

Early help work involves following a process of identification, assessment, planning, providing services and reviewing the plan. Early help is a voluntary process and families need to give their consent to an early help assessment being undertaken

Why is it important?

The early help process is for children and families with additional needs and focuses on ensuring that families receive the right support at the right time. The principle of early help is about taking action as soon as possible to help children and families with problems before they become more difficult to reverse. It is a collaborative approach with agencies working with families to ensure effective support.

How do we do it?

Identifying need – If a practitioner identifies a need they should have a conversation with their line manager/ safeguarding lead to identify the way forward. They should use the PSCP Threshold document to consider the level of need and appropriate response for child and family. If an early help response is the appropriate one, the practitioner must discuss the needs with the family and gain their consent to start the early help assessment.

Assessing need - Using the Early Help assessment form, discuss the strengths and needs of the child and family, identify outcomes or goals to be achieved and record the information on the Early Help Assessment. Share the assessment with the family and anyone else who contributed to it.

Planning to meet need - As part of the Early Help assessment process, there will be a conversation regarding who will support the family to meet the identified needs. This could include family members, neighbours, informal support networks as well as professional support.

Reviewing what's happened - Subsequent reviewing of the plan should be used to make decisions regarding whether to continue the plan as it is; amend the plan or to end the plan as needs are met. If the plan is not working and concerns about risk and safety are increasing, practitioners need to have a conversation with their line manager. The Early help review form should be used to record the conversations and decisions made at Team around the Child/Family meetings.

Ending the plan - The child and family should clearly understand that the plan will end and there will need to be a sustainability plan developed with them so they maintain changes and access informal support when necessary.

At any time in the early help process, if it is considered that a child is at risk of significant harm, the practitioner must contact Portsmouth MASH to share concerns.

Information Sharing with Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - All completed Early Help assessments and review forms should be emailed to Portsmouth MASH. This is the central co-ordination point for all Early Help assessments in the city.

For more information:

All early help forms and guidance can be found at
<https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/professionals/early-help/>

Training courses on early help processes and practice is provided by Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership. Please complete the booking form which can be found at
<https://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk/professionals/early-help/>