

EARLY HELP

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. (Working together to Safeguard Children 2015)

Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.

Effective early help relies upon local agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help;
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help; and
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child. Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children.

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the well-being of all children in the authority's area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.

Gloucestershire has in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. This requires all professionals, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment. In Gloucestershire the Early Help Partnerships have built on the SEND pathway and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to develop one integrated, holistic Graduated Pathway of Early Help and Support. This pathway enables practitioners to work with children, young people and their families ensuring they receive the right support when they need it most. There are six Early Help Partnerships across Gloucestershire and each has a fortnightly Allocations Group. These are made up of representatives of services who decide the help that's

needed and offer advice, guidance and support to Practitioners. These groups are supported by Families First Plus teams in each District.

To access support at Gretton, we would complete a Request for Support form along with a Consent form from the family and send it to the Tewkesbury locality Families First Plus inbox.

Professionals should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence;
- has returned home to their family from care; and/or
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.

At Gretton

- A culture of respect exemplified by the relationships between staff and with children and parents.
- Close relationships and knowledge of families and pupils developed and maintained - open door policy for all staff.
- Trained Designated Safeguarding Leads - (Headteacher and Senior Leader).
- Clear policy which outlines expectation and practice - Safeguarding everyone's business and responsibility.
- Effective PSHE curriculum & Circle Times to develop social and emotional skills, teaching children about keeping safe, enabling concerns to be shared and giving opportunities for staff to monitor vulnerable children.
- Identification and monitoring of Vulnerable, SEND, Young Carer children.
- Maintaining good records of communication- eg Parent Contact Forms, Concerns Forms, Incidents of Bullying etc - identifying the need of the child from these.

- Regular staff Training to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities.
- Learning from Serious Case reviews - shared with staff.
- Engagement with other professionals - Health, Social, Police and other agencies to support pupils, using myplan+ where necessary.
- Good links with Theresa Brown our designated Early Help Co-ordinator.
- Learning Mentor - working with individual and groups of children.
- Anti-Bullying Policy, both adult and child versions.
- E-Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement for staff, volunteers and children.
- Dedicated time at every staff meeting to discuss children of concern.

Effective assessment of the need for early help

Local agencies should work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from early help services.

Children and families may need support from a wide range of local agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments, such as the 'my assessment' conducted as part of a myplan+ should identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989

The early help assessment should be undertaken by a lead professional who should provide support to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and coordinate the delivery of support services. The lead professional role could be undertaken by a General Practitioner (GP), family support worker, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs coordinator. Decisions about who should be the lead professional should be taken on a case by case basis and should be informed by the child and their family.

For an early help assessment to be effective:

- the assessment should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers. It should involve the child and family as well as all the professionals who are working with them;
- a teacher, GP, health visitor, early years' worker or other professional should be able to discuss concerns they may have about a child and family with a social worker in the local authority. Local authority children's social care should set out the process for how this will happen; and
- if parents and/or the child do not consent to an early help assessment, then the lead professional should make a judgement as to whether, without help, the needs of the child will escalate. If so, a referral into local authority children's social care may be necessary.

If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need as defined in the Children Act 1989, or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral should be made immediately to local authority children's social care. This referral can be made by any professional.

CONTACT DETAILS- EARLY HELP

Theresa Brown

Early Help Co-Ordinator
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 Email: Theresa.BROWN@gloucestershire.gov.uk



To make a request for additional support, please complete the Consent Form with the family and send with the completed Early Help – Request for Support Form to:

Locality	Email	Telephone
Cheltenham	cheltenhamearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328160
Cotswolds	cotswoldsearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328101
Forest of Dean	forestofdeanearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328048
Gloucester	gloucesterearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328076
Stroud	stroudearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328130
Tewkesbury	tewkesburyearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328250

