



One minute guide

Early help — our approach to responding to the needs of children and families in Leeds

No. 33, February 2021

What do we mean by early help?

Early help is the term used by agencies in Leeds to describe our approach on a whole range of individual social, health and educational issues when providing support to children, young people and their families as soon as problems emerge or re-emerge.

Families should be enabled and supported to have the right conversations, with the right people and at the right time about their needs or concerns, so that statutory interventions can be avoided where this is appropriate. Intervening as early as possible, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes. Early help is voluntary and consent from children, young people and their families to work with them should always be sought.

Early help is a collaborative approach not a provision and relies on local agencies working together effectively with families to identify who needs help and then to meet their varied needs. Early help can be provided through a single agency or a multi-agency response as appropriate to the needs of the child and family and the concern.

The Leeds early help approach, in line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#), also includes proactive and planned support for those children and young people stepping down from statutory social work interventions or specialist care.

All agencies in Leeds see early help as part of our 'day job' and work to the following early commitment:

'We will provide help and support to those who need it without delay. By establishing positive and trusting relationships with families, we will work with them to identify what they need to address their particular concerns and problems.'

What is our early help approach?

The Leeds early approach has four key elements:

Right conversations, right people right time - this means talking to families about what support they need. Sometimes the best person to help is someone families already know and this happens quickly so they don't have to wait. Conversations lead to a meaningful assessment and where appropriate a plan to support the child or young person and their family.

The 3As—helping every child and young person to Attend, Attain and Achieve— if children are supported to go to nurseries, schools and college, this will help them to do well, have better health and well-being, and be more likely to get a job when they're grown up. We want children in Leeds to have friends and hobbies and lots of opportunities to play.

Leeds Practice Framework - this help practitioners to work restoratively **with** families.

Early help is everybody's business— we will never do nothing when families tell us they need help, and we act early before situations or problems become worse. Families can approach anyone working with them who will respond, begin to assess need and start conversations with the right people to identify how help should be provided.

How do we put early help into practice?

It is everybody's responsibility to identify and assess need, through having conversations with children, young people and their families and planning with them to address these needs. The following shows how we put this into practice:



When someone identifies that a child or family need additional support—conversations take place with the child or young person and their family to assess need. An offer of additional support is provided from within the agency's own organisation. A single agency early help plan is developed with the family. Progress and plans are reviewed with the family.



When someone identifies that needs of the child or family cannot be met by their own single agency—a coordinated multi-agency approach is then required which is underpinned by an early help assessment. A worker is identified to lead and coordinate the plan, which is developed with the family and agreed with other agencies. Progress is reviewed with the family and the Team around the Family.



When someone identifies that a child may be a child in need (Section 17) or is at risk of or has suffered significant harm (Section 47) as defined in the Children Act 1989—they should discuss their concerns in the first instance with their Safeguarding Lead or line manager if they are unsure if a child or young person is suffering significant harm. If it is felt that a child or young person is suffering significant harm they should contact Duty and Advice who will have a conversation with the referrer to discuss the concerns and advise the most appropriate course of action. This may include making a referral to Children's Social Work Service, signposting to specialist services or recommending that an early help assessment (or re-assessment) is more appropriate. Practitioners can ring Duty and Advice on tel: 0113 3760336.

Where to go for more information

Universal – Most children's needs are met by their family or universal services that are available to everyone, provided as a right to all children, young people and their families. Information about **Universal** services is available from the Family Information Service tel: 0113 3789700 and from their [website](#).

Targeted services provide additional capacity and expertise and may use a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach, early help assessment and plan with a Lead Practitioner coordinating support.

When needs cannot be met in universal or targeted services, a request can be made for **Specialist** services.

For more information about **Targeted** and **Specialist** services, practitioners can contact their local Targeted Service Leader or Cluster Manager if they know them. Alternatively they can contact the relevant Early Help Hub as follows:

East: eastearlyhelp@leeds.gov.uk or tel: 0113535899

West: westearlyhelp@leeds.gov.uk or tel: 0113 5351924

South: southeearlyhelp@leeds.gov.uk or tel: 0113 5350185

For more information about early help visit the [Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#) for the approach and strategy document— *'Right conversations, right people, right time'*, practice guidance, a poster, an animation, early help forms and other information.