

'Early help' is support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes which can often reduce the chance of a problem getting worse.

It is important that children receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues from escalating.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children applies to both early help and child protection.

It is defined as:

- **protecting children from maltreatment**
- **preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development**
- **ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and**
- **taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes**

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.

Early help can prevent further problems from arising and relies on local organisations working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services

Sharing information is key to good assessment and provision of suitable and timely support.

All staff should be aware of their setting's early help process and understand their role in it.

Any child may benefit from early help, but all education staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- is a young carer
- shows signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, or exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- has returned home to their family from care
- is privately fostered

Sheffield's Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST) can help with advice and provision of early help services:

- [MAST: Professionals](#)
- [Ask us a question](#)
- **Tel.: 0114 203 7485**

Useful resources:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021](#)
- [SCSP Early Help information](#)
- [Family Common Assessment Framework](#)
- [Referring your safeguarding concerns](#)

If you are worried that a child or young person may need early help, inform your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy as soon as possible.

The DSL/D will assess the child and family's needs using the Family Common Assessment Framework (FCAF), work with them to address those needs, and refer them to other services as appropriate (see 'Referring your safeguarding concerns' in the useful resources box above)

Early Help

