

Early Help and Children and Families Service



Our aim is to empower children and families to manage difficulties as they arise, thereby improving their life opportunities. By doing this we will help reduce social problems generally in society and improving outcomes for the whole family.

What is Early Help?

Early Help is Tower Hamlets approach to providing support to children, young people and their families as soon as problems start to emerge. When a child, young person or the family need some extra support, Early Help is often the initial response offered by those services in contact with them.

Early Help is primarily delivered through our 12 Children and Family Centres situated throughout the borough. The services in the centres will support families of children and young people from 0-19 years old and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities up to 25. Our aim is to support families at the earliest point when challenges first arise and to stop these challenges escalating.

Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, Early Help is not just for very young children. Problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence, as such children and families are entitled to access Early Help if and when they need it at every stage of a child's development.



Purpose of Early Help

The purpose of Early Help is, through prompt and targeted interventions, to prevent challenges and problems becoming acute, chronic and costly to the child, young person, the family and the wider community. The aim of Early Help is to build on people's capacity and resources to manage their own challenges, resolve their own difficulties and to reduce the likelihood of the problem reoccurring in the future.

Early Help may be provided through an increase in the levels of universal services, or other local authority services provided or commissioned; this includes family support provided by Children and Family Centres 0-19 team, schools, youth services and voluntary sector services. In most cases, families are best supported where those who already work with them, organise any additional support with local partners as needed.

What help do we provide?

– right help, right time

With our partners we offer a range of services within the Early Help & Children and Family Service dependent upon the level of support for children and their families. We provide direct support to families and work alongside our partners to ensure that families received consistent and joined up interventions. Our partnerships include organisations who offer housing, parenting programmes, employment services, mental health services, and education which includes all local schools. By working together and engaging with partner agencies, we ensure that families get the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

Engagement opportunities include phone calls and meetings, including Team around the Family Meetings which take place between those individuals and organisations who work across universal, targeted and specialist services.

The best time for engagement is early in the life of the problem, when it is felt that a child's needs are not being met and that added support will help to improve life opportunities.

As children's needs are met and concerns are reduced, the level of engagement will reduce until this quality engagement is no longer required.

Services we provide

Most children's needs are met by their family or universal services that is, those services that are available to everyone. These provisions such as schools, GP's and Stay & Play sessions are provided to all children, young people and their families.

For those children and families who face more challenges and have multiple needs, for example where there is parental conflict, poor school attendance and parental mental health difficulties, targeted services provide additional capacity and expertise to work alongside families to address these needs.

For children whose needs and circumstances are multiple, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, based on an Early Help Assessment (EHA), with a Lead Practitioner to ensure that all family members receive the support they require in a coordinated way. A range of targeted services are available through the Early Help & Children and Family Services and its partners at the Children and Family Centres in the local community.

When a child's needs cannot be met in universal, targeted or specialist services in Early Help, practitioners can make a request directly to statutory services. This includes when a child needs help, and where it is believed that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Children and Family Centres

Children and Family Centres provides support and advice to families to enable them to access and play opportunities, preparing children for school readiness and ensure early identification is taking place at the earliest opportunity. Children and Family centre sessions aim to:

- Support children to learn and develop, to improve confidence and skills through a playful learning experience
- Support parents in their role as the first educator.
- Empower parents to support child development
- Promote an active and healthy lifestyle
- Encourage parents to follow their child's lead and interests
- Offer ways that families can enjoy play at home or outdoors
- Encourage children to explore boundaries and take risks in a safe environment

For further information, please visit your local Children and Family Centre.



When concerned about a child

For more information about Early Help, please call the Early Help Hub on 020 7364 5006 (select option 2) or visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/earlyhelp. The Early Help Hub is the front door to most Early Help Services.

If you are concerned child that a child is at risk of or is experiencing significant harm, you must contact the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub Team Tel: **020 7364 5006** (Option 3) and MASH out of hours **020 7364 4079**.