# Protecting and Supporting Families in Health and Social Care

**Module: BMHP5021 Report**

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# Introduction

Early Help in the UK indicates a variety of preventative services provided to children, young people, and families when facing challenges. These are meant to be interventions at its preliminary stages, to enhance resilience, and limit risk and the necessity of statutory child protection intervention Early Help System Guide (2022). Local authorities organise and oversee Early Help, making the services ready and available to the families.

This report analyses the process in which the Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Norfolk County Councils communicate Early Help related family support using public websites. This evaluation considers clarity, accessibility, referral pathways, multi-agency coordination, and alignment with the national guidance. Analysing the strengths and weaknesses within the councils, and finalise with recommendations to enhance visibility, accessibility, and multi-agency transparency according to Early Help System Guide (2022) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC, 2023). The structure of the report is as follows, first Early Help System: Definition and Purpose, Multi-Agency Working in Early Help, Three Local Councils Analysis and Recommendations.

# Early Help System: Definition and Purpose

According to the Early Help System Guide (EHSG) (2022), it refers to multi-agency strategy that coordinates various agencies to ensure problems do not increase (see Figure 1). The EHSG brings out Early Help as a system, were universal services such as health, education, community, and specific interventions of specific needs are included (Lucas and Archard, 2021). This is aimed to identify problems at its initial stages, facilitating provision capacity and minimising log-term damage. This helps to develop shared values between the Early Help System and Statutory services.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) develops the principles by putting Early Help within the values of safeguarding. According to the guidance, prompt assistance is needed to enhance welfare of children and avoid impairment. It emphasises that protective work is collective responsibility of central stakeholders such as local authorities, health, schools, and voluntary organisations (Dixon et al., (2022). This will further enhance the local Early Help to be open and transparent.

## Early Help System

Figure 1: Early Help System by (Early Help System Guide) 2022.

Principles of Effective Early Help, below are a few principles to form the basis of effective Early Help:

Timely detection of arising requirements. Strengths-based family –centred help. Joint Early Help Assessments (EHAs). Multi-agency to offer holistic assistance (Lin, 2024). Available channels for communication with families to highlight areas of assistance. Inclusion and cultural sensitivity, allowing different opportunities to interact.

The council's public communication process and transparency about Early Help is relevant. Its importance is defined by having the following; the contact information, referral pathways, and description of services offered. This directly impacts positively on the families and its effective use of the information.

## Multi-Agency Working in Early Help

An efficient Early Help is based on multi-agency cooperation (Ball et al., 2024). There are numerous issues affecting families, associated with health, education, emotional health, housing, financial pressure, and neighbourhood security that needs to be managed together by multi-agencies for example school and Health visitors, GPs, child services, and local authorities. (Department of Education, 2023).

## Agencies Involved in Effective Early System

Local Authority services: Children's services, Family Hubs, Youth Services (Firmin et al., 2022). Their responsibility by law is; Health Services and Hospital by duty of care. GPs, school nurses, and health visitors to provide education. Schools and Early Years have safeguarding duty. Residential support services and social care homes (Goswami, G., and Bulsara, H.P. (2025). Voluntary and charity organisations such as the NSPCC, helps with domestics' violence helpline along with other parenting initiatives. The local authority provides referrals, assessments, and planning are usually coordinated through the milt-agency channels or hubs.

## Statutory Guidance.

In working with multi agencies in safeguarding of children agencies must follow Statutory Guidance**:** Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC, 2023), is a core statutory guidance which sets how multi-agency work to safeguard children and young people from harm. The guidance specifies expectations of shared workforce planning, joint assessments, and co-located services (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023). The multi-agency system is well developed particularly well in those areas where the Family Hubs are present.

## Relevance of Multi-agency Working

Multi-agency working allows integrated evaluation of the needs of children. It further ensures fast intervention and helps in eliminating duplicates services. Minimises an increase in statutory services, while enhancing transparency, communication, and accountability (Owens and Lloyd, 2023). Its relevancy is developed through assisting families with compounding difficulties. Multi-agency's presence in council websites indicates how developed the local Early Help system is coordinated and accessible (Department of Education, 2023).

# Local Authorities Websites

For this assignment, the following Local Authority websites were selected; Tower Hamlets, Southwark, and Norfolk.

## Tower Hamlets Council

The Tower Hamlets Council have committed themselves to implementing the Early Help Strategy 2025-2028 indicates good commitment to enabling access to these services. The council has a website and a dedicated section for Early Help services online information.

The clarity of Early Help information in the Tower Hamlets website has a clear and easy to understand information (Tower Hamlets Council, 2025). It states that Early Help is offered at the first point of contact with families, focusing on preventative and strengths-based work. The website offers universal and targeted support while clearly indicating those who can receive such services as young people up to the age of 25 years old and parents.

Accessibility and navigation on the website for information about Early Help is strategically placed below children and family care topics. The Erly help section on the website is easy and organised to navigate, with links for Early Help Assessment, Family Hubs, parental support, and Early Help Strategies (Tower Hamlets Council, 2025). This website requires multiple clicks with headings and subheadings clear and easy to navigate. The council offers a comprehensive database about Early Help Assessment (EHA), Team Around the Family (TAF) and the analysis of issues that needs Early Help Services. This also includes parental conflicts, mental health, housing pressures, and school attendance. The information provided is aligned with national guidelines.

There are wide range support and services that are available in Tower Hamlets, such as Start for Life programmes, Family Hubs, parenting support, youth services, domestic abuse support and SEND support (Tower Hamlets Council, 2025). This Early Help Strategy 2025-2028 indicates good commitment to work out whether it needs reviewing.

## Southwark Council

Early Help information descriptions appear simplified and easy to read on Southwark Council website. Southwark categories Early Help in two main structures: Universal and specialised services that allows families to live safe, healthy, and resilient lives (Southwark Council, 2025). The information of these is well articulated even for non-articulated users. The accessibility and navigation are structured under the Children Social Care –Early Help section (Southwark Council, 2025). In the subpages of the Universal Services, children, and family centres along with Early Help referral information are clearly indicated.

Southwark provides a good list of services from youth clubs, family centres, parenting support groups, health services, SEND services and many more. However, there is less clarity on how the assessment are carried out. The support and services have adequate levels of information, ranging from health, education,

parenting, emotional wellbeing, and practical needs such as housing. Early years support description for centres is important and helps to select relevant service to parents, children and individuals involved with safeguarding of children.

Referral route for Southwark Council for Early Help process requires an email address, telephone number for advice line, requires consent (Southwark Council, 2025). There is less visibility on direct contact telephone numbers of services, most enquiries go to the Hub Centre for referrals, this makes Southwark early Help services harder to find to access information compared to Tower Hamlets.

### Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council defines Early Help as Information advice, and guidance to families at the point when the problems arise (Norfolk County Council, 2025). The website emphasis the assistance of families that have children until the age of 18 or 25 in SEND category. It highlights and safeguards the adult challenges impacting the children. The navigation and accessibility of the Early Help section is clearly placed at the main level heading. There other two subpages including How we can help, Ask for Support. Additional, Information for professionals and Report safety concerns. It can be concluded the website is user friendly.

The information is provided in short form, it describes the Family Hubs, on-line, face to face support while providing developmental support to young children. The services focus on mental health, however, information about parenting programmes, and older children are not mentioned. The website offers the Family Hub model that includes The Early Childhood and Family Services (ECFS) Norfolk programme for 0-5. Norfolk's Early Help website describes their services primarily as Integrated Services. Although services are targeted to a specific group of children, it offers far less compared to Southwark or Tower Hamlets.

Referrals are outlined as request forms for support that can be aimed to both families and professionals (Norfolk County Council, 2025). Consent following the completion of the form is required which implies services are readily available. The multi-Agency collaboration, on the Norfolk council's website focuses on collaborative work in the Family Hubs, however, no other partnerships are mentioned. Clarity on the coordination mechanism process within its multi-agency is unavailable. The simplicity of the website provides less information, with no visual aids and translation (Norfolk County Council, 2025). However, the referral plan is easy to follow, there still no visibility of multi-agency involvement and the support descriptions.

## Three Local Councils Analysis

Analysing three councils reveals that there is a lot of diversity in the communications on Early Help services. Some of the Strengths identified are; the Definition of Early Help is clear across all three councils. All three provide families and professionals

referrals pathways. There is Specific assistance and universal support recognition. Services related to young children and families is evident in all councils.

### Differences in Multi-Agency Transparency

Tower Hamlets: Multi-Agency is clearly defined through MAST. The Early Help Strategy is targeted, focus and extensive.

Southwark**:** Lacks formal structure on its Multi-Agency and Associates. Wider services are provided but no clear path.

Norfolk: Universal structure with no description of each agency.

Therefore, Norfolk provides easier access with 1 step referred, followed by Southwark with logical structure, lastly is Tower Hamlets, with extensive information, necessary information can be hidden within the system.

In conclusion, The Tower Hamlets council offers the best, holistic and coordinated Early Help communication across all three councils. With its comprehensive explanations, open referral pathways, descriptions of examinations and definite multi-agency frameworks in harmony with Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC) (2023). The Southwark Council website has clear information about referrals however lacks multi-agency clarity. Norfolk is accessible but offers unknown contacts.

## Recommendations

Multi-agency information should be publicly available for Southwark and Norfolk. Early Help strategies flowchart information with visual graphics to attract users. Cultural sensitivity and language translation options to reach wider communities. Enhance service descriptions, expand to all areas that could impact Early Help users. By applying the above strategies to all three councils to align with the Early Help System Guide and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). This allows families to value the help they can receive at early stage when problems arise.

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