

Resources Toolkits and guidance for practitioners in County Durham

The following tools and guidance are for practitioners working with families and undertaking assessments. The documents provide a sound evidence base upon which to form robust analysis, decision making and actions.

[Home Environment Assessment Tool](#) and [HEAT Analysis and Action Plan](#)
[County Durham Family Outcome Framework](#)
[County Durham Children and Families Practice Toolkit](#)

[Neglect Practice Guidance](#)
[Threshold Document \(0-19 Level of Need\)](#)
[Engaging Families Guidance](#)

[Screening Tool for Alcohol related risk](#)
[The Family Pack of Questionnaires and Scales](#)
[Three Houses](#)

What to do: If you are concerned a child is at risk consider referring to First Contact

What is Early Help?

Early help means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes. Effective early help works to prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do, before problems get worse. It also helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life.

Early help can take different forms, from home visiting programmes to support vulnerable parents, to school-based programmes to improve children's social and emotional skills, to mentoring schemes for young people who are vulnerable to involvement in crime. While some have argued that early intervention may have its strongest impact when offered during the first few years of life, the best evidence shows that effective interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence.

Why it matters

All children deserve the best possible start in life. Too many children face the kind of disadvantage that affects their development and threatens their future health and happiness. Early intervention can play a part in offering these children and their families the support they need to reach their potential. The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) estimate that in England and Wales approximately £ 17 billion per year is spent on 'late intervention', focussed on the damaging problems that affect children and young people such as domestic violence and abuse, child neglect and maltreatment, mental health problems, youth crime and exclusion from education and work. This figure does not capture any lasting effects

How does it work?

Early help works to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors in a child's life. We have a good understanding of the risk factors that can threaten children's development, limit future social and economic opportunities, and increase the likelihood of mental and physical health problems, criminal involvement, substance misuse, or exploitation or abuse in later life. These factors exist at different levels within the child's environment – at the individual family, community and society level and interact in complex ways. Protective factors are the characteristics or conditions of individuals, families, communities and society that can mitigate these risks and increase the health and wellbeing of children and families. These risk factors cannot tell us exactly which child or young person will need help. But they can help us to identify children who are vulnerable and who may need extra support.

What can early help achieve?

Early help approaches often focus on supporting four key aspects of child development

- their physical
- cognitive,
- behavioural;
- and social and emotional development

This is where it has the potential to make the biggest difference and provide benefits throughout a person's life.

Family Centre 'Early Help Offer'

will operate out of 15 Children's Centres. The Family Centres will help families avoid poverty, manage debt and improve family circumstances through support education, training and work and will coordinate, voluntary and community partners to ensure all children get the best start in life, have access to services, activities and resources. Children, young people and families can have multiple needs and that support will not be limited to either adults or children

Family Centres 'Early Help Offer' includes: Support for learning- enabling early learning and development, improving access to education, improving behaviour at school. Health and wellbeing- mental and emotional health, healthy lifestyles, safe choices. Life skills- budgeting, employment skills, home Environment. Healthy relationships and parenting

Early Help in County Durham

All children and young people in County Durham will receive Universal Services; however, some children will require extra support to be healthy, safe and achieve their potential. Early Help Services in County Durham are delivered through a coordinated universal and targeted community based provision. This includes, Health Visitors, School Nurses, Midwives, GPs, Schools and Durham's One Point Service. The One Point Service provides targeted early help to children aged 0-19 years (up to 25 with SEND). They identify and support children, young people and families. The one point Service consists of:-

Intensive Family Support for children and families with complex needs requiring early help. These families will receive coordinated intensive whole family, outcome focussed support in order to help them to make positive changes.