Early Help

Background

Early Help is the term used in Warwickshire to describe all support offered to potentially vulnerable children, young people and their families. The purpose of early help is to put in the right support at the right time so that problems are less likely to escalate to a point where the child becomes vulnerable or in need. Early Help is sustainable so that problems are less likely to recur.

Where can I find further information?

- NSPCC website
- Warwickshire County Council website
- West Midlands Interagency Safeguarding Procedures
- Research in Practice: What is Early Help? article
- Spectrum of Support guidance
- Action for Children website
- Family Information Service

Why is Early Help important?

Early help can offer children the support needed to reach their full potential. It can improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enable them to perform better at school and support their mental health.

More than 30,000 children go into care each year in the UK – that's one every 17 minutes. Many of these children might have stayed with their families had they accessed early help.

What happens when a case is stepped up?

An early discussion with the targeted support officer or the early help social workers can support decision making. Ultimately, if it is determined the lived experience of the child is unlikely to change and outcomes may be compromised, a referral to Family Connect may be necessary and an assessment by Children and Family Service may be appropriate and can be referred under the 'step-up procedures'.

Examples of Early Help support

The type of support can vary; some services will provide advice, and others may provide restorative work for families. This can be in a one-to-one setting or as part of a group. For example:

- Parenting support
- Play and activity groups
- Emotional health and wellbeing support
- Communication and language support

What is the Pathway to Change Planning Tool?

If you have identified that a multi-agency action plan is needed for a family, you should seek consent from the family to complete an Early Help Assessment Pathway to Change Planning Tool. Assessments should be conducted alongside the family rather than on behalf of them. Plans should identify strengths as well as needs and demonstrate that children, young people and their families have been part of the process.

Do we need consent for an Early Help assessment?

Early Help is voluntary and consensual. Where parents or a young person do not consent to Early Help, or do not use the services offered, then the lead professional should make a judgement as to whether, without significant help, the needs of the child will escalate. Speak to your agency safeguarding lead if you have any questions.