

Early Help Assessment and Family Plan

Guidance for Professionals

Introduction

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) is a tool to assist any professional who is working with children, young people and families. It should be used where there are emerging welfare or well-being concerns. This is NOT a referral form but gives a framework to consider whilst working with a child/family. It has been endorsed by Worcestershire Children's Safeguarding Partnership as part of The Early Help Strategy for partners within the County.

It is not compulsory to use the EHA, but if, at a later date, you wish to refer the child or young person on to statutory services, there will be an expectation that you have completed this form.

Parental consent is essential. A signature or confirmation of consent from the parent/carer must be in place. This guidance document should be read in conjunction with the Early Help Assessment and Early Help Pathway forms.

Child and Family Details

Section 1 focuses on the general information about the child and family. All children in the household should be named on the form, although you may not have concerns or provide support for all of them. It is important that families are supported to help themselves, so this section asks about significant people both within, and outside of, the household. These questions are asked to determine what support network the family have, and who could ultimately support them when professionals are no longer involved. Other significant adults could be: extended family member; close family friend; or a neighbour that is part of the family support network.

The child or young person should always be asked what they want to happen – the child/children's voice(s) should be a central part of the assessment and should influence actions moving forward. If a child is very young or non-verbal, observations of the child's lived experience should be made. It may be relevant to talk to other professionals about what they see/hear/understand about the child's wishes or feelings.

Thinking about the child or children that you are worried about? The Assessment

The EHA and plan must be written in such a way that it can be owned and understood by the child and family. The family should be directly involved in clarifying what the concerns are, and what the family need to do. This might involve actions with you, or if necessary, using the support of other agencies, to make the situation better.

The questions in the table, using the columns from left to right, should assist both you and the family to identify the issues, concerns and necessary actions¹.

As you work through this section with the family, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I and/or my agency going to do, or have done, to support this child/young person/family?
- Do I need to talk to or work with anyone else? If there needs to be more people involved, then who should take the **professional lead** for the family. Should I gain support from others to achieve the family's goals? (*For example: a school contacting a school health nurse or bereavement counselling, a nursery contacting a health visitor, a health visitor talking to the peri-natal team*)

- Does the family agree with me about the need for additional support and will they accept the services identified?
- Do I need to discuss the family with my manager or our Designated Safeguarding Lead? Please refer to Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Levels of Need Guidance
- Do I need to escalate my concerns to the Family Front Door in Children's Social Care?

The identification of a lead professional may be necessary if there is a need for someone to co-ordinate the provision of support for the child. This person acts as the single point of contact when other services are involved with that child or family and a joined up response is required. The choice of lead professional should be informed by the wishes and feelings of the child or young person about who they feel is most appropriate for them.

When answering the left hand column and the worries indicate that significant harm has or is taking place, then escalate immediately.

If the parent/carer(s) are unwilling to give consent, this should be recorded on the form. You can still use the form to record your professional viewpoint and concerns but without consent you will be unable to move a plan forward at this time.

Early Help Family Plan

Not all Early Help Assessments will lead to a plan. Where a Family Plan is required, this section can be completed by a single agency or by a group of professionals where a multi-agency meeting has been convened. If a Lead Professional is required to co-ordinate multi-agency involvement, they should hold responsibility for ensuring that the plan is reviewed with the family and partners.

The actions contained within the plan are those that you might ordinarily take as part of your professional role. This is a way to support your ability to record what you/others have done with the family. The actions listed may well result in a need to make an onward referral for support, for example to CAMHS or parenting support.

The plan should be agreed by the family and informed by the assessment and circulated to the child/young person, parent/carer and partner agencies within 5 working days of the completion of assessment. The plan should be specific, measurable, achievable within timescales, realistic and timely. It should also focus on the required outcomes that the assessment has identified.

Once **Sections 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4 and 5** are completed, please email to familyassessment@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Retain a copy for your own records.

When the intervention with the family ends:

- **complete the** Early Help Closing Summary form **(available as a separate document)**
- **Ensure Sections 3c and 3d - Early Help Family Plan Review/s are updated**

and email both documents to familyassessment@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk secure email

Retain copies for your own records.