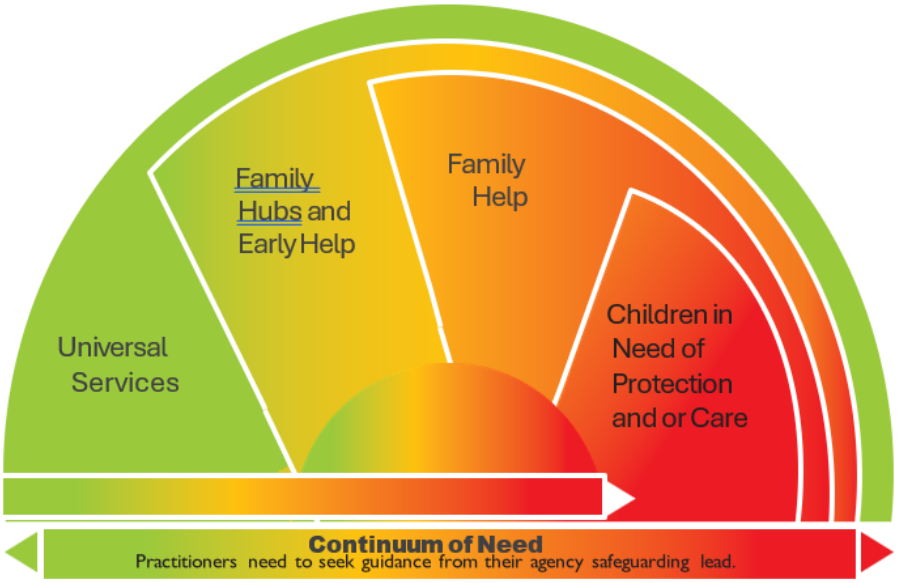
Getting the Right Help in Wokingham

One-minute guide for families and practitioners
September 2026

This guide is for families and practitioners. It explains how Wokingham responds to children's needs at different levels of support, how to access help, and when to involve children's social care. It replaces threshold language with a description of how help is matched to need — proportionately, in a timely way and through relationships that can continue as circumstances change.

Our continuum of support



Level 1 Universal	**Universal Services** Healthcare, education, early years, health visiting, midwifery, youth services — available to all families without referral, at every level of support.
Level 2 Family Hubs	**Family Hubs and Community Based Early Help** Open to all families. Drop-in groups, parenting support, SEND advice, financial guidance, preventive youth justice and more. A non-stigmatising community anchor throughout every level. *Access directly or via the Integrated Front door.*
Level 3 Family Help	**Family Help: Targeted Early Help and Child in Need** A single, seamless offer for children with multiple or complex needs. One assessment, one plan, one lead practitioner. Families move between Targeted Early Help and Child in Need (s.17) within this level as needs change, with the same lead practitioner wherever possible. *Access via the Integrated Front Door.*
Level 4 Statutory	**Family Help: Child Protection and Children Looked After** Still Family Help, with the additional statutory functions of child protection (s.47) and corporate parenting. Where there is actual or likely significant harm, care proceedings or a child becomes Looked After. The FHLP remains involved wherever possible for continuity. *Contact the Integrated Front Door if a child is at risk.*

Our approach

Our Practice Framework is relational, systemic, strengths-based and whole-family. We work with children, young people and families in a way that builds trust, recognises strengths and understands lived experience. We match help to need in a timely, proportionate and joined-up way.

As needs change, practitioners **step in and step back without unnecessary transfers**, so families experience continuity in relationships, assessment and planning. **Children's lived experiences are at the centre of everything we do.**

Support must be inclusive and responsive to difference. Practitioners are expected to be curious and self-aware about how their own biases may shape how risk is perceived and assessed, and to explore through supervision how discrimination and inequality may affect a child's lived experience.

Family Hubs

Family Hubs are the main route to universal support, advice and early help in Wokingham. They are open to all families and offer a non-stigmatising community anchor throughout every level of support. Families can access support directly in person through their local Family Hub or via online membership. Support includes advice, parenting support, health visiting, SEND guidance, infant feeding, financial advice, wellbeing support and much more. We plan to develop a digital youth offer, a co-produced digital place to go for young people to find what's on offer.

Where more than one service is already involved, or additional coordinated support is needed:

For Professionals seeking family hub/ community based early help support for families, a Multi Agency Referral Form should be completed Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF), following which the family will be discussed at the Family Hub Partnership Panel.

Support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is available through Family Hubs alongside universal, community and specialist services, including the Local Offer. Where needs are more complex, the Children with Disabilities Service provides specialist support across short breaks, autism, sleep and behaviour.

Please note: Safeguarding procedures must always be followed where there is a risk of serious harm — if unsure, seek advice from the Front Door.

The Front Door — one point of access

Wokingham is developing a single, seamless point of access for families or professionals who have a concern about a child. By March 2027, the Integrated Front Door will replace the existing MASH, bringing together information, advice and decision-making so families get to the right support more quickly and easily. Professionals can complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF). The response may include information and advice; signposting; a Family Hub offer; Family Help; or, in the most serious situations, Family Help alongside Child Protection enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Contact the Front Door

Tel: 0118 908 8002 · Mon–Fri 9am–5pm · Email**:** triage@wokingham.gov.uk

Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours): 01344 351999 · If unsure whether to refer, call for advice first.

Family Group Decision Making and Kinship Care

In Wokingham, we believe that children are best supported when the people who know and love them are involved in decisions about their care. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is an umbrella term for approaches that bring together a child's wider family and naturally connected network to make plans, find solutions and share responsibility for a child's safety, wellbeing and future. We use FGDM throughout our pathways.

Information sharing

Under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026), relevant agencies have a duty to share information; information must be shared where it is relevant to safeguarding and promoting a child's welfare, including where concerns relate to early help, prevention and unmet need. **Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding children.**

Whilst consent is not required to make a safeguarding referral, practitioners should discuss the referral with and seek the views of the parent/carer before doing so, unless this would place the child at greater risk of harm.

What makes a good referral?

A good referral is clear and concise, with enough detail for the Front Door to understand the concern and the child's situation. Before referring, ask: *What am I worried about? What is working well? What needs to happen next? Is Family Help or Family Hub the right response?*

Include in your referral

- Up-to-date address, accurate DOB and ethnicity, who children live with, interpreter needs, all relevant family members including estranged parents
- Referring agency details, your relationship with the family, other professionals already involved
- Historical context — prior involvement, recent changes, what has led to the referral, what support is already in place
- Clear distinction between fact and professional opinion — both matter
- The family's views — discuss the referral with them first, unless doing so would place the child at greater risk
- If the child is in immediate danger: call the police first

Useful contacts and links

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (moving to Wokingham Safeguarding Partnership Oct 2026)
- Family Information Service
- LADO: LADO@wokingham.gov.uk
- Wokingham Assessment Protocol
- SEND Wokingham Local Offer (0–25) · CAN Network · Short Breaks
- NSPCC website
- Contextual Safeguarding Network