

STORY SO FAR.....

GUIDANCE:

The definition of early help is intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Effective intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life. (Definition proposed by C4EO).

By not intervening early to tackle emerging problems, we risk long term damaging impact on children, young people and families and unmanageable pressure on services.

This guidance aims to help practitioners to effectively complete the Story So Far and develop plans of support. Anyone working with children and families can complete a SSF. What is important is that the professional completing the SSF engages well with the family and develops a trusted relationship.

1. Talk to the family

The use of the Story So Far must be discussed with the parents/carers and or the child/young person and consent obtained to progress the early help process. It is important for the family to be involved in the process as well as the development and review of any plans

The Story So Far can be used to document your conversations with a family, taking into account their worries, explore what is working well and not so well, identify their strengths and their support needs, and co-produce an early help plan to help them move forward. It is important that you include the child/young person's views on what is important to them and what they want to change.

2. Talk to other Services

The completion of the SSF requires an integrated approach with the child/young person and their family, alongside any services that are currently involved. The benefit of this integrated approach is that it helps to give a full understanding of a family's strengths and needs, avoids families having to tell their story repeatedly, stops duplication of services and maximises positive outcomes for children/young people and their families.

3. Develop a Plan

The SSF **is a choice** available to the family to help them to feel empowered and to be more self-reliant in finding their own solutions to the problems. This means that the resulting plan will be bespoke to them. It will identify the outcomes the family agree they need to achieve, build on their strengths and set out support based on what families have identified as being most relevant and necessary for their individual situation.

The Story So Far can identify needs that could be met by a single agency; if this is the identified outcome then a single agency review should be held within 12 weeks to establish if the family's needs have been met. If further support is required then the SSF can be updated to determine whether a multi-agency approach is now required which would be reviewed as a "Team Around the Family" plan.

4. Ensure consistent decision-making

The Bury "Continuum of Need and Thresholds Document" (Appendix 1) provides a visual guide to align need with a corresponding level of support to meet that need, from universal support (with either a single agency or multi-agency approach) through to statutory levels of support. This aids consistent decision making with children, young people and their families about the most appropriate support to meet their needs and enabling them to successfully return to, or continue to be maintained on the universal pathway.

Whilst thresholds are important to ensure that children are protected, they should not prevent the provision of support because a certain threshold has not been met. A flexible responsive approach when needs are first identified will help to prevent escalation.

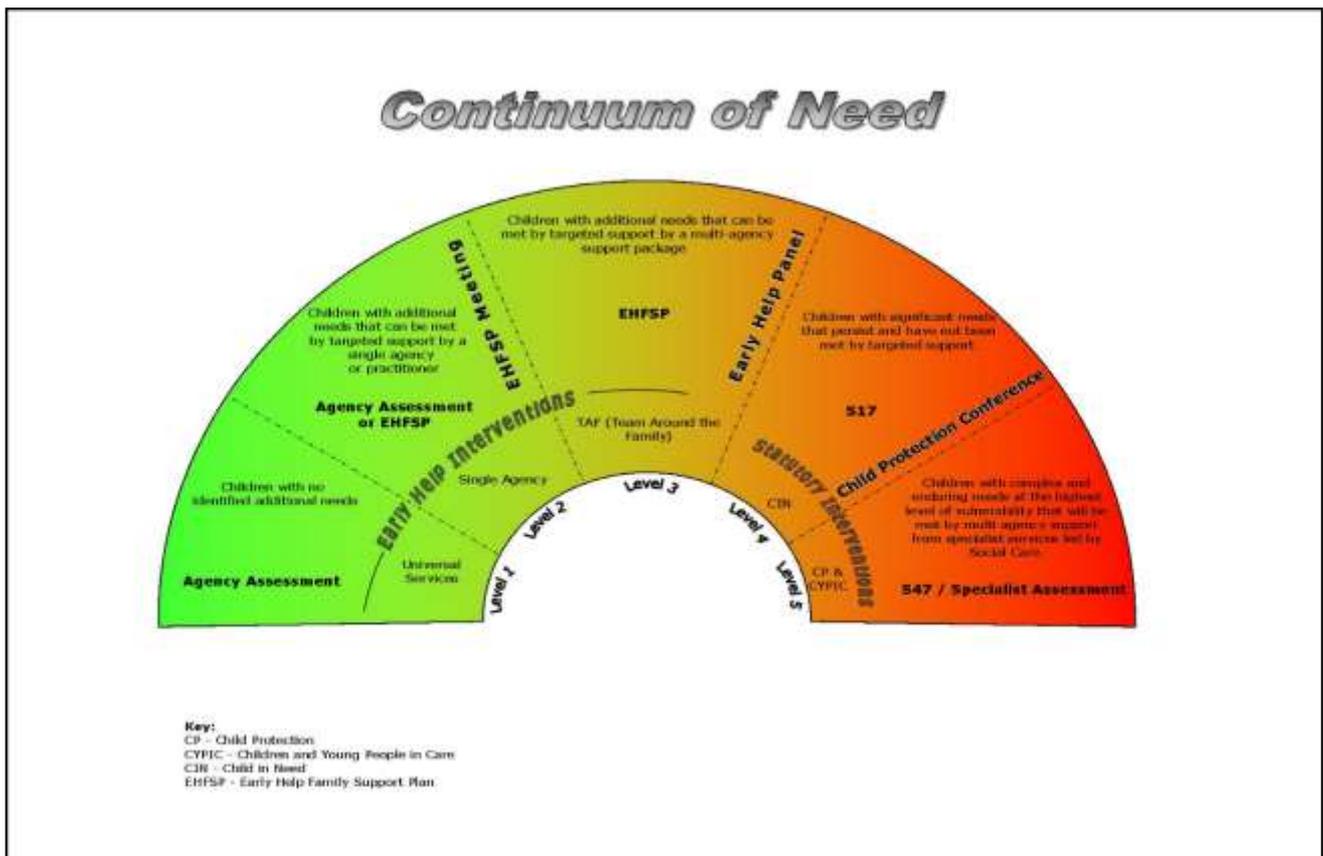
If you require any assistance with this process, please contact the Early Help Consultants for advice

Bury East Locality Team (including Tottington/Ramsbottom)
Early Help Consultant – Faye Higgs
Telephone Number: 0161 253 5200

Whitefield Locality Team (including Prestwich)
Early Help Consultant – Vicky Burgess
Telephone Number: 0161 253 5077

Radcliffe Locality Team
Early Help Consultant – Julie Barlow
Telephone Number: 0161 252 7465/7468

Appendix 1: **Bury Continuum of Need and Thresholds Document**



Level 1 – Universal Services: Children with no identified additional needs. Their needs are met through Universal Services.

Level 2 – Single Agency: Children with additional needs that can be met by targeted support by a single agency or practitioner. A parent or age appropriate child can request a story So Far to be completed or a professional involved, may recommend this to them.

Level 3 – Team Around the Family (TAF): Children with additional needs that can be met by targeted support through a Multi-agency Support Package.

At Level 3, the completion of the Story So Far enables an effective plan of action building on the strengths of the family and setting out the multi-agency support that will be provided. This is a voluntary process and requires the consent of a person with parental responsibility. Failing Team Around the Family Plans should be directed to the Early Help Consultant in the relevant locality teams for advice/guidance or possible allocation for a targeted response.

Level 4 & 5 cases have met the threshold for Statutory Intervention; the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) make decisions in response to interagency referrals received as to whether the statutory threshold has been met.

Level 4 – Child in Need: Children with significant needs that persist and early help support has not been able to meet these needs.

Level 5 – Child Protection and Children & Young People in Care: Children with complex and enduring needs at the highest level of vulnerability that will be met by multi-agency support from specialist services led by Social Care (Safeguarding/Looked after Children).