

Early Help Offer

There are times in our lives when we find situations difficult to cope with. At these times, we need help and advice but finding the right department or agency can be difficult. The Early Help Framework gives parents and carers a framework for asking for support. An assessment form may be completed, with an experienced member of our team, or signposting given, to provide parents and families with services who can help. This may be behaviour support, parenting advice, bereavement counselling, health advice, or help with specific medical issues.

'Early Help' refers to the offer of any information, advice or support to children, young people and their families as soon as possible in their lives, or when issues emerge, to help to prevent problems from escalating. This means working with children and families to engage and include them as equal partners and to support them to access additional services that can promote positive outcomes.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (a guide to inter-agency working) identifies that supporting children to achieve positive outcomes is more effective when local agencies work together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help
- Undertake an assessment with you (known in Bolton as the Early Help Assessment)
- Provide Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family to improve outcomes

All services are responsible for using standard ways of working with families to provide the right support that can be delivered quickly. They have a responsibility to share information, work together and co-ordinate action plans.

Effective Early Help can be delivered at any point in a child's life; pre-birth onwards about any issue which is impacting or could affect their development and wellbeing, including education and health and safety.

If you think you or your child needs extra support you could speak to someone who already works with you and ask for an Early Help Assessment to be started by a lead professional. This could be a teacher, health visitor, volunteer or other health professionals involved with your family. Alternatively, a worker that knows you might suggest to you that Early Help support might be helpful and ask to start the assessment with you.

By having a better picture of your situation, you and the lead professional will be able to put together a plan of action – these could be things that you could do, things that those who are already working with your family could do, or things that new services can help with. If there are a lot of people involved, it is helpful to have a meeting to make sure everyone agrees to the plan and knows what everyone else is doing. In Bolton we call this a 'Child Action Meeting'. At that meeting, one person will agree to coordinate the plan and keep in touch with you, they are called the lead professional. This is usually the person who opens the Early Help but it can be transferred to someone else who might be better suited to support the family over time.

Every 8-10 weeks you will meet with your lead professional and any other external agencies working with you to make sure things are getting better and you are getting the right help. If you still need support at this stage everyone will review what is working and what else is needed. If things have improved, you and the other agencies might agree to close the Early Help.

There are many benefits to opening an Early Help Assessment, such as;

- You will have a clear picture of what, when and who is supporting you and your family and this can be checked regularly to make sure things are getting better
 - Early Help is for children of all ages
 - You don't have to keep repeating the same information over and over to different agencies as it will be recorded on the form and shared with everyone working with you • Your family will be treated as a whole unit
 - The information you provide will be shared only with your consent amongst those organisations who will be directly helping you*
- * there could be certain times when the practitioners might need to share the information without your consent, for example, to help a child or adult who are at risk of harm or prevent a serious crime

For more information about Early Help please follow the link below

<https://www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/early-help-working-together>

We are always happy to help where we can and to try to find you the right agency to support you. We will look for individual tailored support that best meets the needs of individual situations. If you would like support as part of the Early Help process please contact the school office on 01204 333444 for more information.