

Early Help Referrals

1. Purpose and content

The purpose of this appendix of the College Safeguarding Policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to staff regarding identifying young people who would benefit from a multi-agency response to issues affecting the young person or their family.

2. 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. 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, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

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.

3. The Need for Early Help

Any child or young person may benefit from early help, but all college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a young person 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;
- is showing 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 misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;

- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse;
- has returned home to their family from care;
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect;
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
- is a privately fostered child.

Early Help is useful where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early assessments 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 2004 1989.

4. Making an Early Help Referral

If you suspect a young person would benefit from Early Help to prevent issues from escalating to a Child in Need at a later point, you should contact your site Safeguarding Officer or Welfare Team.

The Safeguarding or Welfare Team will work with you to complete an Early Help Assessment which will establish the level of need of the young person. If the level of need meets the requirement for referral an Early Help Assessment will be sent to the local First Contact Team.

If the level of need does not meet the threshold for an early help referral, the Safeguarding and Welfare Team will work with you to implement support to best suit the young person's needs. It is essential that the young person, the safeguarding and welfare team and you as the referrer work together to support the young person.

If the young person's circumstances change or the situation does not improve, consideration should be made to review using the early help assessment framework.

5. Effective Early Help

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 or tutor, with the Safeguarding Officer or Welfare Team, 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, however, the Deputy Safeguarding Lead in college should make the final decision and lead on the referral.