

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series

Early Intervention and Support

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's business and that includes making sure children and families can access early help and support when needed. This includes not waiting until a crisis or a referral for a statutory social work service is necessary.

Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. Some early help is provided through 'universal services', such as education and health services. These are universal because they are available to all families, regardless of their needs.

Other early help services are coordinated by a local authority and/or their partners to address specific concerns within a family. Examples of these include parenting support, mental health support, and housing and employment services.

Early help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's consent, and may be provided before and/or after statutory intervention.

Targeted early help may also take place before or after statutory intervention. This is when some children and families have diverse and complex needs requiring the support of multi-agency services. This takes a case work approach with a lead practitioner co-ordinating an assessment to identify the most appropriate support needed for the child and family.

"Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early intervention and help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse."

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help,
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help,
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.

Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help

All practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, should be attuned to identifying emerging problems within families and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment. Some children and families may be more likely to need early help:

- Young carers
- Children with a parent/carer in prison
- Children with disabilities/complex health needs
- Children with special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- Children showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- Children who are frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Children who are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- Children at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Children who are privately fostered
- Children of young parents or about to be young parents
- Children and families experiencing housing issues
- Children who have experienced multiple suspensions or has been or is at risk of being excluded from school
- Children who are missing education, or are persistently absent from school or not in receipt of a full time education
- Children whose parents/carers have mental health issues, drug or alcohol use
- Children who live in households where there is parental conflict

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series

- Children whose family circumstances present challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Children misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Children viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence) or developing inappropriate relationships online.

Further information

For details of the early help offer in each local authority area please click on the links below. If you are worried about the safety of a child or young person [contact children's services](#) in your area.

Hampshire

- [Hampshire early help information for professionals and service providers \(Hampshire County Council\)](#)
- [Contacts for early help providers and professionals \(Hampshire County Council\)](#)
- [Early help referral process for professionals \(Hampshire County Council\)](#)

Isle of Wight

- [Family support and Early Help \(Isle of Wight Council\)](#)
- [Early Help \(Isle of Wight Council\)](#)

Portsmouth

- [Early help and prevention service \(Portsmouth City Council\)](#)
- [Early help and prevention service for professionals \(Portsmouth City Council\)](#)

Southampton

- [Families First Service \(Southampton City Council\)](#)
- [The Children's Resource Service \(Southampton City Council\)](#)