

NEW

Intervene Early, It Helps



**What practitioners need to
know about Early Help services**

GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS

What is early help?

It is the term used for identifying children, young people and families who need extra support - but doing this as soon as problems start to emerge instead of reacting when they get worse. It is for children and young people of any age, not just early years.

Who is responsible?

All professionals have a responsibility to work together to identify children who need additional support, irrespective of whether they provide services to children or adults.

Those working mainly in universal services are best placed to identify children at risk of poor outcomes. It includes professionals in children's centres, those working in education provision for any age and all health professionals such as health visitors, GPs and school nurses.

Lead practitioner

As part of an early help assessment, a lead practitioner will be identified to co-ordinate services and an action plan for the family. This will be the practitioner most suitable to work with the family. Support and training will be provided.

Which services are involved?

Most of those services and activities involved with children, young people and families. As it is

about families, it includes some adults services too. Some will be based round children's centres, but it is wider. Some examples are:

How is it different to what we do now?

The concept isn't new and many of us will continue to provide the same or similar services. The aim is to provide the right help for right child at the right time. It is a co-ordinated multi-agency response and plan focused on the following themes:

- **any professional, any agency** can initiate an early help assessment or services
- **any child, at any age**, and their family can access it
- **better co-ordination** between agencies to avoid gaps, duplication or poor solutions to needs
- **not just formal processes**, it needs people to talk to each other, take responsibility and share information
- **considering circumstances** of the whole family - pressures on parents affect children
- **empowering families** by helping them get skills and confidence to support their child

Family and young people support

Education welfare
Housing advice
Benefits advice
Adult learning

Advice and welfare

Youth support
Parenting groups
Drop-in sessions
Domestic violence support
Groups for male carers/dads
Behaviour

Education and Early Learning

Schools
Stay and play
Talking Toddlers
Peekaboo
Bookstart Corner
Let's get cooking

Health

Health visiting
Midwifery
School nurses
Drop in clinics
GPs



Which children might benefit?

For example, a child where you're worried about their health, development or behaviour, or who is:

- not attending school or is at risk of exclusion from school
- not in education, training or employment
- involved in anti-social behaviour or at risk of becoming involved in crime
- carer for other family members
- disabled
- affected by domestic abuse, drugs or alcohol, or a parent who has mental ill health

What's the assessment procedure?

Sometimes it can be as simple just talking and directing families to the right activities. At other times a formal assessment may be needed. This could be an Early Help Assessment (formerly a CAF) or one of your organisation's existing assessments.

Is it the same thing as CAF?

Not quite, early help is wider. CAF is part of the early help pathway. The CAF itself is being replaced by an Early Help Assessment and we would expect this to be used most of the time. But this is not the only way to access early help services.

Agencies' own assessments can also function as an 'Early Help Assessment'. The important thing is that dialogue happens, it is recorded where it needs to be, and the family gets the right help.

'Step up, step down'

Where more intensive or specialist services become necessary, there is a process for referral to social care. Similarly, there are procedures for when social care involvement reduces but support from early help services is needed. Separate guidance is being made available on this.

Consent

Families should be fully involved in the process and you should make sure they understand they can say no. Where an assessment is carried out, you should ask for their consent to share information.

So, what do I need to do then?

- Be aware
- Think whole family
- Don't assume that someone else will pick it up
- Talk to colleagues in your area or other organisations if you think that's the best approach

- Respond at first point of contact even if that need falls outside your immediate area of expertise
- Get familiar with the assessment process
- Be ready to act as the lead professional if appropriate
- Remember it is based on consent

Where to go for more information

leicester.gov.uk/earlyhelp



To make an early help assessment

0116 454 5899 early-help@leicester.gov.uk

For support with the lead practitioner role or any other queries

0116 454 1694 Early-Help-Queries@leicester.gov.uk