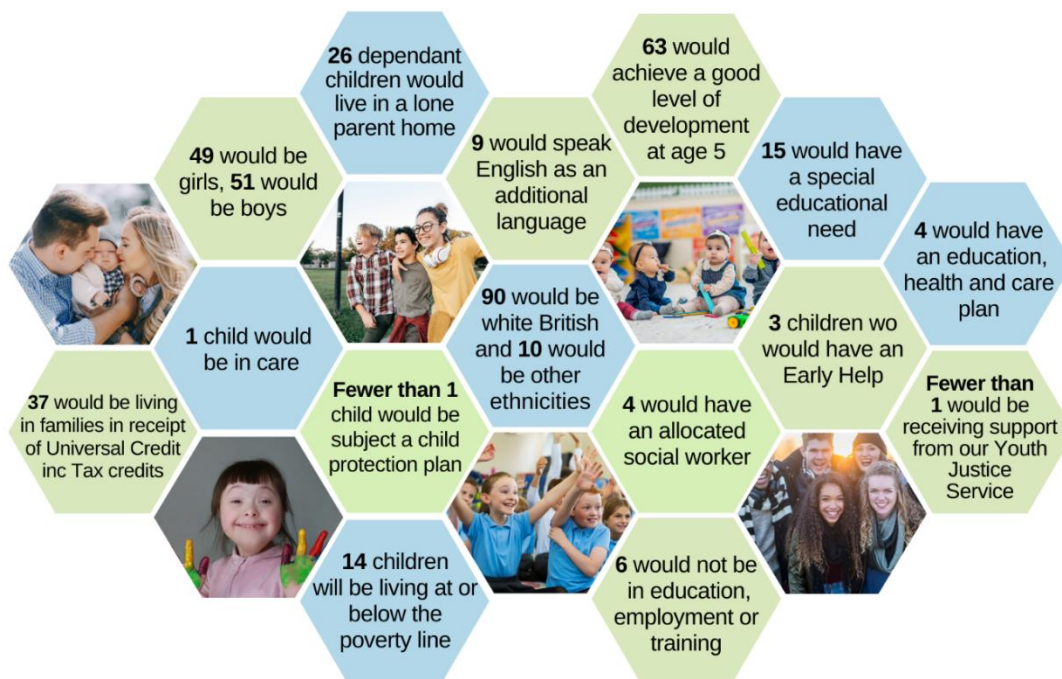


## 3.2 The challenges faced in Wigan.

Demand for children's services in Wigan has increased significantly since 2019 putting our 'Children First Partnership Hub under pressure to a level that is not sustainable either financially or in terms of service provision. This increasing demand on the front door and crisis provision across the whole system, has had a knock-on effect throughout the whole service and radical change is required to address it. Our demand model evidences the current state and the ambitious change we are working towards is shown in the diagram below.



In considering the needs of children in Wigan:  
If Wigan was a village with 100 Children.....



This data makes plain the scale of the challenges for Wigan and the Early Help system, and why we need to provide high quality early help to those families who need it. So, within this early help and prevention strategy, we need to understand need and lived experience of families and the impacts of rising deprivation, inequality of provision and the effects on families throughout our early help practice.

## 4. What do we mean by Early Help in Wigan?

All children and families may require some level of support at various stages in their lives and this can range from support antenatally, support in early years, support to access education, support with health needs or support in response to key life events or changes in circumstances.

Early help and prevention in Wigan can be a voluntary or consent-based offer of support aimed at preventing or reducing the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. At its simplest form it can be an offer of advice, guidance, or signposting from an individual, or a centre, right up to a multi-agency co-ordinated early help plan with a lead professional that requires written consent. Early Help seeks to identify and understand the needs of the whole family at the earliest opportunity to prevent needs escalating which may impact on members of the immediate family or wider family and friends. Intervening as early as possible, considering the needs of the whole family, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes.

Through our early help offer families should be supported and enabled to have asset-based conversations, with the right people and at the right time about their strengths, needs or concerns, so that statutory interventions can be avoided where this is appropriate. Early help is not a single service, it is a collaborative approach that relies on local agencies working together effectively with children and families to identify who needs help and to develop and agree a plan with the family to meet their varied needs.



## 5. Our early help and prevention approach and practice.

It is everybody's responsibility to identify and assess need, through having asset-based conversations with children, young people and their families and planning with them to address these needs.

Wigan's Safeguarding Partnership Threshold of Need Framework has been developed and is intended as a multi-agency guide to ensuring children, young people and their families access the right support at the right time. There are different levels that consider the different stages of need and types of intervention which are available for children, young people and their families. As children's and family's needs change, responses will need to move up or down the levels accordingly.

The way we practice as an Early Help Partnership to support our families' journey is outlined below:

For the purpose of this strategy the terms Early Help and Prevention is used to describe all interventions at levels 1-3.

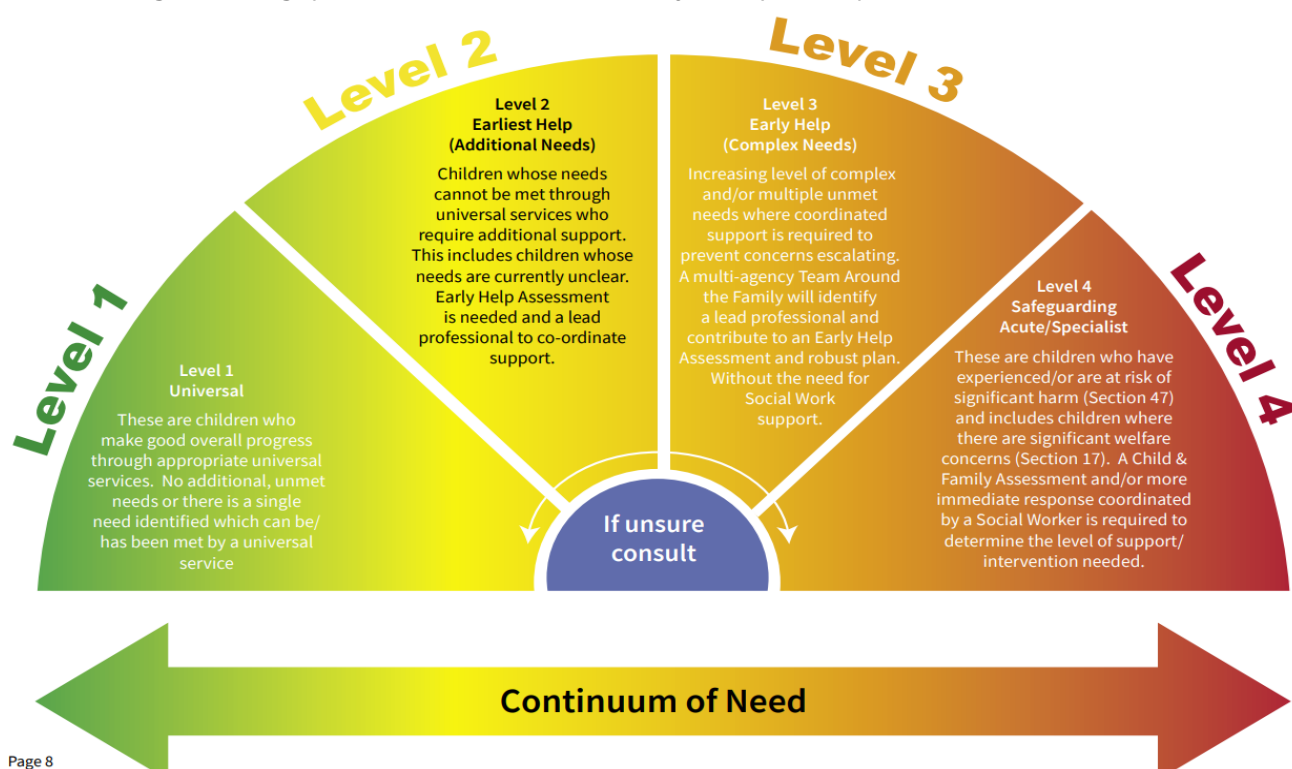
In line with [Wigan's Threshold Of Need and Advice Guidance](#) Early help can be provided through a single agency or a multi-agency response as appropriate to the needs of the child and family and the level and nature of the concerns. This offer works across as a continuum of need across four levels ranging from:

Level 1 Universal

Level 2 Earliest Help

Level 3 Early Help

Level 4 Safeguarding (Social Care or Statutory Response)



<p>Our developing family hub model, will work with universal services including our voluntary and community services to join things up for families early enough to prevent the need for further intervention by statutory services.</p> <p>This is often a single agency response. We have introduced the term earliest help to aid people's understanding of support. An Early Help assessment and plan is needed to coordinate a response for this to commence.</p>	<p>We aim to build on existing professional relationships to gain consent and engagement with the support being offered. Help can be achieved using a multi-agency 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) approach within the Early Help Framework. An Early Help assessment and plan is needed to co-ordinate a SMART response for the child and the Family. Children considered to be at level 3 may be supported by a partner led multiagency Early Help or may require co-ordinated support through the Start Well Service. Referrals to the Start Well service are through Wigan's Professional Referrals for Children Portal.</p>	<p>Children considered to be at level 4 may be facing a risk of significant harm and there is a requirement to refer into the Child First Partnership Hub for screening using Wigan's Professional Referrals for Children Portal. Children who meet the criteria for level 4 will be allocated to a social worker.</p>
<b>Level 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>

Wigan's early help approach aligns to [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) in ensuring local organisations and agencies:

- Work together to promote the welfare of the children at the earliest stage rather than reacting later.
- Identify families who would benefit from Early Help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for Early Help
- Provide targeted early help services to address the assessed need of a child and their family which focusses on activity to improve the outcomes of the child.

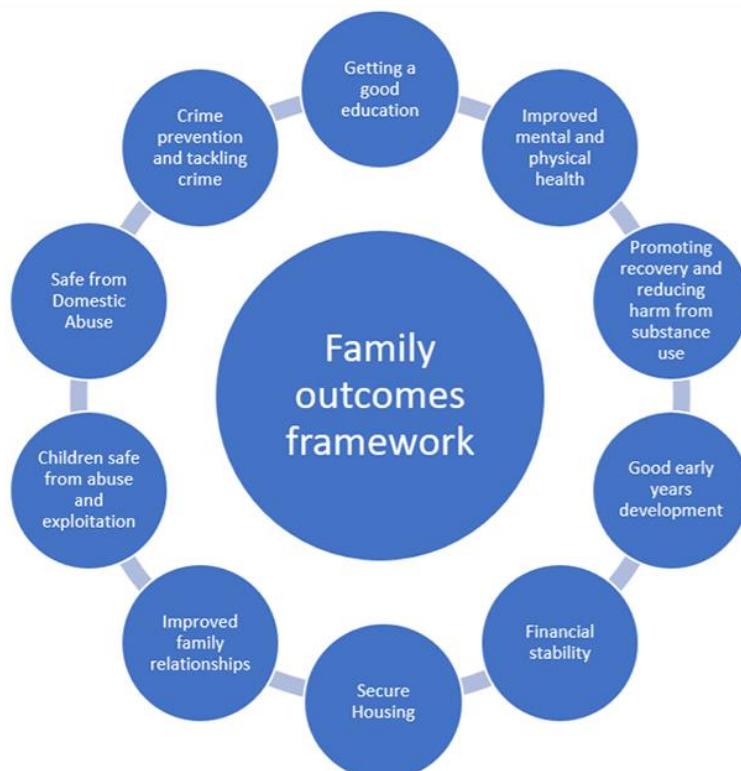
In February 2023 the government published [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#), which set out an ambitious plan to transform children's social care, committing to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. Updating Working Together is central to delivering on the first phase of this transformation journey, implementing strengthened multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families, re-balancing the system towards help at an early point, and ensuring strong, effective and consistent child protection practice. Although still at the consultation stage at the time of producing this strategy the key proposals within Working Together 2023 that are particularly relevant to early help and prevention include:

- Encourage the family and parents to play a more active role in the discussions, inquiries, and plans.
- Reference to 'lead practitioner' rather than 'social worker' as the case holder across early help, child in need and child protection.
- Identify and extend the groups of children who may have a potential need for early help. For example, children missing from school, children forming inappropriate relationships online, children at risk of exclusion from school.
- Early help assessments to include the needs of all family members and how those needs impact on one another.

- Early help assessments providing the basis for any further assessments under s.17 or s.47. If complex, the social worker could be the lead practitioner in early help cases.

Wigan is committed to ensuring that the needs of whole family are assessed in a consistent and strength based manner across the partnership using the [Wigan's Your Family Early Help Assessment](#). Early Help assessments, plans and reviews are stored centrally on the Early Help Module (EHM) database and access to this database is being expanded to the partnership through a dedicated digital portal.

The assessment aligns with the national requirement to work in line with [The National Supporting Families Outcome Framework](#) which measures outcomes across 10 domains including:



These outcomes will be measured and monitored through our early help outcomes framework.

Given the prevalence of domestic abuse in Wigan, prevention in relation to domestic abuse has been added as a standard agenda items in the Family Hub Workstream Meeting and in addition to reporting back to the Early Intervention and Prevention Board it is also reported into the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board.

As part of our transformation programme and in recognition of the need to support the partnership in initiating and leading Early Help, Wigan has invested in an Early Help Development Team who provide training advice and guidance on early help practice, processes, resources, IT access, opportunities for volunteers and parenting. The team can be contacted at [EHDT@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:EHDT@wigan.gov.uk). The team provide a weekly earliest drop in to support the partnership with early help queries and an invite to this meeting can be arranged through [earliesthelp@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:earliesthelp@wigan.gov.uk)

Wigan Council provides dedicated support for targeted families at threshold level 3 through locality based Start Well Workers and referrals into this service, or for level 4 safeguarding referrals, is through [Wigan's Professional Referrals for Children Portal](#).



## 5.1 Our programme of work to deliver this strategy.

Wigan has the Child first ethos and ambition. Central to this ambition is to ensure that all children, young people and their families in Wigan receive the help they need as soon as they need it from those they trust. To enable our ambition and to achieve our vision we have developed a program of work and a set of key objectives to:

- Work with families to establish ways to gather their voice.
- Develop a culture and practice of a shared workforce.
- Enable a whole family approach.
- Develop family hubs life course model across our seven neighbourhoods, utilising our assets and resources effectively.
- Make smarter use of evidence and information to demonstrate improved outcomes for our families.

Key to achieving this vision and ambition is a Boroughwide, multi-agency commitment to providing effective, proportionate and high-quality early help and preventative services delivered in local communities. The program will deliver the objectives above through the workstreams tasks included in the diagram below.



## Our Universal offer to all families through the Family Hub/Neighbourhood model

In line with the national development of Family Hubs, Wigan is developing seven family hubs across the borough aligned to the seven neighbourhoods. The aim is to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children by providing a mix of physical

and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can easily access non-judgmental support for the challenges they may be facing. Family Hubs will provide a universal 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive start for life offer for parents and babies at its core.

Each Family Hub should be unique to the local community it covers but there are three key delivery principals that underlie all Family Hubs:

## Access

- There is a clear and simple way for families with children of all ages to access help and support through a Family Hub building and a Family Hub approach.

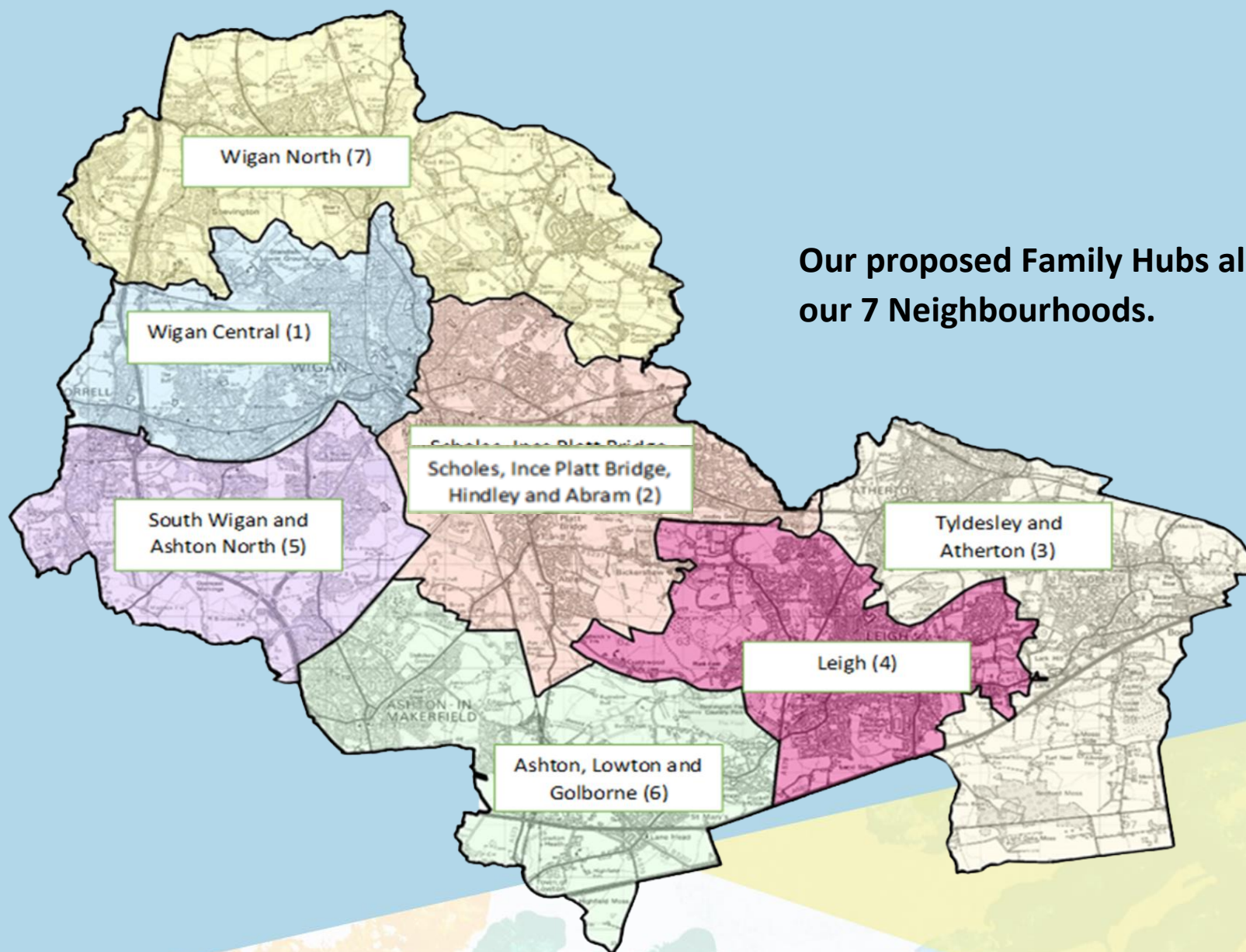
## Connections

- Services work together for families, with a universal 'front door', shared outcomes and effective governance.
- Professionals work together through co-location, data-sharing and a common approach to their work. Families only have to tell their story once, the service is more efficient, and families receive more effective support.
- Statutory services and voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners work together to get families the help they need.

## Relationships

- The Family Hub prioritises strengthening relationships and builds on family strengths.
- Relationships are at the heart of everything that is delivered in Family Hubs.

We intend to develop our Family Hub model aligned to the above principals and minimum standards as set out by Government as part of this strategy. This model will be developed as a truly integrated partnership approach and whole system commitment to Early Help and Prevention and will be aligned to our seven Neighbourhoods



**Our proposed Family Hubs aligned to our 7 Neighbourhoods.**



# Develop culture and practice for a collaborative workforce.

Given the complexity of demands, legislation and local policies and procedures on services for children its important that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the delivery of early help in Wigan. Wigan has the agreed partnership vision for early help as the overriding driver for the development and delivery of the early help offer for the borough. Under this there are eight principals of practice that underpin the way we work with children and families throughout the children's Pathways:

- Collectively lead and be accountable at every level of support.
- Value professional contribution.
- Work collaboratively.
- Children at the heart of what we do.
- Whole family approach.
- Informed learning from family voice, intelligence and best practice.
- Focus on tackling identified inequalities.
- Placed based, neighbourhood approach.

These principals are aligned to Wigan's safeguarding practice priorities and to our Family Safeguarding values and approaches to Child:

- Professional curiosity, critical thinking and challenge.
- Impact and analysis.
- SMART planning.

Family Safeguarding multi-disciplinary team approaches directly support the early help and prevention objectives and goals of right service right person, right place and seeks to avoid unnecessary escalation to statutory services.

## Family Safeguarding Values

### Family Safeguarding values are based on firm beliefs

As Family Safeguarding practitioners and leaders, we believe:

1. That all people have value and inherent worth, and that they are deserving of our time, attention, and care
2. That people have innate propensity for growth – they naturally want things to get better and to achieve their full potential
3. That people can learn to get things right even when they have got them very wrong in the past – being restorative rather than punitive in our approach
4. That children belong in their own family and the state should only intervene at parents' request or when it is essential to prevent actual or likely significant harm to a child
5. And finally, we believe in the rights of people, and the importance of upholding them

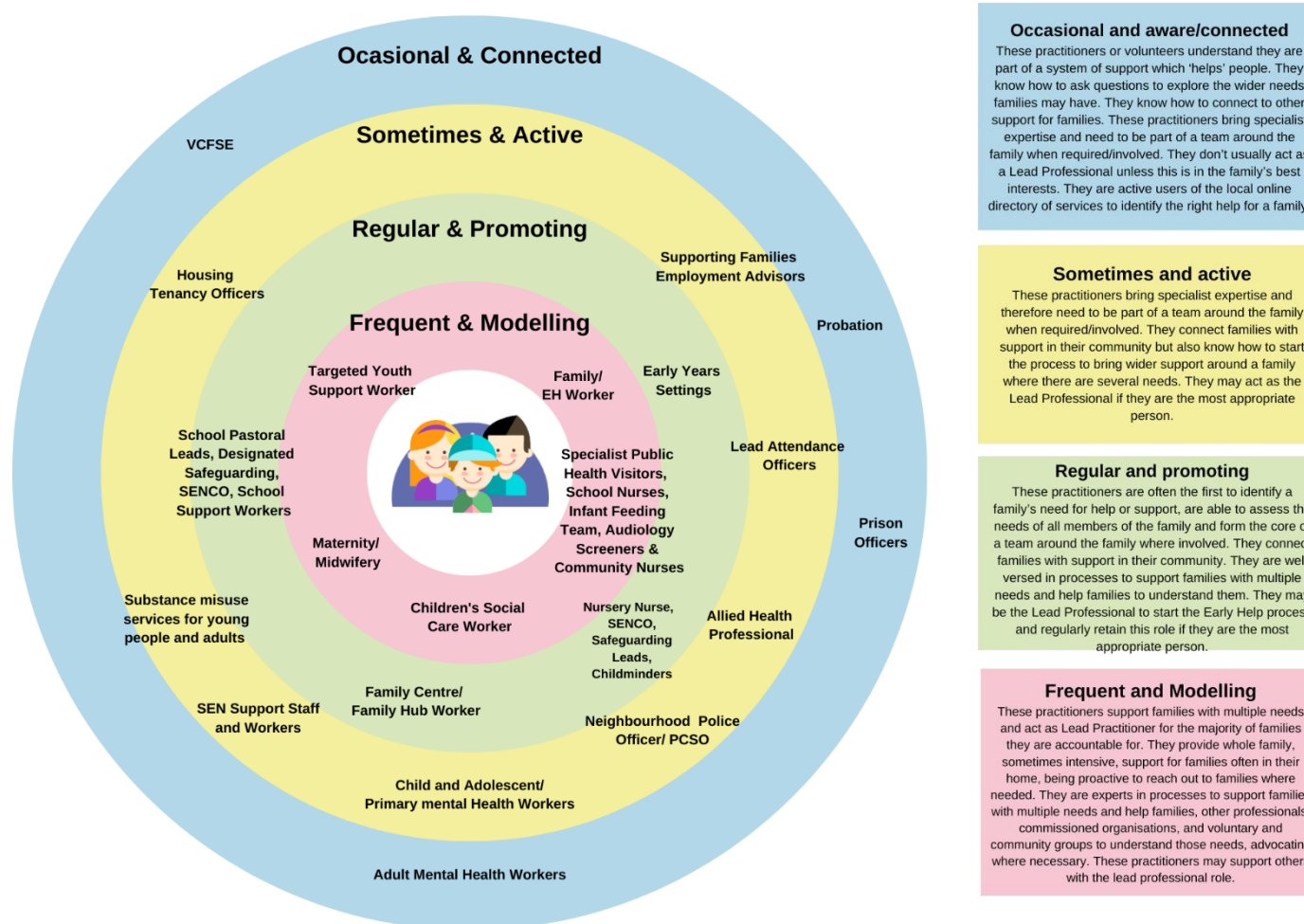


\*At the time of writing this strategy the Family Safeguarding Model transformation work had only just started in Wigan but given its relevance to early help and prevention it was important to include some early commentary

In line with the Early Help System Guide requirements, Wigan is also mapping our Early Help Workforce to understand the staff that will be initiating and leading our early help offer and this information will be used to shape the seven family hubs that are aligned to our neighbourhoods.

Within each neighbourhood the suite of services available to support children, young people and families is being identified so that a coordinated offer across the NHS, Education and Voluntary Community and faith sector, is made available and publicised to families.

Where gaps are identified we will bring these to the attention of our partners and through our governance arrangements identify causes of gaps and issues so we can seek change together.



#### Occasional and aware/connected

These practitioners or volunteers understand they are part of a system of support which 'helps' people. They know how to ask questions to explore the wider needs families may have. They know how to connect to other support for families. These practitioners bring specialist expertise and need to be part of a team around the family when required/involved. They don't usually act as a Lead Professional unless this is in the family's best interests. They are active users of the local online directory of services to identify the right help for a family.

#### Sometimes and active

These practitioners bring specialist expertise and therefore need to be part of a team around the family when required/involved. They connect families with support in their community but also know how to start the process to bring wider support around a family where there are several needs. They may act as the Lead Professional if they are the most appropriate person.

#### Regular and promoting

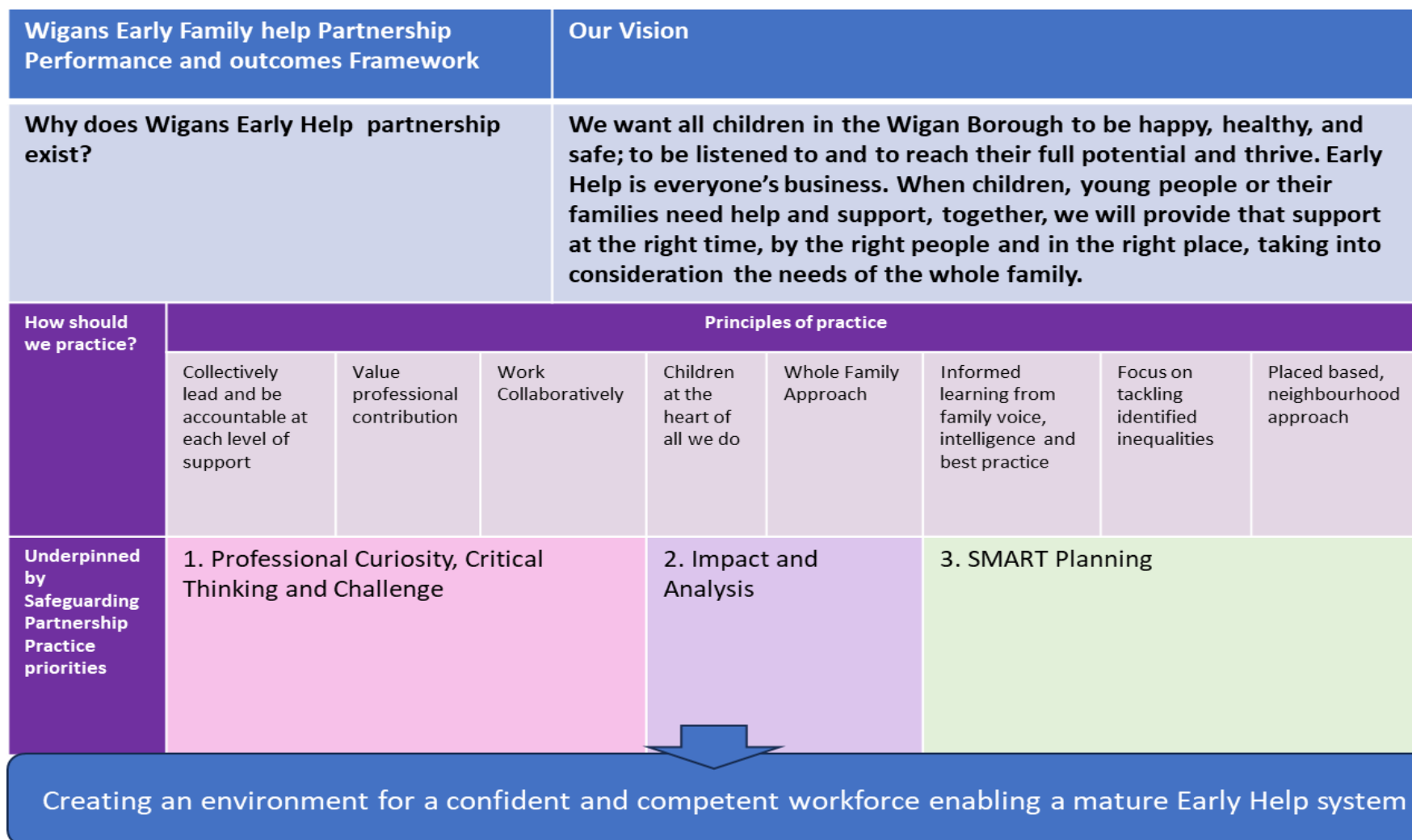
These practitioners are often the first to identify a family's need for help or support, are able to assess the needs of all members of the family and form the core of a team around the family where involved. They connect families with support in their community. They are well versed in processes to support families with multiple needs and help families to understand them. They may be the Lead Professional to start the Early Help process and regularly retain this role if they are the most appropriate person.

#### Frequent and Modelling

These practitioners support families with multiple needs and act as Lead Practitioner for the majority of families they are accountable for. They provide whole family, sometimes intensive, support for families often in their home, being proactive to reach out to families where needed. They are experts in processes to support families with multiple needs and help families, other professionals, commissioned organisations, and voluntary and community groups to understand those needs, advocating where necessary. These practitioners may support others with the lead professional role.

## 6. What difference will it make?

Aligned to achieving our vision is the development of a performance and outcome framework for our early intervention and prevention partnership. This framework brings together a methodology for ensuring we achieve the best outcomes for children and families in Wigan. It aligns to our shared practice principals and how we will work together to measure and achieve the Supporting Families Outcome Framework and Healthy Child Outcomes. This framework has a real emphasis on understanding family voice and experience, measuring change and empowering families to sustain positive change. As a key part of our investment in this model we will develop a performance dashboard which will contain detailed measures on our performance and will be reported through to Early Help and Prevention Partnership and our Safeguarding Executive.





## 7. Performance and outcomes framework

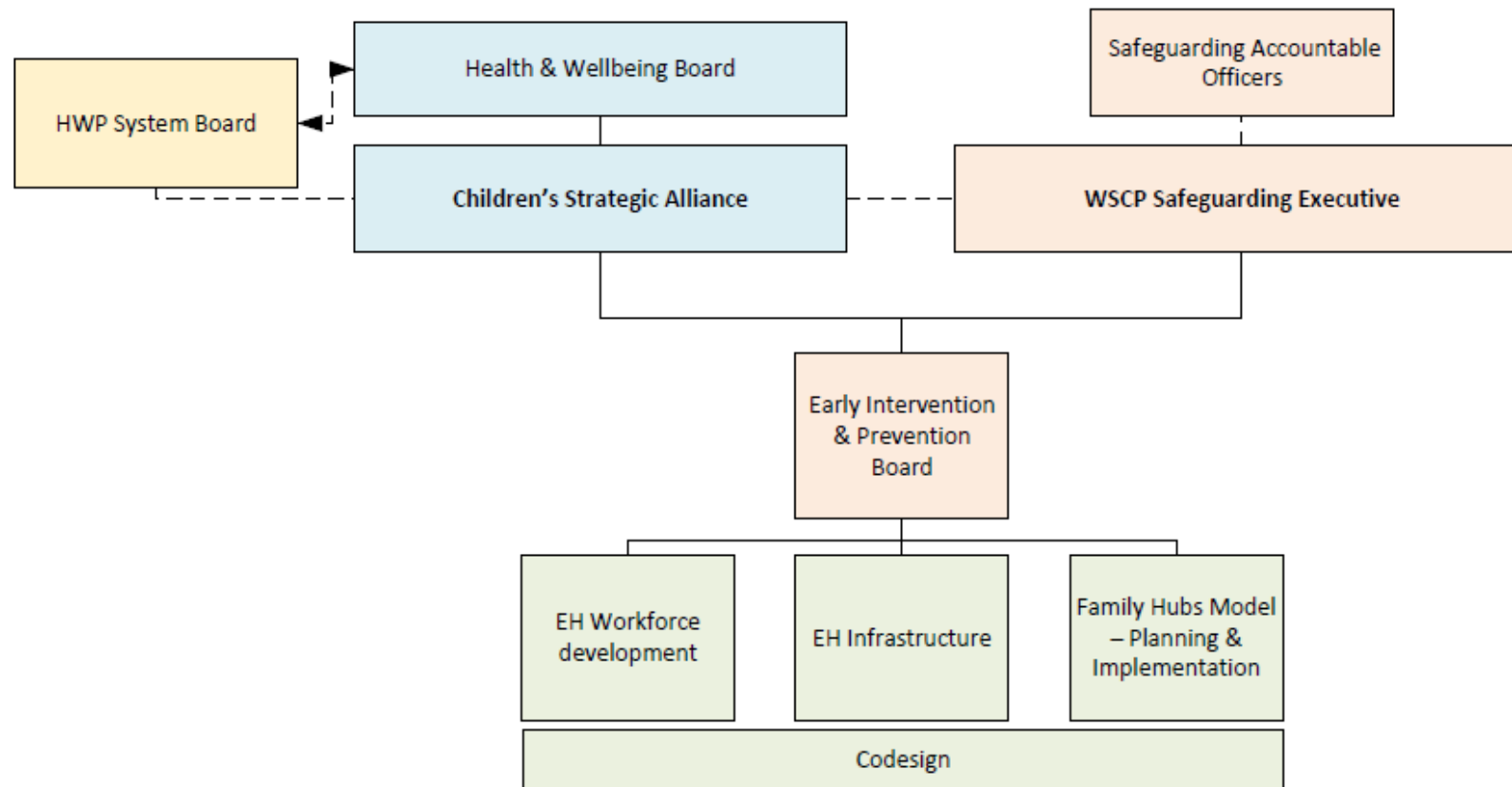
The performance dashboard will be produced quarterly by the Joint Intelligence Unit in Wigan Council and a set of measures have been identified and agreed as an initial starting point and these will develop- over time in line with the development of the seven Family Hubs.

Wigan's Early Help Family Partnership Performance and Outcomes				Our Vision						
Why does the Early Help partnership exist				We want all children in Wigan to be happy, healthy and safe; be listened to and reach their full potential and thrive. Early Help is everyone's business. When young people or their families need help and support, together, we'll provide that support at the right time, by the right people and in the right place, taking into consideration the needs of the whole family.						
How should we practice?	Principles of practice									
	Collectively lead and be accountable at each level of support	Value professional contribution	Work collaboratively	Children at the heart of what we do	Whole family approach	Informed learning from family voice, intelligence and best practice.	Focus on tackling identified inequalities	Placed based neighbourhood approach		
Our Safeguarding Practice Priorities	1. Professional Curiosity, Critical thinking and challenge		2. Impact Analysis		3. SMART Planning					
What should Wigan's Early Help Partnership achieve?	Outcomes for children and families					System enablers				
	Families needs are identified at the earliest opportunity	Children, young people and families know who and where to go for help	Children, young people and families stay together where appropriate	Our communities and families within them are empowered and have a voice	Children and young people are safe, healthy and happy in and outside their home	Infrastructure in place to support investment	Joined up family assessment where needed	Leaders drive the conditions for effective practice	Family Hub model of delivery	Workforce is equipped, skilled and connected
How do we know we are making a difference?	Proposed dashboard evidence - Measures									
	<b>Families sat they</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Know how to navigate local services and get help</li><li>Feel those that helped, listened and cared</li><li>Feel that the help they received address all problems</li><li>Feel connected to support network and local community</li><li>Feel all professionals worked together to support the family</li><li>Have a lead practitioner and feel they understand their role</li><li>Feel their individual &amp; whole family needs were considered, they only tell their story once</li></ul>					<b>Early Help</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overall number of early helps open in Wigan - Episodes</li><li>Overall % of early helps open to Start Well and Others</li><li>Number of Start Well and partner early help by SDF/ neighbourhoods, and by service/agency type, tracking past 12 months</li><li>Re-referral rates for partners and Start Well (a referral in past 12months)</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EHA/CP/CIN/ Intervention, 2 or more MASH enquiries</li><li>Referred to Young Carers</li><li>Referred to Children Centre for targeted support</li><li>Increase in step down to Early Help</li></ul>	
Supporting Families Outcomes Framework	Getting a good education	Good early years development	Improved mental and physical health	Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance misuse	Children safe from abuse and exploitation	Improved family relationships	Crime prevention and tackling crime	Safe from domestic abuse	Secure Housing	Financial Stability
Healthy Child Programme	Ready to Learn, narrowing the gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Health and Wellbeing and development</li><li>Support additional and complex needs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Maternal &amp; Family mental health, resilience and wellbeing</li><li>Supporting healthy weight, nutrition, breastfeeding and lifestyles</li><li>Health Literacy:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Managing minor illness &amp; reducing accidents</li><li>Self care</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complex &amp; Additional health wellbeing needs</li><li>Health Behaviours &amp; reducing risk taking</li></ul>				Reducing vulnerabilities and improving chances		
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transition to parenthood</li><li>Maternal &amp; Family mental health, resilience &amp; well being</li></ul>			

## 8. Our Governance.

Wigan's Childrens Safeguarding Partnership (WSCP) will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of this strategy. We will also report into our Healthier Wigan Partnership and Integrated Delivery Board. Its membership is representative of the partners delivering early help, enabling it to resolve strategic issues.

The Early Intervention and Prevention subgroup has been put in place to enable this program of work and they will support the Early Help and Prevention Partnership to ensure this strategy is enabled as business as usual. This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.



## 9. Useful contacts and links

Wigan council early help co-ordinators  
[ehcoordinators@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:ehcoordinators@wigan.gov.uk)

Wigan Council Early Help Development Team  
[EHDT@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:EHDT@wigan.gov.uk)

Diane Bradbury, Early Help and Family Hub Transformation Lead  
[Diane.Bradbury@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:Diane.Bradbury@wigan.gov.uk)

Graham Doubleday, Service Lead for Start Well and Early Help  
[g.doubleday@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:g.doubleday@wigan.gov.uk)

To be added to the invite list for the weekly earliest help drop in.  
[earliesthelp@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:earliesthelp@wigan.gov.uk)

Family Hubs and Start for Life programme - GOV.UK  
[Introducing Family Hubs - The Family Hubs Network](#)





