



# **City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership**

## **Early Help Guidance**

**March 2022**

<b>Title</b>	<b>City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Early Help Guidance</b>
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<b>V1</b>	<b>Rose Howley, Head of Service Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), Assessment, and Targeted Intervention, City of York Council</b> <b>Sue Naylor, Service Manager: Targeted Interventions, City of York Council</b> <b>Sophia Lenton-Brook, CYSCP Business Manager, CYSCP Business Unit</b>	<b>Jan 22</b>	
<b>V2</b>	<b>Early Help Task Group</b>	<b>March 22</b>	<b>Sign off</b>

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This document aims to provide guidance to the whole range of practitioners working with and supporting vulnerable children, young people and families in the City of York. This document should be read in conjunction with the [City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Early Help Strategy 2021-2023](#). The overarching vision of the Early Help Strategy is to **'ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time'** (Working Together, 2018).
- 1.2 Early Help is a collaboration and not the sole responsibility of one service. 'Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe' (Working Together, 2018).
- 1.3 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, 2018).

## 2. Meeting Needs

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### Early Identification – Local Offer of Support for Families

- 2.1 Providing Early Help support to families at the right time is more effective in promoting the welfare of children. This early identification of support means that children will less likely be at risk of harm and in turn will achieve better outcomes and start in life.
- 2.2 This can mean exploring additional support to be offered by a single agency already in contact with children and their families. This could be school, a health visitor or early years' provider, amongst others. For example, support offered to a child and their parents/ carers around poor school attendance or additional support around establishing bedtime routines for a young child. This is not an exhaustive list, but examples of how single agencies may offer support in the first instance.
- 2.3 At this stage, it may be useful to explore support universally available in the wider community. In the City of York, this information can be accessed through the Family Information Service. You can seek support from the Family Information Service (FIS) which provides a wide range of advice and guidance as well as information on resources including family support

and advice, education, childcare and activities. Further information about the Family Information Service can be found [here](#) or alternatively you can contact the Family Information Service at: [FIS@york.gov.uk](mailto:FIS@york.gov.uk)

- 2.4** While at times it may involve referrals to other agencies, at its heart is providing support by practitioners who have an existing, trusted relationships with the child, young person or family in order to intervene early and prevent problems from escalating. For many families, this may be all the additional support they require which should continue to be offered through the single agency. This should be the first step in embarking on identifying and offering Early Help support.

### **Emerging Problems and Potential Unmet Needs**

- 2.5** At times, families will require additional support to address issues and needs as they arise above that of a single agency response. Agencies should always seek to discuss their concerns with the child's family and if appropriate, directly with the young person. Working in partnership and advising how you are trying to help.
- 2.6** In the first instance, we advise that you check with the Supporting Families Team: [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk) via email to identify if there is already an agency involved with the family. If there is, with consent from the family, you **must** make contact with that agency to be included in the offer of early help support. If not, you will need to register that you are supporting a family with the supporting families team: [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk).
- 2.7** The supporting families' team can also advise you on how to assess early help needs, formulate a plan with the child and family and set up a team around the child. This service also offers advice on supporting parents into employment.
- 2.8** If not already in place, discuss any identified needs with the child and parents and offer an early help assessment. You will need consent to share information and to access support. Families may also be able to explain, assist or resolve the issues themselves or within their wider family, networks and communities.
- 2.9** You should use the [City of York Early Help Assessment Tool](#) to assess the early help needs, to consider support needs and to collaboratively

develop a plan with the child and family.

### **3. The Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family**

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- 3.1** The Early Help Assessment is a tool to engage with the child, young person and their family to effectively identify needs, strengths and possible solutions working in partnership with both the family and other services. Once you have assessed needs and strengths with the family, the Early Help Assessment can be shared with the services that you agree with the family need to be involved to meet the needs of the child, young person and their family. By doing this the family do not have to repeat their story more than once and the services you have identified have a clear understanding of how they can be of help.
- 3.2** Understanding the child's 'lived experience' is critical. While the degree of concerns or the presence of multiple factors may escalate concern, the presence of protective factors may reduce a child's vulnerability and provide the potential for increased resilience.
- 3.3** Once needs, strengths, protective factors and risk factors have been considered, the process requires an analysis of the likely impact of these factors on the outcomes for the child. The Early Help Assessment should:
- Be a dynamic process, which analyses and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or likelihood of harm faced by the child.
  - Monitor and record the impact of any services provided to the child and family and review the help being provided; and
  - Be focused on the needs of the child and on the impact any services are likely to have on the child. This leads to action planning.
  - Include (where relevant) information relating to the GRRACCEESS (Gender, Generational, Race, Religion, Abilities, Age, Culture, Class, Education, Ethnicity, Sexuality, Spirituality).
  - Capture the views of all family members and significant others, whether living in the family home or not, should be evident in the assessment, for example, it may include references to conversations or direct quotes from parents/carers/children/young people. The assessment should always prioritise the needs of the children.
  - Include a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound) plan for the first Team around the child and family meeting (e.g. date, proposed TACF members, childcare, venue, interpreter, etc.) This will include clear actions/outputs for the child/family alongside professionals.

- The plan should be impactful, and outcome focussed and be clear and jargon free and will define what success measures (outcomes) will look like. The focus should always be on outcomes for the child and family rather than outputs or actions completed.
- 3.4** As you progress the early help assessment, if needs are identified that your agency is unable to meet, you should consult with the appropriate agency/agencies that could meet the need and where appropriate make a referral with consent of the family. They should then become part of the assessment and subsequent Team Around the child and Family. The child and family need to agree on the person best placed to act as the main point of contact.
- 3.5** Once the assessment has been completed, this will need to be emailed directly to the Supporting Families Team [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk) to ensure the support accessed by a child and family is recorded centrally.
- 3.6** It is the collective responsibility of all agencies involved to promote the safety, health and wellbeing of the child. All agencies involved with Children and their Families have a statutory duty to support, safeguard and provide early help support to children. Should there be any issues in involving other agencies please see the [CYSCP Guidance on Resolution of Disputes](#) for further support.
- 3.7** Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) it is important that all agencies continue to be involved in the delivery of support to a child/ family. This is managed through regular Team Around the Family meetings. These are important to ensure actions identified from the assessment are completed and any outstanding needs or issues are addressed.
- 3.8** If the child and family need a more co-ordinated response you should convene an initial team around the child and family meeting **within 10 working days**, ensuring that the child, if appropriate, family and all identified agencies involved are invited. The completed assessment needs to be shared with all parties prior to the meeting with a clear agenda for discussion. An example of this is available on the [CYSCP Early Help webpage](#).
- 3.9** The Team Around the Family meeting is a collaborative one. There will be actions identified for all involved and it is the responsibility of all members

to ensure these are completed within agreed timescales.

- 3.10** A written record of the Team Around the Family meetings must be taken, distributed to all members and a copy emailed to the Supporting Families Team: [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk) within **5 working days** of the meeting. Responsibility for this can be agreed by all parties and need not always be the same person/ agency. These meetings should continue until all actions have been addressed and the needs of the child have been met. The Team around the Family form is available on the [CYSCP Early Help webpage](#).
- 3.11** At the point of all actions being met and no further needs identified, you may agree with the family that the Team Around the Family is no longer required and single agency support should continue as required. At this stage, you will need to notify the Supporting Families Team via email: [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk) that the assessment is completed and there is no further requirement for Team Around the Family meetings.
- 3.12** At times, families may require continued or additional support. If a Team Around the Family has been running for 3 months and either new needs have emerged or concerns remain or have escalated, you will need to complete a new early help assessment. At that point, if support is required from additional agencies, these should be approached and be included in the Team Around the Family. This new assessment must be submitted to the Supporting Families Team: [supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk](mailto:supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk).
- 3.13** If at any point there are escalating concerns of a safeguarding nature or if you are unsure of the level of support after looking at the [CYSCP Multi-Agency Levels of Need Threshold Guidance](#) or you can contact the MASH to be able to speak to a Social Worker or Early Help Co-ordinator: Telephone: **01904-551900** or alternatively email: [MASH@york.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@york.gov.uk)

#### **4. The Local Authority Offer for Early Help**

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- 4.1** Most families who need some additional support will achieve positive outcomes through an Early Help Assessment and Plan leading onto a Team Around the child and Family, drawn from universal service provision, e.g., schools, health visiting. Where the family and the team around the child and family are struggling to make progress to achieve outcomes, the support of a Child and family support practitioner can be accessed to work alongside the team around the child and family to provide outreach support and direct work with the child and family within their home.

- 4.2** As part of the collaborative approach to delivering Early Help Support to children and families. If there is a need for a targeted response from a child and family support practitioner and you have identified a need for a practitioner to work directly with the child and family, you can use the early help assessment to make the referral to the Targeted Intervention Service by emailing the Early Help Assessment to MASH: [earlyhelp@york.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelp@york.gov.uk)
- 4.3** The Child and Family Support Practitioner will be able to offer targeted support in the home, for example modelling parenting strategies, support around routines, addressing challenging behaviours or complex relationship issues within the home, impacting on the child/ren. They use a wide range of evidence-based tools to engage families and promote positive change.

## **5. Information Sharing**

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- 5.1 Effective sharing of information between practitioners and local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe. Partner Agencies have worked together to develop a multi-agency overarching [City of York and North Yorkshire Multi-agency Information Sharing Protocol](#) to create a positive culture of sharing information and facilitate more effective Data Sharing practices between Partner Agencies, with the aim of improving service delivery.
- 5.2 The Protocol applies to all information being shared by signatory Partner Agencies and it establishes the types of data Partner Agencies will share, how data is handled and the legislation which allows the information to be shared, as well as outlining processes for developing Partner Agency Information Sharing Arrangements.
- 5.3 The Department for Education has produced [guidance on information sharing](#) for people who provide safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers

## **6. Consent**

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- 6.1 Early Help is voluntary and consent from children, young people and their families to work with them should always be sought. A consent and information sharing form should be used. It is important that children and



families understand that consent is required to share information and are agreeable to information sharing as part of the assessment of early help and support needs.

- 6.2 For further information regarding the Early Help Privacy Notice and Consent Form please visit the [CYSCP Early Help Page](#).