

Good Practice Guidelines for Early Intervention

What is Early Intervention?

VINCYP Standard 11: There is a service within each Health Board (HB), which provides Early Intervention and family support on identification of Visual Impairment (VI).

This is defined as a service providing contact by a professional with experience in visual impairment and emotional and practical support for families, within at most 5 working days of referral. This should be available both in the community and in hospital.

Referral should be made to VI agencies in the VINCYP pathway within 4 weeks of identification of VI ([see VINCYP Care Pathway and VINCYP standards](#)).

What do families need in terms of support after identification of VI?

The needs of individual families vary depending on their unique circumstances. However, most families need:

- clarification of the immediate next steps after VI has been identified
- contact by a professional with experience in visual impairment who can provide emotional and practical support for families (including extended family members if required) and who can offer direct regular contact
- information about their child's visual impairment and how this may impact upon their life - this information needs to be given by a professional who can make sense of medical terminology and make this understandable to the family
- opportunities to ask questions and to generate discussion
- to be directed to reliable information (including websites and online resources) that accurately but sensitively describes the cause and impact of the visual impairment

- practical advice and strategies for how best to support their child/young person (YP)
- information about and help to navigate the [VINCYP Care Pathway](#)
- signposting / referral to other organisations that can offer enhanced and ongoing support to the child/YP and parents/carers
- introduction to other families and support groups who have lived experience
- practical support and advice where appropriate e.g. applying for relevant benefits

What exactly should Early Intervention involve?

Professionals providing Early Intervention should:

- make contact with the parent/carer as soon as VI is identified
- be prepared – have some knowledge of the child/YP's visual impairment and the family situation before making contact
- provide emotional support which includes allowing time to talk, listening and answering questions
- advise appropriate early visual strategies for the child/YP
- offer regular contact
- develop a relationship with the family – understand their journey leading up to the identification of VI and their concerns moving forward
- tailor support to meet the needs of the family - take the lead from the parent carer
- provide an appropriate level and amount of information
- signpost/refer to other organisations for access to the right information and support at the right time
- follow up with families to ensure they are accessing the support they need and that they have choices in what they take up
- provide practical support including help with access to benefits

- advocate on behalf of children and their families in full consultation with them
- have a multi-agency approach with good communication and regular liaison with VI professionals in other agencies to provide a joined-up service to families

What training / experience do professionals need to provide Early Intervention?

Professionals providing Early Intervention need:

- experience of working with families, children and young people with VI with varied backgrounds
- an understanding of the emotional impact the diagnosis has on a family
- a skill set that includes good communication, listening, attention to detail and empathy
- training in VI including:
 - the causes of VI
 - an understanding of how the condition can affect the child or YP
 - the impacts of VI on child development
- knowledge of the local [VINCYP Care Pathway](#) and the professionals/ organisations involved
- to be aware of, and signpost to, organisations that offer help and support for the parents/carers and child or YP
- experience of working collaboratively with a range of other service providers
- appropriate support for themselves - professionals may be aided by having a 'mentor'

Which professionals are best placed to provide Early Intervention in this context?

This will be determined by local services and may be a professional working in:

- Health - Early Intervention VI Specialist Nurse
- Education – Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI)
- Social Care (VI) / Voluntary Agency e.g. Early Intervention Support Worker

There should always be a multi-agency approach to coordinate care and ensure the best support and guidance for the child / YP and their family - it is vital that all services supporting the family are able to share information and work together.

What are the next steps following Early Intervention?

Ongoing support should be available for families, but this may be delivered longer-term by various professionals/organisations.