

Early Help

What do we mean by Early Help?

Early Help is an approach which is about taking steps to provide extra support a child or their family early in the life of a problem occurring, if possible, as soon as it emerges.

Early Help may be needed 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. It also applies to all children regardless of any other need they may have.

Early Help requires agencies to work together as soon as a problem emerges or a need is identified to ensure the child gets the right response, and the right services, from the right people at the right time.

In doing this we try to meet need early and avoid a problem or the level of need and intervention getting much bigger. Early Help is provided to reduce the need for specialist interventions, unless they are the correct response to resolve the problem at the time.

Early Help can be provided in complicated circumstances as well as those which may be quite simple.

Early help means responding promptly if a child is at immediate risk of harm (or has other significant or complex needs) as much as it means responding to a need which only requires advice or guidance.

There are 4 key steps to Early Help at our Schools.

1. **SEE** - identify that there is a possible issue, problem or need and find out more – from the child, their parents or carers, and other professionals and agencies who know the child as necessary.
2. **PLAN** - assess the need and plan with the child and their parents or carers, alongside other professionals as necessary to determine how best to meet that need.
3. **DO** – agree who will lead the plan, implement the plan together, arrange who will provide the service (s) that are needed.
4. **REVIEW** - review progress, change the plan, change services or withdraw because the help is no longer needed.

There are key principles which support our work in the Early Help arena

- Universal services support every child to meet their full potential – for example 15 or 30 hours early education.
- Every professional has a responsibility to identify or see the need for early help and to act accordingly
- Agencies must work together, if more than one agency needs to be involved they must work together to assess the need, respond appropriately depending on the identified needs, and provide services as necessary
- Decisions are reached through having conversations with each other as well as the child and their family
- Decisions focus on the best response to meet the needs of the child
- The processes followed are there to support professionals to have the right conversations, use the right information and make child focused decisions, rather than as an end in themselves