



Defence
Children
Services

Early Help toolkit

Parent guide to Early Help



Introduction

All agencies that work with children and young people are responsible for listening to your concerns and worries and working closely with you to make sure you and your family get the right support at the right time.

Every family goes through challenging times at some point. Early help means working with you so that small problems don't become big problems.

There are lots of reasons you might need early help:

- You may have just moved to a new country and need a bit of extra support to help your child and family adjust.
- You could be worried about your own or your child's health, development or behaviour, school attendance, or worried how things are going on at school.
- You may have just experienced a bereavement and need a little extra support for you or your child.
- You may have some financial difficulties.
- You may have some worries about some of the things your child is doing online.

What is involved?

Get the support of a trusted professional to help. They might suggest completing the My child and family form, this will help to identify what additional support you require, and who in your existing network can support you.

Your trusted professional will ask you to sign the early help consent form to enable them to talk to other professionals your child is involved with like the health visitor, their school, or their youth worker. This helps gain a fuller picture of your child and their needs.

Using all the information you will work with your trusted professional to complete the early help assessment. Completing this means if you require support from other professionals, it will help them understand how they can help you and your child, without you needing to repeat yourself.

It is important that we get an understanding of what your child wants, together we can decide who is the best person to talk to your child.

When you are content that we have all the information we need to provide you and your child with the right support, with your permission, we will organise a meeting called 'The team Around the Family'.

The Team Around the Family (TAF)

Your Team around the Family (TAF) meeting will only consist of people you give permission to attend. These people will be relevant to you and your child's needs. It

might involve your friends, your family, and other people involved in your child's life such as their health visitor, teacher, early years practitioner, or CAMHS nurse.

It is important your child has their say, therefore with your permission they might be asked to attend the meeting. Sometimes children cannot attend the meeting because they are too young, or they might not want to. If this is the case, we will decide together who is best to speak to your child to find out what they would like.

At the meeting we will discuss what you would like and once everyone knows the situation, the team supporting you and your family will work with you to identify a plan and work out how everyone supporting you can provide the best support to you without overwhelming you. We call this the SMART Family Action Plan.

During the initial TAF meeting we will help you to identify who is going to be your lead professional. This is the person who you would like to co-ordinate the plan, meetings and ensure all professionals do what you need them to do.

Questions you may have

What happens if I ask for an early help?

You will always be fully involved, and we will always listen to you. It might mean that we can help you by pointing you to the support you want without the need for an early help assessment. If it's a bit more complicated, we will discuss starting the formal early help process.

Can I say no to an early help?

Yes, you can. However, we will ask your reason why because we want to try and reassure you that early help is going to help you and your child.

Does this mean the social work team will get involved with my family?

No. However, if in future your family circumstances change, and we need to involve the social work service we will talk this through with you and make sure you understand everything that is happening and why.

What happens when I stop receiving early help support?

We want to make sure you are confident, and able to find your own solutions to family problems in the future.

You can continue to use all the services that are available to you in location, if you need help in the future, please let a trusted professional know and they can start a new early help to support you and your family again.

Will an early help affect our posting?

Getting early help support will not affect this, or later postings. However, we want to make sure that the right support is in place in any location you are going to therefore someone from DCS might need to ask us a few questions about the support You

have received. You will be asked to provide consent before this happens.

Will my information be shared outside professionals involved in our Team Around the Family?

The professionals involved with you and your family through early help will not share your information with any other professionals without your agreement. However, there may be certain times when the people working with you and your family have a duty to share information.

This includes:

- When they need to find out urgently if your child is at risk of harm.
- To help your child if they are at risk of harm.
- When an adult is at risk of harm.
- To help prevent or detect a serious crime.

Your TAF team are here to support you and your family. Talking to people can make a real difference. Getting help early means you can prevent problems getting worse!