



Supporting Families

What is it?

Supporting Families focuses on providing help to families with multiple and complex problems to prevent them from escalating into crises. A keyworker works with all members of the family to build a relationship and effect positive change.

The programme also drives early help system transformation locally and nationally to ensure that every area has joined-up, efficient services, is able to identify families in need, provides the right support at the right time and tracks outcomes in the long term.

Supporting Families focuses on providing targeted interventions for families with complex interconnected problems. These problems include unemployment and financial instability, poor school attendance, mental and physical health problems, involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and poor family relationships, children who are at risk of abuse and exploitation, substance misuse and insecure housing.

The four key principles of Supporting Families are; early intervention, whole family working, multi-agency working and measuring outcomes and data.

What are the benefits?

Providing support at the earliest opportunity to prevent crises for families is key to the approach. The vision is that the practice of whole-family key-working is spread across

agencies, including the forming of strong partnerships with specialist services, more involvement from voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and from communities themselves. The aim is for strong multiagency local partnerships in every area and mature local and national data systems, which enable partners to identify families in need of extra help, target services more effectively and track family-level outcomes over the long term. This supports partnerships to fully embed preventative approaches into their support systems for families, creating more resilient communities for the long term.

Why is it important to provide Early Help support and work in a joined up way?

Parenting is not easy under the best of circumstances. It is particularly challenging, however, when parents and carers must also cope with serious and persistent issues such as joblessness, mental health problems and family breakdown. Parents and carers often require access to a range of interventions, including intensive relational support to be able to address multiple issues. Effective support for vulnerable families cannot be provided in an uncoordinated, transactional way, which sees only problems rather than people and fails to comprehend the entirety of a family's life. The result is escalating problems, poor outcomes for children, and unmanageable flows into reactive, statutory systems, which is overwhelming and costly for public services.

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What should practitioners do?

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help at the earliest opportunity with the whole family
- Act as Lead Professional and work in using a multiagency approach (where needed) to provide targeted and coordinated early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child and support the family to achieve sustainable changes
- Identify the relevant Supporting Families criteria as part of the assessment and reflect this in the plan to support change and improvements. This supports identifying and measuring outcomes
- Let the Early Help central database know when the Early Help Assessment is open, when the plan has been reviewed and when the support has ended and the Early Help Assessment and Plan have been closed. This supports effective partnership working, prevents duplication and supports data quality.

For more information...

Early Help Access Point for support and advice on undertaking Early Help Assessment email: earlyhelp@bolton.gov.uk

Visit [Early help and working together – Bolton Safeguarding Children](#)

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