

We have produced some advice based on questions partner agencies have asked to support you with your Early Help offers to children and young people in Worcestershire.

Is an Early Help Assessment the same as a referral to Early Help Family Support? No, the Early Help Assessment is a working tool to assist any professional who is working with children, young people and their family in Worcestershire. This may be the Worcestershire early help assessment template or your own agency approved template.

A referral to Early help family support is a Family support worker service delivered by Worcestershire Children First and required a request to be completed via their website.

Why do I need to submit an Early Help Assessment?

So that Worcestershire Local Authority can report on, recognise and understand the Early Help being provided by all agencies /services across Worcestershire to our children and young people. This is reported to the Early help partnership board and helps inform impact and needs for children and young people and their families in Worcestershire.

Professionals who have completed an early help assessment for a child, young person and their family are asked to submit this to the Local Authority via the Early Help Assessment portal. [Third Party Professional Assessment \(worcestershirechildrenfirst.org.uk\)](http://worcestershirechildrenfirst.org.uk)

How do I refer to Early Help?

Early Help is a term used to describe both preventative work and a range of services and support for children, young people, and their families at the earliest opportunity when a need first emerges. By engaging a family in an early help assessment, you are able to identify what help and support they need and who is already identified. If you need help in identifying possible services or support please look at the early help leaflet which can be found on our virtual early help Family hub page: [The Family Hub | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Early help is not a referral process it is the help and support we give to children and their families through our work with them and our connections with others who also help and support them with the needs we have identified.

Why do I need to complete an Early Help Assessment?

We should capture the needs of child and their families and how we and others are supporting them to address those needs and make the changes required. Or it may be a child or young person who will need ongoing help and support due to very specific needs e.g. a disability or mental health need. This will enable us to understand what works and what's been tried. The completion of an Early Help Assessment will ensure the presenting or emerging needs of the family are identified, and who or what may help prevent the escalation of these needs. This will help us understand not only what works and makes a difference for that family but also what we need to provide or where there are gaps in support.

How do I get a signature on the electronic Early Help Forms?

Parent's, children and Early Help agencies signing the Early Help forms should sign a paper copy which is held by the Lead Professional. When submitting an Early Help Assessment electronically you can upload this or you can type in the space where the signature goes the words 'signature held on file', name the agency and record the date of the signatures

Can I proceed with an Early Help Assessment without the consent of the family?

No, an Early Help Assessment is a voluntary process and therefore parents and children where appropriate should be fully engaged in the process, and consent must be given. If a young person requests an Early Help Assessment and does not want parents involved they can give consent themselves (following Fraser Guidelines [Gillick competence and Fraser guidelines | NSPCC Learning.](#)) The Early Help Assessment cannot proceed without either the Parent or Young Person consenting.

Do I have to include parents?

Yes, both parents whether parenting together or not should be included in the Early Help Assessment, where safe and appropriate to do so.

Does my Early Help Assessment have to be completed on the Worcestershire Safeguarding Partnership Board template?

No, you can use your own agency Early Help Assessment template. Please ensure the strengths-based signs of safety (SoS) approach is used throughout your document / template.

Who should be lead professional completing the Early Help Assessment?

At the early stages of the assessment the professional undertaking the assessment will be the lead professional until the first Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting is held and a Lead Professional (LP) can be agreed by the family and supporting agencies. This should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The family should be involved in this decision and can request to change the lead professional.

What is the role of a lead professional, what do I need to do?

The Lead professional will act as a single point of contact for the child and family, coordinate the delivery of actions agreed and reduce duplication in the services received. The Lead Professional is accountable for their own service; they are not accountable for the actions of others.

Who will support me to do an Early help assessment?

Your line manager should support you in completing an Early Help Assessment or you may have a designated member of staff or a peer who can support you.

Additional guidance on completing an assessment can be found via the following link [FAQs and Guidance | Early help guidance for professionals | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Training for professionals can be found via [Early help training and events | Early help guidance for professionals | Worcestershire County Council](#)

What do I do once I have completed an Early Help Assessment?

The assessment should have identified what help and support is needed and who else may help and support with this. This will formulate the early help plan which is the help and support being offered. The Team Around the Family meeting will review this on a six weekly basis and update it with progress and next steps accordingly.

Once you have completed an Early Help Assessment, we ask that you notify the Local Authority through the Third-Party Professional Assessment portal [Third Party Professional Assessment \(worcschildrenfirst.org.uk\)](#)

When the help and support within the plan comes to an end and is successful and the child and family no longer need help and support then the Early Help Closure Form needs to be completed through the portal.

All Worcestershire Forms are available on this website for use.

What happens if the lead professional identified does not agree to be the lead professional?

It is really important to respect the family's wishes with regards to who they want for Lead Professional, who should be a trusted person for the family. Where the family are open to whom this could be, we advise that professionally within reasonable levels you encourage the professionals in the meeting to agree the Lead Professional but if it becomes contentious take it out of the meeting and contact your manager to raise this issue as it is not helpful for family members to witness disagreements between agencies.

Why should I initiate an Early Help Assessment when the identified concerns can be managed by another agency?

Identification of needs and the family's engagement in the access of help and support is key. Who delivers the help and support is what will be captured in the early help plan. Early help is everyone's business. The professional who has identified a family who needs additional support and completes an Early Help Assessment.

Why when I submit a referral to Children's Social Care am I sometimes advised to complete an Early Help Assessment?

This will be because Children's social care is a level 4 need and the referral you made has not identified this but agrees with you that there is a need for that child and that it needs to be addressed through an offer of early help and you are requested to complete an Early help assessment based on the information you have submitted.

Can I complete one Early Help Assessment for more than one child if they are from the same household? (i.e. sibling / step sibling)

Yes, an Early Help Assessment will focus on the whole family, if there is more than one child who needs an assessment they can be included in the same assessment. You do not need to do separate ones as early help is a whole family approach.

What should I do if a professional does not complete their actions or be part of the Early Help plan?

If one of the professionals is unable to attend the Team around the family (TAF) meeting then they should be contacting the Lead Professional to let them know and update them on progress/actions/work completed since the last TAF meeting. If a specific Early Help agency is persistently not attending meetings/updating the actions/completing actions then this should be discussed with your line manager, if this is left unresolved your line manager should follow the Worcestershire partnership escalations process.

How do I add my scoring for supporting families on my agencies own Early help assessment?

When submitting your Early Help Assessment via the early help portal, you will be asked to complete the Supporting Families Scoring section of the assessment as part of the process. Please do not add in the Supporting Families scores in your agencies early help templates as you will be prompted to provide this information when submitting this document.

Why do I need to add in my supporting families outcomes score?

The DFE requires us to capture the Supporting Families Outcome Scores in Worcestershire and it helps us to evidence the impact and outcomes we are making to children and young people. This data is submitted to the DFE for Worcestershire and reported to the Early help partnership board.

How do I tell the Local Authority that I have done an Early help assessment?

When an Early Help Assessment is submit via the Third Party Assessment Portal, it will be picked up by a member of the Early Help Partnership Team: [Third Party Professional Assessment \(worschildrenfirst.org.uk\)](http://worschildrenfirst.org.uk)

How will I know if someone has already done an early help assessment?

If you are trying to find out if an Early Help Assessment has been completed for a child/family, you are working with please check single view of the child.

How many early help assessments can a child / young person have?

Children and young people should only have one Early Help Assessment at one time, but they can have multiple episodes of help and support during their childhood which for some children will be very appropriate given their or their family's needs.

Is it still early help when you are 17 years old?

Yes, an Early Help Assessment can be completed at any age between 0-18 years (age can be extended if there are specific needs e.g., SEND).

Is an early help assessment the same as an EHCP assessment?

No. An education, health, and care plan (EHCP) are for children and young people aged up to 25 years who need more specific support due to their educational needs support. EHCPs identify educational, health and social needs and sets out the additional support to meet those needs.

Do I need to distribute minutes after each meeting?

yes, but it is not "minutes" it's the updated Early help plan, this is a way of ensuring everyone is aware of the plan, actions and date of the next meeting.

Who should have a copy of the completed Early Help Assessment?

Family members involved as well as each professional involved in the delivery of the early help plan.

What happens if the professionals involved in the Early Help Assessment / TAF meeting believe the family situation has deteriorated to the stage where there are significant safeguarding concerns? You should discuss your concerns with your line manager or designated safeguarding lead and consider if a referral to children's social care is now needed.

How long will an Early Help Assessment take to complete?

This will depend on how much you already know about the family and how complex the identified needs are. Following your conversation with the child/young person and their family, alongside professionals who are involved with the family, the Early Help Assessment may only take a short while to complete, but the EHA process may involve a longer relationship with the family. However good practice would be to submit a copy of your assessment within 4 weeks from the date of starting the early help assessment.

How often do I need to review the Early Help plan?

Good Practice is that it reviewed at least every 3 months. The importance is not allowing drift or delay to happen and families not getting the help and support identified. This is a needs-based process, and meetings can be held more frequently. A plan should be reviewed as often as is needed to make sure the plan is working and is kept on track for the child/young person and family.

What if only one parent is agreeing to an Early Help assessment? The consent of one parent is sufficient, so if parents are living separately you should normally obtain consent from the parent the child is living with.

However, each situation is different, and you will need to manage each situation carefully so as not to exacerbate situations, if unsure seek advice from your line manager.