



**How did colleagues working with children and families in Woking create a joined-up way of working?**

**Workshop 5 to 27 June 2023**



**SURREY**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

# Context: national vision for the early help system

The Early Help System is not a single service. It is a network of services, process and interactions that aim to help children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity. Improving this system requires clarity of what success looks like, shared across a range of partners, and informed by the voices of managers, practitioners and families.

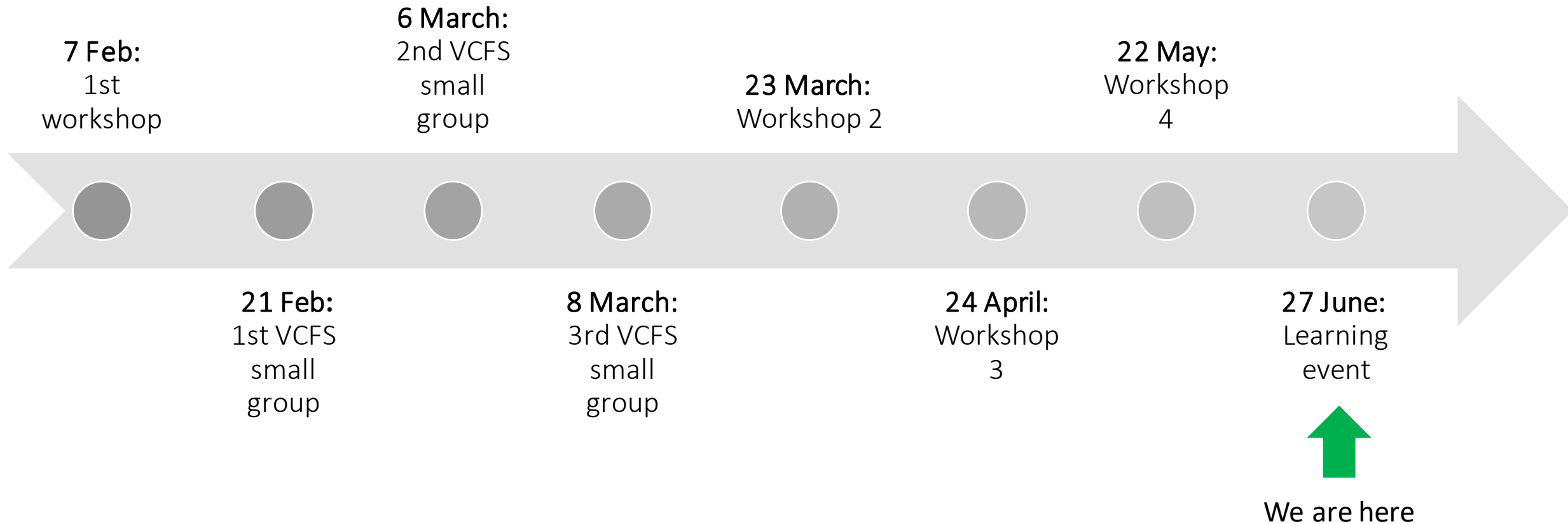
Early Help is the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse



**In Surrey, our long-term ambition is to have...**

“A collaborative model of early help which empowers individuals to do what they can for themselves, to connect with their communities and organisations within to build resilience, and to access early support which builds their resilience, preventing a need for more formal services.”

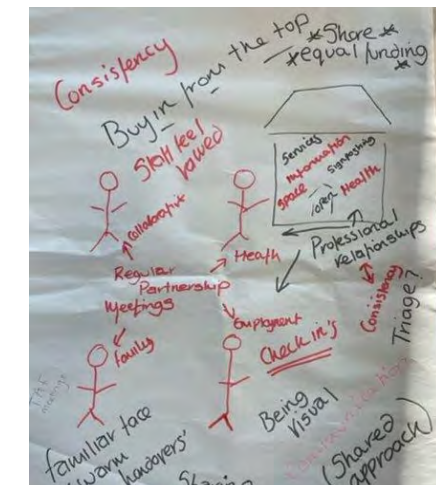
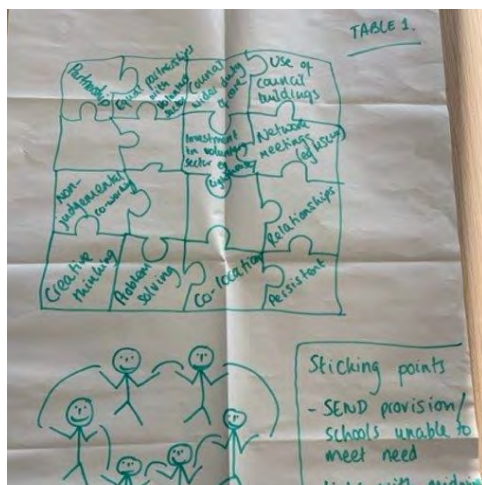
# The journey so far...



# Workshop 1: what is working well in Woking

We introduced the workshop and early help context, and captured your experiences of what is working well in Woking.

- Individuals are bought into a **shared vision**; they understand how their work ties into the **wider system** and council's ambition in Woking. Partners are treated as **equals**.
- There is a **shared cultural belief** that organisations can achieve more when they work together, and a **“can do” attitude** which seeks to **problem solve creatively and collectively**. Staff have **permission** to take risks and make mistakes.
- **Relationships** are built between people (not necessarily organisations) through face-to-face networking events, informal chats, and shared working spaces. There are **key individuals** who are considered more inter-connected, and they play a **key role** in putting new people in contact with the wider system.
- **Local resources/assets are utilised effectively**, which enables/promotes collaboration, avoids duplication, and lowers costs.
- Challenges in Woking include families/parents not being active in asking for help, GDPR/confidentiality considerations, emphasis on word-of-mouth signposting to support/services



# VCFS small groups: key themes identified

Small groups were held with organisations/practitioners who were not at the first workshop, to capture their experiences of early help in Woking and what works well.

- **Core group of partners** who are in it for the **long term**, coming together. Difficult with SEED funding/roles that goes in a couple of years.
- All partners come together **without feeling the need to protect their own resources**.
- Partners bring their **'whole self and gifts'** to the community without having to guard their own ethos for example to leave their religion on the doorstep.
- Everyone has the **same goals in mind. Relationships are key**. This is done by building trust. Everyone makes the effort to keep people informed about what is going on locally and signposts to these activities.
- **Trust is built by doing things together**. Volunteers who signpost and help people find any help they need. Place for parents to meet and support each other. Not just talking or knowing who people are.
- Workers/volunteers in Sheerwater **care about their work and people in the community**. Great place to work.
- **'Need' brings people together**. When residents cannot meet their own needs within their own resources they look outward for support. Organisations understand the local need even if this is not articulated fully by residents, and come together to meet that need.
- There is a **'networked/webbed community'**. This is working well horizontally but not vertically across the system
- **Multi purpose buildings/hub type spaces** interwoven with the community that enable people to get the help they need without being stigmatised.

# Workshop 2: mapping networks and connections

We had a networking session, and discussed the different networks, roles, and relationships that exist, plus any gaps and what connections you would like to build further.

Networks	Key roles	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ROC community group</li><li>• Family Centre (for under 11yrs)</li><li>• Schools</li><li>• Sheerwater Together</li><li>• Early Help Hub</li><li>• Parent SEND support group</li><li>• Cluster meetings</li><li>• Morecroft community group</li><li>• Early Help prototype meetings</li><li>• Informal networks / pop-up café</li><li>• Mindworks</li><li>• Woking together for Woking</li><li>• Lakeview Community Action group</li><li>• Church and interfaith groups</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Connectors</li><li>• Health e.g. GPs, Wellbeing Advisors</li><li>• Health Link Worker</li><li>• Head of Family and Community services, WBC</li><li>• Woking ROC</li><li>• Locality Early Help Advisors</li><li>• Community Link Officers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Permission for curiosity, autonomy and flexibility (ethos of organisations)</li><li>• Culture of “can do” from the top</li><li>• Passionate practitioners/volunteers</li><li>• Holistic approach to providing support, and signposting to other organisations</li><li>• Strong community – thrive</li><li>• Volunteer training</li><li>• Intentional networking</li><li>• F2F meetings/co-location</li><li>• Respect and trusting relationships</li><li>• Clear communication</li></ul>

# Workshop 3: reviewing the principles

We reviewed the Time for Kids principles and shared the first draft of the principles of working in Working with you (drafted based on our previous workshop conversations), and explored whether you felt these accurately reflected your experiences. The principles below are the final version.

## Believe

**Shared vision for supporting families** – partners are committed to helping families early and are positive about the change this will bring. Their individual and collective contribution is recognised and valued by the Early Help support network.

## Belong

**Effectiveness through relationships** – partners feel connected to other services, organisation, and community groups in the Early Help support network. Being part of the network brings people together around families and communities, which helps them to feel that they belong.

**Being curious** – partners are curious in their work with families and proactive in finding out more about the wider network of support and what is available for families.

## Connect

**Strong partner relationships are intentional** – formal and organic networking opportunities between partners and communities are inclusive, proactively sought out, and followed up on.

# Workshop 3: reviewing the principles

## Connect

**Effective collaboration between partners** – local spaces and resources are shared where possible, and partners signpost to other services, organisations and community groups. This creates consistency of support for families.

## Hope

**Continuous development** – individuals, organisations and community groups come together to learn from each other's experience and celebrate achievements. From this they take positive action to improve the support provided to families, working towards a more positive future for families.

## Trust

**Trusted partners** – partners trust each other to put families' needs first. Trust is built from open communication and working closely together to find the best solutions with families.

**Supportive organisations** – partners are empowered to creatively and flexibly problem-solve, and are trusted to work closely with each other to provide the appropriate support and advice to families.

**Strong presence in the community** – there is a purposeful approach to create trust in communities and finding key representatives in communities to support this. This enables effective signposting to information and other support, as well as making it easier for families to identify and access support.



# Workshop 4: turning enablers and barriers to working into positive action

We focused on topics raised at previous workshops: information sharing, empowering practitioners, assets, and networking and connecting. We mapped the enablers and barriers for these, and started to think about turning these into actions.

	Enablers	Barriers
<b>Information sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being intentional about it and informing families that is what you are doing</li> <li>• Clear and accessible information for families</li> <li>• Early Help partnership – board and meetings</li> <li>• Family Information Service a good example</li> <li>• Culture of information sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of doing the wrong thing</li> <li>• Language – terminology and interpretation</li> <li>• Different data recording systems/no shared access</li> <li>• Information not always shared consistently e.g. across teams or with smaller organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Networking and connecting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network events/interagency meetings – making it networking intentional</li> <li>• Incorporated into staff job descriptions</li> <li>• Shared spaces/buildings to support F2F meetings</li> <li>• Joint training and sharing of volunteers</li> <li>• Creative and flexible approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time – everyone so busy / staffing capacity issues</li> <li>• Difficulties finding information needed and lack of awareness of events</li> <li>• How to connect with informal networks?</li> <li>• WFH, rather than being in a physical workspace with networking opportunities</li> </ul>

# Workshop 4: turning enablers and barriers to working into positive action

	Enablers	Barriers
<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide range of services available to residents e.g. L2 early help, libraries, family centre, the Lighthouse, Jigsaw hub, and transport</li> <li>• Multiple shared buildings across the borough</li> <li>• Multicultural offering</li> <li>• Passionate volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial assets can be difficult e.g parking</li> <li>• Limited activities for early years, 8-11yrs and 16+</li> <li>• Lack of (free) spaces available; some previously free now charge</li> <li>• Council offices/churches sometimes carry stigma</li> <li>• Geography; distance between services</li> </ul>
<b>Empowered practitioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F2F multi-agency meetings</li> <li>• Shared vision</li> <li>• Management support for partnerships and joint events</li> <li>• Access to resources through partners</li> <li>• Caseload management/reflection time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources, capacity, funding for training</li> <li>• Poor communication</li> <li>• Some agencies not understanding social care</li> <li>• Staff turnover</li> <li>• Out of date information</li> <li>• Little time for F2F interaction</li> </ul>

# Wider ranging actions

The following actions need to be discussed further at partnership level:

1. Sign-up to a specific Early Help branding, which includes promoting the importance of networking and relationship building as part of the brand
2. Development of data sharing agreement/policy between agencies
3. Early Help induction and training
  - *Early Help training available through the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership and Surrey Youth Focus which is county-wide: [www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/professionals/academy/learning](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/professionals/academy/learning)*
4. Early Help / Borough online forum / space for professionals to post queries
5. Family Information Service to develop an app (for professionals) to map services and support available to children and families across the area/county
  - *Hub of Hope app (national mental health database)*