

Early help guide for families

Introduction

All agencies that work with children, young people and families are responsible for listening to your concerns and worries and working closely with you to make sure you and your family get the right support at the right time.

At times children and families need a bit of extra support – and when that happens, it's ok to ask for help.

Early help is there to make sure worries don't become bigger and you get the support you need at the right time. You may have found out about how early help can make a difference from a teacher, health visitor, midwife, school health nurse, early years practitioner, doctor, voluntary worker or another trusted professional already working with you.

There are lots of different reasons you might need early help:

- You could be worried about your own or your child's health, development or behaviour, or how things are going at school or nursery.
- You could be caring for others, or maybe you've had a bereavement in the family, and it's made life a real challenge.
- It may be that you're worried about money or housing and how it's affecting your family.
- Maybe you or your family are affected by domestic abuse, mental health, drugs, alcohol or crime.

“Talking to people can make a real difference. By getting help now you can stop problems getting worse.”

What's involved?

You've already taken a big first step by asking for help. Now we can work with you, your family and all the agencies who are here to support you in Oxfordshire to take the next one.

Step 1

Get the support of a trusted professional to help you. This is important. They will help you explore what's going well and any difficulties you and your family may be experiencing.

They might suggest filling in a strengths and needs form. This is just a record of what you talked about, so that the right support can be provided.

You will agree together what is written on the form. Completing it means if you require support from other professionals, it will help them understand how they can help, without you having to repeat yourself.

It is important that your children get their say. So, once you've given the ok, together with the person supporting you, you can decide who will speak to your children.

Step 2

Using the strengths and needs form, you may be able to put together a plan which can help to support any needs you have. If this is the case, you may not need to do anything else.

Step 3

If you need advice from other professionals, your trusted person, with your permission, can also speak to people in other organisations and share the information you've provided. They will then pull together a team of people who can provide the advice and support you need.

Step 4

You may all meet to talk through what needs to happen next. This is called a team around the family meeting and together you'll find ways to solve any of the support needs you have.

The important thing is they all come together to make what could be a big worry easier to solve.

What's involved in a team around the family meeting?

Step 1

To make sure you get the right people involved, your team around the family will be personal to your needs. Yours could involve friends and family including your children, but also other people who are already a part of your life such as a teacher, health visitor, midwife, school health nurse, early years practitioner or doctor.

It's important that your children have their say. If appropriate your child(ren) can be invited to the team around the family meeting or their views could be included in the meeting without them needing to be there.

Step 2

You may meet them all to talk through what could be done to help you. This could be done physically or virtually.

This first meeting together is to go through your strengths and needs form which sets out the worries you have.

Step 3

Once everyone knows the situation, the team supporting you will then develop a plan with you, to work out how everyone together can solve the problems you have raised that you and your children need help with. It could be a mixture of different things are needed.

Step 4

The team around the family will also identify who your lead professional will be going forward. Once your plan is in place, they will help you keep track of how you are doing. If they need to involve others, they will do. But only with your agreement.

We're committed to giving you the best possible advice

If the lead professional requires additional advice and support, they can contact the **Locality Community Support Service (LCSS)** whose role is to support the early help process, offering guidance and advice to those professionals working with you.

This can start as soon as you or the professionals working with you identify that early help may be of benefit to you and your family.

They can help in different ways:

- If they need advice on who to ask for specific types of support – LCSS can save them time by pointing them in the right direction.
- They may need some guidance on how to complete the paperwork that is done with you to work out what you need – LCSS can support them, so you get the most out of your time with your trusted/lead professional.
- Sometimes team around the family meetings may need more support to find solutions to meet the needs of your family – LCSS can attend to help with this.



They're here to enable your team to support you and your family.



Early help privacy notice

What happens to the information that is collected about me?

Any information about you can be shared with all those working with you **with your agreement**.

All early help paperwork (strengths and needs form / team around the family meeting minutes) is sent to the Locality Community Support Service, who support early help processes in Oxfordshire. We will treat your information as confidential and won't share it with any other organisation unless we are required by law or you or any person will come to some harm if we do not. In this case we will only ever share the minimum information needed. All personal information will be processed and stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

For more information please visit: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/childrens-services/integrated-childrens-services/early-help-privacy-notice>

Your team could be made up of lots of different people, so make a note of their names and what they do here: