



# Family Support Service

A professional's guide to Buckinghamshire's Family Support Service covering the support available to children, young people and families and how it is accessed  
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# What the Family Support Service does

The Family Support Service (FSS) helps children, young people and families early before problems become bigger. This is known as an early help, which is a partnership approach to supporting families in need of additional help.

Through expert advice, signposting, sessions at Family Centres and specialised one to one support, the service is here for parents, children and young people from birth to 19 years (or up to 25 years for people with special educational needs and disabilities).

This leaflet will guide you through the support that the Family Support Service provides along with other early help partners, and how it's accessed. We offer 3 levels of support depending on the challenges parents, children and young people are facing. We'll explain what these levels cover and how you can identify which is most appropriate for a child, young person or family you're working with.

To find more information, see details of our provision or find local support in Buckinghamshire go to the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service website:

[familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk](http://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

## What are levels of support?

Levels of support are simply types of support and what they involve. The scale that organises these levels is called [The Continuum of Need](#).

These levels range from level 1 which is informal and available to everyone, to level 4 which is specialised intervention to avoid significant harm. This can involve services such as social care, police and emergency health services.

As an early help service, the Family Support Service's role is to offer level 1 to 3 support. Our top priority is to do all we can to help children, young people and families before problems become bigger and level 4 intervention is needed.

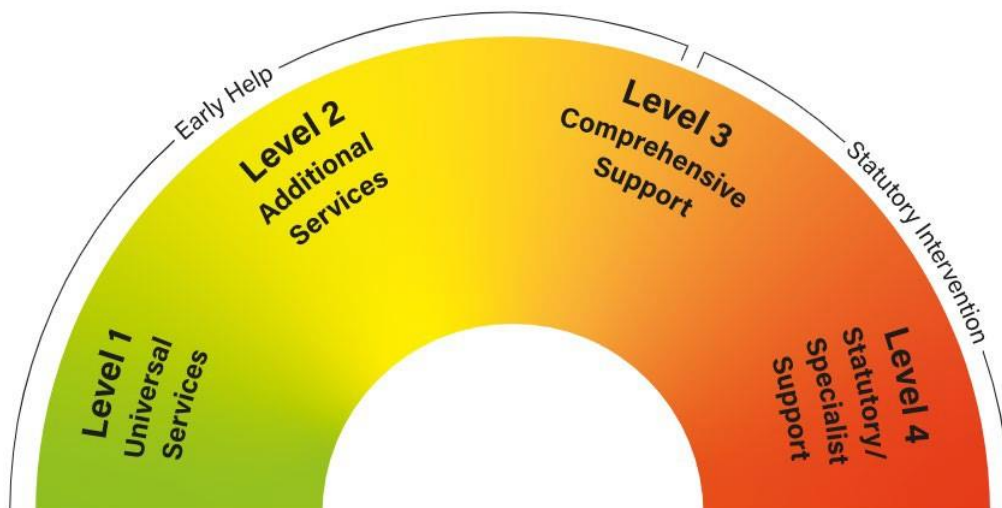


Figure 1: The Continuum of Need

# Overview of support

Supporting children, young people and families early...

## Online and by phone

- Family Information Service website
- Directory of activities, organisations and childcare
- Advice line, email and outreach

## Family centres

- Open access sessions
- Drop-ins for advice and guidance
- Group and one to one sessions

## Additional support

- Dedicated Family Workers
- Support for complex problems
- Targeted courses
- One to one support for up to six months



Good practice requires that professionals discuss the concerns they have at an early stage with the child, young person or family, who should be asked how they think they could be supported or what support they feel they need to help improve things.

Understanding what the family thinks about your concerns and whether they agree to the support is very important, particularly if you intend to refer for level 2 or 3 support as they **must** give informed consent to the referral and request for support from the service.

# The 3 levels of support we offer

## Level 1

The Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) provides information, advice and a huge directory of local services, activities, family centre sessions and childcare providers.

BFIS is here every step of the way. From support for new parents and parents to be, understanding what to do when it's time to find childcare or start school applications, to help with challenges that families can face.

Our easy to navigate website contains the latest information from the knowledgeable team, experts within the council and signposting to leading organisations who can help.

Our supportive team of Information and Outreach Officers are also available by phone, email and out and about in the community.

The Family Information Service website is the place to discover the support at family centres across Buckinghamshire including open access sessions, drop-ins and tailored sessions.

Visit: [familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/](http://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/)

phone: 01296 383 293

email: [familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

The Family Support Service delivers regular sessions and groups that parents and children can attend together. Families can drop in anytime during the week at one of our three Family Centre Plus sites. There are also weekly youth drop-ins and universal sessions for under 5s. All activities at family centres are free of charge.

Through our partner agencies, we run a variety of groups and courses that offer support for both parents and children with things like:

- healthy eating and lifestyles
- children with additional needs
- child development
- family learning
- independent living skills
- activities for children with SEND
- positive mental health and well-being

## Keep up to date

Search **Bucks Family Info** on social media to keep up to date with the latest information, news, outreach and support from the Family Support Services, partners and local organisations.

## Level 1 support at a glance

- [Family Information Service website](http://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/) providing expert information and signposting
- [Directory of childcare, organisations and services](#)
- [Family Centre sessions and drop ins](#) at Family Centre Plus sites
- Groups and courses
- Support by phone and email Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm
- Community outreach

# The 3 levels of support we offer

## Level 2

Short term, small group and, where needed, individual targeted support for parents and young people.

We currently offer a range of groups aimed at addressing the emerging needs of our communities.

### Groups for parents

Covering a range of ages and themes including:

- Nurture groups for 0 to 5 years supporting parents to be more confident, have a greater understanding of their children's needs and communicate more effectively.
- Supporting parents of teenagers to better understand them, building on relationships within the family, communication, negotiating, decision-making and strategies to reduce conflict.
- Children aged from 18 months to 3 years where there is a concern around speech, language and communication development.
- Workshops for parents based on identified needs. For example, financial guidance, supporting children with SEND and parenting strategies.

### Groups for young people

Offering support with:

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Positive relationships
- Stress, anxiety and low mood
- Transitions (from year 6 to 7)
- Engaging children and young people in service development. This includes specific groups for children with SEND or who are looked after

Where required we can provide 1:1 support for 6 to 8 sessions on specific targeted outcomes.

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Level 2 support can be offered to families open to statutory Children's Services as part of the identified plan, requested by a social worker through a request for support

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### School link worker support

All schools in the county have an allocated worker from the service who is a single point of contact for advice and guidance where there are concerns for children and queries about the best route of support.

They may identify support which they could offer to schools which could include supporting targeted groups within the school setting, joint delivery of parenting programmes with schools or youth support.

[Level 2 support can be requested online](#)

continued...

# The 3 levels of support we offer

## Level 2

### Early Help Partnership Forum

The Early Help Partnership Forum is for professionals who are working with a family and may need advice and guidance on how to support them or aid signposting to other agencies who may be able to support with the issues they are facing as part of an early help response.

Professionals from a variety of support agencies are on hand to share their views, suggestions and resources which would support the family and worker to overcome the issues they are facing.

For more information email: [ehpartnershipforum@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:ehpartnershipforum@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

### Level 2 support at a glance

- Specialised groups for parents covering understanding the needs of children, communication and conflict, confidence in parenting, parenting teenagers and children with SEND
- Youth groups covering confidence and self-esteem, positive relationships, stress, anxiety and low mood and transition from primary to secondary school (from year 6 to year 7)
- Level 2 support can be offered to families open to statutory Children's Services
- Allocated FSS worker to schools (School link worker) offering advice and guidance to staff and supporting early identification and effective referral
- Early Help Forum for professionals who are working with a family
- Support requested online via the [Family Information Service](#)

# The 3 levels of support we offer

## Level 3

We offer more focused support to families for up to 6 months if they are experiencing multiple or complex issues.

We work with the family and alongside other relevant agencies to support the family through a coordinated family plan with clear, agreed objectives.

We can work with families and young people who are:

- Excluded from school or having difficulties engaging with education
- Currently or at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Affected by domestic abuse or parental conflict
- Demonstrating risk-taking behaviour
- Impacted by the consequences of substance misuse
- Parent of a young person affected by poor mental health
- Impacted by poor attachments or relationships within the family

- Having difficulty parenting in a consistent way
- Impacted by financial problems and debt
- Having difficulty maintaining boundaries and expectations within the home
- Vulnerable to exploitation
- In a home environment impacting on the health and wellbeing of a child
- Affected by health-related challenges that make family life more difficult

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If you would like Level 3 support this should be requested using the [Report a concern form \(MARF\)](#)

The Family Support Service does not provide whole-family support (Level 3) when a child or young person is open to Statutory Children's Services. For cases that are stepping down from statutory support to level 3, the case transfer process must be followed.

## Level 3 support at a glance

- Focused support for up to six months
- Supporting families and young people with multiple or complex issues
- Request support using the [Report a concern form \(MARF\)](#) or case transfer process for stepping down from statutory support



# Talking through levels of support

If you are unsure of the most appropriate support you can speak to a member of our team via phone or email:

01296 383 293

[familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

## Schools

All schools have a link worker you can discuss concerns and referrals with. If you do not know who your link worker is, please contact your local area team:

### Aylesbury

01296 398 242

[southcourtfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:southcourtfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

### Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire

01494 776 786

[newtownfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:newtownfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

### High Wycombe

01494 450 279

[mapledeanfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:mapledeanfc@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

## Right support. Right time.

The Family Support Service aims to identify the level of support required by a child, young person, parent or family so that the right service can be provided at the right time. This includes support provided through the wider early help partnership offer. Please ensure that you consider the needs of the individual and family and when you have discussed this with the family or young person, seek the support available at the level required. If you would like to discuss your concerns, please contact the FSS for an early discussion.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, please call the First Response Team on 01296 383 962 between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Outside of these hours contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0800 999 7677.



# What makes a good referral to the Family Support Service?

Presenting Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you concerned about?</li> <li>• What is the person or family concerned about?</li> <li>• What has the person or family said they would like help with?</li> <li>• What actions have already been taken to address these issues and concerns?</li> </ul>
Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the family/individual agreed and given consent for support to be requested?</li> </ul> <p>This includes children who will be directly worked with where their age and mental capacity allows them to give their own consent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the person or family open to making changes?</li> </ul>
Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include any historical information relevant to the current request for support</li> <li>• It is not necessary to tell us everything, just that which relates to the current needs and any risks to the family or professionals</li> </ul>
Others involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which other professionals are involved with the family and what support is already in place?</li> <li>• The impact of this support or barriers to change</li> <li>• What other approaches have been tried? What success did they have?</li> </ul>
Barriers to engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do any family members we are likely to be working with have any barriers to engagement?</li> </ul> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ learning needs</li> <li>○ behaviour</li> <li>○ speaks English as a second language</li> <li>○ has not engaged with professionals in the past</li> </ul>
Family Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of all the children who live in the household (under 19)</li> <li>• Correct contact details for the family. Phone number and, if available, email address</li> </ul>