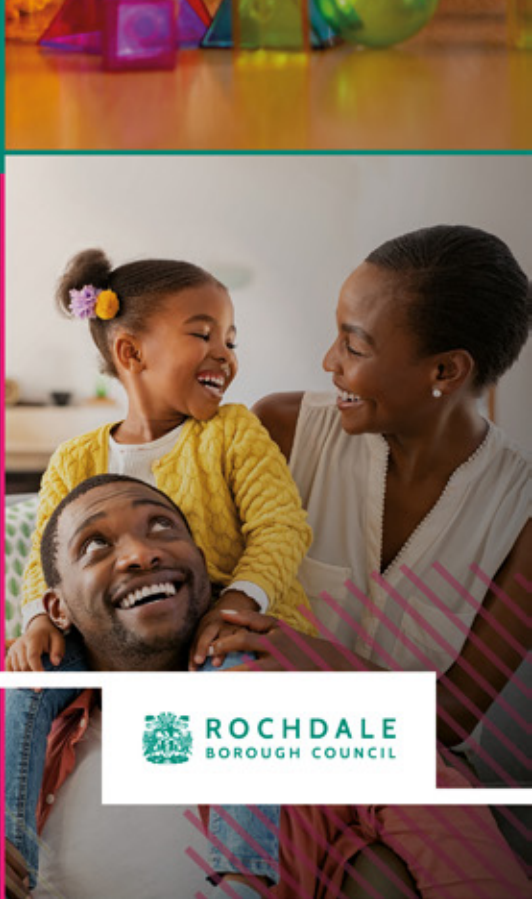




# Rochdale Early Help Strategy

2026-27



# An introduction to our strategy...

The borough of Rochdale is committed to ensuring that children, young people and families receive effective help at the earliest point of need. Our Early Help Strategy 2026-2027 details our progress during 2025-2026 and priorities for 2026-2027 to ensure that we provide the right help, at the right time, and prevent escalation to statutory services.

It reflects the collective ambition of our partners across health, education, social care, training and employment and the VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social Enterprise) sectors, to build a system that is proactive, relational, and firmly rooted in the lived experiences of our communities. This approach is aligned to our Children and Young People's Partnership's Raising Rochdale plan.

Our approach is rooted in a whole system, multi agency model, where services work together to identify emerging need early, deliver proportionate support, and achieve sustained improvement in children's outcomes. Through our Best Start Family Hub network and community based services, we provide accessible, non stigmatising support that families engage with and trust.

We will continue to strengthen prevention, improve consistency and timeliness of support, and ensure that children's voices shape decisions.

Through strong partnership working, our borough will continue to deliver an Early Help system that improves lives and reduces demand on statutory services. During 2026-2027, we will focus on transitioning our services and delivering the ambitions of;

- **the Families First Partnership Programme**
- **strengthening, and evolving our Best Start Family Hub network**
- **embedding inclusive, integrated community based early support across the borough**

We will continue to champion the importance of emotional wellbeing, school readiness, healthy relationships, and effective support for children with SEND and their families.

We are grateful to all our partners, practitioners, and community organisations for their continued dedication in supporting us to give our children and young people the best start in life.

## What is Early Help?

Early Help in our borough provides support for children, young people, and families to address challenges early, improve outcomes, and prevent problems from escalating.

It is not a single service but a whole system approach that recognises the importance of trusted relationships, timely intervention, and community-led solutions.

### **Early help is about;**

- **working together to identify emerging needs early**
- **reducing inequalities**
- **strengthening resilience within families and neighbourhoods**

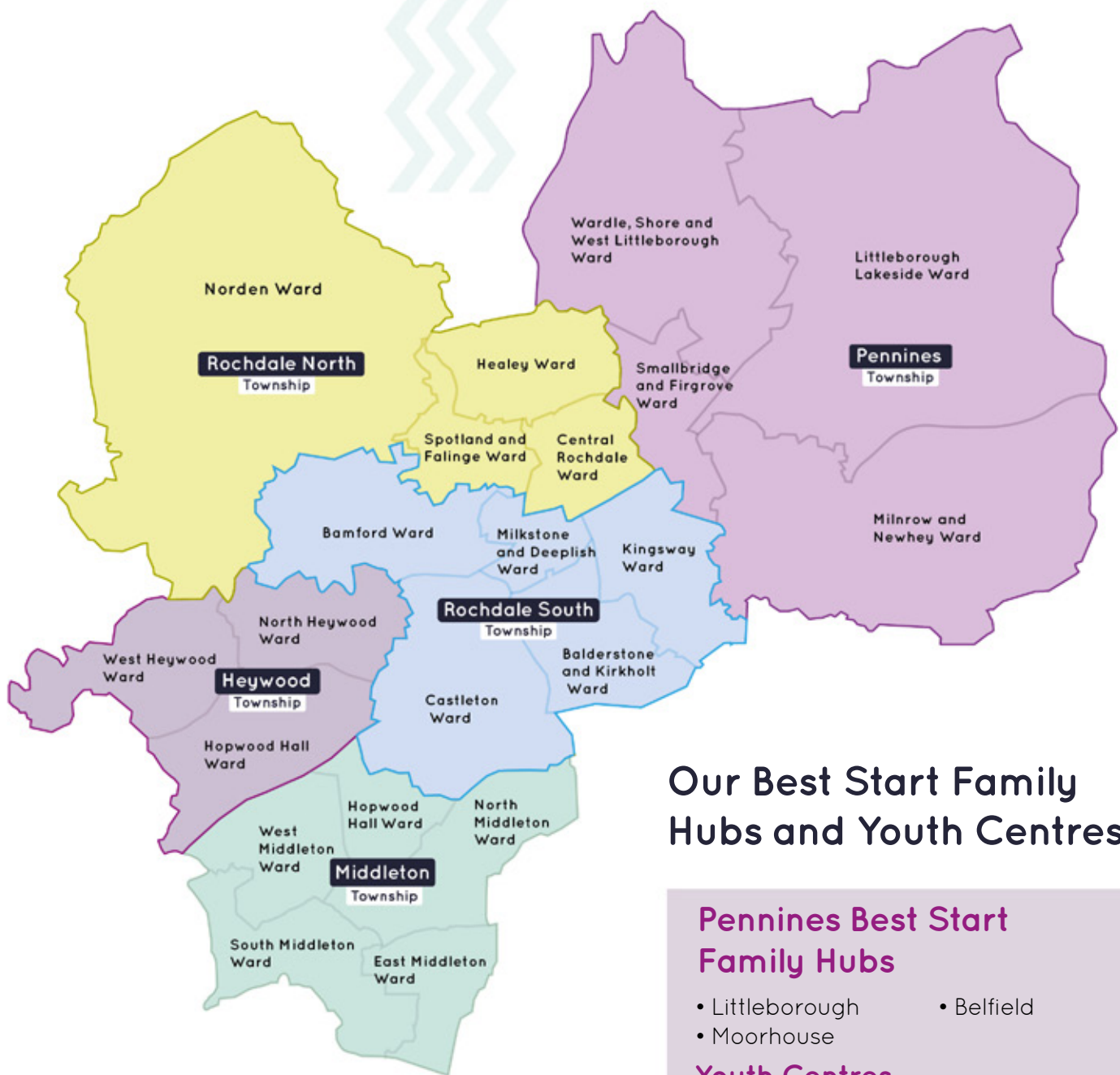
It brings together support from across education, health, children's services, training and employment, adult services and VCFSE partners to ensure families and children 0-19 years (25 years if SEND) receive timely, coordinated,

and strength-based support, helping them thrive at the earliest opportunity.

Our Early Help offer is delivered in both individual and group situations, in the home and the family's local communities and includes our parenting and relationship programmes, Best Start Family Hub provision and Youth Centres. Services and teams provide early community-based support to families both formally and informally at a neighbourhood level.

Where an early help assessment is required and Team Around the family meetings are scheduled, practitioners across the borough use the Early Help Module (EHM) of the Liquid Logic system

Individual practitioners access the EHM following training. Support is available from local authority Early Help Workers in relation to navigating EHM, completing assessments and plans and organising the team around the family meetings.



## Our Best Start Family Hubs and Youth Centres

### Rochdale North Best Start Family Hubs

- Howard Street
- Meanwood
- Heybrook
- Norden

### Rochdale South Best Start Family Hubs

- Castleton
- Sandbrook
- Moss Street
- Newbold
- Deeplish
- Matthew Moss

### Pennines Best Start Family Hubs

- Littleborough
- Moorhouse
- Belfield

### Youth Centres

- Milnrow
- Littleborough

### Heywood Best Start Family Hubs

- Derby Street
- Woodland

### Youth Centres

- The Yard

### Middleton Best Start Family Hubs

- Langley
- Boarshaw
- Hollin
- Kirkway

### Youth Centres

- Springvale

# What have our families told us?

Voice activity took place throughout 2025-26, and our parents, carers, children, and young people told us...

- They value the positive working relationships that are built during early help interventions.
- They value the early help support offered to them.
- They felt involved.
- Early Help made a positive difference in their lives.
- That workers were reliable and did what they said they would do.
- Early Help had improved relationships within the family.
- School attendance improved.
- Confidence in parenting had improved

## What our families have said during conversational audits:

“Helped with putting things in place for the family, motivated me, helped when I don’t think I can do things”

“FSW has really helped me with college. College understands me more because FSW has explained what is happening to me”

The borough of Rochdale has 17 established Best Start Family Hubs. These form the foundation of our Best Start Family Hub network.

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“Our relationship has improved and it’s a more calmer household”

“Family life is much happier, less stress and my mental health has vastly improved”

“T has now gone back to school. It wasn’t the right decision to take him out of school when we did. We thought we would be able to manage like we had in covid, but this wasn’t the case. So, we are both happy everything is back to normal with going to school”

“I feel like I have a new outlook on my child’s behaviour and I now notice and appreciate every little step forward we take and it makes me so proud of my child and myself”

# What does our data tell us?

Our Early Help data for 2025-2026 highlights that Early Help Assessments (EHAs) show an increase in activity between 2024- 2025 and 2025- 2026. The total number of open Early Help episodes with a completed Early Help Assessment rose from 1,366 in 2024/25 to 1,499 in 2025- 2026. Within this, the number of children open on an EHA increased from 810 to 887, while the number of adults rose from 556 to 612.

Timeliness of assessment indicators demonstrate improvement: with the average number of days from an episode start to EHA completion reducing from 26 days in 2024- 2025 to 23.6 days in 2025- 2026. Team Around the Family (TAF) activity has also increased, with 2,433 TAF meetings completed in 2024- 2025 and 2,780 in 2025- 2026. The percentage of families recorded as achieving all outcomes also increased by 2.2%.

At the end of March 2026 there were 1,391 multi agency practitioners trained and issued with a user number for the Early Help Module (EHM), which is an increase of 41 from March 2025.

Early Help Lead Professional support is delivered to multi-agency partners by Early Help Workers within the Early Years, Early Help & Neighbourhoods Service. Between April 2025-March 2026, 711 individual support sessions had been provided to support Lead Professionals enabling them to navigate the EHM system, complete Early Help Assessments and organise Team Around the Family meetings alongside formal training and briefings.

## Early Help Strategic Board

The borough's multi-agency Early Help Strategic Board has strategic ownership of early help provision across the borough. The group meets every 8 weeks and includes leaders and managers from across different services, all of whom support children, young people and families.

Its purpose is to:

- **Set direction and drive forward the early help agenda**
- **Oversee delivery of early help provision**
- **Improve outcomes for children, young people and families**
- **Share and receive information about national legislation or policy, or relevant national or local research**
- **Provide shared oversight and scrutiny**

Information from the Early Help Strategic Board is shared at a neighbourhood level through local advisory boards and closely aligns with the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH) strategic board. The board is accountable to the Children and Young People's Partnership.

Organisations represented at the Early Help Strategic Board include teams from children's services, adult services, public health, housing, police, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), work and skills, health visiting, midwifery, school nursing and more.



# Early Help Strategic Board Actions 2025-2026

The multi-agency board progressed the following actions during 2025-2026.

## Family Voice

Action	Achievement
<p><b>We ensure every family's voice is heard, valued, and used to shape meaningful, timely support that leads to better outcomes and sustained positive change.</b></p>	<p>By the end of 2025-2026, significant progress had been made in strengthening co-production, quality assurance and multi-agency working across Early Help and neighbourhood services.</p> <p>Parent Carer Panels are now embedded across all neighbourhoods, supported by a Voice and Co-Production Working Group aimed to increase engagement with seldom-heard families and communities.</p> <p>Quality assurance has been enhanced through routine conversational audits and expanded multi-agency audit activity, providing improved insight into family experiences and service effectiveness.</p> <p>Multi-agency practice has been further developed through strengthened Lead Professional support, training and governance through the Early Help Strategic Board. Key procedural updates, including revised thresholds, Step-In and Step-Out arrangements and the Multi-Agency Response to Need, align with national guidance and local reform.</p> <p>In addition, early help staff have received refresher training in relation to the principles of Family Group Conferencing, and Family Network Meetings are now established to promote and explore natural family support at the earliest opportunity.</p>

## Workforce

Action	Achievement
<p><b>We will support and grow a confident, knowledgeable, and adaptive workforce that drives system wide improvement, strengthens multi agency collaboration, and delivers consistently high impact early intervention for children and families.</b></p>	<p>At the end of 2025-2026, significant progress has been achieved in the provision of support to multi-agency practitioners undertaking the Early Help Lead Professional role. Monthly Early Help and Lead Professional training is delivered across the borough, local authority Early Help workers provide individual support sessions to partners in relation assessments, EHM system, organising TAF meetings etc, and regular network meetings that support practitioners on a range of topics and provide networking opportunities.</p> <p>Support for practitioners has been enhanced following the review of threshold and step in and out protocols and has included both neighbourhood level briefings and targeted support. The Children's Needs and Response Framework has been re-launched, with further review and engagement planned during 2026-2027.</p> <p>Multi-agency training continues to develop alongside Family Hubs and local needs analysis, contributing to a more coordinated Early Help workforce approach. A structured programme of quarterly multi-agency audits is in place, with outcomes reported to the Early Help Strategic Board.</p> <p>Progress has also been made in aligning SEND services within neighbourhoods and Family Hubs, including the deployment of Disability Outreach workers and the development of the Norden Family Hub specialist facilities and sensory provision.</p> <p>Data systems are evolving to support integrated neighbourhood working, with improvements to dashboards and reporting currently underway.</p> <p>A priority for 2026-2027 is to develop community based Early Help principles and guidance aligned to the borough's all age Prevention Strategy, the Families First Partnership Programme, Live Well, Prevention Demonstrator and Working Together guidance.</p>

## Communities

Action	Achievement
<p><b>We will strengthen resilient, connected communities that are empowered to shape local solutions, reduce inequalities, and work collaboratively to create safer, healthier environments where children and families can thrive.</b></p>	<p>The Family Hub App is now established and being used by parents across the borough, supported by partnership-wide briefings to raise awareness and engagement.</p> <p>The Early Family Help pilot in Rochdale North has introduced a collaborative, doorstep out approach to building community capacity and strengthening multi-agency working. This model is now being expanded across the borough through neighbourhood networks.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken and is ongoing to increase SEND parental involvement in co-production of the new short breaks offer, ensuring diverse and representative participation. Criteria have been developed, with further work planned for 2026-2027.</p> <p>Further embedding of parent, carer, and community voices in strategic boards continues to be a priority for 2026-2027.</p>

## Leadership

Action	Achievement
<p><b>We will provide clear, ambitious, and accountable leadership that drives system wide improvement, enables a confident and high performing workforce, and fosters a culture of collaboration and innovation that delivers sustained positive outcomes for children, families, and communities.</b></p>	<p>Multi-agency practice standards are in place and will be reviewed in line with the Families First Partnership Programme during 2026-2027. Ongoing work through the Children's Information Project (in partnership with Oxford University) included identifying families in our Rochdale North neighbourhood at a Lower Super Output Area where children's achievement was below the borough and national average from our seldom heard families community.</p> <p>As part of this project staff training was provided, and research activity undertaken with Oxford University. This is a national project which will conclude with a comprehensive evaluation in 2026-2027, following the production of two interim reports to government.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken as part of a system wide preventative neighbourhood approach to review performance and data at neighbourhood and borough level. This continues in 2026-2027 and will include multi-agency and the local authorities Early Years, Early Help and Neighbourhood provision.</p> <p>The revised Community-Based Early Help approach will be developed in 2026-2027, alongside further work to strengthen the tracking of practice standards metrics.</p>

## Data

Action	Achievement
<p><b>We will harness high quality, timely data to drive intelligent decision making, strengthen early intervention, and deliver measurable improvements in outcomes for children, families, and communities.</b></p>	<p>A review of performance reporting across boards and at neighbourhood and borough levels is underway, including revisions to Early Years, Early Help and Neighbourhood dashboards and reports. Performance clinics are planned for 2026-2027 to strengthen oversight.</p> <p>Our Community Based Early Help Strategy will be updated in 2026-2027, alongside improved tracking of practice standards. These standards are already in place but will now be refreshed and aligned to the Families First Partnership Programme.</p>

# Early Help Strategic Board Priorities 2026- 2027

The multi-agency board progressed the following actions during 2025-2026.

1)	<b>Support the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme</b>
	Support the effective implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme by working collaboratively with partners and families across neighbourhoods, embedding shared values, strengthening community early help, ensuring coordination of services, and delivering better outcomes for children, young people and families.
2)	<b>Develop a shared definition and vision in relation to Community Based Early Help</b>
	Agree and formally adopt a multi-agency definition of “Community-Based Early Help,” clearly setting out principles such as prevention, accessibility, strengths-based practice, and community-led delivery aligned to Live Well and the Prevention Demonstrator.
3)	<b>Produce a Community Based Early Help approach with partners, parents, children, and young people aligned to the Prevention Strategy.</b>
	Design a co produced Community Based Early Help Strategy in partnership with professionals, parents, children and young people, ensuring that services are shaped by lived experience, responsive to local need, and focused on delivering timely, relationship based support that improves outcomes for families
4)	<b>Quality Assurance</b>
	Provide effective quality assurance to ensure Community Based Early Help and Families First practice is consistent, strengths based and outcomes focused. Use data, audit, learning from families and practitioners, to drive continuous improvement and system wide accountability.



5)	<b>Data dashboard</b>
	Develop updated high quality, timely data to drive intelligent decision making, strengthen early intervention, and deliver measurable improvements in outcomes for children, families, and communities.
6)	<b>Strengthen engagement with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector</b>
	Agree and implement a clear framework outlining roles, expectations, and principles for working with VCFSE partners, including shared values around prevention and community-based support.
7)	<b>Review multi-agency practice standards</b>
	Review multi agency practice standards to ensure shared expectations, consistency, and quality of practice is supporting effective collaboration and improving outcomes for children and families.
8)	<b>SEND</b>
	In partnership with the SEND Alliance and in line with SEND reform agree a multi-agency framework that sets out expectations for inclusive SEND practice across all community based early help services, aligned with statutory guidance.





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