Shropshire Council

Early Help Transformation Engagement Project

Report

November 2023

www.shropshire.gov.uk
General Enquiries: 0345 678 9000

1. Introduction

1.1 Early Help is the route for children, young people and families to receive a low-level of targeted support at the earliest possible stage of need, before issues escalate into problems that need more serious interventions. Early Help is a tool for prevention, giving parents and carers the support to stay in control of their family's needs. Successful Early Help involves shared working between practitioners in children's services and partners in health, education and the voluntary and community sector.

1.2 Shropshire Council has been working on the transformation of Early Help services. The Early Help transformation programme is Shropshire Council's investment in prevention for children's services. The best outcomes for children and young people happen when their families have been supported at an early stage, not when unchecked issues turn into crisis. Investment at this stage helps to manage demand for more costly and disruptive services, like residential care, when problems have become too big for families to handle themselves.

1.3 Some of the many changes that have been taking place include:

- One 'front door' for children's services, situating the Early Help and Support team alongside COMPASS.
- Development of the 'how can I help? approach', to support families receiving the right help at the right time.
- Refreshed the partnership board, making sure that all our current partners are represented and can share their expertise.
- Delivery of staff workshops to obtain the views and ideas of those working in Early Help services.
- Made better use of data and performance reporting.

1.4 Work has been undertaken to focus on engagement. This includes the review of current ways of working and gathering feedback from children and young people, parents and carers and a wide range of partners and stakeholders. A number of different survey forms were designed by the Early Help Transformation Project team.

1.5 The engagement was undertaken through September and early October 2023.

1.6 This report brings together the engagement activity designed and delivered by the project team including:

- A survey for young people
- A survey for young people in receipt of Early Help support
- A parent and carers survey
- A stakeholder survey and workshop sessions covering three main themes: strategy, partnership and delivery.

1.7 The feedback is presented in 7 main sections:

- Engagement summary
- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Stakeholders: Strategy
- Stakeholders: Partnerships
- Stakeholders: Delivery
- Feedback summary

1.8 A summary report will also be made available. The reports and the findings from the engagement will be considered by the Early Help Transformation project team and senior leads within Shropshire Council. The engagement results will inform next steps including the development of a new Early Help Strategy for 2024 and the design of further actions and partnership working.

2. Engagement summary

2.1 This report brings together a diverse range of feedback from different groups central to the delivery of Early Help. The engagement considered the views of children and young people and parents and carers, but it also worked to ensure the views of a wide range of stakeholders were considered. The stakeholder engagement included workshops and discussion sessions with a range of groups and professionals working within the delivery of Early Help across different types of service and across different sectors.

2.2 The chart below summarises the numbers of responses received. It is difficult to calculate a total overall number of people involved in the engagement. There were 156 individual responses to surveys. In addition to that there were groups of stakeholders involved in the workshop discussions and in the smaller group discussions.

2.3 More information is included later in the report to explain more about those involved in each stage of the engagement but to summarise the breath of involvement it is important to highlight the settings from which stakeholders were represented. These included:

- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Early years providers
- Colleges/ Further Education and Higher Education
- PACC (Parent and Carers Council)
- Autism West Midlands
- All of Us
- Barnardo's
- Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service
- Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Local housing providers
- Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership
- Shropshire and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
- Education Welfare and Education Access Service
- Occupational Therapy
- Public Health

In addition to those listed there were a few other voluntary and community sector organisations participating in the stakeholder survey. They did not give details of which group or organisation but the feedback is helpful.

2.4 The list above highlights engagement across all sectors, private sector, public sector and voluntary and community sector organisations. Many thanks are extended to all those who took the time to support the Early Help Transformation Project Team by sharing their feedback and offering suggestions for working in partnership in the future.

2.5 The next section of the report takes a closer look at the responses from the 79 children and young people who participated in the research. There were 12 children and young people surveyed who have been supported by Early Help and 67 other children and young people.

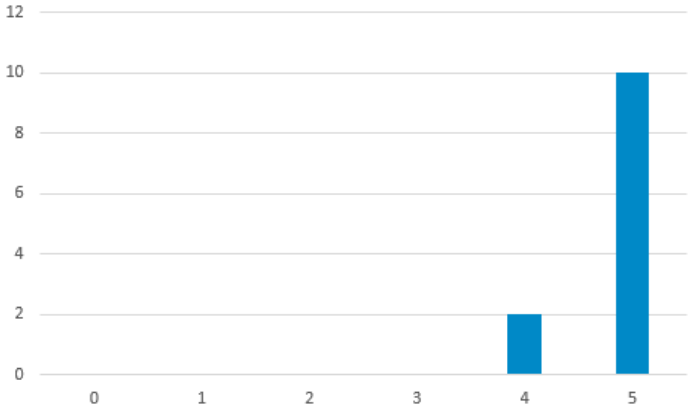
Survey	Group discussions	Number of individual responses
Children and Young People	Not applicable	67
Children and Young People in receipt of Early Help Support	Not applicable	12
Parents and carers	Not applicable	56
Stakeholders: Strategy	11	7
Stakeholders: Partnerships	18	7
Stakeholders: Delivery	14	7
Total	**43**	**156**

3. Children and young people

3.1 The engagement project captured the views of 79 children and young people, 12 had benefitted from support through Early Help services and the remaining 67 had not. The children who have received support were asked about their experiences.

3.2 The 12 children were asked to rate the service using a 5 star scale. The results shown below are very positive. 10 children rated their support as 5 stars and 2 gave a 4 star answer.

How many stars would you give us? (out of 5)



3.3 The next question asked if there was anything that could have been done better. 3 children and young people did not give an answer to the question, 4 said there was nothing that could have been done better and the remaining 5 gave an answer shown below.

What could we have done better?

- *"Helping with talking to my dad, with his mental health and how to control situations without being angry."*
- *"Stayed longer, Mum still needed help after."*
- *"Parents needed more support - brother has ADHD."*
- *"I don't mind, like more card games - with the questions on."*
- *"Nothing really, you did everything I needed, I didn't expect you to come."*

3.4 The comments highlighted a range of issues but a theme in 3 comments may be that longer term or additional family support may have been needed.

3.5 The next question asked the children and young people what they had liked about the support. 3 of the children mentioned eating pretzels at a session, 1 didn't know and the remaining 8 comments are shown below.

What did you like?

- *"I liked the colouring things, play dough and talking about stuff I need to get off my chest."*
- *"Playing with the play dough."*
- *"Better and relaxed about the situation, going to the park!"*
- *"Its made my Dad more calmer and realise he has done wrong. Made me feel better about going to my Dad's."*
- *"She was funny and she makes sure I get what I need at home."*
- *"She helped me, talked to me I was sad when Nan died."*
- *"Everything. Support . Helpful in lots of ways. People were really nice."*
- *"Helped us move home, we were in emergency accommodation. Mum and Dad split up."*

3.6 The comments highlight that the children and young people valued the support and they are all very positive about the experience. The importance of having something to do/play with, having someone to talk to and having support with family issues come across within the comments made.

3.7 The next question asked 'Did we listen to you?'. One child didn't answer, one responded 'I think so' and 10 answered 'yes'. This backs up the positive comments made in response to the previous questions.

3.8 The next question was 'Did we help make things better?' All of the children and young people answered 'yes'. The last question asked 'Tell me about it'. All 12 children added something in response and the answers are covered on the next page.

Did we make things better? Tell us about it.

- *"I eat pretzels, it make me better."*
- *"Thanks for the pretzels."*
- *"Pretzels"*
- *"I don't know."*
- *"Yes, because when we got told Dad & [*name removed*] didn't want to see us anymore, you got told and came round straight away - in a flash!"*
- *"Got Mum the right medicine from the doctors, played with me, I trusted her."*
- *"My dad needed support for depression."*
- *"Helped a lot. Really nice and supportive. Gave me lots of ideas to help me."*
- *"Listening to me, able to talk about things that have happened."*
- *"Really like just talking."*
- *"We then had stepping stones, I liked the family worker she met me every week and listened to me."*
- *"Hugging me."*

3.9 One child/young person didn't really know and 3 mentioned the pretzels they had been given. The remaining 8 answers provide more of an insight into how the children and young people felt after receiving support. 3 of the 8 spoke about the importance of the support that had been provided following identification of parental issues or needs; 4 mentioned the importance of having someone to talk to and one emphasised the value of a hug!

3.10 The 67 children and young people who had not benefitted from Early Help were asked a different set of questions. The first question was 'What do you think Early help/Family help is?'. There were 61 answers given. The responses are summarised in the table below. Only 8 children and young people weren't able to give an answer.

What do you think Early help/Family help is?

Theme/comment	Count	%
I don't know	8	13
Helping children/helping young children	11	18
Helping families in need/ families who have money/food issues	9	15
Help with problems	8	13
Help for families	7	11
Help for people	6	10
Relationship support	3	5
Environment, housing and warmth	3	5
Carer support	2	3
Other comments	4	7
Total	**61**	**100**

3.11 11 children wondered whether Early Help only means support for young children. However, many gave very good answers highlighting the provision of family support, helping families in need and helping resolve problems within families. A few examples are shown in the box below.

What do you think Early Help/Family help is?

- *"Because it's 'early' does that mean young help-for when you are young?"*
- *"Help for children when they are young."*
- *"They can help with mum and dad's problems."*
- *"Help me with my problems."*
- *"Supporting families, talking to parents and resolve family issues."*
- *"Helping my Mum and Dad, people helping families, families that need a little boost of the help they need support families with issues families helping families."*
- *"Help families that are struggling."*
- *"Offering support and money to families."*
- *"Early Help is to make sure families have what they need."*
- *"To stay warm. To have food and water on the table."*
- *"Support for the whole family, support with money and doing things as a family."*

3.12 The next question asked of children who had not received support was 'If you had a friend that needed help, how could we help them?' The answers have all been categorised into themes. There were 62 comments. The top themes were trying to help with a problem, being kind, taking to the friend and listening. Some example comments are shown on the following page.

If you had a friend that needed help, how could we help them?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Try to help with a problem or find someone else who can help	13	21
Be kind and friendly	8	13
Talk to them	8	13
Listen to them	8	13
Examples from situations with friends	6	10
Money worries mentioned as example	5	8
Find information and seek advice	4	7
Hold their hand or give them a hug	3	5
Other comment	7	11
Total	**61**	**100**

If you had a friend that needed help, how could we help them?

- *"Listen to them."*
- *"Be kind. Ask them. Talk to them."*
- *"Help people by being kind and listening to them."*
- *"Take them somewhere to talk."*
- *"Talk to them and make them feel better."*
- *"Tell someone and talk about it."*
- *"Ask them do they need any help or support."*
- *"Ring someone to get them help."*
- *"Make sure they know where to go to get help."*
- *"I saw my friend on the friendship bench-looking sad so I helped them."*
- *"One time, my friend was upset so I took their hand and led them away to talk."*
- *"More places to chill out with friends where it is safe and our parents need to know we are safe there. Someone who can help in the holidays when school is closed."*

3.13 The next question was similar but aimed at support for adults. It asked 'If one of your grown ups needed help, how could we help them?' There were 61 comments in response from the 67 children and young people surveyed. The feedback is summarised in the table below. There were 8 main themes.

If one of your grown up's needed help, how could we help them?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Tell someone	11	18
Talk to them/ask them if they want to talk	10	16
Money and food worry comments	9	15
Mental health and other support needs	6	10
Help with cooking, housework	6	10
Ask them to get help	4	7
Tell a trusted adult/ find an adult to help	4	7
Work pressures/ job and lifestyle	3	5
Help with childcare	2	3
Other comments	6	10
Total	**61**	**100**

3.14 The two top themes were to tell someone, or ask if the grown up wanted to talk/talk to them. Quite a few children and young people referred to money and food worries which suggests that this is something they are conscious grown ups may be worried about currently. 6 children and young people said they would try and help with housework/cooking and 2 said they could help with childcare. The example comments in the following box better illustrate the answers.

If you had a friend that needed help, how could we help them?

- *"Tell someone you are worried about them."*
- *"Ask them what help they need."*
- *"Help them call services for help."*
- *"Sit down and talk about it."*
- *"Chat and listen/ Cup of tea."*
- *"Tell a trusted adult that you are worried."*
- *"We can tell our teachers that we are worried about them."*
- *"Parents are struggling with money to buy food, need help to buy food."*
- *"Put money to water bills."*
- *"Give them help, care support and money."*
- *"Grown ups work a lot, it is hard-cost of living."*
- *"Do the dinner and dishes - help them tidy up."*
- *"Help with childcare - my mum has 4 children and it costs a lot."*
- *"My Dad uses humour and doesn't talk about it but I know he is struggling and needs someone to talk too. I do the same, it embarrassing to talk about home with friends."*

3.15 The feedback shows that children and young people thought carefully about how they would try and help their grown ups. The comments also demonstrate that children are conscious of money concerns. Many of the comments highlighted examples about household finances and food costs.

3.16 Children and young people were also asked 'If your family needed help, what help would you want for them?'. The answers are summarised in the table below and are similar to the previous question responses. Many children would try and do something practical to help, others would look to find help elsewhere. Answers touched on money, mental health, physical health and relationships.

If your family needed help, what help would you want for them?

Theme/comment	Count	%
I don't know/not applicable	7	11
Practical help e.g. shopping, cleaning, help with other family members etc.	11	18
Talk to someone/an adult	9	15
Help with money and household bills	8	13
Mental health related comments	8	13
Physical health related comments	4	7
Tell a teacher/ ask a teacher for help	3	5
Take them somewhere for help	3	5
Other comments	8	13
Total	**61**	**100**

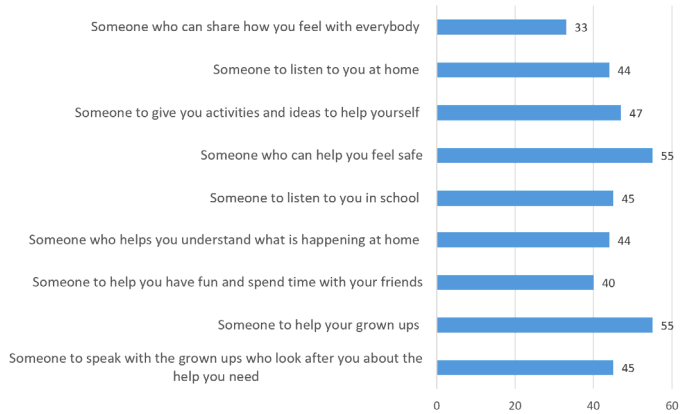
If your family needed help, what help would you want for them?

- *"Talk to another grown up."*
- *"To talk to someone."*
- *"Ask for help from a teacher."*
- *"Take them to a place to get help."*
- *"Help around the house."*
- *"Help get shopping."*
- *"Help with poorly family members."*
- *"Help with rent. For them to not have any issues with money and food. People could be homeless so give them housing and rent help. " I need help with that" "I can give you help with that."*
- *"Talk about it. Give them support. If they need money - help them."*
- *"Help my brother to not be angry."*
- *"Therapy - talking to someone."*
- *"Panic Attacks - mindfulness, someone to talk to. Calm them down and cheer them up. Be nice and kind. Listen."*
- *"Bereavement - take things away in the house so you don't need to look at them. Support with depression."*
- *"To get settled down and get some sleep. My brother is awake at night."*
- *"Help communication with Mum and Dad."*

3.17 The answers suggest a mix in how children and young people have answered the question. Some children and young people have answered more as a theoretical response, others seem to be basing their answer on a known issue or something their family may need help with. Approximately 19 of the 61 comments seem to be based on a real concern (31%).

3.18 The survey asked the children and young people 'If you needed help, which of these would you want from us?' and the results are shown below.

If you needed help, which of these would you want from us?



3.19 The type of help most commonly requested was 'someone to help your [my] grown ups' and 'someone who can help you [me] feel safe'. The types of help fewer children selected were 'someone to help you have fun and spend time with your friends' and 'someone who can share how you feel with everybody'.

3.20 The last main question asked of children and young people was 'If you had a team of super heroes that could help your family, what would they do?'. There were common themes in the responses. Money concerns was top followed by help to undertake household tasks and removing worries. Other commonly mentioned issues were family relationships and anger/ mental health. The example comments following the summary table illustrate the responses more clearly.

If you had a team of super heroes that could help your family, what would they do?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Solving money concerns	15	22
Helping with household tasks e.g. cooking and tidying	11	16
Taking away worries/ giving support	9	13
Resolving relationship problems	7	10
Overcome anger or mental health issues	4	6
Playing games/ things to do	3	4
Better health	3	4
Protection/ safety	2	3
Appreciation of parents	2	3
Other comments	11	16
Total	**67**	**100**

If you had a team of super heroes that could help your family, what would they do?

- *"Tell my Dad to be nice to me and my Mum."*
- *"Make the anger issues go away."*
- *"Help with all bills and supply with a bit of money."*
- *"Someone I could text or email and tell how I am feeling. People shouldn't have to wait to get help. I do not want to put on my parents, they are struggling too. A person helping needs to be nice and you need to trust them. Support with universal credit, money and benefits, it is not enough to live on. Benefits are seen as a bad thing."*
- *"Clean by bedroom and help clean the house. Make prices go down."*
- *"Help with cooking. Give me transport."*
- *"Help mum and dad to live together."*
- *"Help my parents to stop me being naughty, help my family come back together, stop my Mum and Dad arguing."*

- *"Make life easier."*
- *"No more gangs in Shrewsbury, there is so much violence. We have to get picked up we can not walk home together as it is not safe. Someone to help us as a family. Stop the arguments in the family. My parents are too embarrassed to ask for help and do not want social workers."*
- *"Help us move house due to the neighbours being horrible, I want someone to talk too I get anxious about things. I am nervous about my exams. I want to be able to hang out with friends and be safe."*
- *"Generate food for them and medicine if they cannot pay for it. Flash - I want to be Flash - my brother goes to Severndale and we have to wait for his bus, so I am late to school. I don't want to be late for school - so if we had flash then I would be on time."*
- *"Groot. Spiderman. Captain America - I can travel on his shield and not be late."*

3.21 Some of the children and young people's comments suggest they may be in need of Early Help support within their families. The children and young people are not trouble free and express concerns over family and household issues.

3.22 The last question was a general question designed to cover anything else the respondents wanted to add. It read 'Anything else you think would help?' There were 36 comments. The comments have been grouped into themes. Help for parents and help with living costs and money were the two top themes followed by a help-line phone number to call. Other themes included reference to activities/equipment and pets/animal therapy. Example comments are shown in the box following the table below. The examples include some of the other comments that didn't easily fit into a theme.

Anything else you think would help?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Help for parents	7	19
Help with living costs and money	7	19
A phone number to call	5	14
Activities or equipment	4	11
Animal therapy or pets	3	8
Help to sort out messy house/cleaning	3	8
Help to ensure people are happy	2	6
Other comments	5	14
Total	**36**	**100**

Anything else you think would help?

- *"Give them more money for buying food for us."*
- *"Help us if we are struggling with money."*
- *"Help with living costs."*
- *"Cleaning my house, messy bedrooms."*
- *"Someone to talk to. Animal therapy dogs - dog to help someone with depression and anxiety. For anxiety - have fun activities and headphones where they can sit in a quiet room."*
- *"Fun activities to help get things out of my head."*
- *"Make clubs go down in price."*
- *"Help my Mum and Dad. Bereavement support."*
- *"Funding cuts have meant my Dad doesn't get the mental health support he needs, he cannot work and we are struggling on universal credit. Lots of people talk but there is not a lot of action."*
- *"Everyone equal rights to everything, help for parents that spilt up, help for children when parents split up."*
- *"Start a charity for people who don't have a good place to stay and call home."*
- *"Help mum not to feel so stressed."*
- *"I know where to go at school but that is for me what about my parents. I waited three times last week for over 2 hours for Kooth support and never got through."*
- *"Most young people at the table 7/10 said they often felt anxious. Parents don't seek family support because they feel judged, embarrassed and don't want people finding out."*

3.23 The last comment shown above highlights that some of the children and young people were supported to complete the survey and to discuss the issues they raised. Again the responses highlight that a proportion of the respondents appear to be in need of some additional support.

3.24 The next section of the report considers feedback from parents and carers.

4. Parents and carers

4.1 Within the survey designed for parents and carers, they were asked about their understanding of Early Help. Of the 56 respondents, 55 added a comment. The comments were grouped to understand the main themes within the responses. These are summarised in the table below. 10 of the 55 didn't know what Early Help is but the remaining 45 added comments. 12 described very general help for families, 10 comments on addressing family needs and 9 specifically mentioned prevention or early intervention to prevent needs from escalating.

What is Early Help/Family Help?

Theme/comment	Count	%
I don't know	10	18
Support for families	12	22
Support for families facing problems/ difficulties or with specific challenges	10	18
Early intervention/prevention to ensure problems do not escalate to social care	9	16
Parenting advice and support	4	7
Support from external partners, schools or a range of services	3	5
Support for children with special needs or learning needs	2	4
Other comments	5	9
Total	**55**	**100**

What is Early Help/Family Help?

- *"Family support and advice."*
- *"Support for children and families."*
- *"Meant to help and support you and your family as a whole."*
- *"Support for families who maybe struggling from a designated key worker."*
- *"Support for families facing difficulties."*
- *"A support group who help families who need some support with development and school, domestic abuse, budgeting etc."*
- *"Support for families to help them with finance, behaviour, parenting skills, and a contact for any help/advice that the parent may need."*
- *"Parent support to de escalate issues or prevent issues. Positive strategies. Replacement for Sure Start."*
- *"Identifying at the easiest opportunity help and support available for families."*
- *"A team that comes in and help the family before social services."*
- *"Early intervention to help prevent any situation worsening."*
- *"'Support' aimed at improving outcomes for children or preventing escalating need or risk - early intervention service."*
- *"Support and advice from a wide range or services and professionals."*
- *"School and the social."*
- *"Not entirely sure as re-structured during us being assigned another practitioner. Seems to just be some sort of management company now."*
- *"Lots of people coming into help me. Been a big help."*

4.2 The parents and carers were then asked if their family needs any support and the help that could be provided by Early Help. There were 60 comments. 9 parents or carers emphasised that they were not in need of any help and 4 didn't know. The remaining 47 provided some examples. These have been summarised into themes below with examples shown on the following page. Top themes included help with a diagnosis/SEND or mental health, general advice/signposting, access to other services and parenting advice.

If your family needs support, how could we help you?

Theme/comment	Count	%
I don't know	4	7
Don't need support	9	15
Help with diagnosis, SEND and mental health	8	13
Advice, support and signposting	8	13
Access to other services and organisations	6	10
Parenting, behavioural advice and routines	6	10
Negative experience of Early Help	5	8
Positive experience of Early Help	5	8
Counselling and therapy	3	5
Other specific comments/examples	6	10
Total	**60**	**100**

If your family needs support, how could we help you?

- *"We're good thank you."*
- *"We don't need help."*
- *"Help with getting a BEE U assessment and ECHP."*
- *"Getting my child ADHD diagnosis. She has been waiting since year 7 now year 10."*
- *"Support with assessing my sons anxiety and possible neurodiversity."*
- *"Had level 3 support, and put to level 2 , would have liked the support to continue until family felt ready."*
- *"Again not entirely sure as no help or particular support has been forthcoming!"*
- *"You already are supporting my family emotionally. parenting. Giving me confidence. Letting me talk."*
- *"I've had help before and they really helped me."*
- *"Help with routines and children's behaviour."*
- *"Parenting. Emotional containment."*
- *"Directing us to the people who can help us."*
- *"Give advice on what is available to help us deal with our current situation."*
- *"Go between mediator; counsellor for the children."*
- *"Case worker, food bank referral, liaise with school or other outside agencies."*
- *"Access to GPs and dentists."*

If your children need support, how can we help you?

- *"Stay away. Resist pressure to comply with government punitive responses (except in genuine cases where a child is at risk of immediate harm)."*
- *"Put provisions in place to help support my child whilst in school."*
- *"My child's education."*
- *"I would like my child to have access to more support while waiting the 2+ years for an ADHD assessment."*
- *"ADHD service."*
- *"Referring us to specialists for help with our child's behaviour."*
- *"My child still needs help with behaviour issues."*
- *"To help her with her feelings and emotional wellbeing."*
- *"Support and guidance and ideas of what to do with your child."*
- *"Look at the past of the family discuss what help is available as most parents have no idea what help is available."*
- *"Again not entirely sure as no help or particular support has been forthcoming!"*
- *"More drop ins with health visitors or children's practitioners."*
- *"Support with respite services for son."*

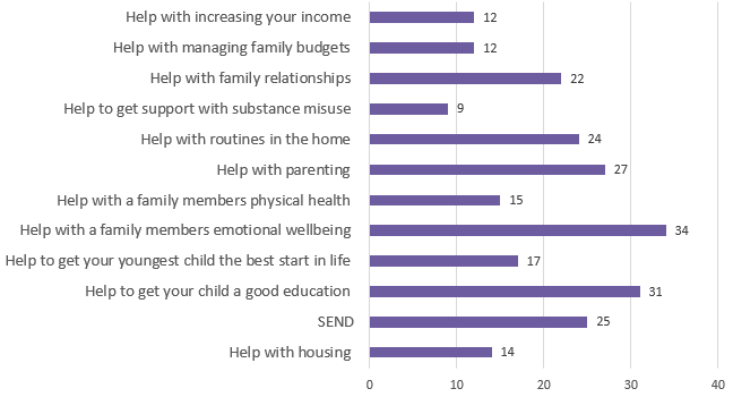
4.3 The parents and carers were also asked about the support needs of their children. 52 of the survey respondents made comments. 5 didn't know and 6 commented that support wasn't needed. The most commonly requested type of assistance was emotional support and wellbeing followed by help with education/in school and behavioural support.

If your children need support, how can we help you?

Theme/comment	Count	%
I don't know	5	10
Don't need support	6	12
Emotional support and wellbeing	12	23
Education support and assistance in school	5	10
Behavioural support	5	10
ADHD services	4	8
General help with everything/ need to know what help there is	3	6
You didn't help	2	4
Access to activities and interests	2	4
Specific examples e.g. health visiting, transport, respite, speech and language help.	8	15
Total	**52**	**100**

4.4 To confirm support needs, parents were asked what Early Help could help with and the chart below shows the results. The most common support need is emotional wellbeing, followed by support for a good education, help with parenting and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Although children raised concerns about family finances, these were not commonly selected options (increasing income or managing family budgets). There were 6 additional comments made with other suggestions so all six comments are shown in the example comments box on the following page.

What could we help you with?



What could we help you with (Other)?

- *"None of the above. You are the last people most parents would go for help. They will engage on surface level if forced to. That doesn't help anyone, least of all the child."*
- *"As above practical help at home to give us more time and 1:1 support for children when out doing activities."*
- *"Anything and everything."*
- *"Mental health support."*
- *"Teach School subjects."*
- *"Very limited opportunities in Shropshire to discuss children's health and development."*

4.5 Through the research parents and carers were asked whether they had faced any challenges when seeking Early Help support. Many parents commented that they didn't have challenges or hadn't sought help. 39 of the 56 parents and carers did describe experiences and made a comment. These have been grouped into the themes summarised in the table below with example comments also included.

What are some challenges you have faced when seeking Early Help support, if any?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Waiting times for support/ long process	8	21
Assessment criteria/eligibility	4	10
Very limited support provided	4	10
Not feeling listened to as a parent	3	8
Lack of awareness among other services e.g. GP, A&E	3	8
Limited time with support/lack of follow up	3	8
Access to services (e.g. restricted times)	2	5
Lack of support through form filling etc.	2	5
No challenges	2	5
Other	8	21
Total	**39**	**100**

What are some challenges you have faced when seeking early help support, if any?

- *"Knowing what is on offer, if I am eligible for help and who to contact."*
- *"Assessment criteria."*
- *"Length of time having to wait."*
- *"Length of time on the waiting list. Waited so long it became pointless so gave up waiting."*
- *"Took too long to be allocated and be able to access support."*
- *"Although I have received early help I'm sorry to say I am still where I was before I felt nothing was really done no support was put in place."*
- *"Coping with every day life, without support."*
- *"There is little or no support. Children's Centres have all closed, nowhere to drop in to if need any advice. Health visitors are so limited and no multi agency working unless there is a crisis."*
- *"Lack of follow up."*
- *"It's not ongoing for the rest of the child's school life. Problems don't just go away after 6 weeks and a lot of children need additional support as do their families."*
- *"Not listening to parent and what support is needed."*
- *"Worker who came round did not listen to any concerns about children, [name removed] suffered with mental health issues and she got someone involved who had no clue. Son suffered . 12 year old son asked for them never to come again. Was awful and made family suffer as a result."*
- *"Doctors don't want to know unless school do a referral, school SEND is non existent and ignores emails."*
- *"Not enough services know about Early Help."*
- *"Limited times to visit. As it falls within school pick up."*
- *"No challenges. Early Help Have always been there when I need them."*

4.6 The main challenge expressed by parents and carers was waiting times. The remaining feedback was spread across themes with 2-4 comments per theme. Eligibility/assessment criteria, limited support, not feeling listened to and lack of longer-term support and follow up were among the other themes mentioned. There were also a few comments about limited signposting/awareness among other public sector services and GPs.

4.7 The table below summarises the responses when parent and carers were asked about their involvement.

How can Early Help better involve you in the decision-making process regarding your own support and outcomes?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Good, no need for improvement	8	21
Listening to parents	6	16
Improved 2-way communication and involvement of parents	6	16
Additional forms of support	6	16
Didn't feel supported	4	11
More solution and action-focused	3	8
Boundaries -respecting parents may not wish to engage	2	5
Other comments	3	8
Total	**38**	**100**

How can Early Help better involve you in the decision-making process regarding your own support and outcomes?

- *"I feel very involved."*
- *"We felt very involved when the social care worker came to visit regarding support, we felt they listened and understood our situation and were supportive and understanding of our children's SEND needs."*
- *"I feel you have always involved me in decision making."*
- *"We were told about all the decisions being made and involved in the decisions. We felt very included and respected."*
- *"Listen to the family and tell them what help is available. Help them access the help that is available."*
- *"Talking to you and listening, rather than assume the professionals know better...listen to the families and the children - we have to live it - its hard."*
- *"Listening to parents more. Do not disregard the parents' thoughts and feelings."*
- *"Train workers better to actually listen to parents, they know their children better than anyone. Better and more frequent communication, we understand there is a large caseload but even a text helps. Explain processes and procedures so we have an idea of what is actually happening and what the end goal is. Work better with child social care."*
- *"Updating families more frequently."*
- *"Keeping parents informed and involved."*
- *"From this experience with Early Help (our case has just been closed) any help or support for my children has been provided by the schools, support for myself has been non-existent."*
- *"We set goals with Early help but this process felt rushed and generic. Set more than 2 goals. Have more support in identifying the root cause of the family problems."*
- *"Putting the action plan together with support."*
- *"Regular in person/telephone meetings and updates. Plan reviews and goals."*
- *"Respect a wish to not engage, don't force compliance with threats. Take responsibility for issues caused by schools taking industrial action and closing in Covid - accept the resultant issues are not the parent's fault."*

4.8 38 comments were made when parents and carers were asked about involvement. 8 provided very positive comments suggesting they had been very involved and could not see room for any improvement. There were 27 comments with suggestions and 3 other comments.

4.9 Themes within the comments included improved listening, better communication (e.g. updates and keeping parents informed), and some specific suggestions. The suggestions were varied but included better information sharing with others, improved advice, closer working with school and more targeted/specific advice/support. 3 parents and carers suggested more emphasis on action planning/ solutions and 2 highlighted boundaries.

4.10 The next question included in the survey was focused on closer working with professionals. The question read 'How can early help work with other professionals to provide support to your family?' There were 41 suggestions (some explained they didn't know but these are not included in analysis). The top theme with 10 of the 41 comments was linked to the involvement of GPs and NHS services. The example comments better illustrate the suggestions made.

How can early help work with other professionals to provide support to your family?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Good, no need for improvement	1	2
Closer working with schools	6	15
Improving awareness of what services can offer among professionals	5	12
Better communication to reduce repeating needs/messages	4	10
Greater involvement in meetings and appointments	3	7
More professionals working around a family to take action	3	7
Greater engagement of GPs and NHS services	10	24
Other comments	9	22
Total	**41**	**100**

How can Early Help better involve you in the decision-making process regarding your own support and outcomes?

- *"Inviting everyone supporting family to meetings."*
- *"Better communication so you don't have to repeat yourself all the time."*
- *"Communication between different settings needs to improve."*
- *"Getting in contact with other professionals to help the whole family when needed."*
- *"Explain the situation and work together and actually do something."*
- *"For other professionals to get a better understanding of early help."*

- *"Other professionals need to understand what support Early Help can give."*
- *"Direction to support, assessment but most of all follow up followed by follow up."*
- *"Some pathways for support for health needs were not available in Shropshire. There are long waiting lists for assessments. This is a barrier to getting support for children with SEND, early help could help to signpost, chase and provide check in support for families while they are waiting."*
- *"Getting more children mental health support. Free or subsided therapy. I know of two suicidal children waiting 2 years for support through doctors so parents feel helpless and no one to help."*
- *"There needs to be more work with health visitors , midwifery services, who get to know families very early on. There is limited follow through or signposting to other services e.g. with health visitors, you get the routine visits when baby first born and then nothing."*
- *"It is these other key professionals that make the most difference; play practitioner, social subscriber. However the key for us would have been mental health support and work around domestic abuse."*
- *"Work with GPs and dentist to provide appointments."*
- *"Help with referrals to GP."*

4.11 The parents and carers involved in the research were asked how Early Help can raise awareness and promote services to families and the wider community. There were 49 comments in response to the question. There were some main themes within the comments. 10 parents/carers described use of communications channels such as social media, posters etc. 10 highlighted the importance of information through schools and nurseries.

How can we raise awareness and promote early help services to families and the wider community?

Theme/comment	Count	%
Social media, posters, text emails etc.	11	22
Through schools and nurseries	10	20
By addressing reputation, increasing culture of openness, addressing perceptions etc.	9	18
Through community services, GPs, libraries, play groups etc.	8	16
By building more trust and knowledge among families	6	12
Through family hubs (increase opening)	4	8
Other comments	1	2
Total	**49**	**100**

4.12 A range of community based services and support groups were also listed as a way of raising awareness, these included GPs, libraries, play groups and other groups, fun-days, drop-ins, voluntary sector organisations, play centres, baby-changing areas etc. A few comments crossed over themes but the main point was used to categorise. Some comments suggested that there is a need to change the way parents and carers see the services/ address reputational issues. The example comments shown below help to illustrate the answers provided.

How can we raise awareness and promote early help services to families and the wider community?

- *"School to send out e-mails with information on about Early Help."*
- *"I think more awareness in schools and nurseries relating how to identify a child that needs additional help and more important how to put the parents on the right direction and support them with the forms."*
- *"Schools and childcare settings need to know more about early help and support so it's not seen or viewed in a negative way. They are the ones who have consistent regular contact with families since the closure of Sure Start."*
- *"Through GPs, online Facebook groups, in-person baby and parent groups."*
- *"Promotion of services at GP reception, nurseries, schools, specialist education settings via posters, newsletters and emails. Local offer website, school GP and nursery websites. Local radio e.g. Radio Shropshire. Parent carer forum, citizens advice. Local councillors being aware to signpost services. Advert on back of park and ride buses, bus station adverts. Shropshire star and social media. Places carers go for support and places parents need support e.g. local hospitals, other healthcare practices. Health visitor and speech therapy, physio, paediatricians give out leaflets. Info at soft play centres."*
- *"Be helpful not judgemental."*
- *"By actually providing a support service which worked!"*
- *"I feel like Early Help are not coping as it is. I believe it is professionals who refer, therefore, it is important professionals have the appropriate knowledge and know who and how to refer. From my experience schools need better training; our form was filled out incorrectly twice... I did not feel supported in the process and made to feel I was wasting their time. They did not want to hear about the abuse we suffered and recorded it very badly…"*
- *"Make it less intimidating for families to seek help we all feel embarrassed for needing help."*

4.13 The survey for parents and carers included a question about improvement. Many parents and carers didn't know but 36 of the 56 survey respondents were able to make a comment. 3 didn't think any improvement was necessary but 33 had some suggestions. The top suggestion was increasing awareness of available services and support followed by reduced waiting times and more of a presence in the community. Some of the themes reflected earlier comments such as listening to parents. The table below summarises the feedback and some example comments and also provided to better illustrate the type of comments made within the survey responses.

How could Early Help services be improved?

Theme/comment	Count	%
No improvement needed	3	8
Increasing awareness of service offer and how to access support	8	22
Reduced waiting times	6	17
Presence in community, schools or home (where parents and children are)	6	17
Listening to parents	3	8
Concern about service sustainability/ staff	3	8
Poor experience/lack of support	2	6
Other comments	5	14
Total	**36**	**100**

How could early help services be improved?

- *"I have been more than happy with the support I have received."*
- *"Advertising, awareness, less paperwork and red tape that is pointless and 'tick box'."*
- *"How to access Early Help in the first place."*
- *More local services. Cohesive joined up working with partner agencies. Think family model to support the families and wider families around children getting help prevention. Clearer message what is Early Help? Do families even know?"*
- *"Early referral - too long, the first process failing."*
- *"…A clear list of what support could be provided and how to get it and who to contact. The process could be quicker, shouldn't have to wait months for help when in crisis and struggling. Paperwork needs to be easy read for parents who haven't got time to fill in forms or digest lots of information..."*
- *"It is so disappointing that services that used to run in children's centres don't any more. Other professionals sign posting to early help e.g. when routine midwife and HV visits are finished but actually families may still need some support and intervention."*
- *"I don't actually feel early help helped I had a FSW and all that I felt was done was some emails sent and no reply. When I asked for a pa they didn't know what it was nor how to access that support. In fact, I found the whole process a waste of time as nothing really was accomplished that I didn't accomplish myself."*
- *"Some level of mental Health support would be key. Better training for professionals who are referring to Early Help. Family able to change Early Help worker if they do not suit the family, particularly if the child is not able to build a bond with the worker provided. Spend time with the family until the family feel they have improved their situation. I felt we were left at the same point as I asked for help. We had less than 6 months support and the domestic abuse we both suffered was not addressed."*
- *"Going into liquidation?"*
- *"By actually employing trained professionals not nail technicians!"*
- *"Listen to parents when they ask for help as they are asking for a reason. LA not to dismiss request for support from schools and parents due to lack of funding and staffing."*

4.14 A question was included to ask parents and carers 'If you have received Early Help support, can you tell us about your experience?' 34 parents and carers responded that they could comment on their experience and 32 of the 34 wrote a comment within the survey. There were 15 positive comments (47%), 6 comments with mixed feedback (19%) and 11 negative comments (34%). The example comments are grouped to better illustrate the nature of the comments made.

Examples - Positive comments

- *"It has been really positive. We have had lots of help, pointing us in the right direction, help with our daughter's behaviour, financial help, sleep advice. Play practitioner has helped us to do things together as a family."*
- *"I was always consulted and I had a good collaboration with the Early Help team….everything worked out for good for us. The early intervention put us on the right path and gave my son a chance. Now my son is thriving being in the right environment with trained teachers in special needs. Made a huge difference for us like a family and for him personally. He is developing wonderful. I am very proud of him."*
- *"Helpful and understanding. Comfortable chat and not being interrogated, can talk to her about life and not judged."*
- *"Positive, good clear communication. Very supportive."*

Examples - Mixed comments

- *"Was good but time limited. One professional (not from early help) dismissed an early help workers opinion and outside agencies didn't always work well with early help. Early help workers themselves are amazing."*
- *"Took too long to be allocated support due to being denied by LA on numerous occasions for not meeting criteria. Support worker good at trying to listen and co-ordinate relevant parties."*
- *"Took ages to get the help. Good when I had it and can still call my family worker."*
- *"They were involved for a situation that didn't happen then the help I received was very helpful in the end. They started helping my son in nursery but unfortunately they didn't help him at all and he is still struggling."*
- *"They helped me very much regarding myself but feel like my child was left out a bit as he wasn't super naughty in class, but let out everything once he was out of school."*

Examples - Negative comments

- *"As previously mentioned I found it a waste of time no support was pit in place they sent a few emails to try and assist in a school move which I had already started and accomplished by myself....I asked my FSW for a pa, never came to fruition in fact nothing actually came of having a FSW and after a few weeks we have now been signed off and no longer have any help even though they didn't actually do anything anyway."*
- *"My daughter did not bond with the support worker. We would have preferred to change, wait longer, and get the help she needed. Then we received less than 6 months support. Our family were not ready to have support taken away and I feel we had not made much progress. I asked to see our targets and paper work several times, but support worker kept saying she had brought outdated plans by mistake. We only had ONE school meeting and this was the main issue….I felt the main issues were domestic abuse and school attendance; and I felt let down with both of these areas."*
- *"Accessibility to service is limited and limited unrealistic time frame spent with families."*
- *"Due to time it took to start process (7 months) family went elsewhere through mental health teams."*

4.15 The comments reflect themes provided in answer to previous questions. The examples are very helping in brining the feedback to life and understanding individual experience.

4.16 The research participants were asked if they would be willing to join a parent and carers panel. 13 parents and carers provided their contact details. A few added comments to highlight that it was something they would consider but had concerns around anonymity of their survey feedback or would need more information before making a commitment.

4.17 Following feedback from children, young people and parents and carers, the next sections of the report consider feedback from stakeholders and those working within the wider Early Help system. The stakeholder feedback focuses on three main themes, strategy, partnership and delivery.

5. Stakeholders: Strategy

5.1 Stakeholder feedback was collected through 3 main approaches: workshops, feedback forms completed within smaller group discussions and an online survey.

5.2 The stakeholders participating in the research represented a range of different local groups and organisations including primary and secondary schools, nursery providers, voluntary and community sector organisations and groups, NHS health services, other public sector partners and a range of services delivered by Shropshire Council.

5.3 Under the theme of Strategy, the first question asked was 'What are the initiatives that we currently offer that would like to see integrated into the new EH strategy?'

5.4 There were 16 form and survey responses. There are too few to fairly theme the comments but there is an emphasis on the need for Locality Development Officers (LDOs). Other points mentioned by more than one respondent included community-based support, parenting support and cross service working (e.g. referral, networking etc.) The example comments shown have been chosen because they are more specific in nature. Three respondents answered very generally without naming initiatives or support/services.

5.5 The workshops also included discussion about the areas of service which should form a focus for future improvement. The feedback from the 2 workshops has been combined and is shown on the following page. Themes within the workshop feedback include:

- Mental health support
- Family relationship support, safety and domestic abuse services
- Early intervention and early years
- Service through schools and improving school attendance
- Community and home based, accessible local support
- Improved multi-agency and system working
- Support for vulnerable families (food, heating, housing etc.)

Current initiatives for the strategy

- *"Community events that are taking place in the south. Hub drop ins. Local development officer support and extending this offer. Parenting Team support. Family Support Offer - more of this. More face to face for parenting rather than online courses."*
- *"Community Meetings - South. Peak times - LDO is in the school for half a day to workshop through some cases. LDO to be accessible as they are - good source of support to talk things through - positive get back to partners. Parents posters for UYC [Understanding Your Child] - online etc - course offer - easy to share with families."*
- *"Access to local LDO, continue attending Network meetings. Continued training on Liquid Logic, good resources for all services working with families."*
- *"LDOs - is the resource enough to meet demand?"*
- *"Parenting team, LDOs."*
- *"AWM [Autism West Midlands] - service not an initiative. Young Carers - to be continued. Family support work to be continued. Parenting - continue but more collaboration required. Parenting carers helpline - no consultation with PACC about is this is required."*
- *"Having someone who can come and work with a family as long as from a SEND perspective, just signposting or giving them leaflets isn't going to help, just being there and having someone to talk to really does help. That offer of face to face support is valuable. Integration work needs to go in there and being integral to what we do. Parenting-change the language-support for parents-consider the way in which it is presented."*
- *"Parental support."*
- *"Early Help Drop In. Social Prescribing. Family Support Workers."*
- *"I would like to see an referral being part of the early help strategy so that all clients receive a visit from the fire service to ensure they are safe in their home."*
- *"HAF Programme (Holiday Activities & Food)"*
- *"EH and HV have become more distant bringing professionals together EH meetings integrated meetings with professionals. Strength knowledge and access to services is key."*
- *"Everything don't take anything away-not enough in Shropshire."*

Workshop feedback - Current initiatives for the Strategy

Parenting

- Understanding Your Child more within communities; parents need to feel safe.
- Parenting offer and play practitioner, leap into learning good for career development need to continue.
- Free online courses that are available.
- Sleep workshops.
- Targeting the hard to reach for parenting.
- Focus on under 5s.

Information, Training and Support

- FIS [Family Information Service] is good but, needs to be improved.
- Focus on mental health and training

Professional support

- The right staff structure.
- More family practitioners and family workers.
- Locality Development Officers (LDOs)
- Home visits from family workers to continue.
- An allocation of a worker always helps.
- Like having direct outcome from MARFs sent.
- Integration panel, bringing cases to the panel for discussion/to enable appropriate support in place.
- Flexibility - staff working hours and patterns-to meet the needs of family differing lifestyles.
- Collaborative working with partners-midwifery/health.
- Access to Occupational Therapy support at the front door, preventative non screening and non clinical.

Home and Family Life

- Financial support and food hubs
- employment advisors and access to benefit checks
- would be good to have housing support available
- Focus on domestic abuse/mental health/family relationships/school attendance.

Community-based support

- Universal help for all.
- Physically present in schools/nursery/in the community.
- Drop ins, network meetings are good.
- Family festivals.
- Social prescribers-pull them into the integrated hub.
- Child/Young Person focus- voices responded to.

Other

- One front door easier access.
- Allowing families to decide their priorities and removing stigma to family hubs.
- Understanding that language and terminology is important.
- Safe spaces and acceptance.
- Reliable service, restorative approach.

5.6 Stakeholders were asked what matters most to the communities they work with and which priorities should be included in a new Early Help Strategy. The survey respondents were asked to rank priorities and the resulting order was:

1. SEND/ Inclusion
2. Poverty
3. Supporting pregnant parents and families with children under 5 years old
4. Domestic abuse
5. Serious youth violence
6. Sourcing external funding

5.7 The table below highlights how many times different priorities were mentioned through the survey and group feedback forms. The box below includes comments that didn't easily fit into any of the top priorities.

Priorities

Issue	Count
Mental health support for children and families	7
SEND pathway and support including holiday provision	7
Diagnosis and support for behavioural issues and attachment, trauma, developmental issues etc.	6
ADHD support	4
Improved information sharing and multi-agency working	4
Substance misuse support	3
School exclusions and attendance	3
Domestic abuse	3
Early Years support	3
Poverty	2
Parenting support, sleep, nutrition etc.	2
Electively Home Educated (EHE)	2

Other priorities for the strategy

- Teenagers
- Supporting families who are separating
- Supporting families post adoption
- Safeguarding Children and Strengthening Families
- Internet usage and safety
- "Specialist teams are needed within Early Help - skill sets of staff need to be correct for what is needed for the family."
- "Engaging with families - Hard to reach pathway - how sure start broke down the barriers previously - a way to engage with families. Break the stigma of once in system they are under scrutiny."

Other priorities for the strategy cont...

- Compassion and empathy in the system. Approach of belief - believe what families / parents / children are saying.
- Should support the outputs of the JSNA and the information from community consultations that have taken place.
- CDC finding difficulties in families being able to access Early Years settings-practical support-families just needing a break-so they can have a breather-families needing a break.
- Compassionate, parents feel judged, use of language, how can we support you in a compassionate way-what can they access, how and where.
- Practical support-challenging sensory behaviours -training needs of staff-practitioner in the house supporting the families in the way they need it-empowering and enabling families to access support.
- Siblings in the SEN community can often be the forgotten tribe, and facilitating their access to things. Training of practitioners.
- Supporting families into communities to ensure they don't feel so isolated. Enabling parents to feel positive about future-and that it's going to be ok. Not duplicating work-working together to ensure we have a broader support response-coming together in a place-knowing our parents really well.
- Waiting well - have got through but waiting - having someone ringing and checking back in whilst waiting.
- Not being able to access multiple services simultaneously - e.g. awaiting autism diagnosis but cant access mental health services, alcohol and substance and trauma.
- Children with complex health needs.
- Thresholds are a priority - these create barriers don't help overcome the issue. All in/ Children With Disabilities (CWD) respite - cant deliver what children and young people need.
- Early Help has a lot of potential and needs to be reframed.

5.8 Stakeholder feedback on priorities was also gathered through the workshops. The next box brings together the priorities listed within the 2 larger workshop sessions. Key themes similar to the survey and form feedback included SEND support, Poverty/Family Finances and Child and Youth Safety. Other themes mentioned included other needs (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers), family relationships and behaviour and the importance of access to support within the community.

Workshop feedback - Priorities

Child and Youth Safety

- Child exploitation
- County lines
- Domestic abuse
- Crime ASB and exploitation
- Lack of safe places for young people to go outside of school.
- Increase in anti-social behaviour that needs addressing.
- Reduction of anti-social behaviour and criminality.

SEND and Other Additional Support Needs

- Focus on SEND and inclusion
- Disability support for children, parents and carers.
- More readily available respite for families short breaks.
- Support asylum seekers and refugees.
- Mental health of young people and parents.

Family relationships and behaviour

- More support for parents to effectively parent-could social media be a platform for this?
- Parenting challenging behaviour
- Behaviour of young people
- Parental acrimony following break ups of parents

Community locations

- Better presence at Meole Brace
- Where we put hubs
- Could you have advice teams available within the community?
- Hub in a pub
- Sainsbury's and Morrisons community rooms.
- Community cohesion.

Poverty and Family finances

- Poverty
- Cost of living crisis.
- Family finances
- Debt management
- Many not eligible for Universal Credit.
- Food banks
- Hidden deprivation
- Housing

Other

- 0-5 work needs to embed ways of working.
- Early intervention focus better for families and more cost effective.
- School attendance
- Reduction of waiting time for families
- Clear pathways
- Manage expectations
- Youth provision.

5.9 The next page covers the feedback received when stakeholders were asked about challenges of implementing a new strategy.

5.10 A question designed for stakeholders read 'What are the challenges of effectively implementing a new Early Help Strategy?' There were 18 responses through the group feedback forms and stakeholder survey. The table below summarises the key challenges referred to and examples are provided in the following box. Top themes included:

- Limited resources and staff capacity
- Lack of engagement by families and perceptions/stigma
- System and multi-agency working

Challenges

Issue	Count
Lack of resources/staff capacity	7
Family engagement and perceptions	7
System and multi-agency working	6
Lack of awareness or knowledge of support and how to access it	5
Other issues	3

What are the challenges of effectively implementing a new Early Help Strategy?

- "Capacity to deliver the strategy. Funding and buy in from huge range of partners."
- "Having the resource to work with families for long enough to build up a meaningful connection with them."
- "Capacity is a challenge for all of early help internal and external partners."
- "Bringing families on board and the issues of consent."
- "Families not consenting. Families moving around schools to avoid engagement. Schools having day job, therefore unable to manage chasing these unseen families."
- "Feels that the system is going back into silos-lack of resource-focus nationally addressing the needs of those in crisis-where is the scope of us being able to undertake the preventative work to prevent the crisis -creative workforce."
- "The different systems not communicating with each other. How does the Early Help strategy link in with other strategies from other services, to reduce duplication. How is this mapped?"
- "Buy in from all services - GPs, other health professionals, housing, criminal justice, early years."
- "Lack of communication and multi-agency working. These are key to be implemented."
- "Making sure THE [Targeted Early Help] practitioner has the right skill set, knowledge and experience to support the family effectively…."
- "Think about the best person to work with a family - person centred not process driven. Access to support and supervision."

5.11 The workshop sessions also covered challenges to implementing a new Early help Strategy. The feedback is summarised below.

Workshop feedback - Challenges

Meeting needs

- Parents of SEND children
- Behaviour support to parents
- Better access to BeeU
- Support to get children into school.
- Independent to challenge and offer solutions.
- Bravery- having challenging conversations.
- Not one size fits all
- Accessing services.

Capacity and resources

- Budget
- Resources
- Use of resources to implement strategy.
- Waiting lists
- Time- we need to ring fence time, all of this takes time.
- Having time as a professional to support families.

Communication

- Education of people in new strategy.
- Professionals knowing what is available-who does what.

Family engagement

- Buy in
- Listening
- Done with not to.
- Needs to be a more restorative approach.
- He who shouts the loudest
- Getting families to take ownership of problems.

Other

- Is this an all-age strategy? If so adults should be part of this.
- Admit things haven't worked and look at how this cab be implemented differently.
- Consistency across the county.
- How does this translate into practice?

5.12 The workshop feedback includes very similar themes to the group discussions and survey feedback. Main challenges are resources and staff capacity, family engagement, partnership working and the ability of all services to meet needs (some of them complex needs).

5.13 In seeking to overcome some of the challenges, the research included a question on good practice and the responses to this are covered on the following page.

5.14 The research included the question 'What best practice in other areas / organisations could we learn from and incorporate into the new strategy?' There were too few replies to theme. Not all of the 13 comments referenced good practice. Examples are shown below.

What best practice in other areas/ organisations could we learn from and incorporate into the new strategy?

- "TEH [Targeted Early Help] have only a certain amount of families allocated. They do not have the capacity too high, so that they do this really well. Other LA's have no cap and struggle to see all children, have effective outcomes."
- "An online form referral might be useful - it would be useful if all LAs worked along the same strategies. Routes through different levels of interventions and ensuring pathways to access high tiers of support are clear should lower levels not be successful."
- "Safeguarding flow chart of who to contact and what pathway to follow would be really useful. Not complicated."
- "Locally we used to hold face to face multi- agency conferences. Can we please have these back? Discussed the Networking Market places that are a key element in the South being developed."
- "Having 1 point of contact to oversee and check information is shared as seen in Child in Need meetings. Staff knowing the roles of staff involved so they can correctly direct you to the person most suitable to help you - found this to be very clear when keep asking working with virtual schools. Good communication back to explain what will happen next - always get this from Public Health Nursing Service."
- "Sure Start Centres - Health Visitors would join us and we would work together in the community. Families can go and not feel judged. A cup of tea and biscuit and shown compassion. Brighton- all in one hub: health, Early Help, housing - little hubs and offices together."
- "Southampton - really good LA with SEND intervention offers."
- "Telford - launch - lead of Children Services there - more connected - wider connectivity people in the room. Need to be aware what Telford offer and should be cross offer. All age approach - whole family - cant just concentrate on one thing."
- "Integration work - look with open eyes, see what is working differently. Develop joined up professional curiosity, relational practice, restorative approaches. Think about how people can be enabled to talk things through with colleagues rather than having a referral culture."
- "Locally-integration work. Keep doing the test and learn approach: if it is not working change it. Looking in other similar counties and how they are working. Thinking about schools and YP experience at school. Creating environments where people feel comfortable. Coping in different environments- children that are absent from school due to emotional challenges. Not as easy as refusing to come into school. Recognise that sometimes families have seen the benefit of not sending their children to school... Considering the harder to reach families."
- "Other LAs delivering HAF [Holiday and Food] programmes and successfully delivering SEND provision during the holidays."
- "Trauma-informed practice would lend itself well to working in this capacity with complex families."

5.14 Workshop attendees also had some suggestions concerning best practice. The notes from the workshop are grouped into themes in the box below. Although few examples of good practice were mentioned, themes included improving access to workers and multi-agency work around families.

Workshop feedback - Best practice

Meeting needs

- Wolverhampton strategy is strong and they have Early Help navigators
- Live Well Medway porch light programme.
- Mental Health life skills for 16-25 year olds
- Mediation to prevent escalation
- Use of befrienders
- Parents of SEND children
- BeeU family therapy available
- More Locality Development Officers
- More Family Practitioners attached to schools
- MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Co-ordination] type discussion, similar but, ASB [anti-social behaviour] related.

Meeting families - accessibility

- Home visits: face to face contact, joint visits with Early Help.
- Early Help/Family Worker allocated to school clusters.
- Working closely with schools
- Mobile library
- Family hub early adopters

Professionals around a family/families

- Family Group Conference
- Team around the school meeting.
- Weekly multi-agency meetings

Communications

- Parents understanding of EH role
- Training to share best practice
- Focus time limited discussions

5.15 Another important theme of the research was inclusivity. The stakeholders were asked 'How do we make sure that the new strategy is inclusive and addresses all the needs of families in Shropshire?' There were 15 comments through the smaller group feedback forms and survey. Although there were not a large number of comments there were enough to identify some key themes because most individuals listed multiple different points. These are summarised in the table below with examples shown in the box.

How do we make sure that the new strategy is inclusive and addresses all the needs of families in Shropshire?

Issue	Count
Meeting the needs of people with different characteristics/different audiences	8
Considering the relationship between professionals and parents/carers	7
Focusing on good communication and engagement	6
Ways of working and relationships between professionals	4
Inclusivity in service planning and activity	3
Considering the needs of families of children with SEND	2
Other comments	4

How do we make sure that the new strategy is inclusive and addresses all the needs of families in Shropshire?

- "Gypsy/Roma/traveller families - used to have a Gypsy Liaison officer, now a gap. We need more coverage to support this community but be mindful of their cultural needs. We need to be thinking creatively how we can work with this community."
- "English as an additional language - barriers - written communication to families, ensure that we are inclusive with other advertisement and marketing."
- "We have a lot of children who are electively home educated- how are wee addressing the financial barriers they may face- for example funding provision as they may be entitled to free school dinners if they were in education. Doors are closed to these families when their children are not on role."
- "Thinking about all vulnerable families not just using FSM criteria - trust professionals to know the families they work with. How can we reach EHE [electively home educated] children?"
- "How are we communicating with dads and other male carers? Are we taking the Mums view that they don't want to be involved, do we try and talk with them and offer help outside of 9-5 times. When we speak with dads are we listening to them and responding to what they are saying and asking for. Or are we dismissive and judgmental?"
- "Parents with sight issues. Support in school. English as a second language challenges around interpreting face to face makes a huge difference."
- "Dyslexic guidelines- is it accessible?"
- "We need to be inclusive of parents needs- how we are communicating information- not everyone can read and access technology."
- "Sure Start centres are closed-it's not personal enough, value of being face to face with someone and actually having a conversation-lacking since the centres closed."
- "Often if social workers are allocated they can change multiple times, which kids find unsettling and often we may not be informed as professional and we then have to track down the social worker. It would be handy if that was updated on EHM [the system used]."
- "Prioritising the family's needs rather than trying to meet all the family's needs."
- "Keep asking for feedback from professionals to let you know if they find a situation where there seems to be no support."
- "Survey all the partners and ask what are the barriers they face and then sign post to the right services. Too many hoops to jump through e.g. numerous form filling just to get the right support service."

5.16 As the example comments show, there were some overall themes within the responses on the topic of inclusivity but a wide range of different examples were included and it is an issue that is difficult to summarise or generalise.

5.17 The workshop comments are shown in the following box. The feedback is similar and fairly wide-ranging, highlighting what a big issue inclusivity is.

Workshop feedback - Inclusivity

Engagement

- Inclusive of languages and disabilities.
- Consult with all ages groups.
- Can we consult and see if we have done well with archived families.
- Feedback consultations to see if you are inclusive and meet the needs of all families.
- A universal and level 2 feedback questionnaire.
- Less questions and more conversations.
- Targeted towards new families.
- Approach families who have had previous support.
- Engage with the voluntary and community sector.

Inclusive access

- We can have hubs in all communities.
- Meeting places varied.

Workshop feedback - Inclusivity continued...

Approaches
- Speaking to families including YP and parents asking for their views on services, access to these and GAPs.
- Can you ever meet all the needs of families? Understand what you can do and do it well.
- Matching workers with families.
- Use SEND lens.

Communication and information
- Accessible info on social media and different platforms.
- Remove the stigma all families, all areas.
- Dispel myths of Early Help and social care
- Raise public awareness of what Early Help is.
- Different forms of contact e.g. computer and face to face.

5.18 Another area of investigation within the research focused on the goals and outcomes stakeholders would like to see from the Early Help Strategy. The table below illustrates the themes from the comments. The top theme was the importance of using the right approach when working with families followed by comments relating to early intervention, prevention and transition. The example comments are useful and these are shown below.

What would you like to see as specific goals or outcomes from the early help strategy?

Issue	Count
Approaches to working with families	8
Early intervention, prevention and transition	5
Referrals and waiting times	3
Planning and measures	3
Multi-agency working	3
Other comments	4

What would you like to see as specific goals or outcomes from the early help strategy?
- "Ensuring families receive a compassionate approach and support through staff who understand their needs-quality interaction between staff and families."
- "Parents to be engaged, getting the help they need and access to the essentials they need for their children for them to thrive as they are our future. Listening to the families and taking on board their feedback."
- "Understand what the family / child is saying."
- "Whole family approach."
- "Preventative approach to reach more families who would benefit."
- "Every parent to do UYC [Understanding Your Child] before a child starts school."
- "More continuous and specific support for families at point of transition. Early years to reception, year 6 to year.... When families have continued support from TEH [Targeted Early Help] at these points transition is much more successful than those who close at this point."
- "Right support, right time - healthy happy children and families."
- "Easier more straight forward process for referrals and waiting times."
- "Specific outcome and measure that can show that we have made a difference. Measures can include how many people have been supported and how as a result that family is now better off i.e. children are going to school on time, one of the parents may have been helped into employment, families taken out crisis as a result of support provided."
- "Confidence to hold professional meetings."
- "Provide greater support for educational settings with completing assessments."
- "Thresholds are a priority - these create barriers and don't help overcome the issue."

5.19 In addition to the comments shown above there was a significant amount of feedback on the Early Help Strategy goals and outcomes at the 2 workshop sessions. The box below (continued on the next page) summarises the main areas of feedback.

Workshop feedback - Strategy Goals & Outcomes

Engagement
- Collaboration with service users to develop strategy.
- Engaging the hard to reach families.
- Co-production of strategy.
- Focus on engaging fathers.
- Feedback and audit from families/partners.
- Focus on building a relationship with the family and their community.
- Stakeholder collaboration.

Access to Services
- Accessible service for all families in Shropshire.
- Out of hours working to meet needs of family.
- Focus on hub development-empower families to access.
- Locality based working.
- Easy referral process for families and partners.
- Consistent service across the whole county.

Crime and Safety
- Support in relation to serious youth violence.
- Focus on children on hidden harm, intense support for these families needed, multi-facetted team.
- Domestic Abuse needs to be a focus.

Communication
- Easy to understand-clear to all and consistent language.
- Clear understanding of priorities linked within the SF outcomes.
- Continuous service review to ensure communication remains consistent and clear.

Early Intervention and Crisis Avoidance
- Prevent escalation.
- An outcome goal needs to be fewer children and families being at L4 and less children being looked after.
- Managing support before crisis has started.
- More child and YP support needed sooner.
- Timely help at all levels.

Family Relationships
- Better well-being for all family members.
- Reduction of conflict in the home.
- Well-being needs prioritising.

Managing Demand and Resources
- Reducing demand on targeted services-value for money to reduce demand.
- Good de-escalation to universal where long term support can be offered.
- External funding
- Voluntary sector

Professionals working together
- MOU/terms of reference to ensure roles and expectations are clear.
- Data sharing
- Multi-agency discussion around families.
- Referrals from the Early Help team.
- Use of technology
- Relaunch of service

Education
- EWOs [Education Welfare Officers] and EAS [Education Access Service] need to be involved and using EHM [Early Help Matters].
- Education a special category/team will attend and learn-emotionally based school avoidance.
- LDOs [Locality Development Officers] linked to each schools and school to be clear who they are.

Measures
- SMART/measurable actions
- Evidence based programmes
- Reduction in exclusion
- Increase attendance

Ambitions
- Positive collaborative working.
- Successful family outcomes.
- Some form of help and support needs to be accepted and changes to be made.
- Early Help to feel more approachable, manageable and realistic.
- Families thriving independently.
- Open and transparent process

Other comments
- Focus on SEND
- Focus on poverty and neglect.
- ACEs
- 0-5 children need to be a focus link with early intervention officers.
- EMSA.
- More cost effective-cost of Early Help intervention VRs looked after child.
- Stakeholder/CJ audits.
- Assessments completed by Early Help Staff.

5.20 The feedback on the goals and outcomes for the strategy was quite varied and possibly suggests that stakeholders do not all share the same priorities and ambitions.

5.21 The question was asked 'What steps can we take to promote sustainability and long-term impact of the new early help strategy?' There were few responses from the discussion groups so all are shown below. From the number of comments received it is hard to draw out main themes but common messages included the importance of communication and the need to work well together (professionals with each other and professionals with families). The workshops provided more feedback.

What steps can we take to promote sustainability and long-term impact of the new strategy?'
- "Work together collaboratively - walk the walk, not just talk the talk."
- "Promote and continue to used multi agency working with a solid joint up approach- no them and us."
- "Training staff - Good staff team, building on staff skills and expertise."
- "Communication - updates to keep happening frequently."
- "Consistency."
- "Regular updates short snappy points and keeping the continuity of promotion."
- "Extra financial support, to allow the service to increase capacity."
- "Make sure the transition out of Early help is carefully planned."
- "Got to be simple, it's got to be supportive. For a lot of families it needs to be supported and ensure they don't feel stigmatised."
- "Real time examples enabling people to feel part of it and understand their role."
- "Need to know how it feels for families - are they being feeling heard and listened to! Need to capture real experiences and how has this helped change things."

Workshop feedback - Sustainability and long-term impact of the strategy

- Regular workshops and partner meetings.
- Building trust with partners.
- Networking
- Review cycle with all agencies.
- Share learning what has worked well.
- Giving information and resources.
- Utilise and value what is already there.
- Ensure you are making changes as the time changes and keep updated.
- Not ridged show you can change with the times.
- Evolving with communities.
- Stop swapping models-ECINs/EHM!
- Secure funding
- Agreed funding for more long term support.
- Clearer pathways and exit plans.
- More coordinated approach with Early Help and Shropshire Council.
- Remove and reduce stigma for families.
- Reassurance

5.22 At the end of the research into Early Help strategy, stakeholders were asked whether they had any other additional comments to add. There were a small number of additional comments. The comments are shown below. They vary in nature so have not been themed but link back to many of the points made in response to the previous questions and support the issues stakeholders would like to see addressed in the Early Help Strategy.

Other comments

- “Relationship based practice.”
- “Value for money strategy needs to meet the needs of families.”
- “Accurate data to inform continuous transformation.”
- “Focus on Early intervention.”
- “Whole system approach and integrated for all to use with ease.”
- “Successful escalation and de-escalation.”
- “What about children who are not HAF [Holiday Activities and Food] / FSM [Free School Meals] eligible?”
- “Social prescribing was started and then pulled at North Shropshire College, so a lady came in and offered the service for students that we could refer...but then were told it was no longer available.”
- “Challenges of information sharing when children transfer from other schools in or out of county - not always made aware of historic/current concerns and impact this has on the family. Not knowing what safeguarding training is now available now the old training is no longer available.”
- “Time pressures and how can we see that investing in time now will reap benefits in the future?”

5.22 A significant amount of information was collected under the theme of ‘Strategy’. Some of the more commonly mentioned topics included:

- Family relationship support
- Domestic abuse
- Child safety, antisocial behaviour and crime.
- Mental health support and wellbeing
- Parenting support and universal access.
- Supporting pregnant parents and families with children under 5 years old/early years.
- Early intervention
- Crisis avoidance
- Support to address poverty (food, heating, housing etc.)
- Waiting times
- Referral pathways
- Managing demand
- Services through schools and improving school attendance.
- SEND and inclusion
- Community and home based, accessible local support.
- Improved multi-agency and system working.
- The importance of professionals working well together and around families.
- Challenges of service resources and staffing.
- Overcoming families reluctance to engage, stigma and perceptions.
- The importance of engagement and communication.

6. Stakeholders: Partnership

6.1 The second main theme considered within the stakeholder feedback (collected through 3 main approaches: workshops, feedback forms completed within smaller group discussions and an online survey) was partnership. Partnership working is a key feature of Early Help and the responses to previous questions highlight the importance and dominance of this issue. To explore this in more depth, there were 6 main research questions.

6.2 Under the theme of Partnership, the first question asked was 'Who is an early help partner?' There were 18 form and 7 survey responses in total for Partnership but not all responded and the question was answered by 20 from the 25 returns. 11 of the 20 answered 'everyone' or 'all working with children and families'. The remaining 9 responses predominantly focused on a list of examples. The box below includes example comments to demonstrate the 2 main types of reply.

Who is an Early Help partner?

- *"Everyone who works with children."*
- *"Anyone who support families and CYP."*
- *"Schools, anyone who works professionally with children and families."*
- *"Any organisation that is offering support to families and children - not limited to statutory organisations (but also including the VCS - toddler groups, youth clubs etc.)"*
- *"Schools, everyone involved with early help."*
- *"Anybody who can offer support - health, GP, Probation etc. early years."*
- *"Social prescriber, play practitioner, BEEU, schools/ educational settings, social services."*
- *"Public health nursing service, BeeU, spectra, woodlands, OT, SALT, play therapist. Mentor ELSA, etc*
- *"Not a service user. Commissioned services. Services supporting families."*
- *"GP, nursey and schools, school nurses, housing."*

6.3 It is possible that the 'everyone' and 'all' responses could cause some issues when issues/concerns are identified and referral considerations are being made.

6.4 The workshop discussions also included an opportunity to list Early Help partners and the 2 discussions have been combined below. For ease of reference those mentioned have been roughly categorised into sector.

Workshop feedback - Early Help partners

Public Sector
Health/ NHS
Parish/Local councils
Child Development Centre
Police
Schools
School nurses
Public Health
Fire Service
Educational Phycologists, Education Welfare Officers
Youth Support Team
BeeU (Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)
Together Reducing & Ending Exploitation in Shropshire
GRT (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller support)

Private Sector
Pre-schools/nurseries
Local businesses
GPs
Dentists
Kooth
Future In Mind

Voluntary and Community Sector
Parent and Carer Council (PACC)
Local playgroups
MIND
Barnardo's
Youth organisations
Sports organisations
Food banks
Princes trust
BEAM (The Children's Society)

Other
Housing associations
Young carers
SC newsroom and comms, use of media
Commissioned services
Careers advice and guidance
Colleges, FE and alternative curriculum providers.

Everyone/all
Everyone and everybody
All universal services
All professionals
Anyone that goes into the home
Everybody working with a child, YP or family
Early Help is everyone's business.

6.5 Stakeholders were asked 'How can we collaborate with community organisations to enhance the support available for families?' there were 20 responses from the small group discussions and survey forms. The table below summarises the themes from responses.

How can we collaborate with community organisations to enhance the support available for families?

Issue	Count
Databases/directories of all community groups and organisations	7
Signposting mechanisms	3
Key point of contact	2
Buildings and locations in communities for families to use	3
Community hub meetings for professionals	2
Social media/posters	2
Other comments	1

How can we collaborate with community organisation to enhance the support available for families?

- *"By identifying community organisations that have the ability to support the early help agenda. Some partner agencies already have some links which could provide further support in this area. By providing some financial assistance to community organisations to encourage them and support them to support the early help agenda. It is important to recognise that community organisations are also stretched and so finding ways to support them would also be key."*
- *"Communities change and develop quickly. Knowing what's available and better relationships, across the services. Understanding what is available a community directory of what is available, better understanding of what is available."*
- *"We rely a lot on community collaboration, we are out and about, knowing who is out there would be helpful. Having a direct contact with a professional from the organisation you need information from. Direct communication with a named person. Having the information all in one place."*
- *"The old children's centre like groups to be available - partners to sign post these. Professionals to identify what services are needed, like the old Sure Start centres. Build trust with families. Courses, interventional support feed back to the families. Communication with the community/schools/ professionals to raise awareness of available services. Holistic approach, more jointed up thinking for the LA."*
- *"Professionals come to resources that are already running in the community- not making families going to Hubs: them going to them. This may help parents to open up as they are likely to feel more relaxed. Use buildings like Libraries/churches."*
- *"From being on both sides of Early Help, as a professional and parent, parents need more support to contact organisations. I was given a list of organisations available to my daughter but it was overwhelming and I had no idea which services were appropriate for my daughter. She is autistic but highly intelligent. I did not know if she would fit in with the other children at events or activities and no one was able to guide me on this. Clearer information and a key contact in an organisation would be useful."*
- *"Signpost to services and establish which services are utilised locally. Building trust in the community. Improving communications links."*
- *"Community hub meetings are useful."*

6.6 Overall, it seems that stakeholders are unsure how to collaborate with community organisations other than calling for more information. The same question was asked within workshop two and the responses are shown below and on the next page, grouped into themes.

Workshop feedback - Collaboration with community organisations

Online information

- "Improve what knowledge is available e.g. build on FIS [Family Information Service]."
- "Need a simple directory."
- "Accessible database and website directory of support locally."
- "Knowing what and where—directory, first point digital offer and social media."
- "A better website."

Hubs

- "Hubs in schools."
- "Family hubs are the way forward, need to be located where the need is and consideration of public transport links."
- "Like the idea of having a washing machine within hubs."
- "Fundraise opportunities within the hub."
- "More partners in our hubs - VCS especially."

Free use of buildings

- "Somewhere where community organisations can go and get into, to hold open events."
- "Letting school premises to parenting groups-utilising partners free space"
- "Space to meet without charges."

Outreach

- "SEND coffee morning across the county."
- "Bespoke SEND coffee mornings."
- "Bring services to our settings and communities."

Contact through community groups

- "We need to know what us out there, e.g. toddler groups."
- "food banks"
- "church groups"
- "Hold workshops such as SPECTRA."
- "Family workers out at community groups, front facing."
- "Getting in touch with places such as Trinity Church."

Networking

- "Invite other organisations to show what they offer."
- "Community networking."
- "Attend local collaborative meetings."
- "Network with agencies -s haring role and services to enhance communication and build relationships."
- "Network meeting face to face in localities and on different days."
- "Continue with integration panel to bring cases for discussion to access appropriate support."

Vehicles

- "Outreach vehicle Bob and Betty."
- "Collaborate with library mobile."

Leaflets

- "Raise awareness - advertisement needed-flyer information."
- "Leaflets-platform from regular updates."

Information

- "What is available? Regularly updated."
- "Raising awareness of what is available."
- "Raising people's awareness of services and are they part of the partnership?"

Other comments

- "Make it easier to refer in."
- "Having one front door."
- "VCS needs to be included."
- "Free refreshments."
- "Removing stigma of support for families."

6.7 A common theme within the responses was that the best way to collaborate with community organisations was to be located in communities either through hubs, community buildings, through outreach or through visiting community groups/services/locations.

6.8 The next area of research under the theme of partnership was work to explore the preventative services being delivered by stakeholders. It is difficult to determine themes when exploring the work of a range of different services but key areas seem to be universal parental support, support for children/young people, mental health services/support, safeguarding and educational attendance. So many different activities were listed within each response: far too many to show them all so these will need to be considered separately. A few examples are shown below.

Preventative work undertaken by stakeholders in their areas of service (Examples).

- *"The Fire Service provides 'Safe and Well' visits which provide fire safety and health related advice as well as a signposting service to other agencies. Clients who require additional help can be signposted to other agencies via a single point of contact i.e. FPOC. The service provides a bespoke fire setting education program called i-learn which supports children under the age of 16 who have shown or displayed fire setting behaviours."*
- *"Signposting to Understanding the Child, Understanding the Team. As a secondary school with a SG and Pastoral team to form a wellbeing team, and do a lot with Early Help. For example the process is so long after referral, the situation is far worse that it comes to social care. Where support is needed/the critical pinch point the required support is not being picked up. General pastoral support. OT sees families at home and usually to do with behaviours and families don't feel like they're accessing support, then feel unsure about the interventions put forward to Early Help. Uncertainty around the measures put in place for example putting routines in place, a headteacher has commented that behaviour support is crucial - managing behaviour would be mostly ESLA support."*
- *"Play therapy, Lego therapy, Understanding your Child, Elsa, Parenting champion, draw and talk, time to talk, wishes and feelings, nurture groups, volcano in my tummy, coffee mornings- spec subjects, parent workshops - support with reading, pastoral, homework club, holiday club around transition, breakfast club, health promotion, parent support, signposting, teeth brushing- smile club, toast and breakfast club."*
- *"Sign posting to parenting courses. Secondary school - Wellbeing team, provide a lot of support before it gets to Early Help. Historically referrals have taken along time and we have put the support in to try and prevent crisis, or it has stepped up to social care before it gets to Targeted Early Help."*

- *"We offer all the sign posting to other services before putting the referrals in. OT referrals - families struggling with behaviour - unsure how we can link back in with EH - looking for support with routines and behaviour support. Behaviour support on the increase. ELSA support."*
- *"EWO - regular attendance reviews - trends / dips. Advise schools. Monitoring school absence - call home - follow up and attendance. 1:1 Champion in school - contacts the family once a week - SEND School. FSW - working with school / DSL - being safe / monitoring /. recording that is a concern - feed into EH / FPOC. Screening on a daily basis. CPOMs / My Concern. Signpost to finances - carers / financial. Mental Health support / anxiety for children. Mental health parents - impact on children. Massive peak of 2 year olds - lack of speech and language - no screening - children have been missed. Speech and language across all age ranges. Social Emotional & communication."*

6.9 A considerable amount of information was provided when stakeholders were asked to list the preventative activities they deliver (only a small proportion is shown above). The same question was asked in the workshops and the response is shown below, grouped in themes. Some comments have been removed where activity was very general such as 'signposting', 'face to face work' or 'everything we do'.

Workshop feedback - Preventative work undertaken

Homes, food and finances
- Breakfast clubs/activities/after school/offering snacks when hungry.
- Breakfast to all children- a secret toast club.
- Tenancy management cases.
- Debt and finance advice.
- Link with food banks.
- We cook with what the food bank gives us and the children take this home.
- Support with school uniform.
- Pupil premium, free school meals and CLA.

Child safety
- Online safety.
- Specialist visits for threatened families EG-DA/ county lines/ MARAC.
- Housing attend Child Protection conferences.
- Safeguarding checks.

Parenting
- Understanding Your Child -help families to complete and access online.
- Parenting advice about boundaries and routines.
- Preventative work with new born babies and Mums to be.

Education
- PHSE
- To improve attendance, we collect and deliver.
- Education Welfare Officers request Early Help support.

Family visits and community support
- Home visits
- Joint visits
- Links with community support officers
- Unofficial counselling

Relationships and Mental Health
- Mental health support for families.
- Families with emotionally based school avoidance, feed into families to prevent this.
- Face to face interventions with young people on pertinent issues.
- Nurture groups.

Other
- LDOs
- Engaging with WAWY and children's society.
- Reviewing EHCP with parents and gaining the peoples voices.
- Family review audit to offer view points.
- SEN referrals.
- Ongoing mentoring and coaches for the VCS.
- Support families from outside charities.
- Links with town councils.

6.10 Unfortunately many comments were not well explained so it is difficult to determine whether very general comments have been made or whether the stakeholders were referring to the preventative activity they, themselves deliver. The responses suggest there could be a mix.

6.11 Effective communication with partners was the next theme explored under the topic of partnership. Many responses were lists of how to communicate so this made the responses difficult to theme. Example comments are shown on the following page but there were some overarching types of comments around the following key points:

- Access to information about services and forms of support.
- Communications and newsletters.
- Opportunities for professionals to meet and to work together.
- Shared records.
- Ongoing communication and feedback throughout the time working with a family.

How do you believe we can ensure effective communication with our partners?

- *"Easy access to a directory, single person as point of contact if numerous agencies are involved to make sure information is properly shared between all partners."*
- *"Need to know how everyone communicates- one on Teams / Zoom /Social media / direct contact / visual. Mapping - what is everyone doing? who the partners are? How do they interlink? Oversight that is strategic. Consistent communication - capacity and overload, risk of people dipping in and out so the message as it isn't always prioritised. Dedicated communication resource that continues to embed this."*
- *"Still see silo working. Mailing lists - regular updates, newsletters - individuals and agencies taking responsibility to seek out and access the info they have been sent."*
- *"Try a more engaging approach. Workshops - preferably in person, build connections and networks allowing professionals to feel more confident to contact each other."*
- *"Regular network meetings. Newsletters, open conversations."*
- *"Weekly email updates - regular updates. When there is new provision available - make it clear to everyone. Branding the services. Central place for communications."*
- *"The Early Help newsletter is helpful. A community directory for professionals, include waiting lists community directory for parents."*
- *"What is the EH offer? Easy access to making referrals in. Front door sounds good, knowing the team. More information about the service and what we all do. Reviews are showing multi- agency meetings and sharing information. Getting together to discuss."*
- *"If Early Help are involved with a student they need to speak to the college BEFORE the student starts to we can ensure they have the best experience possible. Then all parties need to remain in communication throughout the year."*
- *"All partners to have access and communicate on the Early Help Liquid Logic site. I need more information available to professionals on there. I requested access to a student file and it never happened; the process is too slow."*
- *"Do not be afraid to share information. Individual case information shared but feels overall trends not shared and communicated."*
- *"Trying to support family/child; trying to work with different agencies-need a central one person to liaise with otherwise it feels like it's going around in circles……If this [plan] is not in place from the off set it is really causes drift delay, and frustration…."*

6.12 The comments from stakeholders suggest a possible lack of consensus concerning how communications with partners may be improved and this may lead to challenges. The workshop discussions on the same issue are summarised below, there is a similar diversity of response. As some of the responses suggest, not all answers focused on communication and how it could be effective.

Workshop feedback - Communication with partners

Multi-agency working

- Co-location
- Multi-agency training
- Multi-agency audits
- Locality meetings
- Collaborative working
- Integrated projects
- Monthly/weekly briefs
- Supporting events and drop ins
- Co-delivery of parenting groups

Communication challenges

- Knowing who to go to.
- Communication can be challenging and also getting hold of people.
- Improve identifying issues and who needs to lead.
- Once a referral has been accepted make sure referrer clear who the Lead Practitioner is.
- When families disengage with L3 you close the case with now follow up.
- Emails are too much information and they are easily lost.
- Click and reveal rather than reams of words to trawl through.
- Information is often inaccessible for children with SEND.

Shared record keeping

- Shared recording
- EWO service don't update on EHM.
- BeeU need to contribute to EHM recording.
- Can there be fines about service not contributing to recordings?

Communication suggestions

- Clearer pathways
- Alert when actions go on to Liquid Logic
- Better website
- Podcasts
- Make it interesting
- Celebrate good practice
- Anonymised cases studies which show case good practice.
- Weekly comms with key topics and links if needed.
- Workshops.

Other

- Continue with EH newsletter good and really useful.
- EH newsletter good but needs better promotion.
- Visible partners useful to build relationships.
- Detached youth work within schools-not all schools.
- Flyers to be sent to admin for schools to promote.
- A central point of access which is regularly updated.
- MARFs need to get a response.
- Continue with network locality meetings-better online.

6.13 The next question asked of stakeholders was similar, in some ways, to the question on effective communication it read 'How can we build trust and collaboration to ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach for the families of Shropshire?'. There were 13 responses through the small group discussions and survey. With so few responses they are difficult to theme but the issues raised were similar to the previous question on communication.

How can we build trust and collaboration to ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach for the families of Shropshire?

- *"Clear communication around Early Help roles and how to access."*
- *"Model has changed - can be confusing - new teams - seniors, play practitioners - clear communication around EH, structure and roles, who they are and what they offer."*
- *"When we dealt with a family with LDO [locality development officer] we felt supported, these are crucial to the school. Share information, not be afraid to do this, feel supported."*
- *"Drop In Centres, Toddler groups. build up relations with families/up skill staff in schools."*
- *"Ensure families understand the procedure and build relationships."*
- *"Make sure good communication and team work. Clear simple recording process of support and agency involved. Good following up and good planned exit transition from support."*
- *"Asking parents how we can help and if the support we are giving is not supporting. Many SEND families that have accessed Early Help did not feel listened to, conversations on social media, parents feeling like a failure because the strategies they have been given are failing to work. Role in preventing a crisis. Understanding what is needed and the emotional support for the families may help to prevent a crisis in the end."*
- *"Families do not trust the system - families trust pockets but not the wider system."*
- *"Honesty and transparency - not just in partnership but also public facing. Pathways - patient journey - use the same model - that all partners are working to the same model. Same letters templates - what is being sent to the families. Imagery consistent - easier for families. Telford and Wrekin - same health trust and different!"*
- *"Respectful challenge. taking responsibility, multi agency conversations - people understand why decisions are being made, its easier to work alongside. The blame game needs to stop - linked to responsibility. Good communication - keeping these links open."*

6.14 The workshop feedback was very similar to the other responses. Building understanding of Early Help was mentioned, alongside ways of working together to build knowledge of other services. There were several suggestions made within the workshops and these are listed below on the following page.

Workshop feedback - Collaboration and trust

Improved information

- Clarity on what Early Help is.
- More information about Early Help.
- Shared resources and knowledge.
- Improved website for Early Help.

Structures and service design

- Overhaling and making the whole service better to understand.
- Right amount of staff to meet the needs.
- Clearly defined roles across services.
- Continuity of practitioners.
- Systems need to be coordinated.
- Inductions across the services.
- Inset days/PD/teacher training days to update and train partners.
- Shared training.

Ways of communicating

- Reduce use of acronyms.
- Short sharp and bold updates-not lengthy PowerPoints.

Approaches

- Engage with VCS
- Transparency
- Doing with, not doing to.
- Clarity
- Consistency to build trust.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say...back it up.

Suggested actions

- Educating partners on the thresholds.
- FPOC threshold-knowing why it didn't make the threshold sent in.
- Guest speakers for schools to understand roles.
- More opportunities for networking.
- Work together on hot spot areas.
- Keeping in touch signpost and after support signposting.
- Realistic timescales be open about when they are getting touch.
- Bringing cases to integration panels, increase the areas this is available to in Shropshire. Panels improve knowledge base gain confidence and enhance communication with all agencies.

6.15 To understand the issues around partnership working in more depth, information was gathered through the workshop sessions to consider some feedback on partnership working and some of the current challenges. Many of the same points were made so the analysis brings the feedback together into themes to better identify the priority issues and areas of consensus. The box below sets out the current concerns and challenges identified.

Workshop feedback - Current partnerships: challenges and barriers.

Staffing levels and resources

- Time
- Staff capacity
- Lack of clarity on roles of Early Help service
- Workload increases with expectations
- under funded
- Staff retention
- Pay and opportunities to progress
- Time, having opportunity and time to build relationships with partners.

Work relationships

- Need time to focus on building relationships.
- Negativity
- Staff attitude towards other teams.
- Silo working
- Lack of trust between work colleagues/organisations
- Knowing who to contact and opportunity to link up
- Resistance to change
- Poor communication within teams
- Understanding roles and expertise within teams.
- Understanding each others role: Youth team/play practitioners/Lead professionals/family workers.

Knowledge

- Knowledge and understanding of Early Help.
- How we explain what we do.

Systems

- Use of EHM is challenging and difficult.
- EHM not user friendly
- EHM barrier to engagement from partners, needs more support and investment.
- IT systems that don't share information.
- Lack of integration
- Not all recording on the same systems.
- Technology

Voluntary sector comments

- Limited capacity within the voluntary sector.
- More engagement with voluntary sector and funding for this.
- Direct links with community services.

Referrals and pathways

- More opportunity to access advice, guidance and signposting.
- Lack of understanding of thresholds.
- Referral processes too long.
- Unclear pathways into other services.
- Unclear work pathways different across the county.
- School holidays-six weeks is a long time for a 12 week intervention model.
- Simplified consent form to ensure everyone understands what they are signing up to.

Engagement issues

- Focus on developing partnerships with GP/Food hubs/Libraries/police
- Parent carer panels to strengthen co-production.
- Efficient means of communication.

Access and rural county issues

- Geographical logistics
- Rurality
- No appropriate meetings spaces and/or availability.
- Limited capacity for community development.
- Sporadic buy in across the county.

Partner relationships

- Expecting too much from partner agencies/lengthy assessment, using EHM and what support they are expected to provide
- Marketing-partnerships understand who we are and what we do-MOU/TOR
- Reluctance of partners to undertake actions and manage processes.
- Developing our partner base/hub development.

Other

- LDO [Locality Development Officer] support-productive and supportive. More support is needed.
- Information sharing agreements.
- Child focused not whole family.
- Social media comms not effective.

6.16 The last main question under the theme of partnership was worded 'What can you do as professionals to identify early intervention to support families?' There were 13 responses to the question from the small group discussions and stakeholder survey. There were too few to categorise and some diversity within the way the question was responded to. The box below displays the responses. Many of the comments referred to the importance of knowing families and being able to assess needs and then refer or signpost.

What can you do as professionals to identify early intervention to support families?

- *"Every day screening and observing children, young people and families. signposting, referring to EH and FPOC."*
- *"Assessments to understand the needs for the family."*
- *"Know the families we work with."*
- *"We offer signposting, well not just signposting but following up if parents/carers have accessed, did they find the support beneficial? We build up relationships with families and remember that we need to consider other siblings in the family. We have families that we touch base with on a weekly basis to ensure they are engaging with services and are feeling fully supported."*
- *"Be educated with what services are out there that are available for families out in Shropshire."*
- *"Know the clear pathways to access support and have a quick way to clarify plan with a professional when required."*
- *"Keep up to date of what is available in local areas, share information with colleagues, shared learning, universal services asking more questions, following up if they do not turn up for appointments, be professionally curious, follow your gut."*
- *"Closer working with partner agencies and where possible joint working will support this area of work."*
- *"We log concerns initially on CPOMs and staff will approach myself with concerns."*
- *"I believe we are good at identifying early intervention, however, the threshold remains too high for some families to get help early enough and this eventually becomes a bigger issue requiring more intervention."*
- *"Monitor, review, record and communicate."*
- *"Referrals often coming in too late. Particularly children out of school. How do we get in earlier. Need to not miss windows of opportunity. Almost too late. Need to put some proactivity into the system. Remove pressure from families."*
- *"Combination with Health Visiting."*

6.17 The response from the workshop discussion is shown below. Some comments describe very general approaches to working with families and others the issues that need to be addressed early to avoid crisis and escalation.

Workshop feedback - Early Intervention

Communication and engagement

- Listen
- Talk to families, build relationships and be supportive.
- Spend time with families
- Talk to each other
- Be present
- Be approachable
- Build trust with families
- Build on trust
- Hand holding and face to face
- Strong relationships with young people.

Issues suggesting early intervention required

- Neighbour complaints
- Anti-social behaviour
- Rent arrears
- Children's behaviour

Sources of information

- Observations
- Information from other children and families
- Parental requests
- Partner agencies/ seek advice from professionals.

Challenges

- Time
- Lack of engagement of parents
- Move aware from blame culture

Services, action and recording

- Direct referral through Liquid Logic.
- Already do this on CPOMs
- Contact COMPASS
- Assessment tools as part of FNP programme- identify needs complete WFA.
- Completing a WFA.
- YP service is an outreach service so would work well with families
- Speech and language services
- Safeguarding in schools
- Offer SEND families somewhere they can be recognised themselves. Accessible to SEND communities.

6.18 The feedback links well to the next main theme explored with stakeholders: delivery. This is covered in the following section.

7. Stakeholders: Delivery

7.1 The research with stakeholders focused around strategy, partnership and delivery. There were a large number of questions for each theme and unfortunately the response to the last theme of delivery was more limited for the small group discussions and survey responses. Some commented that they had run out of time. However, the information obtained is valuable and where information from the small group discussions and survey responses may have been limited, there were discussions within the workshop sessions.

7.2 The first question asked under the theme of delivery was a key one and it read: 'What are your thoughts on the current early help offer and its effectiveness in supporting families?' There were some dominant themes (some of which had been raised in response to previous research questions) including thresholds, lack of enough support, need of more targeted support and lack of understanding of the offer. The responses listed multiple issues so these have been split, categorised and summarised in the table below. Examples are also illustrated in the box.

What are your thoughts on the current early help offer and its effectiveness in supporting families?

Issue	Count
Thresholds and referrals rejected	12
Not enough support, offer too limited	10
Need more Targeted Early Help and more clarity between levels	5
Unsure of what the offer is	5
School capacity and need for staff/ resources	5
Challenge gaining consent from families	4
Positive feedback	3
Importance of LDO roles	3
Need to work with families in the home	3
Crisis and increased complexity	3
Time waiting for support	2
Perceptions of blame culture	2
12 week timescale concerns	2
Other comments	8

What are your thoughts on the current early help offer and its effectiveness in supporting families?

- *"Thresholds- complex cases means that availability for early intervention is limited."*
- *"No support for a family if they don't meet the criteria so family left with no support at all- this does not help. Schools do not refer a family unless they think they need help."*
- *"Agencies may focus on those complex families who are not meeting statutory levels. This means many other families with less complex needs are not able to access support. Not much space or resource for preventative work."*
- *"Families have a challenge to get into the system, then met with a "yeah and" not a how can we help response. Going to deliver in 6 weeks then we are gone. Families are passed around solutions until are reached this can take a long time, or they don't get through the front door."*
- *"Limited."*
- *"Banging my head against a brick wall, goes round in circles, I am signposted out all the time."*
- *"Didn't feel like Early Help existed….had to do an enormous document which no one could access and at the end of it didn't get anywhere. Feeling that there isn't anything - only Targeted Early Help but, that is only for a few people…"*
- *"Messages from parents - can't access this and when they can it doesn't help."*
- *"Could be improved - no SEND offer. No creativity or flexibility. Families feel blamed when they access early help. Even when we try not to have a blame culture - they do."*
- *"I am not sure what the offer is."*
- *"I have limited knowledge of this but what I would comment on is that the work I have seen or been aware of has been very good. I am unable to put this into context as I am unsure how many families were supported and the difference it made."*
- *"Families try to manage, and we cannot make them engage."*
- *"Families won't consent to Early Help. By the time they agree it is too complex."*
- *"Confused recourses Targeted Early Help and EH what is the offer in each level."*
- *"One of the big problems we have is kids becoming homeless."*
- *"Increased capacity - crisis for all families is building."*

7.3 The workshop discussions also covered feedback on the current Early Help offer and this is summarised in the box below.

Workshop feedback - Current Offer Feedback

Awareness of support
- Lack of directory.
- Frustrating system with various different stakeholders.
- Struggled to articulate the current Early Help offer.
- There are a range of other services available which seem to be unknown.
- Not all parents understand their role of early help, it is seen as only as the targeted team.

Staff capacity, resources and training
- LEAP into Learning works well.
- Not enough tools for EH family support workers—can access social work tool box.
- Capacity to support - not enough workers.

Processes and systems
- Fragmented, difficult to find information.
- Time consuming
- Too much paperwork
- Clunky Early Help system
- Multiple reporting systems information gets lost.
- Recording system not easy to use don't always have access to the main records-this would be useful to understand what has happened in the past.

Consent and family engagement
- Parental perception and consent leads to escalation.
- Families need to be on board and take the recommendations.
- No support for families that refuse consent.
- Remove the stigma-parents see Early Help as judgemental and say things such as I am a terrible parent.

Thresholds
- Targeted early help accessing can be frustrating RE: Threshold evidence.
- Feels like threshold has changed.
- Schools have to beg or jump through hoops to get a service.
- Thresholds and gaps between Targeted Early Help and safeguarding.
- Not early enough struggled for a long time before receiving the support they needed.

Close
- If effective is it sustainable when early help close.
- Need to understand the benefit of a 12 weeks cycle, why support is ending when it is still needed.
- No follow up when families step down from CP.

Parenting support
- Difficult to access higher level of support and parenting team is very positive but not always aware of online courses.
- It can be hard to attend a parenting course should be ran as a matter of course to eliminate stigma, not always attending in all communities.

Achieving outcomes
- Drag on when maybe hasn't been successful.
- EH workers to refer up if they haven't had enough impact.
- Fitness for purpose- is the current offer fit for purpose post Covid? JSNA important to feed into this.

Challenges
- Failure to signpost.
- Haven't carried VCS with them.
- Works best when meetings include everyone possible.
- Wish they could attend the network meetings.
- Never attended or asked for input on family meetings.
- LDOs responding new with a decision not just an automated response.
- Want it to feel like a partnership not on your own.
- Recognise how busy referrers are.
- Depends on the practitioner!!!
- Share information with other partners if it doesn't reach remit EG panel.
- Sharing responsibilities.

Positive feedback
- The newsletter is useful.
- When it works, it works well- family have closed due to successful interventions.
- Role of LDO and signposting can prevent more moves from L2 to L3.

7.4 The summary of the workshop discussion has been organised into key themes but the issues are wide ranging and diverse. They repeat feedback given previously and there is a close match with the small group discussions and survey responses. Overall there are some clear areas of feedback in need of attention including understanding of Early Help, levels of intervention, thresholds, support on close, challenges engaging families/consent, and some challenges experienced by workers including system and process issues. To understand these issues more questions were asked and the next page considers feedback when stakeholders were asked more about working together to deliver Early Help.

7.5 The question about working together read 'How can we work together to deliver Early Help? How can we help you/ how can you help us?' There were 17 small group and individual responses but these included lists of different suggestions so they have been analysed and the themes presented in the table below. Top themes include the need for more capacity in schools and calls for more service integration and joint working. The example comments shown in the box help to describe some of these themes.

'How can we work together to deliver Early Help? How can we help you/ how can you help us?

Issue	Count
Capacity, resources and additional workers in schools	8
More integration or clearer ways of joint working across services	8
Directory or more information about available support and services	5
Improved communication	4
Clearer pathways	3
Shared system EMH	3
A wider offer/ more support	3
Clarity of what the EH offer is	3
Access to families through schools	3
Other comments	7

'How can we work together to deliver Early Help? How can we help you/ how can you help us?

- *"EHM is complicated for schools - A key person to support schools would make it easier."*
- *"Worker designated to schools."*
- *"FSW in schools that can lead on EH - not all schools have the funding to do this."*
- *"Can systems be more aligned?"*
- *"Working together with others that are supporting the family - understand what is going on, don't work on own - work collaboratively - team around the family - work together - use what is already there."*
- *"Wider sharing of information between professionals to progress support for families. Partners accessing EHM/processes would make it more effective working."*
- *"Communication is key - where an early help worker has communicated with the care team around the child this has made all the difference to positive outcomes Work together - keep one another in the picture."*
- *"Directory- professionals- what each team offer."*
- *"Catalogue of support that is available for families and central place of access."*
- *"Better clear pathways for support, clear directory of help."*
- *"Easier pathways in for families."*
- *"Understanding the gaps in service and what training needs are there - School exclusion, mental health, Autism. Is there enough specialist support in place to support the families."*
- *"Change the branding from the council and social care move towards universal services."*
- *"Clarity of methodology, mechanisms, commission services."*

7.6 The question was repeated within the workshop sessions and similar responses were received. The broad nature of the question meant that participants repeated many of the issues they had highlighted previously.

Workshop feedback - Joint delivery

Awareness of services and support

- Lack of directory.
- Knowing where to go for support.
- Directory, knowing where to look for information.
- Knowledge of what is in the community.

Community working

- More accessible services within their communities.
- Working partnership in hubs co-location is key-more comms on how we do this.
- Recognise that for the VCS is part of their work not all of it.
- Volunteer time in precious don't waste it.

Communication

- Multi-agency communications
- Better communication
- Consistent communication in all areas
- Much clearer offer what can partners bring to family
- Make know what the offer it and big launch
- Make communication, training, reporting and interventions inclusive.

Access to support and information

- Up to date information.
- Here to help desk.
- Need to be seen as a universal service to reduce the stigma.
- Just being able to pick up the phone and have advice and guidance.

Approaches

- Collaborative working, listening, understanding-with them not to them.
- Focus on strengths and skills.
- Child centred-no us and them.
- Person centred approach.

Continued….

Engaging families

- Asking communities how can we help?
- Like the how can we help you message-think this will work really well with families.
- Engaging youth, families and schools.
- Involve families and communities in the development of early help services.
- Families ownership of change; their plan, their actions.
- Flexible approach to meet needs of the family.
- Develop more approachable service.

Joint working

- True multi-agency working with connected systems.
- Link services and agencies together to offer support.
- Staff knowledgeable of whole system offer.
- Pool resources and knowledge.
- Collaborative working remove blame culture.
- Linking with partners to better understand prevention needs.
- Meaningful delivery plan which can identify areas for development.
- Sharing who is involved with families.
- Peer support and signposting.
- Professional drop-ins need to offer some form of consultation peer problems solving.
- Value our expertise and judgement as a partner.
- More sub-groups using specialisms e.g. substance misuse.
- Centralised budget and data base.

IT and systems

- Digital platforms.
- App for families to keep on top of their plans.
- Digital offer for families to self-help needs to be more accessible.
- Better understand what the barriers are for EHM and why partners are not using it.
- More user friendly systems LL [Liquid Logic].
- Easy to use systems and support with good feedback.
- Cost and finance implications to helping to deliver early help.

Information Sharing

- Share data.
- Data driven and evidence based
- Reporting and feedback needs to be more effective.
- Evaluation of monitoring impact, monitoring strengths and areas of improvement.
- Share data across end to end services
- Good practice shared across other local authorities.

Managing expectations

- Clear definition of roles what are the expectations and training.
- Setting clear expectations and timescales.
- Realistic expectations.
- Identifying risks signposting and referring.
- Clear processes and policies.
- Really focus on limited time.

Referrals and access to support at key times

- Health visitor support.
- Clear pathways and referral processes.
- Transitioning into secondary and sharing information -waited a long time to gain access to information.
- Links for family to support transitions to support from TMBSS to main stream education.
- More support for under fives.
- Referrals into relevant services such and parenting or Mental health.

Suggestions

- Can we streamline the whole family assessment?
- Better responses from FPOC-give advice on what we can do to help.
- An anonymised contact to remove barrier of having consent when seeking advice.
- More agencies available when it doesn't meet threshold.
- A family support worker based in schools.
- More detached youth workers to extend reach.
- More in-person activity.
- Adapt test and try system, listen to families views.

Other comments

- Like the new front door process.
- Support from LDOs very positive; don't get rid of them.
- Overarching and implemented strategy.

7.7 The amount of information and diversity of response highlights that there are a large number of issues to work through when considering joint working. To build on this, a question was asked around the training, development and resources required to delivery the strategy. The small group discussions and surveys resulted in a large number of suggestions listed on the following page. There were 13 resource suggestions, 6 comments about the provision of training, 35 suggested training courses and 2 other comments.

7.8 It is possible that some of the stakeholders were not aware of the courses on offer currently. The suggestions will need to be further reviewed to understand those issues not already covered within the current training offer and whether there is demand from enough stakeholders to consider new training.

'To implement the Strategy successfully, are there any specific training, development or resources that need to be considered?

Resources

- *"Feedback from when things are not accepted."*
- *"Case studies to support partners understand the context and enable to contextualise this."*
- *"Lots of workshops - multi-agency / networking - build lots of good relationships to enable effective working in supporting families."*
- *"Good comms plan - so people know what we are doing."*
- *"Workforce development plans - elsewhere - SEN - intervention offers - cross system development."*
- *"Community of practice, network of parents, peer support. Using appropriate language about support and what is being offered."*
- *"Thinking about our diverse population. Someone else can't tell me how to parent my child. Has to be an understanding of this and how we work through that."*
- *"Research of what worked previously."*
- *"Early Help newsletters to continue."*
- *"Send out info about what is available already."*
- *"Regular updates. I think we should have been consulted prior to the new early help offer being implemented."*
- *"More face to face translation provision- we have more families that require this support and it is key to ensuring parents understand why we have concerns, how we can help and that they understand us."*
- *"Having the representative to contact is helpful."*

Training Issues

- *"Training within my setting to understand the EH offer for staff to attend-Bespoke. Training for the whole school team."*
- *"Refresher training is always useful and a continuum -processes when new forms are available."*
- *"What training can other partners offer to internal / SC Teams - specialist teams - collaborative?"*
- *"The Fire Service do provide training to agencies to make them more aware of what to look out when visiting clients ref fire safety awareness. A number of dates are already available until January 2024. More dates to be released for 2024 shortly."*
- *"Time is a challenge for partners to attend training."*
- *"All EHM training should be mandatory. Regular update regarding training on EH."*

Other Comments

- *"Culture shift required - need to win hearts and minds across all agencies."*
- *"Stop working in all isolation - pull all other strategies together - across the partnership - all need to be saying the same thing."*

Training requests

- *Threshold training - unpicking a little more- understanding of levels and why referrals are not meeting threshold. Using case studies- as examples.*
- *Supervision training.*
- *Person centred approach huge amount of training, person centred tools changes the way people's practice. Can really help engagement and how they interact with others. Incredibly valuable.*
- *Communication techniques.*
- *Training on the process, pathways and to clearly understand how the new system works.*
- *Motivational interviewing*
- *Restorative practice*
- *Sensory training*
- *Compassion and empathy - SEND sector*
- *SEND*
- *SEN specific, behaviour support*
- *Behaviour management*
- *Children who display very challenging behaviour*
- *Emotional based school avoidance - future minds*
- *Emotional support for children*
- *Mental Health training - reach for the top, ELSA.*
- *Parenting and training - refresher*
- *Supporting parents to deal with child's anxiety*
- *Self-harm / body image / vaping - training is available for staff but is it available for parents?*
- *Trauma informed*
- *Lower level ABC analysis*
- *Attachment focused parenting-insecure attachment*
- *Play course-parents learning how to play.*
- *Nurturing parent*
- *Training for practitioners on how to support with healthy sleep.*
- *Routines at home- deliver these messages- training*
- *Thinking strategies that are manageable and not creating bad habits for later on-able to access nursery placements-sensory feeding problems- advice on diet-overcoming issues with food-health in pregnancy-no smoking no alcohol.*
- *Parents need support - how to support well.*
- *Specific issues when parenting a teenager.*
- *School exclusions*
- *Understanding perpetrators - so consider them not just the victim.*
- *Child to parent abuse*
- *Cost of living*
- *Housing*

7.9 The amount of information and diversity of response highlights that there are a large number of issues to work through when considering joint working. The same question was asked within the workshop sessions.

7.9 The response when training and resources were discussed within workshops was a little different. There were some similarities, but it is interesting to see the differences. The box below lists the requests highlighted within workshop sessions.

Workshop feedback - Training and resources

Worker support
- More robust induction programme.
- Knowing what everyone does, shadowing opportunities.
- Clinical supervision and peer supervision.
- Peer to peer support.
- Problem solving support.
- Buddy groups within settings.
- School need to consider upskilling office staff.

Systems
- All using EHM for effective information sharing.
- Using EHM-too complicated, get my head around it and it changes again.
- YouTube videos about EHM.
- Awareness and knowledge of what every partner can offer.
- Exploring and understanding offer.
- List of all contacts to be given and all agencies.
- Who does what and where?

Resources
- Structure chart to be shared regularly.
- Varied media approaches to ensure all VISCs are met.
- Know things are up to date and fresh.
- Keep thing relevant and timely.
- Venues to deliver support.
- Open door in hubs.
- Pastoral support can access hub for support
- Taking carers to family hubs to talk to others about support.
- Coffee mornings.
- Hot desking.
- Early help champions.
- Digital toolbox
- Access to available funding to support families.
- A forum to ask question and queries and get answers to.
- Parenting team to come into school to deliver to staff and parents.

Training issues
- Good bitesize training at the right time.
- If you want volunteers, training needs to be available evening and weekends.
- Specific training for Leads in identified areas.

Training
- Better training on Liquid Logic.
- More support on SMART recording.
- Making early help referral pathway and beyond. Evidence base training.
- Evidencing rural inequalities
- Bid writing expertise.
- When offering support to families - refresher training around this.
- Underpinning values of UYC.
- Training on new strategy-family help.
- Understanding thresholds.
- Restorative practice.
- Focus DA and under fives.
- 0-5 related training to keep skills and knowledge fresh for this priority.
- School staff need managing difficult conversation training.

7.10 As the box illustrates, the workshop sessions included an additional focus on the need for more worker support such as induction, shadowing, peer support and problem solving support in addition to more formal training. A wider range of other possible resources were also listed, including access to support in community venues, and to specialists and champions.

7.11 The next question asked by the Early Help transformation leads was 'How can we more efficiently share information to ensure that families are accessing the right support at the right time?' Answers to previous questions highlight that information sharing has been a big issue. There were too few responses to easily theme but the answers have been grouped in the following box.

'How can we more efficiently share information to ensure that families are accessing the right support at the right time?'

Online information
- *"Website- shocking."*
- *"Local Offer/FIS keeping the information updated - EH directory."*
- *"Publish it in the correct places - SEND Local offer / FIS / Website."*

Knowledge of support
- *"Details given to schools of all support that is available and how to access it."*
- *"Need a wider level of understanding of services available."*

Points of contact

- *"Being able to ring and ask what EH the family has received previously (shared by health colleague)."*
- *"Check with schools who they would like to receive information rather than guessing. Not everything is relevant to smaller schools when it goes out - is there a way this could be held centrally that they could access or a person they could go to."*
- *"Have 1 person as main point of contact that has an over view of all agencies involved so easier to coordinate."*

Networking

- *"Getting people in a room and discussing families needs. MDM- with and without families."*
- *"Use the networks that we are already have - service and community services - don't share through these networks or mechanisms to do this. No lists."*

System data

- *"Single point of information access on EHM- cannot access info."*
- *"We do not add to it, we look at it EHM."*
- *"One health record, similar for children. Is this possible?"*

Approach to sharing information

- *"Remove barriers, agencies and individuals can hide "Central place for communications."*
- *behind concerns around information sharing - from a place of fear. Need to change this to what will happen if I don't share?"*
- *"Don't be scared to share families information and concerns. Quicker easier process to share information and get the right services / support."*
- *"The earlier the better. Needs to be efficient/smooth collaboration with all professionals."*
- *"We send out parenting bulletins any information which could be added to this would be beneficial. Updates from Shropshire Council are shared with parents."*
- *"Act upon actions set-prevent people from getting frustrated."*
- *"Ensure right avenues of support are shared. Seems that a lot more emails about what is available for support are coming out already this term- this is fantastic. Can we have more ideas?"*
- *"Social media - current cohort of parents - new platforms."*
- *"Different authority- can not get the information from previous one."*
- *"Example of good communication with other agencies enables effect information sharing to support families."*

7.12 The question asked within the workshop differed slightly and focused more on ways to reach and address the needs of families.

7.13 Although the question was asked very differently within the workshops, the response was similar to the feedback from the small group sessions and survey.

Workshop feedback - Meeting needs (information)

Digital Information

- Update social medias as platforms
- Digitally-how to accommodate families in more rural areas.
- Digital offer for families to self-help needs to be more accessible
- An app that can be monitored to ensure families are engaging.
- Development of app and virtual hubs.

Knowledge of support

- Knowledge of services and their offers.
- Knowledge of local areas and support.
- Understanding of Early Help to partners.

Community contacts

- Easily accessible and contactable
- Contact with local community groups
- How to access and in places where families go
- Develop awareness of hubs
- In schools/GP/midwifery
- Mobile help-buses
- Better use of partner facilities and buildings
- Develop relationships with services within the communities.
- Need to be visible.

System data

- ICT systems
- Reporting and feedback needs to be more effective.
- Better data collection

Approach to sharing information

- Public consultation.
- Clear mission statement.
- Media campaign.
- Communications strategy for Early Help.
- Face to face marketing.
- Families need to know what is on offer.

Worker support

- More robust induction programme.
- Clear processes and policies.
- Peer support: support for staff.

7.14 The themes highlighted have been common through the feedback and also featured under the themes of strategy and partnership.

7.15 The Early Help transformation team designed a question to ask stakeholders 'How can we effectively engage and collaborate with you in the implementation of the early help strategy?' There were 16 small group discussion responses and survey responses and analysis of the comments highlights some key themes shown in the table below. The comments suggest a desire for opportunities to network and discuss the implementation of the strategy. Example comments are included.

How can we effectively engage and collaborate with you in the implementation of the early help strategy?

Issue	Count
Workshops and networking events	5
Communication (general)	5
Email, newsletters and updates	4
Joint delivery and integration e.g. with schools, health, social prescribing	4
Continuing discussion around strategy and working together	3
Sharing data and information	2
Other comments	6

How can we effectively engage and collaborate with you in the implementation of the early help strategy?

- *"Talk to us! Workshops - transparency and dialogue."*
- *"Opportunities for face to face collaboration and shared learning - involving everybody - parents, families and agencies together."*
- *"Once again regular updates/newsletters attending Network meetings."*
- *"Continue to work together and good communication."*
- *"Regular updates, Early Help newsletter (which I receive)."*
- *"Continue with these conversations."*
- *"How this was launched... these sessions were good, made this interesting."*
- *"Come back to us before the strategy is created - working together to create it - ongoing collaboration that is proactive and meaningful. QA of the implementation of the strategy - review along the way - don't wait until the end to unpick the challenges."*
- *"Integration work, peer discussion. This is good."*
- *"Group of schools and meet to discuss what is available in local to area."*

7.16 The feedback from the workshop discussions is shown in the following box.

Workshop feedback - Collaboration for strategy implementation

Face to face workshops and networking

- More examples like today.
- Workshops.
- Face to face meeting with Targeted Early Help professionals.
- Face to face meetings to feedback and develop.
- Face to face conversations and meeting people.
- Regularly engage when the strategy is implemented.

Community based contact

- MATs [Multi-agency Teams] can be helpful if localised.
- Locality meetings
- Accessing all locality areas.
- Outreach workers in the community.
- Good links between schools settings.

Locations

- Co-location
- Home working no office space is challenging.
- Remote locations

General communication approach

- Newsletters
- Regular updates and feedback.
- Reach out and keep engaged with updates and refreshers.
- Good meaningful engagement focused and planned.
- Focus on the people and services you want to engage with and a good understanding of partners functions.
- Knowing who is who helps.
- People recognition of what people have put into sessions- sense of ownership and involvement.

Other suggestions

- LDOs
- LDO in regular sessions, valuable resource.
- Supervision sessions
- Youth clubs
- Streamline paperwork and referral forms.
- Time can be an issue for everyone.

7.17 The feedback from the workshop discussions is similar to the feedback from small group discussions and the stakeholder survey. Face to face contact seems to be a preferred method of collaboration to deliver the new strategy. In the same way as before there were positive comments about the Locality Development Officer roles (LDOs) and comments about working in communities and in the right locations.

7.18 Stakeholders were asked a large number of questions and unfortunately there were fewer responses to the last few questions including a question on challenges/barriers to the implementation of the strategy and a question on possible gaps. In response to the question 'Are there any potential barriers to the implementation of the new strategy, and how can we address them proactively?' there were 9 responses within the small group discussions (and no survey responses). Some comments covered more than one issue. 4 main barriers were mentioned:

- Time and resources
- Communication
- Knowledge and access to information
- Relationships across services

The examples shown in the box help to illustrate the comments made.

'Are there any potential barriers to the implementation of the new strategy, and how can we address them proactively?'

- *"Time, money, staff and resource."*
- *"Time - partners are busy."*
- *"Time constraints-time to update yourself."*
- *"Understanding that partners have day jobs - schools are very busy places, staff wear many hats."*
- *"Poor communication, schools not knowing how the new system works."*
- *"Communication."*
- *"Not knowing what the changes are - not knowing where to go - communication is key."*
- *"Basic info- who to contact."*
- *"Really hearing - genuine authentic collaboration and co-production. Not using hyper professional language but plain English. Developing shared language which everyone understands."*
- *"Disconnect between systems and concerns being logged - EHM and internal systems for other partners."*
- *"Conversations top down."*

7.19 There was more feedback from the workshop discussion identifying barriers and challenges. The following box displays the feedback from the workshops. Key themes were fairly similar but also included more comments about service capacity, and the barriers created by attitudes, perceptions and working culture. This was a big theme which may have been influenced by engagement with more Shropshire Council staff members within the workshops.

Workshop feedback - Challenges and barriers

Time and resources

- Time
- Lack of funding
- Capacity within universal services.
- Staff retention
- Social care capacity and the risks this brings.

Communication

- Need for more communications
- Better communication

Knowledge and access to information

- Need for new skills and training
- Understanding of other services
- Joined up services
- Need for networking

Culture, perceptions and attitudes

- Regaining public and staff confidence
- Adapting to change
- Perception of Early Help
- No buy in from partners
- Lack of honesty
- Listen and hear
- Silo working
- A 'not my job' attitude
- Done too model
- Culture and ways of working

Other barriers or challenges

- 12 weeks model
- Lack of community development
- Reaching the right people
- Timescales for implementation are unrealistic
- Welcoming, accessible and removing barriers to those who find it difficult to ask for help.

7.20 The question about gaps read 'Are there any gaps in our current service delivery that need to be addressed in the new early help strategy?' There were few responses for the small group sessions and survey. This reflects the large number of questions asked of stakeholders rather than a lack of gaps. There were 7 responses and all are shown on the following page. Gaps included SEND support, mental health and emotional support. The need for easier referral was also repeated.

7.21 Following the small group discussion feedback the next page details the feedback from the workshop discussion on gaps.

Are there any gaps in our current service delivery that need to be addressed in the new Early Help Strategy?

- *"Easier referral process so that families can access support."*
- *"Not enough preventive work, easier referral process. Community and voluntary sector and what's available. Groups and support that pulls people in, user friendly hubs or venues needed."*
- *"Hands on parenting support emotional support."*
- *"Children and families someone else to run meetings."*
- *"Mental health support is a huge gap!! Families do not have transport or the finances to get to the BEAM drop-in, this could be in location."*
- *"SEND lack of support across the board."*
- *"SEND Siblings carers, multiple caring household, trauma and send, violence and send."*
- *"Schools knowing what support is out there. A gap in support for families of children with ADHD. Support for parents of children with mental health difficulties such as OCD, school phobia, etc."*

Workshop feedback - Gaps

Problems with referrals

- Data share and make referrals
- streamline referral process
- Schools have to beg or jump through hoops to get a targeted service.

Support gaps

- Feedback when doesn't meet threshold.
- Current offer is ok if threshold is met.
- Feels like the thresholds have changed.
- No support with families who refuse consent
- No follow up or pathways for when families are stepped down from CP.
- Gap between L3 and L4. When targeted services closes.
- Hidden harm work has long been a massive gap.

Capacity and provision gaps

- Capacity to support- not enough workers.
- Working groups to explore funding streams and grants.
- Lack of peer supervision.
- Each school has EWO representative-this is a good approach.
- Need for more joint working and visits.
- More detached youth workers to extend reach.

System issues

- Too time consuming.
- Clunky EH system.
- All agencies need to be trained in EHM and access, regularly use and update system.
- Multiple reporting system, information gets lost.

7.22 The feedback on gaps repeats some of the main messages stakeholders shared when asked about strategy and partnerships and from other questions about delivery. To check that all stakeholders had an opportunity to raise any other issues they were all asked whether they had any other comments or anything else to add. There were very few responses, suggesting most feedback had been provided under other responses but the few that were received are shown below.

Other comments

- *"Centralised information bank accessible to all."*
- *"Visual Aids / flow chart of where to access help."*
- *"We also find children reaching or nearing 18 are very often are closed off as they are becoming adult."*
- *"We like the ' how can we help' approach and feel that the new front door will provide a much more fluid approach for families as they drop in and out of services as and when they feel they need some help."*
- *"Challenges when on the border of Telford for a social prescriber (geographical coverage)."*
- *"Partners said they felt valued at being involved in these conversations."*

Workshop feedback - Other comments

- Work to address poverty.
- Safe spaces.
- No reception staff, can't get into buildings, access needs to better to hubs.
- Workshops in school to develop positive peer friendships.
- Youth work: strong links with SEND and inclusion, disadvantaged youth not in education.
- Reach out to more rural communities.

7.23 The next, and last, section of the report summarises the results of the research and the key findings and next steps.

8. Feedback summary

8.1 The engagement undertaken to support the review of Early Help and to support the development of a new Early Help Strategy, involved gathering feedback from children and young people, parents and carers, and a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

8.2 The feedback was collected in September and early October 2023 through surveys, small group discussions and workshops. There were 43 group discussions, 2 large workshops and 156 individual responses.

8.3 The length of this report is reflective of the considerable amount of information collected. A summary report is also available.

8.4 The engagement captured the views of 79 children and young people, 12 had benefitted from support through Early Help services and the remaining 67 had not. 34 of the 56 parents and carers who participated in the research had direct experience of Early Help.

8.5 The stakeholders involved in the research were representative of a range of partner organisations and sectors. Examples include early years providers, schools, NHS, voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers, public sector providers and more.

8.6 Due to the predominantly qualitative nature of the research, the findings are presented under a series of headings below.

Children and young people's views and needs

8.7 The comments from children and young people who have received support through Early Help are all positive. None of the children and young people rated the support less than 4 stars (most were 5 stars). The importance of having something to do/play with, having someone to talk to and having support with family issues were all highlighted within comments. All but one child felt listened to (one was not sure) and all children felt that the support had made things better.

8.8 The comments from the children and young people who have received support suggested that the main benefit had been seeing that their parents/adults had been helped with issues or their needs and that it had helped them personally to have someone to talk to.

8.9 67 children and young people who had not benefitted from Early Help participated in the research. The main areas of support needs highlighted were solving family money concerns, helping with household tasks e.g. cooking and tidying, taking away worries/ giving support and resolving relationship problems. Overall children talked about the importance of having someone to talk to and listen but their main area of focus was understanding where to get support for their parents if, or when, they needed it.

8.10 Reading the comments suggests that a proportion of the 67 children are in need of some support, with many referring to concerns over living costs and money. The top suggestion from children and young people was having a helpline or a phone number to call.

Parent and carer views and needs

8.11 56 parents and carers provided responses to the research through the online survey. 10 commented that they didn't know what Early Help is but the remainder had a relatively good understanding.

8.12 Of the 56 parents and carers, 9 emphasised that they were not in need of any help and 4 didn't know. The remaining respondents provided some examples of support needs. Top themes included:

- Help with a diagnosis/SEND
- Mental health,
- General advice/signposting,
- Access to other services and parenting advice.

8.13 When asked if their children had support needs, the most commonly requested type of assistance was:

- Emotional support and wellbeing,
- Help with education/in school,
- Behavioural support,
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The feedback highlighted that, although children raised concerns about family finances, these were not mentioned in any significant way by parents and carers.

8.14 Although only a proportion of the parents and carers had accessed Early Help support, those who had responded that the main challenge was waiting times (21%). Other challenges or barriers included eligibility/assessment criteria, limited support, not feeling listened to and lack of longer-term support and follow up.

8.15 When asked how parents could be more involved in the process 21% felt there was no need for improvement but others suggested listening to parents, more 2 way communication (e.g. updates and keeping parents informed) and by providing additional support. The suggestions for better working between professionals included information sharing with others, improved advice, closer working with school and more targeted/specific advice/support. Smaller numbers suggested more emphasis on action planning/solutions.

8.16 The top suggestion for raising awareness of Early Help was to do more work through schools and nurseries, others suggested a wide range of communication channels and there were suggestions for overcoming some perceptions/addressing reputation and making use of access through community based services and venues.

8.17 Looking to the future and overall improvements, parents and carers suggested:

- Increasing awareness of the service offer and how to access support,
- Reducing waiting times
- Having more presence in schools, the community, or at home.

Although most were positive and constructive, a few parents included comments throughout to illustrate some negative perceptions of Early Help and a suggestion that they didn't need or want any professional involvement.

Stakeholder feedback on Strategy

8.18 Stakeholder feedback was obtained from a wide range of different local groups and organisations including primary and secondary schools, nursery providers, voluntary and community sector organisations and groups, NHS health services, other public sector partners and a range of services delivered by Shropshire Council. The stakeholders were asked a series of questions under three themes: strategy, partnership and delivery.

8.19 The initiatives stakeholders would like to see covered in the new Early Help Strategy are:

- Mental health support
- Family relationship support, safety and domestic abuse services
- Early intervention and early years
- Service through schools and improving school attendance
- Community and home based, accessible local support
- Improved multi-agency and system working
- Support for vulnerable families (food, heating, housing etc.)

The comments throughout the stakeholders feedback highlight the popularity of Locality Development Officers (LDOs) and community-based support.

8.20 Stakeholders were asked what matters most to the communities they work with and which priorities should be included in a new Early Help Strategy. Top priorities include

- SEND/ Inclusion and diagnosis support
- Support to address poverty
- Mental health support
- Behavioural support
- Parenting support
- Child, youth and family safety
- Supporting pregnant parents and families with children under 5 years old.

The importance of access to support within the community was emphasised.

8.21 Challenges to strategy implementation were considered to be:

- Limited resources and staff capacity
- Lack of engagement by families and perceptions/stigma
- Challenges of system and multi-agency working
- The ability of all services to meet needs (some of them very complex needs).

8.22 The research explored the goals and outcomes stakeholders would like to see from the Early Help Strategy. The top theme was the importance of using the right approach when working with families followed by comments relating to early intervention, prevention and transition. The feedback on the goals and outcomes for the strategy was quite varied and possibly suggests that stakeholders do not all share the same priorities and ambitions. Some cross-cutting themes included:

- Child safety and wellbeing
- Work in schools and school attendance.
- Family relationships
- Mental health support and wellbeing
- Parenting support and universal access.
- Inclusion and SEND
- Crisis avoidance and addressing poverty
- The need for service access and pathways
- Managing demand
- Challenges of service resources and staffing.
- The importance of engagement with families and between professionals.

Stakeholder feedback on Partnership

8.23 The feedback under the theme of partnership emphasised a common concern or barrier to good partnership working. Many stakeholders felt they didn't understand the Early Help offer well enough and didn't have a clear idea of the services and support available and the thresholds, eligibility or referral pathways. This was also highlighted when stakeholders were asked about collaborating with community organisations. Other than more information, stakeholders felt that the best way to collaborate with community organisations was to be located in communities either through hubs, community buildings, through outreach or through visiting community groups/services/ locations.

8.24 Communication was another strong area of feedback under the theme of partnership. Methods of communication were mentioned and there was positive feedback for the Early Help newsletter. Many stakeholders also commented on the value of professional meetings and discussions and challenges around shared records and EHM/Liquid Logic.

8.25 The feedback under the theme of partnership contained some key points for attention and

- Lack of clarity concerning the Early Help offer.
- Better understanding voluntary sector provision.
- Outreach, working in communities and the use of hubs or community buildings.
- Understanding and overcoming rural challenges and access issues.
- Making use of online information, resources and building a directory.
- Improved shared record keeping and systems.
- Challenges of staffing levels and resources including the need for professional support and key posts/roles.
- Concerns over thresholds, referrals and lack of clarity over pathways.
- The importance of addressing issues early to avoid crisis and escalation.
- The value of professional networking and joint working around families.

Stakeholder feedback on Delivery

8.26 When considering delivery, the stakeholders repeated some of their key priorities and concerns including:

- Access to support (for professionals and families).
- Thresholds
- Lack of clarity of the Early Help offer.
- Lack of enough support for families.
- The need of more targeted support
- The need for timely support and follow up support on close (there were concerns about the short length of time offered to families).
- The need for more capacity in schools.
- Challenges experienced by workers including system and process issues.
- Calls for more service integration and joint working.

8.27 There were a wide range of suggestions for training and resources, highlighting the constructive feedback from stakeholders and willingness to find solutions to the challenges they identified. Suggestions included induction, shadowing, peer support and problem solving support in addition to more formal training. A wider range of other possible resources were also listed, including access to support in community venues, and to specialists and champions.

8.28 Face to face contact seems to be a preferred method of collaboration to deliver the new strategy.

8.29 There were positive comments about the Locality Development Officer roles (LDOs) and comments about working in communities and in the right locations.

8.30 When stakeholders were asked about challenges faced and 4 main barriers were mentioned:

- Time and resources
- Communication
- Knowledge and access to information
- Relationships across services.

Where Shropshire Council staff were involved in workshop discussions the results suggest there were some additional concerns and challenges. There were more references to challenges around staffing levels, resources and working culture. Some comments were made to suggest a need for improvement in working relationships and staff satisfaction.

8.31 The stakeholders were asked to identify any gaps. The gaps were quite reflective of the issues stakeholders highlighted for prioritisation on the new Early help Strategy. The gaps included SEND support, mental health and emotional support. The need for easier referral was also repeated.

Conclusions

8.32 The research and engagement resulted in a huge amount of feedback and information. There were a large number of questions asked, particularly of stakeholders and the responses confirmed that there are key issues and priorities for Early Help that will need to be built into the new strategy and into future plans and service design.

8.33 It was noticeable from the feedback received that some of the issues raised have been raised in response to other recent engagement exercises including the Family Relationships survey reported in June 2023, the Early Help SEND engagement reported in August 2023 and the Shropshire Child Neglect Research reported October 2023. These research projects also highlighted the importance of improved information about services and support, service pressures, the importance of family engagement and approach to communicate with families, opportunities to improve partnership working and some concerns over access to services/availability of support. The feedback through this research also included some concerns that some of the needs of families are now more complex and linked to the current challenging social and economic environment (with more families concerned about their ability to meet basic needs such as food, heating, housing costs etc.).

8.34 Cross cutting priorities appear to be early intervention and prevention of demand, escalation and crisis; meeting the needs of children with SEND and focusing on inclusion; school attendance and educational support; child and family safety; clear service offers and pathways; and effective multi-agency working. The challenges and concerns highlighted by stakeholders suggest the need for a shared understanding of priorities and approach/ways of working going forwards.

Next steps

8.35 This report and all of the comments and feedback collected through the engagement will now be considered in full by the Early Help Transformation Project Team and colleagues and partners. The results will be used to inform a new Early Help Strategy for Shropshire.

8.36 The Early Help Transformation Project Team will continue to engage with all stakeholders recognising the requests for further engagement and emphasis on the value and importance of effective local partnerships.

8.37 Many thanks are extended to all those children, young people, parents, carers and professionals who took the time to provide their views and suggestions.

November 2023

Analysis and reporting by:

Feedback and Insight Team, Communications and Engagement, Resources

Shropshire Council

Email: TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk

Engagement design and delivery by:

Early Help, Children's Services, People Directorate -Transformation, Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council