

Halton Borough Council

# EARLY HELP STRATEGY

2024 - 2027

*Aiming  
High*

“Creating a Culture of Collaboration”



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## FOREWORD

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce Halton's Early Help Strategy for 2024-2027

Effective Early Help is essential to improve the life chances of Halton's children, young people, and families. To deliver the Early Help offer requires a significant transformation of some current models of service delivery and this practice and culture change can take time and requires commitment into the medium and longer term.

This strategy brings together the key components of how as a partnership we help families early in Halton now and for the future. It builds on the good foundations that we have put in place in Halton to develop effective partnerships across all agencies, embed the principle that Early Help is everyone's responsibility, and ensure that children, young people and families can easily and quickly access services when and where they need them.

We firmly believe that maintaining good universal services, especially in the early years when early childhood experiences and good child development is so crucial to later life chances, is essential to ensure that all our children can thrive and achieve their potential.

We have made good progress in establishing an integrated front door to early help and safeguarding (ICART) and are now well on the way to establishing and embedding the family hub model that will bring together key partners to provide multi agency teams to coordinate support at the earliest opportunity.

It is vital that we all work in partnership to identify and tackle problems for our children and families as early as possible to ensure we can improve their life chances.

We believe we can help families by building on their strengths, forming relationships and

connecting families to their communities. We know that getting help at the right time in the right way can prevent poor outcomes for children and families.

The strategy is a call to action, as a partnership we are all 'helping families early' and we can help each other to do this by having an effective partnership strategy that brings together the key action that will make most difference to the lives of children in Halton. Together, we have put the foundations in place to now, build on in the next phase that helps families early over the next 3 years

The success of our approach to Early Help is dependent upon collaborative and integrated working and will only be achieved by making Early Help an integral 'golden thread', which is woven into all our borough's strategic plans and comes with a clear commitment across the partnership.

The development of a robust early Help offer for children, young people and families in Halton will prevent problems escalating and becoming entrenched and more complex, leading to a reduction in the need for more costly, specialist and statutory services and preventing unnecessary trauma and emotional upheaval for families.



## WHAT IS EARLY HELP?

“Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family’s resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.” Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, 2023

Key aspects of early help include:

### 1. Timely Intervention:

Early help involves identifying and responding to emerging issues promptly. This proactive approach aims to address problems before they become entrenched or more severe.

### 2. Holistic Support:

Early help is often delivered through a multi-agency approach, bringing together various professionals and organisations to provide comprehensive support tailored to the needs of the child and their family.

### 3. Prevention and Resilience-Building:

By offering support early on, early help aims to build resilience in children and families, equipping them with skills and resources to navigate challenges effectively.

### 4. Inclusive and Family-Centred:

Early help recognises that family dynamics play a crucial role in a child's development. Therefore, it focuses on involving and engaging the entire family in the process of support and decision-making.

### 5. Strength-Based Approach:

Instead of focusing solely on deficits and problems, early help takes a strengths-based approach, acknowledging and building on the family's existing resources and capabilities.

### 6. Flexible and Tailored Services:

Each family's circumstances are unique, so early help services are designed to be flexible and adaptable, offering a range of interventions that can be tailored to meet specific needs.

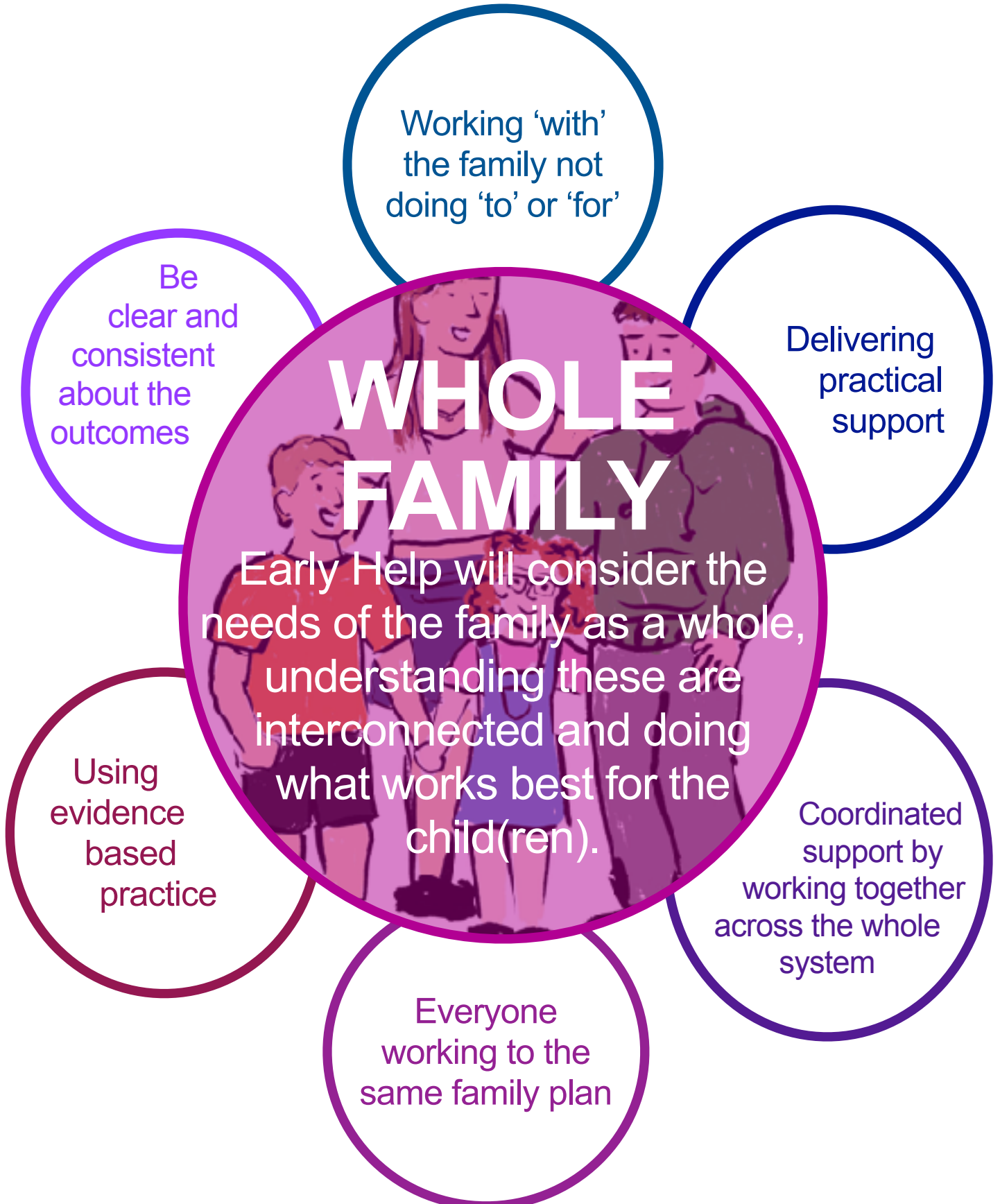
### 7. Coordination and Information Sharing:

Effective early help requires good communication and information-sharing among different agencies involved in a child's life to ensure a cohesive and collaborative approach.

By offering timely and appropriate assistance, early help seeks to improve children's well-being, enhance family functioning, and ultimately reduce the need for more intensive and costly interventions in the future. It is a preventive approach that places an emphasis on promoting positive outcomes for children and families from the outset.



## KEY PRINCIPLES OF EARLY HELP



## WHAT IS EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP?

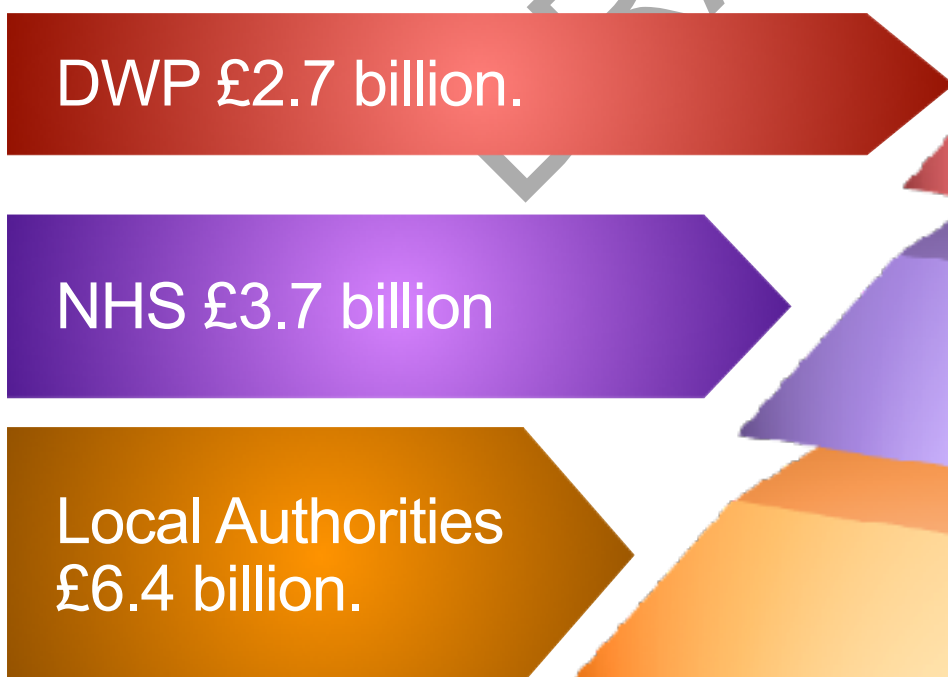


## WHY IS EARLY HELP IMPORTANT?

It can be challenging to quantify the exact Return on Investment of early help services due to the complexity of social issues and the long timeframes involved. “The Cost of Late Intervention: Early Intervention Foundation analysis 2016” – estimated the cost of late intervention to be £17 billion or £287 per head of the population across England and Wales. This relates to the cost of the acute, statutory and essential benefits and services required when children and young people experience significant difficulties in life, many of which might have been prevented. The largest individual costs are:

- £5.3 billion spent on Looked After Children
- £5.2 billion associated with cases of domestic violence
- £2.7 billion spent on benefits for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

The cost is spread across different areas of the public sector, with the largest shares borne by:



Early help offers numerous benefits for families, creating positive and supportive environments that can have a lasting impact on the well-being and development of children. Some of the key benefits of early help for families include:

### 1. Prevention of Crisis and Escalation:

Early help intervenes at the initial signs of difficulties, preventing problems from becoming more serious or leading to crises. By addressing issues proactively, families can avoid reaching a point of crisis, reducing stress and improving overall family functioning.

### 2. Improved Parenting Skills:

Early help often includes parenting programs and support, which can help parents develop effective parenting strategies, improve communication with their children, and enhance their understanding of child development. This results in more positive and nurturing parenting practices.

### 3. Increased Family Resilience:

Early help empowers families to build resilience by providing them with tools and



resources to cope with challenges and adversity effectively. Strengthening family resilience fosters a positive and stable environment for children to thrive.

#### **4. Enhanced Family Well-Being:**

With access to support and guidance, families can improve their overall well-being. This may include better physical and mental health, improved financial stability, and stronger social connections within the community.

#### **5. Positive Child Development:**

Early help contributes to positive child development outcomes. When families receive support to address early developmental delays or behavioural issues, children are more likely to reach their full potential and achieve developmental milestones.

#### **6. Increased School Engagement:**

By addressing any educational challenges early on, children are more likely to stay engaged in their schooling. Early help can facilitate better communication between families and schools, leading to improved educational outcomes.

#### **7. Better Access to Services and Resources:**

Early help connects families to various services and resources that may be beneficial to them. This can include access to healthcare, housing support, financial assistance, and community programs, which ultimately improve the family's quality of life.

#### **8. Empowerment and Inclusion:**

Early help empowers families to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and the lives of their children. By

involving families in planning and service delivery, they feel included and valued within the community.

#### **9. Reduction in Long-term Costs:**

By intervening early and preventing problems from escalating, early help can reduce the need for more intensive and costly interventions in the future. This not only benefits the family but also has cost-saving implications for the broader community.

#### **10. Strengthened Family Bonds:**

Through early help, families can experience increased cohesion and improved relationships. Strengthening family bonds contributes to a supportive and loving home environment, which positively impacts children's emotional well-being.

**In summary,** early help offers families the opportunity to overcome challenges, build on their strengths, and create nurturing environments where children can thrive. By investing in early support, communities can foster healthy family dynamics, promote child development, and lay the groundwork for long-term positive outcomes for both families and society.



# Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan & Childrens Partnership Plan



## Our Purpose Why we are all here Supporting children, young people and families

### Strategic Enablers

What we must focus on  
Working in **partnership**  
Developing the **workforce**  
Raising our **aspirations**

### Top Priorities

What will make the biggest difference, quickly  
**Prevention & Early Intervention**  
**Improving Professional Practice**  
**Increasing Education Attendance**

### Vision

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What we do every day and the outcomes we will achieve together  
We ensure that all children & young people are  
**Safe - Happy - Healthy - Succeeding**

### Key Questions

What we should always ask ourselves

**What is life like** for this child or young person?  
**What can I do** to make it better?  
**Would this be good enough** for my child?

## VISION

This Corporate Plan sets out the priorities and ambitions of what the Council wants to achieve for the residents, communities, and businesses of Halton. It is Halton Borough Council's key strategic document. It sets the Council's priorities for the next 3 -5 years.

Its commitment to children, young people and their families is highlighted as a priority.

## HALTON'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Halton's children, young people and families Plan builds on this communicating the agreed

shared vision, priorities and values of the children and young peoples partnership and including the views of children dn young people themselves.

The plan is ambitious but realistic and pragmatic.

Its key tenet is about raising the aspirations and expectations of everyone who works with children and young people by...

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**Safe**  
Happy  
Healthy  
Succeeding



# HALTON LEVELS OF NEED FRAMEWORK

Children and families can access support and Early Help through universal services for example a Midwife, General Practitioner, Schools, 0-19 Healthy Child Practitioners, Early Years providers or Children and Family Hubs. All agencies and services have a duty to work together to identify, assess and respond to Early Help needs. This strategy will move us to a position of having one agreed assessment tool and shared plan across the partnership that we all subscribe to. This Multi-Agency Guide of Levels (Thresholds) of Need is for practitioners and managers in all agencies that work with, or are involved with, children, young people and their families in Halton. This covers the period from pre-birth up to 17 years and 364 days.

Team around the Family is Halton Borough Council’s service to deliver early help and support. Looked at in terms of Halton’s Levels of Need Framework, Team around the Family ensures that fewer cases reach the ‘Specialist’ end of the continuum, at Levels 3 and 4. Instead, where appropriate, children, young people and their families will receive the additional services that they need more quickly, before these needs escalate beyond Levels 2. Team around the Family services in Halton are coordinated through Integrated Working practices based in Family Hubs covering Runcorn and Widnes supporting children 0-19 (25 with SEND) and their families.



## DELIVERING EARLY HELP THROUGH SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION: FAMILY HUBS AND START FOR LIFE PROGRAMME

During the budget 2021, the Government announced increased investment in the Supporting Families programme alongside new investment to transform Start for Life and family help services by creating a network of Family Hubs, investing in tailored breastfeeding services, infant and parent mental health, parenting programmes, and establishing a clear Start for Life Offer.

Family Hubs are a way of delivering an effective early help system, they provide a single access point – a ‘front door’ – to universal and early help services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Evidence is clear that identifying risks early and preventing problems from escalating leads to better long-term outcomes. Universal services which are available to all local families who need them can help to spot and respond to issues before they develop into more complex problems.

Halton wants to develop a strong provision of universal and targeted support for parents which will help make the transition to parenthood as smooth as possible and which stresses the importance of sensitive, responsive caregiving. This will comprise a broad universal support service alongside more targeted evidence-based programmes, made available for parents/ carers with further needs.

Family Hubs involve co-location of services and professionals to make it easier for families to

access the services they need, including Start for Life services, and this can include both physical locations, outreach support and virtual offers. Many services offered in a Family Hub network will be for families who do not need intensive, whole-family Lead Practitioner support; however, hubs will ensure seamless access to a whole-family Lead Practitioner where needed. Family Hubs enhance integrated working by enabling easier access to support, better outcomes for families, more effective service delivery and smarter use of budgets.

### Halton Family Hubs

Up until March 2025, Halton will be establishing family hubs by utilising existing Children’s Centres and other Local Authority assets to enhance and transform the early help offer by joining up and improving access to services, the connections between families and professionals and putting relationships at the heart of family help.

Our vision is to build upon the well-known and well utilised Children Centre’s and repurpose them as the main physical Family Hubs, accommodating multi-disciplinary teams (MDT) where possible. As such, our ambition is to increase universal access through a stronger integrated partnership offer which in turn will increase engagement for more





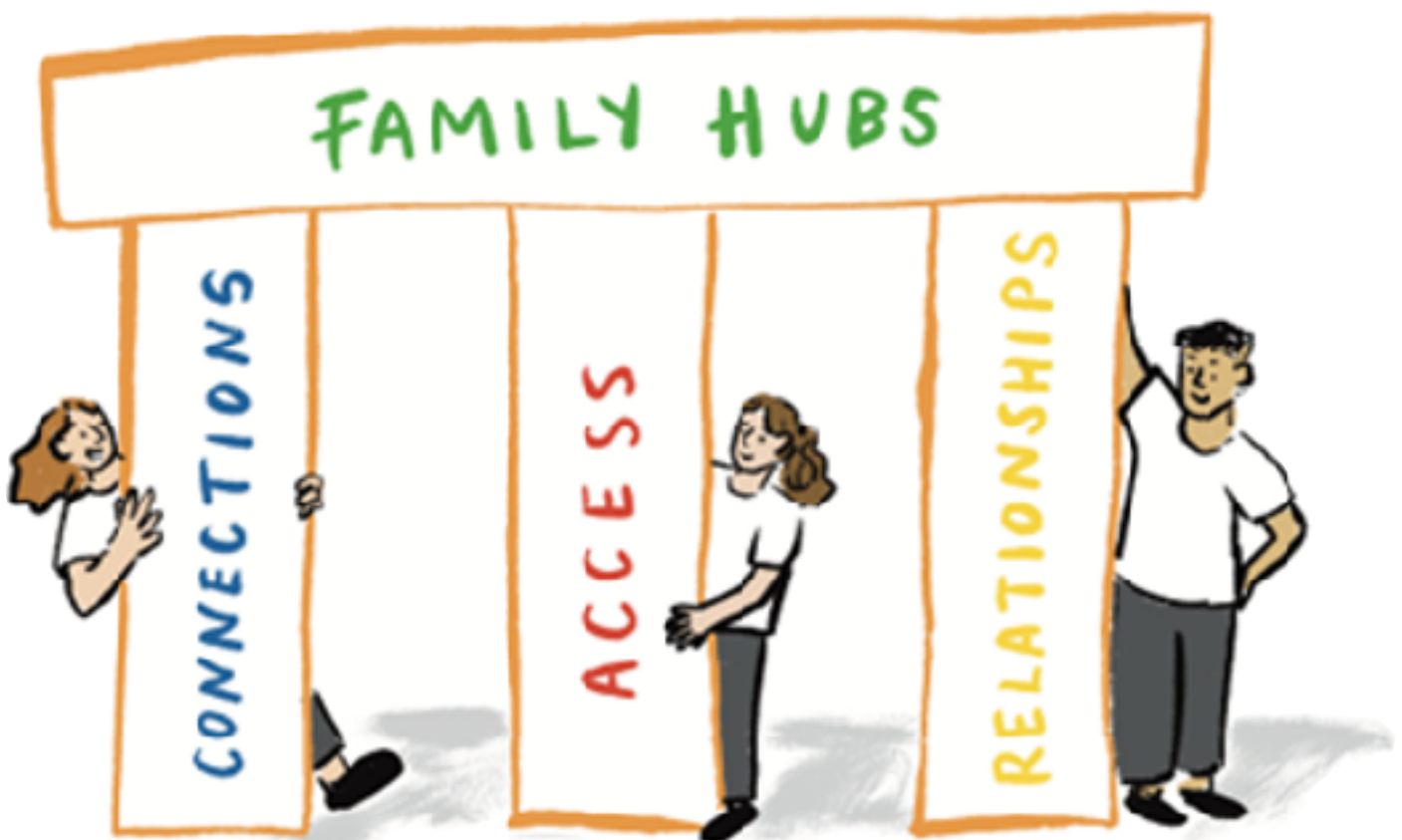
been recognised nationally by the Department for Education in the progress it has been making to meet the minimum and 'go further' standards.

The family hub offer includes services delivered from a building, support delivered in communities, and virtual and digital help and resources. Three key delivery principles underpin the Family Hub offer

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## Core service Expectations

Activities for 0-5	Birth Registrations	Debt & Welfare Advice	Domestic Abuse Support	Early Language and HLE	Early Childhood Education & Care
Health Visiting 0-5	Housing	Infant Feeding	Intensive Targeted Family Support	Local Authority 0-19 Public Health	Mental Health Services
Midwifery/ Maternity	Nutrition & Weight Management	Oral Health Improvement	Peri-Natal Mental Health & parent In want Relationship	Parenting Support	Reducing Parental Conflict
SEND Support Services	Stop Smoking Support	Substance Misuse & Drug and Alcohol Support	Support for seperating and separated parents	Youth Justice Services	Youth Services - Univeral & Targeted

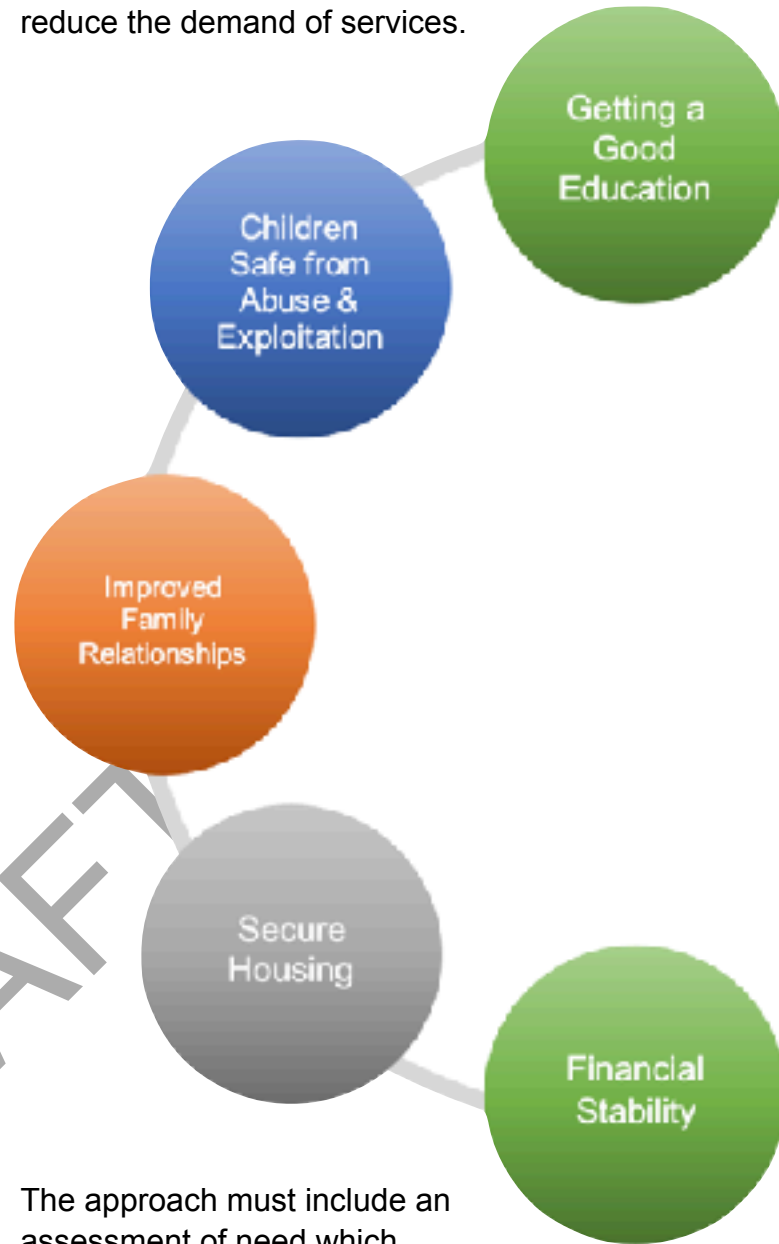


## Halton Family Hubs (Cont)

Halton sees the family hub model as the key delivery vehicle for its early help approach and as such, key priorities have been identified throughout the planning, delivery and implementation stages that will continue until March 2027.

<b>Access</b>	A way of delivering an effective early help system
A clear simple point of access for help and support	
<b>Connection</b>	A single access point to a range of services for families - a a 'front door' to universal and early help services - and involve co-location of services and professionals
Connecting services, professionals and sectors so that they work together	
<b>Relationship</b>	Where needed, hubs will ensure seamless access to a whole-family key-worker.
A focus on the family - relationships being the key - building on family strengths	

partners working together with the family to prevent needs escalating, helping to bring about sustainable changes and reduce the demand of services.



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME

The new Supporting Families Programme was launched in March 2021 and builds on the previous Troubled Families programme. As set out in 'Supporting Families 2021 to 2022 and beyond', it is a nationally funded government programme which requires Halton to co-ordinate early help support and track the impact with families with multiple identified needs. Early help should be delivered through a 'whole family approach' with a range of

The approach must include an assessment of need which considers all family members, followed by a coordinated family plan, led by an identified lead practitioner who is best placed to support the family's needs. Families who have at least three identified needs within the 10 Family Outcomes Framework should receive intensive and individualised multiagency early help. Each year Central Government provides Halton with a target on the number of families they should offer support to. By achieving sustainable outcomes



with the family a payment by Results Claim can be made. This is reinvested into the early help offer and secures ongoing national investment to provide intensive family and increase the maturity of the early help offer.

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Improved  
Mental &  
Physical  
Health

Promoting  
Recovery &  
Reducing  
Harm from  
Substance  
Use

Good Early  
Years  
Development



## THE EARLY HELP SYSTEM

The Early Help System available to children and their families is made up of three types of services that combine in different ways to form a local area's Early Help offer to its citizens. These are universal services, community support and acute and targeted services.

Most children's needs are met by their family or universal services that are available to everyone, and by community-based support.

### Community support

Family and friends, local places and environments, online support services, voluntary, faith and community services, local members of the community and local businesses

### Universal services

Post-16 education, schools, early years settings, family hubs, children's centres and youth centres, GP surgeries, libraries, maternity services, specialist public health or community nurses and community co-ordinators

### Acute and targeted services

Family support, social care, accident and emergency departments, allied health professionals, mental health services, special education needs support services, jobcentre plus, school attendance and exclusion support, domestic abuse services, alternative provision, housing services, police, probation and prison services, family court and family court advisory services, substance misuse services, fire and rescue, youth offending and targeted youth services



# Aiming High



## CONSULTATION

To help inform the strategy, an online survey was produced seeking the views from representatives from across the Early Help System. Responses gained were able to establish what professionals felt was working well and what needed improvement within the borough and has helped to inform strategies and priorities across the whole system.

## HOW WE'LL DO IT – WAYS OF WORKING

Through this consultation with the Early Help Partnership, a commitment has been made that outlines how we will achieve our priorities defined through the family hub developments. This commitment outlines the principles, values, behaviours, and standards that will

guide our actions and interactions in achieving shared goals or objectives and serve as a framework for establishing mutual understanding, accountability, and trust among those involved.

### **Building community resilience and self-help:**

among families is essential for promoting individual and collective well-being, strengthening family bonds, and fostering a supportive and resilient community environment. By investing in family resilience-building initiatives, communities can create a foundation for long-term resilience and prosperity for all its members.

### **Working collaboratively as a whole system:**

to improve outcomes for families leads to more efficient, effective, and sustainable



support systems that promote the well-being and resilience of families in diverse communities.

**Providing the right help at the right time to the right people:**

is essential for maximising effectiveness, preventing problems from escalating, reducing costs, promoting equity, building trust, and enhancing self-reliance. It ensures that individuals and communities receive the support they need to thrive and overcome challenges effectively.

approach that focuses on ‘what to grow’ and ‘what to fix’. Appreciative Inquiry keeps the big picture in view, focusing on an ideal and how its roots lie with what is already working. It quickly creates a new dynamic with people united around a shared vision. We need to take an Asset Based Approach to focus on **‘What is Strong’** and not **‘What is Wrong’**.



**Gaining the voice of children, young people and families:**

is important to gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of existing policies and practices. This feedback can inform the development of more inclusive and responsive policies and services. The engagement and involvement of children, young people and their families is vital to ensuring the strategy is relevant and provides the best possible outcomes for the families of Halton. Using an appreciative inquiry approach in contrast to a ‘problem solving’

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## EARLY HELP PRIORITIES

There are four priorities that we believe will make the biggest difference in the shortest time. These are:



1. Improve access to universal parenting support

2. Increase the involvement of fathers

3. Improve **evaluation** of impact

4. Develop **digital** and on-line support

## GOVERNANCE

The progress of this strategy and the children, young people and families it seeks to support will have strategic oversight from the multi-agency Early Help Strategic Partnership Board which is governed, through the Health and Wellbeing Board and overseen by One Halton

The Early Help Strategic Partnership Board will challenge and scrutinise progress around early help, exploring avenues for collaboration, integration around delivery options with a clear oversight on outcomes and impact.

Halton's Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for ensuring that children and young people are kept safe in the borough and to do this through audit, quality assurance and holding to account the partnership.

## MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY HELP

Measuring the effectiveness of early help is essential to understand the impact of interventions on families and children, identify areas for improvement, and allocate resources more efficiently. Here are some key steps and methods on how we will measure the effectiveness of early help



<b>One Halton</b> Starting Well Children's Board	
<b>Early Help Partnership Board</b>	
<b>Family Hubs &amp; SFL Steering Group</b>	
<b>Family Hub Workstreams</b>	
Family Hubs Best Start Operational Leads Group Childrens Centres Universal & Targeted service Delivery from Across the Partners	Parenting Reducing Parental Conflict Supporting families
Right To Succeed SEND Partnership Working & Initiatives	Early Help Assessments MAP's Early Help Data Across Partnership

## ACTION PLAN

Why is it important?	What will we do?	How will we know we have made a difference?
<h3>1. Increase access to universal parenting support</h3>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps parents develop positive parenting skills</li> <li>• To promote positive relationships within the familyIt helps parents understand the importance of emotional regulation, empathy, and positive discipline techniques</li> <li>• Reduced re-referrals to services with parenting support as an issue.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of families having a successful parenting intervention as part of the Supporting Families programme.</li> <li>• Parenting support contributes to an improvement in children’s emotions, relationships and sense of self via an increase in number of children achieving EYFSP Expected Level in Personal, Social and Emotional Development.</li> <li>• Parenting support contributes to behavioural improvements in children and young people resulting in a reduction school exclusions (links to Supporting Families)</li> <li>• Reduction in stigma around parenting support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of practitioners in the family hub network to deliver evidence based parenting support</li> <li>• Raise awareness of the parenting offer amongst those who work directly with parents and children.</li> <li>• Ensure that the support offer is communicated to all parents and carers, including those who are hardest to reach and/or most in need of it.</li> <li>• Develop the offer to ensure that there are digital options to provide a more flexible delivery model</li> <li>• Increase capacity in the parenting support offer including number of courses/ support on offer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increase in the number of parents using the service and in the number of courses (reduction in waiting time)</li> <li>✓ At the end of the virtual course, parents report confidence and resilience in parenting skills</li> <li>✓ At the end of in person courses, parents report improved confidence and resilience in parenting skills</li> <li>✓ Increase in the number of staff confident in recommending parenting support</li> <li>✓ In follow-ups, Parents report they improved their capacity to meet their family’s needs via parenting face to face courses</li> <li>✓ Increase in self –referrals as more parents know about parenting support</li> <li>✓ Increase in referrals into service from family hub network</li> </ul>

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Why is it important?	What will we do?	How will we know we have made a difference?
<h2 style="color: white; background-color: #008080; padding: 5px;">2. Increase the involvement of fathers</h2>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote positive child development,</li> <li>• To foster equity and inclusion,</li> <li>• To support fatherhood identity,</li> <li>• To enhance family relationships,</li> <li>• To address systemic barriers,</li> <li>• To promote positive parenting practices,</li> <li>• To improve outcomes for children and families as a whole</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver short briefing sessions on the rationale of father-inclusive practice to Executives, Officers, Cabinet members/councillors and key leaders</li> <li>• Deliver consultation seminars with the Family Hub Workforce including maternity, Health Visitors, Early Years Practitioners, Family Hub Staff, Social Workers and partners from the Education and Voluntary sector.</li> <li>• Undertake an on-line staff survey to capture attitudes and behaviours of the workforce across Halton.</li> <li>• Compile a summary report of learning from consultation sessions to help to inform future planning</li> <li>• Implement a bespoke audit tool designed to capture baseline data, including the collection of Fathers details and data and routine father engagement, disaggregated by sector.</li> <li>• Use the data from the audit to inform workforce development sessions in the future</li> <li>• Implement Fatherhood Champions across Halton who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to cascade their learning to colleagues and lead on key issues in their locality.</li> <li>• Promote the use of Dad Pad across Halton as a resource to support expectant and new fathers</li> <li>• Develop specific father inclusive imagery across Family Hubs and marketing literature to ensure that fathers feel included and that services are relatable to them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ An increase in Father Engagement Rates at events, workshops, support groups, or participation in parenting classes.</li> <li>✓ Measure the changes in fathers' parenting skills, knowledge, and confidence by including pre- and post-program surveys or interviews to gauge improvements in parenting techniques, understanding child development, and communication skills.</li> <li>✓ Assess fathers' satisfaction with the programs or services provided by measuring retention rates and reasons for dropouts to understand the effectiveness of engagement strategies.</li> <li>✓ We will evaluate the impact of father-inclusive practices on community engagement and social connections by assessing fathers' involvement in community activities, support networks, or advocacy efforts.</li> </ul>

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Why is it important?	What will we do?	How will we know we have made a difference?
<h3>3. Improve our evaluation of impact</h3>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It analyses the impact on services and families</li> <li>• To be able to report on the journey of the family</li> <li>• It enhances the quality, impact, and responsiveness of support services for families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Outcome Star across the Team around the Family Division to support meaningful conversations and measure progress toward defined outcomes</li> <li>• Design and implement accurate evaluation measures for the targeted offer across the 0-5 service within Family Hubs that are completed by all families at the end of each intervention</li> <li>• Develop Power BI Dashboards to create visually appealing and interactive data visualisations such as charts, graphs, maps, and tables that help in understanding complex data and identifying patterns or trends quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Number of practitioners across the Early Help system trained in how to use Outcome Star</li> <li>✓ Number of families demonstrating positive behaviour change</li> </ul>

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Why is it important?	What will we do?	How will we know we have made a difference?
<h2>4. Develop digital and online support</h2>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver a positive experience accessible to the entire community</li> <li>• To help families self-serve their own support.</li> <li>• To consolidate information, support services and existing applications into one single mobile application</li> <li>• To make support for families more accessible, help them feel better connected and be more relationship centred</li> <li>• To increase operational efficiency and productivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an integrated Family hub digital platform</li> <li>• Consolidate all national and local content and parent experiences into one place</li> <li>• Integrate existing information from web/ apps and services to drive one parent experience.</li> <li>• Deliver communication via multiple channels to educate the community on support, events, training and services</li> <li>• Use a range of Automated Care Pathways to provide relevant, timely, targeted and personalised content on a range of different topics and themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Families report having an increased awareness of the Family Hubs across Halton</li> <li>✓ Advanced analytics that help optimise the Family Hubs Support experience</li> <li>✓ Month on month improvement in the number of families accessing the platform</li> <li>✓ Families report that accessing information and navigating support is easier</li> <li>✓ Number of families onboarded on Automated Care Pathways and report the impact at the end of them</li> </ul>

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## HALTON CONTEXT AND NEED

### Population

The Population of Halton is 128,964, with 27,546 – 21% being under 18. There does appear to be a trend towards an ageing population according to the 2021 Census. In 2021, there were 242 fewer live births in Halton than in 2013, with the births per 1000 of the population falling to 10.5. [i]

However, this should not distract from the fact that there is a clear need for a robust, comprehensive Early Help offer in Halton, and some of the factors are explored below.

### Child Poverty

32.1% of children in Halton live in relative poverty [ii]. Child poverty affects all outcomes for children including health, education and future employment.

In Halton, 20.1% of the population is claiming universal credit, with a significant proportion claiming it as an in work benefit. In May 2022, half of those (in the UK) receiving a UC payment had children. In 2021/22, 71 per cent of children in poverty in the UK were in a working household[iii]

In 2022/23, c.38% of children in both primary and secondary phases were eligible for free school meals, placing Halton 141st of 153 local authorities for these measures. Halton is ranked 19th amongst local authorities within the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, with 1 being the most deprived.

[i] Births in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

[ii] 21/22 after housing costs figure - Child-Poverty-AHC-estimates-2015-2022\_final.xlsx (live.com)).

[iii] 21/22 after housing costs figure - Child-Poverty-AHC-estimates-2015-2022\_final.xlsx (live.com)). <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/faq/>

### Maternal Health

Smoking at time of delivery figures 22/23, in Halton, were some of the worst in country – 16.8% compared to an average of 8.8%[i] .

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks is 25.7% compared to an average of 49.2% nationally, this means birthing parents are missing out the many protective qualities that breastfeeding offers the birthing parent, as well as the baby [ii].

In 2021, 71.2% of over 18's in Halton were overweight.[iii] This means that potentially almost a 1000 women, in Halton at 2021, were at risk of poorer birth outcomes for birthing parent and baby (using live births data).

1 in 5 birthing parents experience mental health issues during or after pregnancy. This is 271 of the people in Halton in 2021 who had a live birth. Suicide is a leading cause of maternal deaths in the UK within a year after childbirth.[iv]

### PATERNAL HEALTH

Services often overlook the needs of Dads (or non-birthing parents). There are numerous benefits to Dad being in a child's life, above and beyond being a role model. Hence it is important to encourage a healthy lifestyle, which means reducing smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity, amongst other things.

Dads (and non-birthing parents) may also experience peri-natal anxiety and depression but are reluctant to talk about it. A study by the National Childbirth Trust in 2015 found that one in three first-time dads reported feeling worried about their mental health following their baby's birth.[v]

## CHILD HEALTH & WELLBEING

### Health Visiting

As part of the national Healthy Child Programme, all children and parents are entitled to early support from health professionals at the following points in the child’s life:

[i] PHE Fingertips

[ii] PHE Fingertips

[iii] Percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese in Halton | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[iv] Maternal mental health - women's voices | RCOG

[v] Dads in distress: Many new fathers are worried about their mental health | News | NCT

### Proportion of Key Developmental checks received in 2021/22

	Halton	North West	England
<b>New Birth Visit</b>	79%	88%	88%
<b>6-8 Weeks</b>	73%	81%	80%
<b>12 Months</b>	70%	79%	76%
<b>2-3.5 Years</b>	66%	78%	72%

### Birth Weight

Low birth weight increases the risk of childhood mortality and of developmental problems for the child and is associated with poorer health in later life. Birth Weights in Halton largely reflect those for the whole

country, and work in this area needs to further increase the rates of healthy birth weight [i].

### Child Development

Halton children show a relatively good level of development at 21/2 years but by the end of Reception, outcomes are consistently significantly worse than the England average in 22/23.

There are stark inequalities within Halton: at the end of Reception, 70% of girls have a good level of development compared to 54% of boys. In addition, the figure is only 54% those with free school meal (FSM) status, compared to 66% for children not eligible for FSM.[ii]

### Special Educational Needs And Disabilities

Failure to treat mental health disorders in children can have a devastating impact on their future, resulting in reduced job and life expectations.

Hospital admissions due to mental health, as well as for self-harm are much higher in Halton than both the North West and England averages. This is despite the fact that early intervention is much cheaper to deliver - £5.08 per student is the 2017 cost of delivering an emotional resilience program in school, £61,000 is the average cost of an admission to an in-patient CAMHS unit.

The Department of Health estimate that a targeted therapeutic intervention delivered in a school costs about £229 but derives an average lifetime benefit of £7,2525 . This is cost benefit ratio of 32-1.[i]

### Child Substance Misuse

Smoking, drinking, vape and drug use amongst young people are key public health concerns. Recent figures show the number of children using vapes in the past three years has tripled, with 20.5% of children aged

between 11 and 17 having tried vaping in 2023. [ii]

As of 2022/23 there were more children in Halton schools classified as SEN support (14.9%), compared to the North West (13.2%) and England (13%). There was also a greater proportion of pupils in Halton (4.9%) with an EHC plan compared to the North West (4.7%) or England (4.3%). Halton also had higher proportions in both measures than the average for our ten closest statistical neighbour local authorities.

Currently, Speech, language and communication needs are the single largest reasons for SEN Support, followed by moderate learning difficulty, and social, emotional and mental health. These three reasons account for 65.9% of all primary needs recorded.

### Child Obesity

Data for Halton shows the percentage of healthy weight children was lower than England during 2021/22. The percentage of obesity in both Reception and Year 6 children was significantly worse than England.[iii]

### Vulnerable Children & Young People

There were 1,782 referrals to children social care in 22/23

- Children Looked After per 10,000 Children - 134
- CIN per 10,000 Children - 431.8
- Subject to CPP per 10,000 Children – 72[iv]

Effective Early Help to families can reduce the number of referrals to higher need-level services.

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