

A Parental Information Guide on Early Help and Children's Social Care

What is Early Help?

Early Help is a term which describes any additional support which can be sought on top of regular education, benefits, emergency services and help from the NHS. Early Help can range in its services and support from Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision to financial advice, from parenting advice to bereavement support.

Let's look at a few of the most common in a little more detail:

SEND Support: If your child has a disability, or is struggling at school, then it is likely that some additional help is needed. This could be medical equipment, extra educational support or there may be play groups available for your child to attend. There may even be the possibility of financial help if you qualify for the Family Fund grant.

Mental Health Counselling and Therapies: Early Help is a great place to access any mental help support which you, your child, or anyone else in the household may require. This could be to support you through a bereavement, to help the management of a past trauma, to support with the reduction of any substance misuse or to help with anxiety or depression concerns.

Housing and Furniture: If you need support with council housing, or the council house you currently live in is in need of improvement or basic furnishings, then Early Help can help you to access any funding you are entitled to, or charitable organisations who can support you. They can also help you to contact the council if maintenance to the property is required.

Financial and Legal Advice: Sometimes we can be in a difficult situation, and we don't know where to turn. By reaching out to Early Help, you will be able to access the advice from the experts that you need.

Parenting Advice and Support: Courses, workshops and support groups are all available to help you to effectively and positively deal with the difficult issues which we can all face as parents. Accessing these when and if needed, is a lifeline for many and often leads to improved relationships with our children, and happier family homes.

Concern With Your Child's Behaviour: This could be around school attendance worries, concerns with who they are mixing with and what they might be involved in, how your child behaves at home or occasionally if your child is not coming home and is staying with friends without your permission.

When and how to seek Early Help

If ever you, your child or your family as a whole are feeling like things are a struggle, then seeking out Early Help is vital. Ultimately, the key goals of Early help are:

- To promote a child's health, development, and safety by addressing any family difficulties early.
- To prevent family issues from escalating to the point where more intensive intervention may be needed.

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- To empower parents with resources, guidance, and skills that support positive family dynamics.

There are many avenues to Early Help, and some of the main routes are detailed below:

- Contact your GP
- Your child's school
- The Early Help Support Hubs
- Citizen's Advice

Children's Social Care

What is Children's Social Care? – Children's Social Care allows social workers to work alongside families and other agencies (such as health, law enforcement and education) to ensure that a child is cared for and that any harm that may be identified is eradicated. The government documentation and legislation around Children's Social Care is designed to work alongside parents and carers to promote “the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children” (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023). Ultimately, it is in the best interest of the child to work with the parents or carers wherever possible.

How it works – The social workers, family and the team of other professionals work together to establish an accurate picture of the child's lived experience, and then work together to create an actionable plan which will improve this for the child. Review meeting will be planned to make sure that the items identified are being implemented effectively, and if not, what the barriers are to this. The aim is to work together to provide help and support to meet the needs of the children and to protect them from any maltreatment.

Differences between Early Help and Children's Social Care – When social workers become involved, this is statutory involvement. This means that either a parent or carer has approached Children's Social Care themselves, or others have identified a concern. At this stage, involvement as a parent is a requirement. Consent from a child's parents to involve Children's Social Care is preferred, as any intervention works best alongside and with the full cooperation of the parents, however it is not necessary if there is a concern that the child might be suffering significant harm. The child's welfare is the priority for all.

Contacting Children's Social Care – If you have a concern about a child's welfare, then do not hesitate to contact your local Children's Social Care services, which in our case is Birmingham Children's Trust. If you do not know the child's postcode, then you can contact the NSPCC or the police. If you believe that the child is at risk of immediate harm, then don't hesitate to call 999. Don't forget, the safeguarding of children is everyone's responsibility, and anyone can make a referral if they are concerned.

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Super resources for you and for you to share

- Hub of Hope – a website allowing you to explore some Early Help in your local area: [Hub of hope](#)
- NSPCC – specific support for parents: [Support & advice for parents | NSPCC](#)
- Young Minds – Early Help with mental health issues or concerns: [Guide to early help and early intervention services | YoungMinds](#)
- Citizen's Advice – [Citizens Advice](#)
- Childline – information, advice and support for children – [Childline | Childline](#)