

## Case Studies

**Referred by:** School referred family to Early Help having discussed concerns with parents

**Themes:** Domestic abuse, managing behaviour, healthy relationships, anxiety

**Background:**

Mum, and her partner live with mum's two sons. Parents describes child A to be controlling, aggressive, angry and defiant. Parents struggling to manage behaviours and they believed their son was undiagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hypoactivity Disorder (ADHD). History of domestic abuse, witnessed by children.

**What we did/put in place:**

- A consultation with the Children's Mental Health Liaison Practitioner concluded that work around child A's experience of domestic abuse is explored before CAMHS intervention is considered.
- Starry Night sticker chart – promoting kindness, positives about both boys and their relationship- leading to family activity.
- Strategies involving empowerment and choices, same voice and tone limited commands, calm down space introduced, support to repair after event/incident.
- Parents had routines and some strategies in place but responded well to keeping with the same responses and consequences for the children.
- Parent now feels confident in using strategies but has also engaged in additional need support like Reaching Families for further specialist advice.
- Maternal family are a great support and regularly has the children for respite, alongside this maternal grandmother will have the children individually so mum can spend 1-1 with each of them.
- Mum has looked up "inner chimp" book and researched further articles about brain and emotional development which she has found interesting and helped her to understand the child's behaviour.
- Mum was able to discuss her experience of domestic abuse during her relationship with the children's father and readily engaged in support from Connect domestic abuse service.
- Family is now in receipt of middle rate Disability Living Allowance care and low rate mobility as well as additional housing benefits.

**Outcome:**

Family are better equipped to manage behaviours and although there were bad days, support is in place. The Adult relationships are improved although they have separated, they are supportive of each other and there have been no arguments. Mum feels her ex-partner is in a much better place emotionally and he is good with the children, helping

them to keep calm and talk through (repair) incidents afterwards. This is good modelling for the children in terms of a calm and stable home life and positive relationships. The boys have activities that meet their needs in place and are thriving. Connect are completing work specifically around the family's experience of domestic abuse.

**Referred by:** School referred to Early Help as they were witnessing a child with increased anxiety in school

**Themes:** Anxiety, routines and boundaries, domestic abuse

**Background:**

Early Help worked with a family with two children aged 9 and 3. A referral was received from primary school with concerns around the older child with anxiety. Parents also reported that he displayed anger and aggression when at home. There were also concerns around the younger child who attended a child minder. When at home, the younger child was unable to follow routines and boundaries and sought constant attention from mum.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Early Help worked with the family to understand each of their needs and how this impacted on each member of the family.
- Time was spent with the family at home and the children were seen within their respective settings. Once a relationship of trust had been built, it transpired there was domestic abuse in the home.
- A plan was implemented to support each family member, including a safety plan, involving Early Help, School, childminder, Worth Services, and the health team.
- Early Help supported the older child by empowering him to be able to understand and express his feelings. These strategies were shared with the parents to support him when he was feeling overwhelmed. The younger child was given support to understand routines in the family home and responded well to these.

**Outcome:**

Mum was able to understand the impact of the home environment and felt strong enough to find alternative accommodation with the support of Early Help. Mum has strategies to manage and support both her children and they spend more time together engaging in family activities. The older child is now able to express how he feels and talks to his mum and school when he needs to. The younger child is now calmer and more able to follow routines and boundaries. This has created a more harmonious environment at home. The children have regular contact with dad who has engaged in an anger management intervention to support and understand his behaviours. The family scaled their confidence at maintaining these changes at 8 out of 10. Mum expressed she felt that both herself and the children had come through this period feeling confident with much lower levels of stress and anxiety.

**Referred by:** Health Visitor identified concern and referred direct to Early Help

**Themes:** parental mental health, self-harm

**Background:**

Parents were under a lot of pressure experiencing their own mental health issues. Mum has recent diagnosis of emotionally unbalanced personality disorder and depression; she has a mental health nurse supporting her. Mum was able to speak very openly about her worries and how her mood changes and her concerns about how her mental health impact her parenting and her relationship with her partner. Mum puts herself under a lot of pressure to be the perfect parent, she becomes overwhelmed and this at times is debilitating. Dad is experiencing anxiety and depression alongside worries in relation to managing his feelings of anger and uses self-harm to manage this; he described feeling rage and helpless and seeing red at times, lashing out and punching walls, but also described throwing himself down the stairs.

Both parents have inconsistent support from a wider family network and conflicts adds more stress and worry. Both parents describe at times arguing when their child is asleep, and this can escalate if for e.g. mum needs emotional support and dad feels frustrated and unable to fix things for her, he also takes issues with mum sometimes personally.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Helped Mum and Dad engaged in healthy relationship work and looked at strategies to help them in deescalating situations and potential conflict. Both parents have been open and honest regarding their emotional and mental health needs and issues within their relationship. Both have shown motivation and made changes towards improving this aspect of their relationship.
- Mum is engaged with health visiting team; she has allocated their child a nursery which due to Covid his start has been delayed.
- Parents have been observed to and assessed to have a strong and caring relationship with their child, he presents to be happy and thriving.
- Mum was helped to seek advice around weaning and milk feeds and is very insightful around what her son needs alongside awareness of how she doesn't want her mental health to impact him negatively in any way.

**Outcomes:**

With improved parental well-being and with the appropriate services in place, the lived experiences of the child in this family have improved- he has started nursery. Dad has a worker from 'Find it out plus' for continued emotional well-being

support and Mum also has access to the right level of mental health support in line with her diagnosis. Dad has detoxed from Anti-depressants and is feeling well and able to manage anxiety and stress better. Mum is supported by her partner with her mental health needs, her diagnosis means she will continue to experience episodes that may be stressful and unsettling, but the couple are now more equipped to manage. Parents report, they have stopped arguing so much and it feels different as it is not as intense, and they solve the arguments quicker as they both understand each other's needs better. Mum reports that she learnt strategies to help manage tense situations with my partner before they blow up. Dad reports that he is managing his own anxiety, anger issues and depression better and talking to professionals for support

**Referred by:** Individual self-referred by contacting Find It Out

**Themes:** anxiety, risk of NEET (not in education, employment or training), self-esteem

### **Background**

The young person heard about the Find It Out service through a friend and was seeking support around low mood, feelings of anxiety and their aspirations for the future. The young person is a restarted college 2 years ago and is applying for University which has felt overwhelming for him.

### **What we did/put in place:**

- Completed 4 bitesize sessions together to complete:
  - Exercises around how he views himself (choosing 3 descriptive words and thinking about them in more depth)
  - Completing an eco-map of people around him who he can reach out to for support
  - Completing a surviving/thriving activity so the young person can visualise his behaviour and routine when he is struggling and what life looks like when life is good to plan for how he gets to 'thriving'
  - Completed referrals to relevant services that can support him longer term.

### **Outcome**

The young person filled out the referral form letting us know that this support helped him to see what a nerve-wracking time to an exciting time was and how he could manage that difference. He has plans for his summer break now whereas he didn't before and he felt he had highlighted who 'his people' are so he can see he has option of who he can talk to. The young person is going to access support from university counsellors if he feels himself needed this support in the future. On top of this he is going to access Esteem over the summer as part of their community projects work.

**Referred by:** Individual identified through the Young Parents Pathway

**Themes:** Looked After Child, Young parents' pathway, substance misuse, mental health

**Background**

Early Help worked with a 17yr old young man who was a Looked After Child. He had a range of issues, including drug and alcohol misuse, poor mental health and poor family relationships. Early Help also received a referral for a newly pregnant 17yr old young woman, for support on the Young Parent Pathway. Early help identified that he was the father of the unborn child and progressed to supporting both of them. There were concerns about dad's ongoing drug use, housing and mum's mental health. Dad was also not in education, employment, or training, and there was a need for healthy relationship work, as domestic abuse was suspected. Mum was at college and wished to finish her course.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Support to prepare for the baby's birth was given through the young parent's pathway sessions.
- Supported both parents to understand what a healthy relationship is, and domestic abuse was explored with mum and a safety plan was put in place to ensure that mum and baby were not at risk from dad if he was misusing drugs and to reduce the risk of the baby experiencing trauma.
- Appropriate professional were brought together around the family, which helped Dad access support to reduce his drug use, mum was supported to access support for her mental health to improve the way she responds to her baby and she was able to remain at college.
- Wider family members were identified and involved to help ensure that they had a support network around them.

**Outcome**

Baby is now 3 weeks old, thriving and mum is breast feeding. Both parents were prepared for the birth of the baby, they had access to equipment through community resources. The Family Support Worker is still working with the parents to help them identify suitable housing, but at this time they are suitably housed with, and supported, by Maternal grandparents. Both parents and their wider family have a good understanding of healthy relationships and what this means for their baby. Dad disengaged with the drugs service but says he is no longer using drugs. He has been working part time and trying to find full time work. Mum mental health has deteriorated but she is being supported by the appropriate services. Mum remained engaging with college until the birth of her baby. Work continues to support the family to navigate early parenthood.

**Referred by:** Referred by Accident & Emergency

**Themes:** Children with complex health needs, parent with complex health needs

**Background – the referral came from the local A&E Department nurse after the family presented several times with various worries about their new baby. Early Help worked with this family who have 2 very young children, the youngest aged 4 months was born with significant health needs.**

**What we did/put in place:**

- Early Help coordinated the support from a number of Health Professionals to ensure that the family were more aware of their baby's 'norms' and needs, particularly when they should take him to the hospital for medical treatment.
- Early Help also worked with the family to understand their own needs as Mum had Epilepsy and was unable to be alone with her children.
- The community nursing team helped the family to understand their baby's health needs, what the symptoms are, what to do if they worsen and what to do in an emergency.
- Both parents had an increased confidence and lowered anxieties around their son's condition; this meant that his needs were met more consistently, timely and without the panic.
- Supported to access Carers Support which provided a £300 travel grant, so the financial burden on attending hospital appointments was less.
- 2 year free entitlement was applied for and granted for the older sibling, who was not yet in preschool. The impact on the child is that she gets to spend time away from the worries around her younger sibling and will benefit from the routines and social aspect of nursery, meaning she is more likely to be ready for school as she will have had the opportunity to practise new skills learned over a long period of time, her developmental milestones are likely to be much improved, again in readiness for school.
- Early Help implemented a safety plan with both parents and extended family to ensure that if the baby did need to go to hospital, there was always someone else around to help with the older sibling and provide both practical and emotional support to the parents.

**Outcome**

Both parents have the most appropriate support around them, in terms of meeting their baby's' medical needs. Both parents present as more confident and they tell us they feel more relaxed knowing they understand more about their baby's' condition and how they can best meet his needs. With the older child at nursery they are better able to focus on

their baby whilst knowing that their 2-year-old is learning and developing new skills so that she will be ready to go to school in a couple of years. Both parents have said they feel less intimidated by hospital staff and that they know when to go to hospital as an emergency and who to call for advice. Having a safety plan in place means that the family have a list of people who can help them when they need it, the family tell us they have not had this in place previously and they feel supported knowing others will help.

**Referred by:** Individual self-referral for crisis support

**Themes:** English as an additional language, financial hardship, lack of support network

**Background**

Dad contacted Early Help by phone regarding financial support as his Universal Credit had been stopped temporarily, while his new claim was being assessed. This was due to his wife and 2 children moving from Spain to join him in the UK. He also needed assistance in applying for Child Benefit and to register to pay council tax. Father speaks Spanish and little English. Hub partnership support officer who is fluent in Spanish was allocated to provide support.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Arranged an immediate food parcel delivery, including milk and nappies for the children, plus supermarket vouchers.
- Helped Dad to support him to apply for Child Benefit, moved the family's GP surgery and arrange appointments for his wife and children for medical care, and to register council tax in his name.
- Arranged for Dad to be granted £147 energy vouchers through Your Energy and Citizen's Advice Bureau and support Dad to add this voucher onto his meter.
- Acted as an advocate with Job Centre Plus regarding confirmation of mother's right to remain in the UK.
- Arranged for 2-year-old's flu vaccine.
- Contacted Healthy Child Programme regarding Universal Plus service.
- Applied for 2-year free entitlement funding to enable the child to access nursery provision.
- Applied for English classes through Aspire for Mum and Dad, free of charge due to being in receipt of Universal Credit.
- Contacted Ten Little Toes who provided a toddler bed and cot with mattresses and bedding to meet the children's basic care needs.

**Outcome**

The children have beds to sleep in, food to eat, have their health needs met and will see the reduction of stress in their family. Dad and Mum can look to learn enough English to be able to work and will benefit from having all the benefits that they are entitled to whilst they are looking for work and learning English. With the 2-year-old funding this will support them with childcare when they find work and support the children meet their milestones to be ready for school in the future. Dad is now has a job with a regular income and Universal and Child Benefit in place.

**Referred by:** Family referred by Midwifery

**Themes:** Care Leaver/vulnerable parent/pre-birth/ complex needs/Young parents pathway

**Background:**

Early Help worked with young expecting parent (20) referred by a midwife in at a clinic. She had significant children social care involvement since 2014 and there was a history of mental health, risk of exploitation and gang connections in her childhood.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Early Help worked creatively to engage the young parent in their plan and coordinated a plan of support with Family Nurse Partnership and the Perinatal Team.
- Supported the family to access health services that at first the young parent was apprehensive to engage with.
- Early Help supported the family to apply for housing and secure accommodation for when the baby arrived. This also ensured the young parent was in receipt of all her benefits and made an application of support to a charity for an Oven.
- Provided parenting sessions focussed on safer sleep, five to thrive, feeding and bathing.
- Worked on confidence building and help with managing her mental health, with a range of interventions.

**Outcome**

The young parent is now in secure housing with her 3month baby and it has been observed to be clean and well equipped for a new-born. The baby has their own space to move and develop and has been observed to be content as their mother uses a calm and attentive voice. The baby has a safe place to sleep and mother's confidence with caring for her new-born has developed. Mum mother has been seen to meet the needs of her child and is continuing to engage with health professionals when required. Mum feels she can manage her mental health and describes it as the best it has ever been as

she knows she needs to be there for her child and be up every day. The Perinatal Team have also shared they are no longer worried about the young parent.

**Referred by:** Individual self-referral

**Themes:** Parental conflict, loss and separation, impact of trauma

### **Background**

Early Help worked with separated parents and their 2 children aged 7 and 8 years. An early help plan was opened after mum self-referred for support due to her worries about the effect of previous domestic violence and recent parental separation was having on the children. The 8-year-old was presenting with very angry moods, leading to him hitting himself and the walls and expressing thoughts of not wanting to be in the world. The 7-year old's relationship with mum had started breaking down due to blaming mum for the separation and was presenting as anxious and insecure and struggling with peer relationships.

### **What we did/put in place:**

- Early Help worked with all members of the family individually to understand their lived experience and identify appropriate support.
- Direct work was completed with both children around managing feelings about their Dad and his behaviours and managing and understanding their feelings about their relationships with both their parents. This work was supported by Connect.
- Initially dad was not accessing support from early help but with mum's agreement he started to work with us and parents were supported to develop and agree positive co-parenting strategies and expectations and to make changes to their routines to enable a more manageable transition for the children between their parents.
- The worries and views of the children were shared and communicated positively to parents who were supported to feel able to create a shared words and pictures book for the children about their separation and how it hadn't changed how they felt about them.
- Emotional regulation techniques were shared with the whole family.

### **Outcome**

Both children are now feeling much more comfortable in both parent's homes and say they feel able to ask for help, express their feelings and receive emotional support equally from both parents. Both children are much more able to talk about and regulate their emotions and are no longer displaying the behaviours that initially led to mum seeking support. Both children have reported feeling much happier and are able to identify how things have improved for them because of

being supported by early help. Both parents can see the importance of them working together to support the children emotionally. Connect support has enabled mum to do this while maintaining safe boundaries with dad. Family scaled themselves as 8 out of 10 and feel positive that they can maintain the positive change.

**Referred by:** Adult mental health team

**Themes:** Domestic Abuse, financial hardship, homelessness

**Background**

Early Help worked with a family consisting of mum and her 2 children, 15 aged 17. There was a history of domestic abuse, trauma and poor mental health for all family members and the family were living in a caravan due to financial difficulties after fleeing domestic abuse.

**What we did/put in place:**

- Early Help worked with the whole family to understand their needs.
- They spent time with all family members individually in the home and in school.
- Coordinated a plan of support that was agreed by the family and other professionals known to the family.
- Worked to ensure all family members had appropriate mental health support to address their immediate needs but also to ensure recovery work was completed to prevent future impact of previous trauma.
- Supported with heating and food whilst also coordinating with housing to ensure the family could be moved.
- Helped the children's access to education was also maintained by seeking lock down placements and sourcing IT equipment.

**Outcome**

The family are now in emergency accommodation and waiting to be rehoused permanently, they now have their basic needs met. All family members have individual plans and support to address their mental health needs and the children have the support they need to access education. Early Help will continue to support this family to ensure housing issues can be resolved and mental health improvements have been maintained.

**Referred by:** Syrian Refugee resettlement team referred direct to Early Help

**Themes:** Experience of war, displacement, English as an additional language, establishing their life in a new country

**Background**

Early Help initially worked with mum, dad and two children aged 4 & 6. The family are under the West Sussex Resettlement Scheme, due to having to flee their own country of Lebanon due to unrest, and them feeling very unsafe in their own country. They arrived from Lebanon to the UK and were collected by Early Help from the airport and introduced to their new home, which had been arranged furnished by the Resettlement Scheme.

**What we did/put in place:**

- It was the Keyworker's responsibility to arrange support the family in all aspects of settling well into the UK
- This included supporting to access education, benefits, and medical registration.
- Early Help also helped the whole family to integrate socially in to a new community.
- This included everything from how to navigate the local area, use public transport and local services.
- The work ensure their approach was caring, calm and acknowledge their trauma and the challenges of their new life, in a new country with no extended family or friends network.
- Help was given to support the family to understand British culture, expectations and laws.
- Accessing medical care through the dentist, GP & Health Visitor.
- Worker attended initial medical appointments with the family for required Medical Screening checks, and also arranged for all the family to be seen by an Optician.
- Introduced the family to 'Family Assist' so they can get appropriate health advice themselves (which has a translation facility).
- Securing and maintaining accommodation, arranging and supporting the parents to understand their Tenancy Agreement, and the expectations of the Local Authority Housing Department ie to keep the home safe and pay their rent.
- The family had a baby boy in February 2021- throughout the pregnancy Early Help supported the parents with understanding the anti-natal system, appointments, liaising with the midwife on behalf of the parents and ensuring interpreters were in place when mum needed them.
- Dad has been supported to find work, so they are eventually self-sufficient and not reliant on benefits to support them.
- Supported the parents to have regular access to English language classes, both in person and online.

**Outcome**

The two older children are now happily settled into full time education, have good school attendance, have friends and are happy. All the family's English language has really improved, so as a result, the parents are now more independent. Dad now attends twice a week at Brighton Met English Classes and teaches mum what he learns. Dad being supported to actively looking for work. The family are now registered with doctors, a dentist, health Visitors & opticians. The family now feel happy, settled and safe in the UK and have become confident in day to day life. They have a good network of support around them, should they need it.