

Bristol's Early Help Offer

A reference guide for professionals
May 2026



Contents

Introduction	3
Early help for children, young people and families	3
Graduated pathway and continuum of need	4
Bristol's Early Help Offer	5
Overview of early help services	6
Family Hubs	6
Parenting support	6
Early Years ages 0–5	7
Play and Youth Offer	7
Mental health and well-being support for children and young people	8
Harm Outside the Home/ child exploitation	8
Support to education, employment and training (EET)	9
Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	9
Attendance and Education Welfare Support	10
Early Help support for Parents and Carers	10
Family Help (level 3) – Intensive Early Help/ Getting More Help	11
Appendix: Bristol Parenting Courses and Programmes	12

Documents available in other formats

You can request alternative formats of this document by contacting:
family.hubs@bristol.gov.uk

Introduction

This document outlines Bristol's current early help offer for children and families and how to access the offer.

The range of services and help available is ever developing and is not static – development of our locality based integrated Family Hubs, our Youth Hubs model, and our digital offer are key to enabling children, young people, families and professionals to access up-to-date information about where to get help and support.



Early help for children, young people and families

“Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family’s resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.”

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

As with safeguarding, early help for children and families is everyone’s responsibility. The first person to offer help to a child or young person and their family should be the practitioner identifying the need, or the person that the child or family approaches for support.

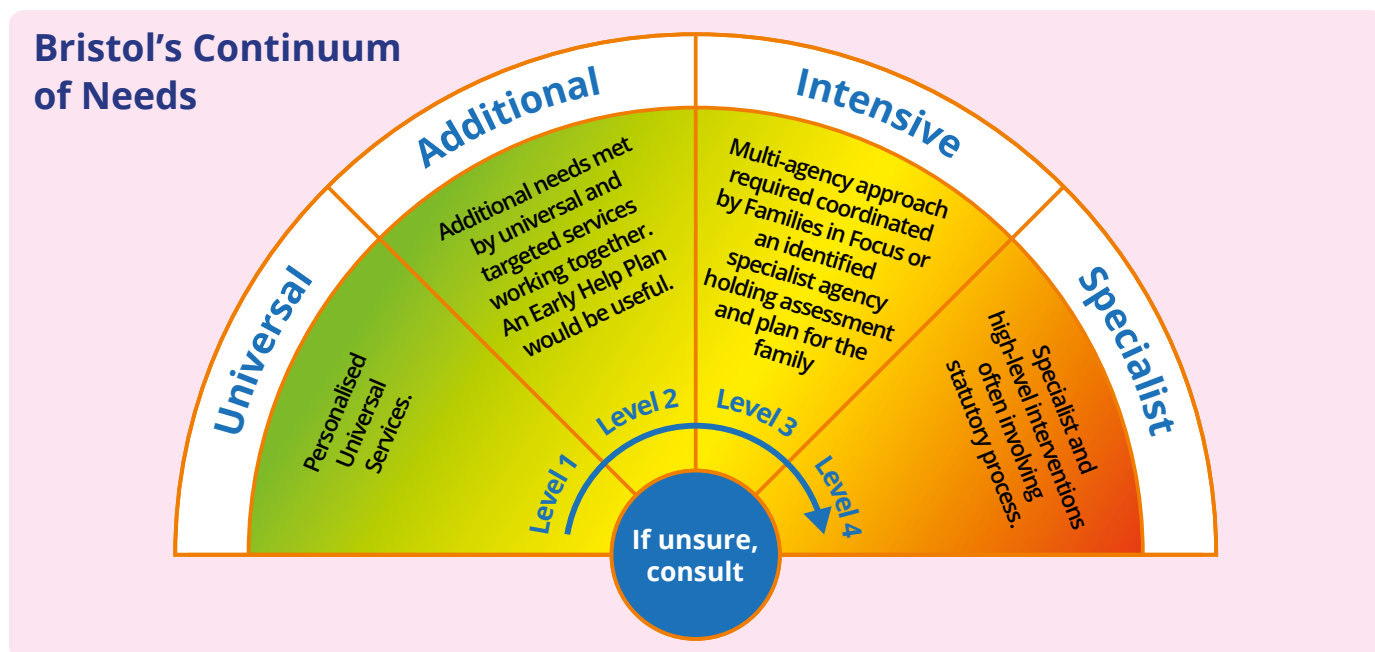
A wide range of services and agencies, deliver and coordinate early help for families within schools, the home, health and community settings.

Graduated pathway and continuum of need

There is a graduated pathway to early help in Bristol, enabling families to access early help at the earliest possible point in time, as soon as they need it, within the community where they live.

The [Keeping Bristol Children Safe Effective Support for Children and Families guidance](#) outlines the support that children and families can access at varying levels of need.

The Continuum of Need 'windscreen' below summarises how needs may be met depending on the level of support that a family needs.



The Continuum of Need is closely aligned to the **I-Thrive** framework.

The I-Thrive framework was developed for use to articulate mental health service delivery and is increasingly used across our services, such as health visiting, to help articulate service delivery for families.

The emphasis is on prevention and promotion of health and well-being across whole populations. The model recognises that people may need different types of advice, help and support at different times to thrive.

Thrive Framework (Wolpert et al 2019)



Bristol's Early Help Offer

We want all children in Bristol to have the best start in life. Children and families have their needs met through the range of universal services available to them most of the time.

Universal services can include family hubs, early years provision (nurseries, child minders), schools, colleges, primary

health care, maternity services, housing, community health care and leisure services. Community and voluntary organisations and faith groups deliver support across the range of universal services and in community settings.

Universal services will also support families in accessing additional early help when needed as per the pathway below:

Bristol's Early Help Pathway – Additional Early Help, Level Two

Additional support needs have been identified for a child and family requiring some coordination. There could be one or more agencies/ services needed.



Support may be accessed through our universal settings such as Family Hubs, Youth Hubs, education, health and voluntary and community sector settings.



It may be helpful for a lead practitioner to coordinate an early help plan – identifying needs, actions and outcomes – with the family where more than one agency/service is involved.



Early Help Plan is closed when agreed outcomes have been met. If needs are multiple and complex and cannot be met through additional help, a request for **Family Help** may be appropriate.



The **Early Help Tool Kit – Team around the Family**, early help assessment and plan processes and templates – will help with this. Helps the family to have one plan where everyone's role is clearly understood.



Access to the early help offer and support in the early help process is available through:

- [Family Hubs](#)
- Early Help Link Workers
- [SEND Local Offer](#)

Overview of early help services

Family Hubs

Bristol's Family Hubs bring together community-based access to information and support for families with children ages 0–19 (up to 25 for children with SEND).

Family Hubs provide a 'one stop shop' where families can get information and advice, access a range of activities and services, and get help to access any additional or specialist support they may need. Health services, the local authority and the voluntary, community and faith sector work collaboratively to provide information and services within the Family Hub system.

The digital [Bristol Family Hubs](#) provides families and professionals with access to information, guidance, and e-learning.

Families can sign up to become members of Bristol's Family Hubs, making it easier for them to see what's available in their local area. Joining is quick and straightforward, and can be done using the link:

[Join Bristol Family Hubs](#)

Early Help Link workers support professionals to develop outcome focused early help plans for children and families.

[Family Hub Navigators](#) are based within communities and help families connect with the help they need.



Parenting support

There is an extensive parent support offer in Bristol for children across the age range – [Bristol Family Hubs](#) (Appendix 1) including:

- Access to advice, information and support via Family Hubs and FLORA (SEND)
- Digital offer – holistic information, short videos, and access to free evidenced based online learning relating to emotional health, child development and parent wellbeing accessible to all Bristol residents using access code "GROWING" via [togetherness.co.uk](#)
- A wide range of evidenced based parenting courses and programmes are delivered across the city tailored to age ranges and specific needs delivered by Family Hubs and Family Help, including for children with SEND.
Bristol Family Hubs Parenting Groups: [Parenting Groups](#) and [Family Help: Citywide Parenting Programme](#)
- Family Learning courses are also provided by [Bristol Autism Family Support Service](#). These courses are designed to support families where a child or young person has a diagnosis of autism, is on the pathway for assessment or has identified social, communication and interaction, and sensory need.
[Autism Support](#)
- [Bristol Parent Carers](#) provide significant amounts of support for SEND families, with or without a diagnosis. Support for families includes peer support, access to Children's Wellbeing Practitioners (for children 5–10) and through signposting access to a full calendar of SEND-specific events delivered across Bristol.

Early Years ages 0–5

Best Start for Life, Healthy Child, parent support, family support and 0–5 activities and services are delivered through Family Hubs including community, voluntary and faith sector, and early years education providers. These include, for example:

- [Health visiting](#) and midwifery services, ante-natal support and support for new parents.
- Peri-natal mental health support; infant feeding support.
- Range of activities such as Stay and Play, peer support groups.
- Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MESCH) is currently provided by health visitors for families who may need additional help.
- [Family Nurse partnership](#) – providing a more intensive home visiting programme for first time parents under 19.
- Home learning support, including a free digital offer to support learning at home through play: [Easypeasy App](#)
- Portage services providing a home visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEND and their families. [Bristol Early Years – Portage](#)
[Bristol Early Years – SEND](#)
- Universal group activities for children with SEND.
- Early Years [Speech and Language Therapy](#) for 0 to 4 year-olds.
- Family Hubs Family Support teams delivering group work and family support.
- Domestic abuse support.

For more information about the above and to see what's on and support available, visit [Bristol Family Hubs](#) and [Bristol Early Years](#).

Play and Youth Offer

The play and youth offer is shaped by youth voice, including the Youth Council and the Listening Partnership and has been developed in partnership with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, Bristol Youth and Play Alliance (BYPA) and Bristol City Council.

The offer in Bristol is for children and young people aged 8–18 (up to 25 with SEND/care experienced). Delivery is prioritised in areas of greatest need and aims to ensure daily provision across wards. The offer provides tailored support for priority groups such as young carers, care leavers, children and young people with SEND, and those from minoritised communities.

Over 186 play and youth sessions take place across the city on a weekly basis. The diverse offer is co-developed with young people and engaged 21,729 children and young people (CYP) across the city in 2024/5 through:

- Open-access youth clubs
- Holiday provision
- Detached/outreach work
- Targeted group interventions and one-to-one support

[Find activities for young people Bristol Youth and Play Alliance.](#)

Services are designed to provide safe, supportive environments that promote:

- Positive mental health and wellbeing
- Personal and social development
- Skills acquisition and progression

Bristol's Holiday Hub (DfE funded HAF Programme) provides a range of holiday activities and meals for children with SEND and children in receipt of benefits related free school meals. [Your Holiday Hub Bristol](#)

East Central Young Futures Hub and Bristol's Youth Zone, opening in South Bristol in 2026, will provide high-quality, dedicated spaces, activities and support for young people. [Children and Young People's Network](#)

Mental health and well-being support for children and young people

Bristol's mental health support offer for children and young people includes:

- Online offer via [Kooth](#) and [Silver Cloud Silver](#)
- Online offer via [ChatHealth](#) (to talk to a health professional). The ChatHealth number is **0731 226 3093**.
- [Off the Record](#) youth counselling services and outreach projects
- Mental Health Support Teams in schools: [Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust](#) (available in selected settings only, ambition to be in all Bristol schools by 2029)
- School nursing service provides support around emotional wellbeing and keeping yourself well. Parents or young people can refer themselves via [School Nursing Service – Children and Young People's Services](#) and professionals (including schools) refer here: [School Nurse Service](#).
- Specialist CAMHS services. [Local community CAMHS: Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust](#)
- Horizons Youth supports children effected by their own and parental drug use. Support includes 1:1 and group support for young people who are using substance or are affected by someone else's substance use. [Horizons Bristol](#)
- [Unity Sexual Health](#) and [Sexual Health & Wellbeing - Brook](#) provide sex and relationships advice.

Harm Outside the Home/ child exploitation

Access to support is via requests to BCC First Response, Children's Services.

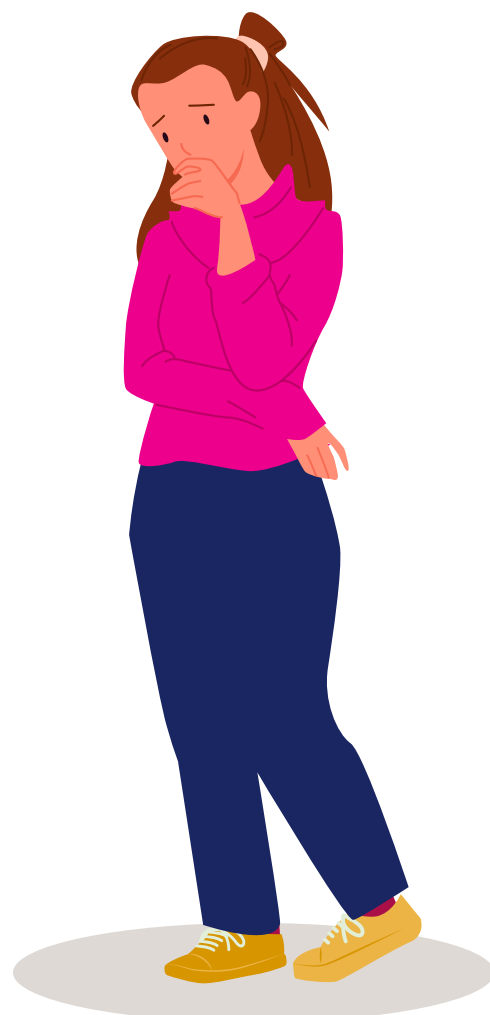
Bristol's youth justice service (YJS) delivers targeted early intervention for children on the cusp of offending through the Turnaround Programme. [Bristol Youth Justice Service](#)

Early support for children and young people is being further developed through the Prevention MACE.

Additional group and individual work with young people at risk of exploitation and serious youth violence is both commissioned and directly delivered via Bristol's Safer Connections/violence reduction partnership.

Schools guide to Safer Connections can be found here:

bristolsafeguardingineducation.org



Support to education, employment and training (EET)

Young people are supported into education, employment, and training (EET) through several programmes focused on meaningful experience of work opportunities and skill development. This includes specific support for young people in YJS, with SEND, and Care Leavers.

[Bristol Post 16](#)

Boost Your Future is a support programme for young people in Bristol who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET.

Details of what to expect can be found here:

[Boost Your Future – Bristol Post 16](#)

Bristol's NEET Reduction Programme pilot, funded by West of England Combined Authority, will significantly enhance our offer through provision of coaching and skill development programmes for 15 year-olds and 16/17 year-olds. The Youth Guarantee for 17–21 year-olds is being piloted in South Bristol. [South Bristol Youth Guarantee](#).



Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Early identification of children with emerging SEND needs enables support to be put in place as soon as possible.

- **Schools** access the Early Intervention Fund to help provide early intervention to a child where an early SEND need has been identified.
- Early help support and activities for parents with children with SEND are delivered through [Bristol Family Hubs](#), via direct support, commissioned providers and navigator signposting.
- The [SEND Local Offer](#) provides information about local services and activities for children and young people with SEND. This includes information on things to do, education, training and jobs.
- **FLORA** (Families, Local Offer, Resources and Advice) provides information and advice for children and young people with additional needs and their parents and carers, including how to access the **Inclusion Service** (short breaks). Contact flora@bristol.gov.uk
- Early Years and education settings are provided with training, to support children with SEND's inclusion. [Bristol Early Years – SEND](#)
- The **Portage Team** offers home visits and dual-setting support to understand children's needs. [Bristol Early Years – Portage](#)
- The [Bristol Autism Team](#) (BAT) uses rapid triage and embedded review cycles to identify needs early and offers support without requiring diagnosis or EHCP. [Parenting courses](#) for children with autism are also delivered.

- **IncludED** holds weekly multi-professional surgeries to support children with barriers to learning and provide tailored support, including outreach and ALP placements. IncludED and BAT provide outreach and mentoring to prevent exclusions and support reintegration. [Support for schools](#)
- **Sensory Support Service** offers an early response to new referrals as per national guidance to mitigate negative impact of sensory loss and support families to promote their child's communication and development. 'Information for settings, professionals and families about sensory support is available from the helpline via sensorysupportservice@bristol.gov.uk

The **Neuro Profiling Tool** and **PINS** project help schools support neurodiverse children without requiring diagnosis.

Attendance and Education Welfare Support

Schools seek to identify and engage families with children where attendance is below 90%. Where children and families need additional help relating to attendance families and schools can directly access the attendance and belonging team who will offer advice and support access to wider early help and specialist services as needed.

Education Welfare officers will work in partnership with other services to co-ordinate support for children missing education (CME).

[Attendance and Education Welfare Service](#)

There is lots of helpful information and resources for schools and for parents on the Family Hubs website that supports school attendance: [School attendance 4 to 11](#) and [School attendance 11 to 16](#)

Early Help support for Parents and Carers

Parents and carers may require additional support on a range of issues to meet their own or family needs. There is an extensive range of digital resources available on the [Family Hubs](#) website.

Citywide support is available on a range of issues from the Local Authority and commissioned providers listed below. For more detailed information about what is on offer across communities, [Family Hub Navigators](#) provide in-person support on a wide range of issues, helping families access and navigate services that can meet their needs.

- **Training and Employment support.** Support for parents to access training and work [Employment, Skills and Learning](#), including courses for [adult learning](#) and for young people aged 16–24 who are NEET [Bristol - Spear](#)
- **Domestic Abuse Support**, support can be access directly from [Next Link](#) and an overview of the group support on offer in Family Hubs can be found here [Domestic abuse](#)
- **Reducing Parental Conflict** tools can be accessed here: [Reducing Parental Conflict Resources](#)
- **Support for alcohol and drug use** can be accessed via Horizons [Get Drug and Alcohol Support That Works For You in Bristol](#)
- **Support for mental health and wellbeing;** Vitamins is a short term therapy for people over 16 years old: [Vita Health Group](#)

- **Support for parents and carers of children with SEND** is available via [Bristol Parent Carers](#) and through the [Local Offer Support](#) for families with children who have SEND
- The **School Nursing Service** can support parents to support their children with a range of health topics, including emotional wellbeing, relationships and sexual health [School Nursing Service](#).
- **Free holiday activities and food** during school holidays can be found via [Your Holiday Hub Bristol](#)

Family Help (level 3) – Intensive Early Help/ Getting More Help

Family Help level 3 is accessed via a request to Bristol City Council First Response.

Where children have multiple and complex needs and a multi-agency plan is needed to avoid escalation of need to statutory services they may be referred to our Family Help services in our locality teams. BCC Family Help Key Workers work with the family and the family's network, to fully assess the family's needs and co-produce a multi-agency plan.

BCC Family Key Workers coordinate Team Around the Family meetings and spend regular time with children and families to ensure progress against the plan.

Multi-agency professionals within the Neighbourhood Family Help teams, support the assessment and plan. These include:

- Primary Mental Health Specialists (PMHS)
- Independent Domestic Abuse practitioners
- Adult Mental health workers
- Drug and Alcohol workers
- And a wide range of specialist services and voluntary sector agencies are accessed. This includes access to evidenced based parenting support and programmes.

The Families First transformation will build on the current delivery model to develop seamless, partnership delivery within neighbourhoods from early help through to child protection.



Appendix 1: Bristol Parenting Courses and Programmes

Digital support via [Bristol Family Hubs](#)

Child Age	Level of help	Name of Programme	On-line / In person
Ante natal to 19+	Advice and Info / Getting Help	Togetherness suite	On-line
Ante-natal	Getting Help	Ante-natal Rockabye	In person
Ante-natal	Getting Help	Welcome to the World	In person
Ante-natal	Getting Help	Hello, Baby.	In person
0 to 5	Getting Help	Circle of Security	In person
2 to 8	Getting Help	Parenting Puzzle	On-line / In person
2 to 8	Getting Help	Nurturing Programme+ Nurturing Programme with Islamic Values	On-line / In person
1 to 5; 5 to 10	Getting Help / More Help	Incredible Years	On-line / In person
3 to 11	Getting Help	Timid to Tiger – parents of children with anxiety	In person
0 to 18	Getting Help	Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities	In person
0 to 17	Getting Help / More Help	Parents Plus Parenting when Separated	On-line / In person
10 to 17	Getting Help / More Help	Parents Plus Adolescents	On-line / In person
8 to 17	Getting Help	Non-violent Resistance (NVR) – parents of children with violent and/or controlling behaviours	On-line / In person
2 to 5; 5 to 9; 10 to 16	Getting Help / More Help	Bristol Autism Family Support: Autism Family Courses – Early Bird, Early Bird Plus, Teen Life; Managing Anxiety	In person
9 to 18	Getting Help / More Help	Parents Plus Special Needs (Bristol Autism Family Support)	