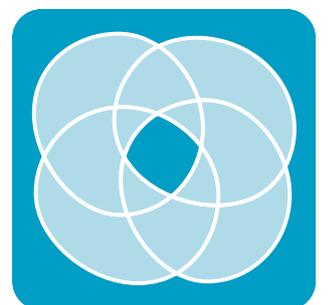


Early Support

Helping every child succeed

How to use the Journal



About this publication

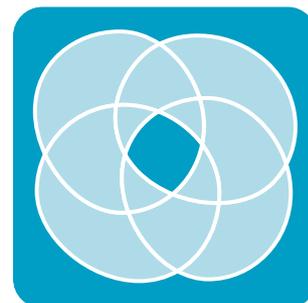
Early Support is the Government's recommended approach to developing better co-ordinated services for young children with disabilities and their families. It is a joint initiative by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health, working through Sure Start, early years settings and health services.

The **Early Support Developmental Journal** has been produced to help parents find out more about early development and to track change and progress over time. It helps everyone involved with a child to share what they know and discuss how best to work together to support development and learning.

The material was developed over a one-year period and we would like to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of families who commented on early drafts.

The Journal can be used by itself, or in combination with other **Early Support** materials.

To find out more about **Early Support**, visit www.earlysupport.org.uk



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What parents say

'It's a really good document that covers everything that's important to my child and my family.'

'It's definitely a helpful tool – it sets out the development of a typical child and helps you keep a record of how your child is progressing. It could be a negative thing if development is very slow, but the fact that the journal is broken down into very small steps makes it a positive thing in the vast majority of cases.'

'Small developments may seem insignificant to anyone else but they're really important to you as a parent. It's a positive record of where and when something new happened.'



Introduction

This Journal is to help families record and celebrate children's learning and development, through the early years, and to share what they know about their child with other people and with professionals.

It's about noticing and celebrating everything that a child learns to do, as time goes by. The material is specifically designed for families who know or suspect that their child is unlikely to progress in the same way or at the same rate as other children – whether or not a particular factor or learning difficulty has been identified and given a name.

When families find out that their child may need extra support and help, they often say they don't know what to expect. They're not sure how their child's progress will be affected, and what they can do to help. The Journal helps families see how a child is progressing and understand the patterns of development that therapists and other people are looking for. This makes it easier for everyone to work together.

The Journal focuses on what children can do, rather than what they can't, and builds a positive record of achievement over time. However, it can also help users pick up on any changes to the way a child is progressing, that might indicate more or a different kind of help is needed.

To summarise, the Journal is a flexible resource that can help in many different ways when it's clear that it may be useful to look in detail at how a child is learning and changing.

What's it for?

The [Developmental Journal](#) helps families track and understand children's learning and development, and share information with other people, including any professionals involved with their child. It helps those who use it to:

- record and celebrate change and new achievements
- understand the significance of what a child is doing now, what they will do next and how they can be helped to move on
- build up a record of the nature and sequence of development that can be shared with other people
- recognise the value of all new learning – particularly when it may seem that very little is happening.

The Journal follows the pattern and presentation of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the material used by professionals working with children under five in early years settings and by childminders. It supports partnership working between settings and families, as the material contained in the Developmental Journal can enrich discussion about how things are going and what should happen next at many different points in a young life. It enables the delivery of 'personalised learning', which is a key component of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It also supports the principles that underpin the EYFS, with the recognition that every child is unique and that they are competent learners from birth.

In particular, the Journal can be used as a shared basis for discussion at times of transition, when new people meeting a family for the first time wish to discuss with them how to include a child safely and how to encourage learning and participation.

If you would like to know more about the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), visit www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs



Where extra help for a young child is expressed as a more structured individual programme supporting development and learning, joint use of the Journal makes it easier to agree next steps or goals and to track when new learning has taken place or new skills have been acquired.

Where many different people or agencies are in contact with a family, the Journal can also provide a single, shared resource that helps everyone communicate better, using the same language and framework of reference. It improves everyone's understanding of the developmental processes involved.

Finding your way around the Journal

Areas of Development

The Developmental Journal describes typical patterns of child development under six headings:

Personal, social and emotional development

This focuses on how children learn who they are, what feelings they have, how they behave and how their relationships develop. It's also about developing self-control and self-help skills like feeding, dressing and hygiene.

Communication, language and literacy

This heading describes the many different ways that a child interacts with other people – for example, by looking, pointing, smiling and talking. It includes how babies and children pay attention to other people and listen to them, as well as how they understand and use language themselves – first in speech and later, using reading and writing.

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

This area looks at the ways children learn to do the things they want to do – particularly where the solution is not immediately obvious. This involves thinking through possibilities. Children become aware of similarities and differences between things very early and this is a basis for understanding numbers and what they mean, later on.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Babies are learning, right from the moment of birth. It may not be that obvious at first, but babies and young children accumulate knowledge at an astonishing rate – even if they may be taking longer to do this than other children. Understanding comes a bit later, and is greatly helped by lots of experiences and discussion about things that are going on around them.



Physical development

This aspect of development focuses on how children develop their ability to move their bodies, hands, feet and fingers, and use their senses and movement to explore the world.

Creative development

This is not only about art, music, movement and dance, but about children doing new things that they invent for themselves and how they engage in imaginative activities. It's an aspect that children develop when they are learning in play situations.

These headings in the Journal are the headings used by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and make it easy to 'read across' from one set of material to the other.

While it's useful to chart progress under these six headings, in real life progress in one area influences how a child learns everything else, so it's best to think about children's progress across all six areas. It's also helpful to remember that when children are very young, it's more difficult to sort behaviours under these headings. For example – when a young baby reaches out to grasp a toy, they're using physical, problem-solving and reasoning skills, and gaining knowledge and understanding of the world, all at the same time. The headings become more meaningful as children develop and behaviour becomes more complex.

The Areas of Development bring together things that professionals and practitioners look for, but there are many other things your child is doing and learning that may seem more important to you – for example, the food they like, the games they play and the things that make them laugh. These things can also be included in the Journal – they make the record more personal and something to keep and look back on later.

Developmental Steps

The [Developmental Journal](#) outlines a series of 14 Developmental Steps. Each Step is presented as a series of charts that can be filled in when you notice your child doing something – particularly something you haven't seen them do before. The charts list skills and behaviours associated with each Step under the six Areas of Development described above. There are no age norms attached – the Journal simply describes the characteristic pattern and sequence of learning seen in young children.

If you would like to find out more about the Early Years Foundation Stage material that describes children's learning and development, you can find it online at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs Or you could ring 0845 60 222 60 to ask for a print copy of the Early Years Foundation Stage (reference number: 00012-2007PCK-EN).

Summaries of development

Each Developmental Step is introduced by a short summary of what's going on for children at that point of development. The summaries are organised under the same six headings, the Areas of Development described above, and each summary is referenced to the six phases of development described by the Early Years Foundation Stage. The EYFS phases are included for reference at the back of the booklet.

Read more about **EYFS phases** on page 23.



Using the Journal

Recording progress using the Developmental Steps

Read more about [Areas of Development](#) on page 6.

The charts for each Developmental Step are organised into six Areas of Development.

For each item listed for a Step, there are three columns that can be used to record the things you see your child doing:

Emerging – Seen for the first time

Tick and date this column the first time you notice your child doing something that demonstrates a skill or behaviour, even if it's only an attempt.

Developing – Seen sometimes

Tick and date this column when you notice your child using a skill or behaviour more often, as they become more skilful at it.

Achieved – Seen often

Tick and date this column when you see your child doing something often and with confidence in a number of different situations – for example, in different rooms or different houses, with different toys, in conversation with different people etc.

You don't have to use all three columns, all of the time. For example, you may only notice a new behaviour or skill once it's already quite well established – i.e. it's 'developing' or 'achieved', rather than 'emerging'. Another point is that children's understanding of language is always ahead of their ability to talk, or communicate using sign language, so it's important to look out for what they seem to understand, as well as what they can say.

Because each child makes their own developmental journey, you may find that sometimes they begin to do something that's one or even two steps ahead of the other things that they can do. So it's worth looking ahead through later steps from time to time, to get an idea of what's ahead.

Notes

The column on the right of the charts is for you to add comments, if you want.

You might describe what you've seen your child doing that shows they're developing a behaviour or skill described on the chart – particularly if you see a number of different things that seem relevant. Or you might want to note down any questions you have about what you've seen. This is also a good place to write something about any 'special' toys that are particular favourites or that seem to encourage things you're encouraging your child to do.

There are a few places on the charts where it says 'Make a list'. These are points at which it's helpful to write down particular examples of the things your child says or does, because it's nice to have a record, and also because these are things that professionals, practitioners or therapists may ask you about when you talk about your child with them.

Use all three columns, and more than one Step, if this is helpful and remember that it's not so important what your child can or can't do when you begin to use the Journal. The material is not a test or a checklist. It comes to life as you use and discuss it with other people over a period of time. The idea is gradually to build up a picture of how your child is changing and developing over months and years – a picture that helps everyone notice and enjoy the new things they learn to do, and work out how best to help.

Some families like to fill out the charts by themselves and then discuss them with other people. Other people prefer to talk about everything first and then fill the charts in with the help of people who are working with them or ask someone else to do the paperwork. You can read more about this later, but it's important to understand right from the start that the material can be used in many different ways and that you can use it in whatever way you find useful.

A sample chart filled in for a real child is included overleaf, to give you idea of what the charts might look like once you begin to use them.

[Read more about this in **Do it your way.**](#)

Communication, language and literacy



	Emerging Seen for the first time	Developing Seen sometimes	Achieved Seen often	Notes
Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them when communicating with other people	✓ Feb 2008			
Understands more complex sentences – for example, "Put your toys away and we'll read a book"	✓ Nov 2007	✓ Feb 2008		Nov 2007 Picked up shoes when I said 'Put on your shoes and we'll go out for a walk' First time!
Begins to say 'sentences' of several words – for example, "Me no go home"	✓ Dec 2007	✓ Feb 2008		Feb 08 want a cuddle NOW!
Make a list Dec 07 'bikkies all gone' Feb 08 'Nate go bed' 'Grampa go sleep'	✓ July 2007	✓	✓ Feb 2008	Feb 08 Nate has his own 'book pile' now
Shows sustained interest in picture books	✓	✓	✓ Feb 2008	Mimics Mum all the time
Tries to repeat many things adults say, either saying the actual word or making a close match – for example, says "Um-beya" for 'umbrella'	✓	✓	✓ Feb 2008	
Make a list top it (Stop it) duffin 'dustbin' go now bad doggie				

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy



Notes

	Emerging Seen for the first time	Developing Seen sometimes	Achieved Seen often	Notes
Has some understanding of 1 and 2, especially when the number is important for them	✓ Jan 2007	✓ Feb 2007	✓ March 2007	Feb 2008 Nate loves numbers and has done for about a year and a half now. Counts up to 20. Recognises some numbers when sees them written down.
Creates and experiments with symbols and marks	✓ Feb 2008			Feb 2008 drew a line of dots
Uses some number language – for example, 'more' and 'a lot'	✓ Oct 2006	✓ Nov 2007	✓ Feb 2008	Oct 2006 'more milk' Nov 2007 'lotta birds'
Recites some number names in correct sequence	✓ March 2007		✓ Feb 2008	March 2007 '1, 2, 3' Feb 2008 Confident with this - counts out loud up to 20
Knows that a group of things changes in quantity when something is added or taken away	✓ Feb 2008			Feb 2008 chose the bigger pile of sweets!
Notices simple shapes and patterns in pictures	✓ Aug 2007	✓ Oct 2007	✓ March 2008	March 2008 Now points out shapes in his bath books every time

Creative development

	Emerging Seen for the first time	Developing Seen sometimes	Achieved Seen often	Notes
Draws simple recognisable shapes – for example, sun, tree	✓ Feb 2008			Feb 08 Drew a shape he said was a cat
Imitates drawing simple shapes – for example, circle, square	✓ Feb 2008			Feb 08 tried to copy a circle for the first time
Can name two or three colours	✓	✓ Nov 2007	✓ Feb 2008	'Red' July 2007 'Red', 'Lello' 'Boco' Jan 2008
Joins in singing favourite songs				
Creates different sounds by banging, shaking, tapping or blowing	✓	✓ Feb 2007		Likes banging on plastic box with wooden spoon
Plays with dough, makes different shapes and will tell you what they have made				
Plays dressing-up games				

Using the Developmental Profile – getting an overview

There's a Developmental Profile at the front of the Journal to help you see the pattern of your child's progress as time goes by and they move through Developmental Steps. It allows you to summarise what's going on, after you've filled out the more detailed charts, and gives you a 'bird's eye' view.

Once you have ticked 'achieved' for most of the items for an Area of Development in a Step, enter the date in the corresponding box on the Developmental Profile sheet. This summarises and celebrates progress over time and helps you to see at a glance the things your child learns easily and the things that are more difficult and that they need more help with. For example, you may find that your child has moved on to Step 6 in the **Personal, social and emotional** areas, but is still at Step 4 for **Communication, language and literacy**. Some people like to review events every three or six months, using a different colour to shade in the boxes each time, as well as ticking and dating entries.

The information on the Developmental Profile helps target learning support and intervention – it identifies areas for attention and particular strengths that can be used to support a child's development in other areas.

Some professionals or practitioners that you meet may ask for a photocopy of the Developmental Profile, as it gives a quick, at-a-glance summary of everything that's going on that can be used by anyone who's trying to help your child.



Special achievements and things to celebrate

At the end of each Step, there's a blank page for you to add information you'd like to record and remember. The space can be used to make the record more personal and to include things that aren't covered on the charts. You could add photos, or record personal preferences and interests – for example, favourite food and toys, the activities your child likes, the TV programmes, songs or activities they like, the places they enjoy going, and what makes them laugh. Add more pages if you want to put in more about your child and their life. It makes the material more attractive and can be good to look back on later.

The design for the rest of the Journal has been kept deliberately plain to allow you to personalise it in any way you want. It works without additions, but there's plenty of space for you to make the file as colourful as you like.

The richer the description of a child, the more chance there is to tailor what people do to try to help them learn, participate and enjoy themselves. So, using this section isn't only about making the Journal more fun – it's about sharing as complete a picture of your child as possible with other people.

Questions you may want to ask

The Journal provides you with lots of opportunities to record new behaviours and skills in a positive way. However, things often aren't straightforward. Children can develop 'difficult behaviour'. At other times, it can seem like nothing's happening for a very long time. Some children start to behave in 'different' rather than 'difficult' ways – for example, wanting to play in repetitive ways with toys or objects for longer than is usual for other children. It's important to discuss these things if they are becoming issues for you – the page is just to encourage you to note down any questions you have, so you don't forget to ask them the next time you meet with someone you can talk to about it.

This is an important space in the Journal, because children move forward if help and support can be given as soon as you notice things that are beginning to concern you.

Do it your way

There are many different ways of using the Journal – so use it in whatever way you find most helpful. Some people use it from the early days of their child's life, others pick it up and begin to use it much later – when factors impacting on development begin to show in the second or third year of life.

Families also like to use the material in different ways – some write a lot, others very little. Some families don't want to write anything at all, but find it helpful to use the charts for reference when they're discussing what their child is able to do with other people – and may then ask other people to fill in the charts for them.

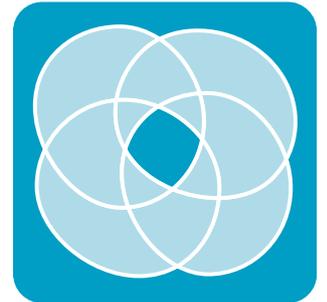
There are no hard and fast rules, except that the material comes alive and is most useful when it's discussed with other people. In general, it's less important to fill out all the boxes (however you decide that you want to do that) than to share the information the Journal provides with other people. It helps everyone involved with your child work as a team and talk with you about how best to support them.

Getting started

If you begin using the Journal early in your child's life, start at the beginning with Step 1. You'll soon become familiar with how to record new achievements.

If you start using it when your child is a bit older, you don't have to go back and fill in all the earlier material. For older children, we suggest reading the Summary Sheets for the Steps to help you find what seems like a good starting point.

Think of the things that your child is currently able to do and a few new things they've learnt to do for the first time recently. Flick through the Steps until you find something that describes what you're thinking about and then start looking in detail at the charts for that Step to find the best place to start keeping a record.



You'll probably find that your child is developing skills that fall across several different Steps at the same time – for example, at any given time a child may be developing skills in the **Physical development** section of Step 2, some skills in the **Communication, language and literacy** section of Step 3 and a few other things described in Step 4. So, flip backwards and forwards to look at the different sections in a number of different Steps to find your way around and to get a general idea of where you are, before you start to write things down.

Whenever you start using the material, it's useful to discuss where and how to begin with practitioners who know your child so that you can use the opportunity to exchange information about what you've noticed your child doing.

How often?

Most parents say they like to fill in the Developmental Journal regularly, so they don't forget all the small things that show their child has learnt something new. A few like to just jot down things as they notice them. We recommend filling the Journal in every month in the first year of life and then as seems most appropriate to you. Some of the skills described towards the end of the Journal are more complex and take longer to learn so you may want to leave a gap before coming back to the material.

You may also find that your use of the material changes over time. There are times when you may want to use the Journal very often, because your child seems to be changing a lot, or because there's some sort of crisis and it's helpful to observe what they're doing closely. On the other hand, if there's a medical problem or something happening in your family that slows development down, put the Journal away for a bit and come back to it later.

Filling the Developmental Journal in regularly makes it easier to remember things you've noticed and can help to pick up any areas of difficulty that are developing, early.

Using the Journal with other people – one set of materials for everyone to use

The Journal is most useful when you talk about it with other people – family members, carers, therapists, teachers and other professional practitioners. The material is particularly useful when many different people are trying to help with different aspects of a child's health and development, as it provides one set of information that can be shared and 'jointly owned' by everyone involved. This can be particularly helpful when reports have to be written, or at times of transition.

Communication is important when lots of different people are involved, and families sometimes say they find the words used by practitioners working for different services and agencies confusing. The Developmental Journal encourages everyone involved with a child to use the same language and provides a single framework of reference. It also promotes partnership working, by valuing what everyone knows about a child, and keeps families at the heart of discussion and decision-making about their child.

So the material is best used as a core part of regular, on-going relationships between families and the people they meet with most often to discuss how best to help their child. For this reason, the Journal may be of particular interest to Portage Home Visitors.

To find out more about the **National Portage Association**, visit www.portage.org.uk



It can also help when families have many appointments to attend and children have many assessment procedures to undergo. The fact that everything's written down and to hand can reduce stress and help everyone understand where the child is. This may be particularly important at first meetings with new people when parents have been waiting a long time for an appointment or when talking about a child's situation is difficult.

Many assessments take place in the first five years of a child's life. The Journal provides information that supplements and enriches the results of more formal assessments undertaken by professional practitioners at particular times in clinical or classroom settings.

It helps anyone new to a child to understand what they can already do, what they find difficult and how best to help. This is particularly useful at times of transition – for example, when a child begins to attend nursery or playgroup, or when a family moves house to a different area.

Where children experience difficulty learning, it's particularly important that everyone works in partnership to support them. The Journal can inform early discussions about what will be needed to include a child in early years settings and how best to encourage them to develop and participate. The material deliberately uses the language and framework of reference of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is the material practitioners working with young children use. Items in the Journal read directly across to items in the EYFS **Areas of Learning and Development** material – particularly **Development matters**. It can therefore be used to support observation of children in Early Years settings (**Look, listen and note**) and as an integral part of planning appropriate play and learning based on a child's interest and needs.

How to use the Journal

In summary, the Journal helps parents:

- notice more
- understand the importance of what their child is doing as they learn new things
- share what they know about their child
- understand what professional practitioners may be looking for and how they think about development
- ask questions
- know what to expect next
- discuss how things are going and agree what to do next to help a child.

It helps professional practitioners:

- work in partnership with families and with each other
- communicate more effectively
- build up a more accurate picture of what a child is able to do and therefore give better advice
- discuss and agree 'integrated goals' so that everyone working with a child is focused on the same development priorities
- identify emerging issues early.



Using the Journal with other Early Support materials

To find out more about Early Support materials, visit www.earlysupport.org.uk

The Early Support Developmental Journal is one in a series of publications that can be used separately, or in combination with one another.

Families who use the [Early Support Family File](#) will find that the material in the Journal helps them at meetings where [Family Service Plans](#) are being discussed and priorities and next steps are being agreed.

Some families with older children may also find it helpful to refer to the information provided by the Journal as they put together material for the [Introducing ourselves](#) section in the file.

Individual children and rates and patterns of development

All children show variation in their progress in different Areas of Development, especially in the area of language development. There are also some differences between boys and girls; boys tend to take longer to reach milestones than girls, but this is not true for all areas, or for all children. It's normal for children to make faster progress in some areas than others. The way the Journal is organised highlights where this is the case and so helps you see more clearly exactly where your child may need extra help.

The Early Years Foundation Stage reminds us that:

- every child is a unique individual, with their own characteristics and temperament
- rates of development vary from child to child and from time to time
- many factors affect a child's development, for example, low birth weight, a recent move or their family being under stress
- what children **can** do is the starting point for learning.

The only risk associated with using the Journal is that you may focus too much on particular Developmental Steps or Areas of Development, rather than seeing your child as a whole. It's important for everyone to keep reminding themselves about all the ways in which you and your child are succeeding and developing, and to celebrate success and progress whenever and however it happens.



Appendix

Early Years Foundation Stage Phases

Phase 1

- Gain increasing control of their muscles
- Develop skills in moving their hands, feet, limbs and head
- Becoming mobile
- Able to handle objects
- Able to manipulate objects
- Build secure attachments to special people such as parents, family members or carers

Phase 2

- Develop curiosity, coordination and physical abilities
- Learn the beginnings of self-control
- Learn the beginnings of how to relate to other people
- Develop their social skills with people to whom they have a positive attachment
- Develop their mental skills with people to whom they have a positive attachment
- Building on their communication skills

How to use the Journal

- Begin to develop a sense of self
- More able to express their needs
- More able to express their feelings
- Learn a few simple words for everyday things and people
- Communication skills grow
- Vocabulary expands very rapidly during this period

Phase 3

- Better understand other people's thoughts and feelings
- Learn how to cooperate with others
- Build a sense of self-confidence
- Learn about boundaries
- Learn how to handle frustration
- Play with toys that come apart and fit together – problem solving and simple planning
- Pretend play



Phase 4

- Fine motor skills continue to develop
- Enjoy making marks, using a variety of materials
- Looking at picture books
- Listening to stories
- Self-help and independence emerge in areas such as eating
- Self-help and independence emerge in areas such as dressing
- Self-help and independence emerge in areas such as toileting
- Build their self-esteem
- Language is developing rapidly
- Beginning to put sentences together
- Joining in conversations with children
- Begin to think about past, present and future
- Join in active play with other children
- Can now usually walk, climb and run
- Learning about dangers and safe limits

Phase 5

- Increased interest in joint play such as make-believe, construction and games
- Social skills of sharing and cooperating
- Helping adults in everyday activities
- A balance between independence and complying with the wishes of others
- Still need the comfort and security of special people
- Aware of their place in a community
- Literacy and numeracy develop rapidly
- Become adept at using longer sentences
- Conversations with adults

Phase 6

- Building a stronger sense of their own identity
- Building a stronger sense of their place in a wider world
- Recognise the importance of social rules and customs
- Show understanding and tolerance of others
- Learn how to be more controlled in their own behaviour
- Development of social skills
- Able to plan and undertake more challenging activities with a wider range of materials for making and doing
- Developing understanding of cause and effect encouraged by wider variety of equipment



Acknowledgements

The Journal builds on the Early Years Foundation Stage, which was published in 2007, and three other [Early Support](#) publications:

[Monitoring protocol for deaf babies and children](#) (2004)

[Developmental journal for babies and children with Down syndrome](#) (2006)

[Developmental journal for babies and children with visual impairment](#) (2006)

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Early Support

Early Support is the Government programme to achieve better co-ordinated, family focused services for young disabled children and their families. It is developing at a time of significant change, as part of the restructuring of children's services in response to *Every Child Matters* and alongside new integrated assessment, information and inspection frameworks for children's services.

The **Early Support Family pack** (ES1) contains a set of background information booklets and a copy of the **Early Support Family file** (ES5).

The **Family file** contains family-held material to help with co-ordinating support and sharing information – particularly when many different people are in contact with a child.

To find out more about Early Support and other Early Support publications, visit www.earlysupport.org.uk





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Partners with Parents and Children