

What is Early Help?

Early Help means providing help for children, young people and families as soon as problems start to emerge or where it is likely that issues will impact negatively on children's outcomes.

Early help...

- Is for children of all ages and not just the very young,
- Can be provided at any point of need and;
- Can be very effective in supporting a child, young person and/or their family to step down from statutory services as well as preventing the escalation of issues.
- Is important because there is clear evidence that it results in better outcomes for children.

Early help is a term that describes much of the everyday work of schools.

Lancashire County Council recognises that Early Help is a term that describes much of the everyday work of schools.

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/>

Early Help in Lancashire

The vision of all partner organisations working with children and families in Lancashire is to improve children's lives by working in partnership to raise aspirations, build achievement and protect the most vulnerable.

This is based on the belief that:

- Children, young people and families develop resilience if there are protective factors in place such as: a positive relationship with an adult; good literacy and communication skills; good school attendance; and, parents in or actively seeking/ready for work
- Children's needs are best met when help is offered in a universal setting within a socially mixed group and early on when problems start to emerge
- Children and young people's needs are best met when addressed in the context of the whole family, meaning that parents/carers/siblings' needs are addressed with consent as part of a holistic and integrated Early Help response

Early Help services should **support** and **strengthen** families so that they can **thrive**.

The Role of Schools

Day to Day Support

Most families, most of the time, can get on with their lives quite happily with little or no outside help. If they need help it is usually provided by universal services, such as schools, doctors, dentists etc. This can include the day-to-day support provided to pupils and their families by staff within school.

Focused Pastoral Support

All families can have times, however, when difficulties arise and they either may not recognise it or may not know how to start putting things right. Schools play a role in supporting families to address these difficulties through more focused pastoral support, which might include bringing in support via an external agency.

Early Help Assessment

For those children and families whose needs and circumstances make them more vulnerable, or where schools need the support of other agencies to meet the needs of the family, a coordinated multi-agency approach is usually best. In Lancashire this is achieved through undertaking an Early Help Assessment and assigning a Lead Practitioner to work closely with the family to ensure they receive the support they require. The Early Help Assessment is an intervention with a family to gather, explore and analyse with them information about all aspects of the child or young person (and their family's) life and then to identify areas where change will address support needs and positively impact on their lived experiences.

This is recorded on an Early Help Assessment form which includes the family's Early Help Plan.

The following four commitments are the core elements to St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School's Early Help Offer.

- Pupils, parent/carers and staff are clear on the Early Help support available through the school
- Clarity for partners, supporting improved multi-agency working
- Delivery approaches of Early Help support for more vulnerable families are up to date with local offers
- Commitment to the personal development and well-being strand of the Ofsted Framework