

# Early Help Services in Islington

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## **Early Help Pledge to Families**

In Islington, we have an early help strategy and a simple early help pledge to families - all partner services (children's and adults' services) have signed up to this.

1. Every communication will count.
2. We will not pass the buck.
3. There will be one main point of contact.
4. Assessments will be uncomplicated and robust.
5. Services that are needed will be easy to access.
6. Services will be safe, practical and useful.
7. Children, young people and adult family members will be involved in agreeing what support is needed.

## Right services first time

To avoid stigmatisation and make best use of resources, Islington's family support services are structured to help families get the right support first time.

Most requests for services are received by our single point of contact, the Children's Services Contact Team (CSCT). This team screens contacts and decides whether they meet the threshold for a statutory children's social care service or require early help support.

Our core **early help family support service offer** is as follows:

Support **universal services** that are available to all families to support families to identify solutions to problems that arise.

Evidence based early help to families is delivered through **Children's Centres** (families with children under 5) and **Families First** (5-19 years). Both services target the most vulnerable families with multiple problems who incur higher costs to statutory services if they do not receive early help. For families who have had lower level early help and there is little impact, we have **Islington Families Intensive Team (IFIT)**.

## What do our services do?

**Universal services** are those that are available to all families. Families are able to identify their own needs and gain access to the services they need with minimal intervention from professionals.

To effectively deliver universal services within the context of Early Help, providers and professionals will support families to identify their own solutions to problems. This involves:

- Making information available to families so that they can find out what services there are and where and how they can access them when they need them. This would include raising awareness of the Family Information Service and the Family Directory [www.islington.gov.uk/familydirectory](http://www.islington.gov.uk/familydirectory);
- Providing general advice and information;
- Assessing needs – using an *early help assessment* where it is identified that the involvement of more than one agency to meet the child, young person or family's additional needs;
- Monitoring needs in a low-key 'at a distance' way and be ready to step in if the family exhibits signs that indicate a more targeted response is required;
- Being aware of the range of targeted and specialist services available and an understanding of how to link with them. This may involve targeted services (such as Families First or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) being delivered within universal settings so that families can 'step up and step down' between tiers of need quickly as needs emerge and are dealt with.

This approach helps families to get support quickly and easily.

**Children's Centres** provide a universal core offer of support to families with children aged 0-5, targeting those who are most vulnerable, and focusing on child development, school readiness, parenting skills, child and family health and pathways to employment.

**Families First** provides services to families with multiple needs from our most vulnerable groups (e.g. low income, minority ethnic communities, single parents, sick/disabled parents) to provide support with parenting, behaviour management, help to sort out practical challenges like debt and rent arrears, and pathways to employment.

**Islington Families Intensive Team (IFIT)** provides more intensive support and challenge to (usually workless) families at high risk of eviction, where children are not attending school, are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Some young people are at high risk of becoming looked after.

Children's Centres, Families First and IFIT deliver to a consistent model:

- Home visiting /outreach- persistent and tenacity
- Dedicated lead professional
- Whole family assessment, plan and intervention
- Tailored to the family but challenging as well as supportive
- Emphasis on delivering quality and improved outcomes and monitoring these consistently

**Family Employment Advisers** are embedded into each service offering bespoke coaching and practical assistance with pathways to training and work. A key strategic change in recent years has to been to put employability at the heart of our family support work, i.e. a job as a route out of poverty. Our advisers stay in touch with parents once they are in work and provide support to continue or to look for more advanced opportunities. Many of the parents they work with have a long history of unemployment going back many years, have missed out on key stages of education and found it hard to fill in gaps and have mental health issues/physical illness. Key factors for success were:

1. Individually designed programme tailored around each family's needs
2. Focus on practical skills required to access help
3. Integration of practical skills with job related activity
4. Timing and goals are person centred
5. Interpersonal skills of individual delivering intervention
6. Coaching style approach.

Our **Targeted Youth Support** Service works with young people aged 10 to 21 years old (12 – 21 for Youth Counselling), who require additional support to enable them to make informed choices and maintain positive pathways. TYS is made up of 4 service areas that provide interlinking support: TYS area teams providing tailored support, 1:1 and group work support, education, detached youth work, Return Home Interviews, and the completion of all Out of Court disposals; Islington Young People's Drugs and Alcohol Service (IYPDAS); Liaison and Diversion and the TYS Youth Counselling Service.

Targeted youth support is specific, tailored interventions aimed at young people and their families who need extra provision on top of universally provided services. TYS use the Early Help Assessment to ensure that the young person's and their families' needs are identified and lead planned work to address those needs. They work with each young person from their own starting point, drawing in partners, peer and parents as appropriate, challenging and enabling them to understand the consequences of their actions, make changes and build skills.

TYS teams also deliver work in local secondary schools covering issues such as substance misuse, positive and healthy relationships, keeping safe, gangs, weapons awareness and joint enterprise.

TYS works with partners such as Children's Social Care, IFIT and Families First to support the young person within the Children and Families Plan.

TYS retain a strong emphasis on community-based delivery providing support within local community settings and working with local neighbourhood services to enhance community cohesion and prevent escalation of anti-social behaviour (ASB). We deploy our youth trucks and

detached teams across the borough based on intelligence and ASB reports, working with young people where they meet and congregate, encouraging them to participate in group work and connecting them into their local areas.

Our **SEND Community Support Service** provides free, legally based, impartial, confidential and accessible information, advice and support on all matters relating to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The offer includes

- Information and advice, either face to face, by telephone or electronically
- Help with preparing for meetings with schools, colleges and the Local Authority
- Support to express your views and wishes
- Information, advice, and support on all education, health and social care matters
- Help with writing letters, reports and filling in forms
- Help to complete SEN-related paperwork such as requests for EHC assessment, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Information about local and national services and help with making referrals to services
- Information, advice and support to help resolve conflicts and disagreements e.g. with schools, colleges and the Local Authority
- Help with paperwork for Disability related welfare benefits including Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- Advice on Health & Social Care, Personal Budgets, the law on SEN & Disability,

For all families, a range of evidence based **parenting programmes** are on offer. These are groups that can promote parent-child bonding, enable parents to find positive ways to support their child's development and manage behaviour problems, and help parents build strong local support networks.

- Solihull Baby
- Incredible Years
- Triple P
- Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities.

These are supplemented by specialist programmes, for example, for domestic violence and abuse or parenting a child with ADHD or autism.