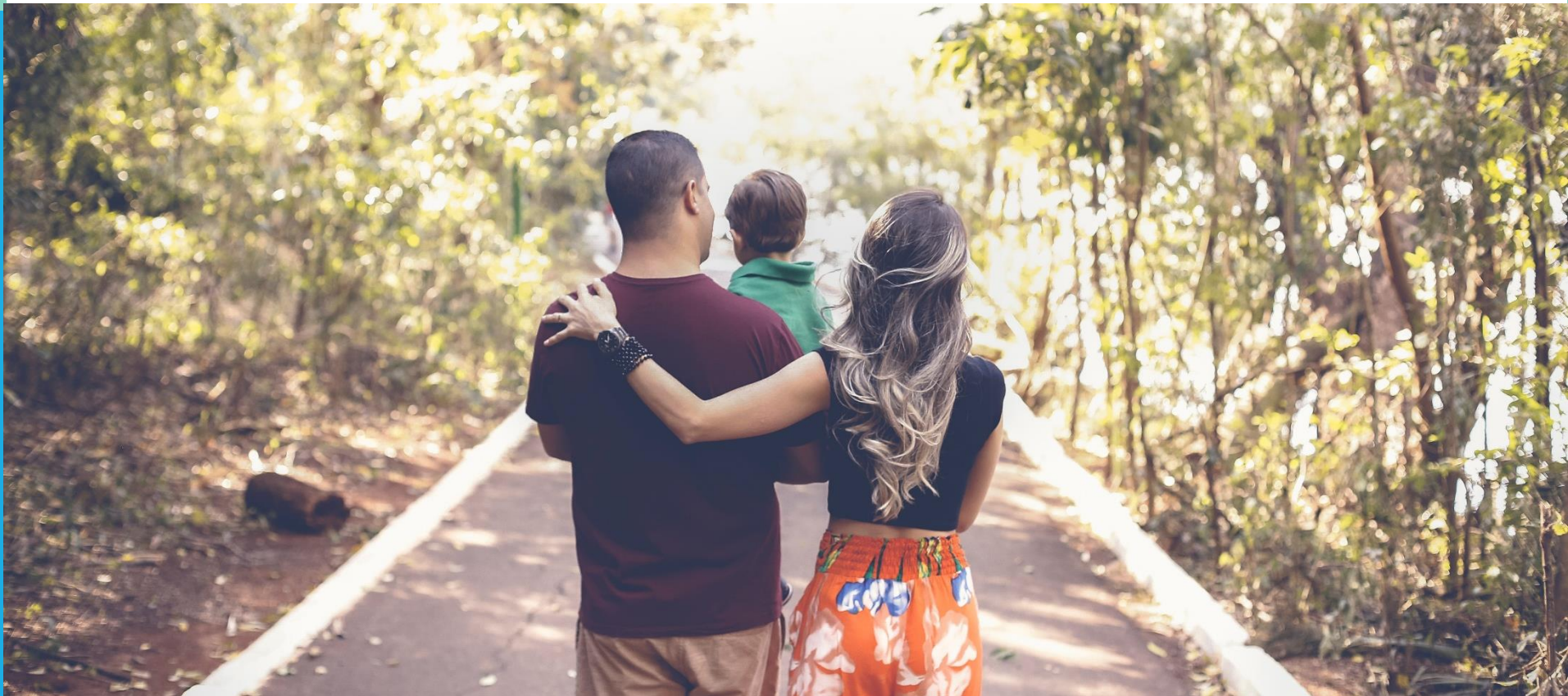




WELCOME TO:

Families First



Bringing Hertfordshire's early help services together

This information pack is for those new to early help in Hertfordshire or can be used as a handbook for those already familiar with the processes.

Save a copy on your desktop, discuss in your team meetings and please give any feedback to Familiesfirst.support@hertfordshire.gov.uk



Section 1- Introduction

- Families First Model & What is Early Help?
- Working together under one umbrella

Section 2 – Tools to help you

- What is a partnership group and how to be involved
- Families First Website
- Continuum of Need
- Referral Pathways

Section 3 – Supporting Families

- Families First Panels
- Families First Assessment and Short-Term Work
- Families First Co-ordinators

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Families First Model

Families First is an approach, not a service. It is the term used in Hertfordshire for all services that work together to deliver early help services. It brings together all organisations, who provide early help across the county under the 'umbrella' of Families First. The Families First approach focuses on 'whole family' support, providing assistance as needs emerge, so that our resources are used to their best advantage, families are supported to become resilient and the challenges they face do not escalate. By providing professionals with access to shared knowledge and services it will reduce the time spent responding to crisis as fewer families will require specialist support.

Early Help is what we call the support we give to children, young people and families as soon as problems start. *'Early Help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, ideally as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth to adulthood, and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.'*

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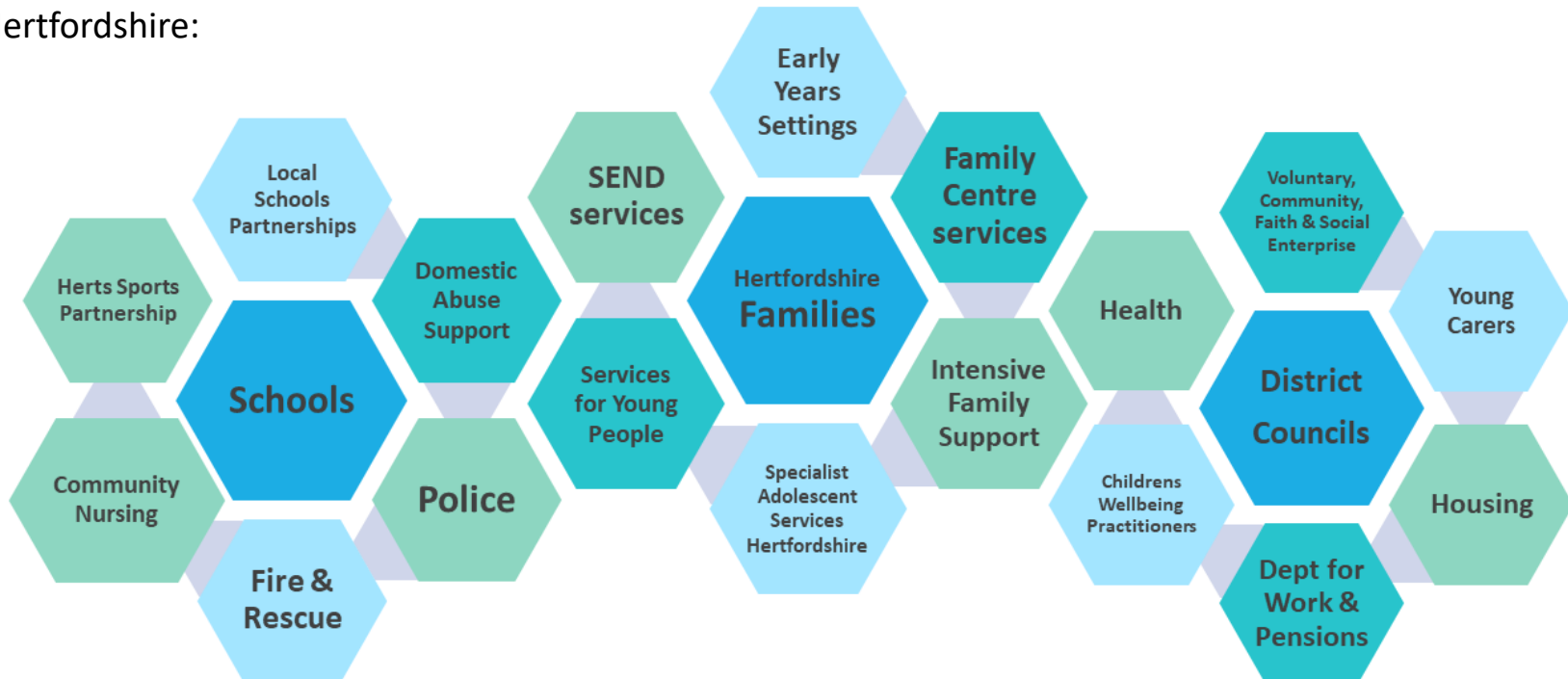
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In Hertfordshire early help covers a wide range of interventions offered by a variety of different organisations and partner agencies as well as services within the County Council and beyond. The diagram below represents some of key organisations and partner agencies that make up the early help system in Hertfordshire:



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Families First Partnership Groups

Families First Partnership groups are held quarterly, providing an opportunity for professionals to come together, share ideas and knowledge and discuss ways of shaping early help in their local area. Partnership groups are about empowering and supporting professionals to be instrumental in the delivery of early help

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR LOCAL GROUP](#)

What you can expect from joining a partnership group

- Open discussions and information sharing & forward thinking initiatives
- Updates on Families First progress, tools and offers & knowledge building sessions/ presentations
- Networking with partners to sustain, promote and encourage participation across the county
- Have your say, ask questions and make suggestions

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Families First Website

This is a key central hub of early help information. This can be widely promoted to families to access self help services and there is a comprehensive professionals area. Please bookmark this page.



<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst>

Website promotional cards

Request a supply of our promotional postcards to give to the families you work with by emailing:-

familiesfirst.support@hertfordshire.gov.uk





**Families
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Early help. brighter futures

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Families First News

[Sign up](#) to receive the monthly Families First Newsletter. This publication will keep you up-to-date on service changes, training offers and much more. Please also send in your own articles for inclusion.



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The Continuum of Need

The provision of early help services forms part of the Hertfordshire's Continuum Of Need which responds to the different levels of need children, young people and their families have. We recognise that families will likely have a combination of needs which are constantly changing, requiring differing levels of involvement from a range of services, from universal, targeted and specialist support services at various points.

Families with emerging needs requiring additional support are supported by universal services and through access to advice and guidance on the public area of the Families First website.

We all strive to support children, young people and their families at the lowest appropriate level to prevent their needs escalating to a higher level.



View the full Continuum of need for children and young people 2023 ([hertfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk))

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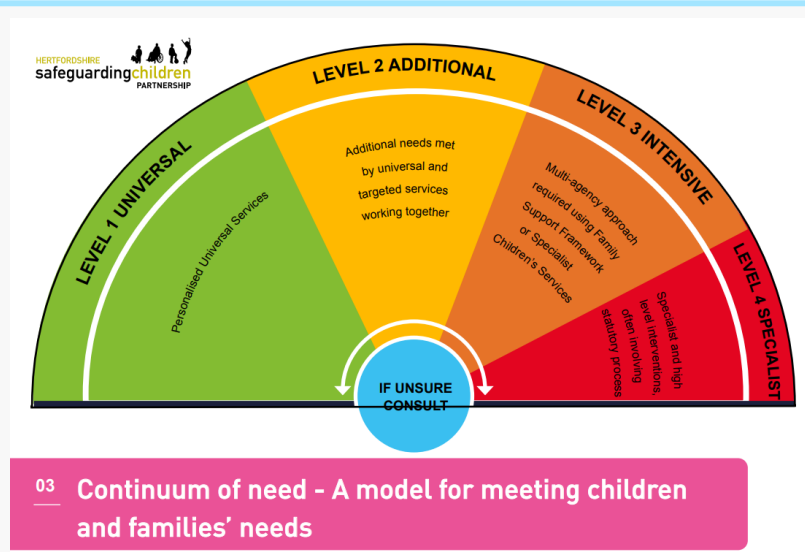
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The Continuum of Need, continued

Where needs are more complex and Families require more targeted/intensive support requiring input from a range of agencies a referral should be made to the Customer Service Centre.

The Gateway team (formerly known as MASH or Front Door) assess the request for support and offers advice, guidance. The Gateway will send referrals to the Families First Panel if a family would benefit from early help support. See next slide for more info on the panels.



View the full Continuum of need for children and young people 2023 ([hertfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk))

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Families First Panels

- Families First Panels are a core component of the Families First partnership model. Families First Panels provide a multi-agency space in each area where professionals come together weekly or fortnightly to discuss families in need of a coordinated approach to early help.
- Children's Services Gateway and Assessment teams identify families in need of co-ordinated early help support, and refer them to Families First Panels, with the families' consent. As a result of panel discussions, a Families First Assessment or Short-Term Work may be agreed as best way forward.
- If an FFA is required, a key worker will co-ordinate the support around the family and monitor progress using EHM to evidence support in place and positive outcomes for the family.
- Group based interventions, co-ordinated by Supporting Families and hosted by local Intensive Family Support Teams, may be offered. These are also open for partners to make a direct referral for family members.



There are 9 panels
*(one for each district &
W&TR joint)*

Panel members include:
*Health Visitors, Family Centres,
Senior Families First
Coordinators, Services for
Young People (youth work)
Intensive Family Support,
Local School Partnerships and
MIND, Community Domestic
Abuse providers & the Police*

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The Early Help Module (EHM)

All professionals from any organisation can access free training to be able to have access to EHM, which is the multi-agency case recording and management system for early help support. EHM supports our multi-agency early help assessment tools, Families First Assessments (FFA) and Short-Term Work (STW).

Visit [Families First Assessment and Early Help Module](#) to find out how to get access

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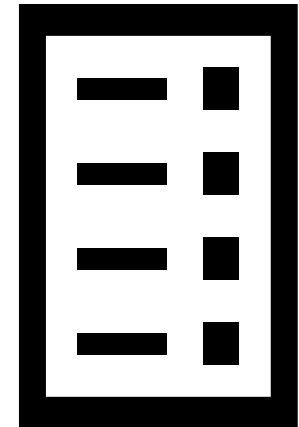
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Families First Assessment and Short Term Work

- A Families First Assessment (FFA) is an early help assessment tool used where a family would benefit from a multi-agency response or to meet multiple family needs. It is used to identify needs of the whole family and to ensure the right support and services are identified and engaged at the right time, to support those needs.
- Short Term Work (STW) is an early help assessment tool used for a targeted piece of work undertaken by a single agency. Short Term work lasts no less than 4 weeks and no more than 12 weeks.
- **Both FFA's and STW requires parental consent from at least one parent or carer**



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Families First Co-ordinators

Contact [your local Senior Families First Co-Ordinator](#) for an early help consultation

Families First Co-Ordinators support with all Early Help queries and deliver EHM Training and continued support, including:-

- When and how to initiate a Families First Assessment (FFA) or Short-Term work
- Support with completing Initial FFA's, attend TAF Meetings and assist with evidencing TAF Minutes & Action Plans on EHM
- Provide advice and guidance on emerging concerns for a child or family
- Maintain oversight of all open FFA's across Hertfordshire, providing support and advice to Keyworkers throughout the FFA process.
- Ensure that all FFA's evidence the voice of the child and all family members included in the FF process
- Help to identify local services available to support the needs evident within the FFA
- Provide advice and support to Keyworkers on cases not progressing, complex or step downs to Early Help
- Support with Personalised Commissioning application
- Support with any issues relating to the Families First process/pathway, tools or EHM



REQUESTING SUPPORT

This diagram shows the pathways for requesting support
Full version can be viewed here:- [Continuum of need for children and young people 2023](#)

A practitioner, family member or member of the public has a concern or identifies unmet needs of a child or young person.

You are concerned that the child or young person could be at likely risk of or suffers significant harm.

You have identified a need at **Level 1**, which can be met by a single agency.

You have identified a need at **Level 2**, which can be met by a joint agency response.

In previous work with the child or young person, you have identified a need at **Level 3**, which requires more intensive support through a referral to IFST or SASH, supported by FFA, or other coordinated multi-agency response.

You have identified a need at **Level 4**, which can be met through a statutory specialist intervention.

Contact Customer Services/Children's Social Care on 0300 123 4043

Your agency can meet the child's or young person's need - follow your agency's procedures for support, delivery and review.

The child's needs can be met through a single agency - but not your own. Use the **Families First Portal** and **Hertfordshire Directory of Services** to establish a suitable service. Consult with the other agency and when appropriate make a referral.

The child/young person's needs can be met through your agency working jointly with another agency. Consult the other agency and initiate a families First Assessment (FFA) and Short-Term Works (STW), convene a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting and formulate a Family Plan for implementation and review.

The Agency identifying the need should convene a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting, gain consent and complete a **Request for Support form**.

Ongoing TAF meetings generate a family plan for support including:
• Timescales and Responsibilities.
• Nomination of a Lead Professional or allocation of a Key Worker.

Contact/Refer to a Statutory Specialist Service (ie., Child Protection - Family Safeguarding Service, Children in Care; YOT, Tier 3 and 4 CAMHS, health care for children with life-limiting conditions, SEND 0-25 Together for children with profound disabilities) for consultation and agree intervention.

Review

The child's / young person's needs have been met - NFA.

Further Support is needed at levels 1,2,3 or 4. Follow the designated process and review at agreed time.

Need help?
Contact [your local Senior Families First Co-Ordinator](#) for an early help consultation

You are concerned that the child may be at likely risk or could be suffering significant harm.



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In your first few months of joining your new role, you should familiarise yourself with:-

- [Families First Assessment Early Help Module \(EHM\) System Training](#)
Virtual EHM System Training for practitioners who will undertake the Key Worker role and initiate Families First Assessments (FFA) using the EHM System.
- ❖ [Hertfordshire safeguarding children partnership](#)
- Learning Hub provides training for members who are paying into the partnership and all HCC employees receive this training free of charge. All other partners pay £75 for a full day course and £50 for a Half day course. All lite bite sessions are free of charge, To book go to: <http://hscb.event-booking.org.uk>

For trained EHM Practitioners only

- ❖ [Practice Forums](#) – Attend your local Families First Practice Forum for a structured, themed learning session encompassing Families First and Early Help within Hertfordshire.
- ❖ [Workforce development](#) - The vision for Families First training and development is to create a skilled, confident and resilient multi-agency workforce that supports whole family working.
- ❖ [Workforce shadowing](#) is an exciting opportunity to ‘spend a day in someone else’s shoes’ and is open to the whole Families First partnership. Email: familiesfirst.support@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- ❖ Check if your service attends a local Families First Partnership Group, if not you may want to join to represent your service

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Contact numbers

- ❖ If you have a child protection or safeguarding concern the Customer Service Centre:
0300 123 4043
- ❖ Families First Assessment, Short Term Work, Early Help Module help call – 01438 737575
- ❖ Schools and key workers consultation Hub:
01438 737511

Useful Newsletters and Links

- ❖ [Families First News](#)
- ❖ [Hertfordshire CYPMHS System newsletter](#)
- ❖ [HSAB and HSCP training and resources | Hertfordshire County Council](#)
- ❖ [The Hertfordshire Local Offer](#)
- ❖ [Services for Young People](#)

Quick Links

- ❖ [Report concerns about a child or request support](#)
- ❖ [Families First Website](#)
- ❖ To find appropriate support services visit the [Families First Directory](#).
- ❖ [Professionals area](#) of the Families First website
- ❖ [EHM Training](#)
- ❖ [Families First Partnership Meetings](#)
- ❖ General enquiries (not case related) email familiesfirst.support@hertfordshire.gov.uk

