

Early Help Assessment for Children and Young People

Practitioner Guidelines

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Early Help Assessment

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) is a standardised approach to assessing children and young people's needs and deciding how they should be met.

The EHA is a key element of our strategy to delivering more effective early intervention and prevention and is a tool for the identification and initial assessment of children and young people considered to be in need of additional support.

Once completed the EHA will serve as a useful way to share information and to track and review a child or young person's progress. At the point an EHA is completed by a practitioner they are also encouraged to consider and identify any future likely or predictable difficulties a child may face, for example the transition to secondary school. The EHA form should be used by practitioners in all agencies who work with unborn babies, babies, children, young people and their families and have been trained in its use.

Completing the EHA will help to:

- Gather information about a child, young person and their family. It will also help identify any other professionals already working with the child or young person.
- Consider the information; identify the risks and protective factors which in turn will help you to assess the additional needs of the child or young person.
- Make recommendations about how best to improve outcomes for a child or young person both through your own service and where appropriate from others.
- Facilitate earlier and better joint working with the parent or carer before a child or young person's needs escalate.
- Improve the outcomes for a child or young person where current intervention and support processes are not working.
- Address concerns about a child or young person's well-being that are related to issues beyond your service / support.

If at any time you feel a child or young person is at risk of harm you should immediately refer your concerns to the Access & Referral team on 0300 300 8585.

Before you start the assessment process, please contact the Access & Referral team on 0300 300 8585 to check whether an EHA has already been completed and logged by another professional. This is essential to ensure that only one EHA is in existence for a child/young person at any one time.

EHA Pre-assessment checklist

The EHA Pre Assessment Checklist can be used by practitioners when deciding whether to initiate the EHA Process in relation to a child or young person.

This form is not compulsory but can be used to aid the decision making process and to trigger an EHA within your agency. It is not intended to be used directly with the family or to be shared with other agencies.

Minimum standards when completing the assessment

Starting the assessment:

It is important that all professionals contact the Early Help Service before they start completing an EHA for a child or young person. An EHA may already exist for the child or young person. CSIS will also be able to advise you of any other professionals/services involved with the family which may assist you and avoid duplication.

The assessment is a way of recording your discussion with the child or young person and their family. You will need to make sure they understand what information you are recording and what is going to happen to it. You should consider the child or young person within their family relationship and community, including their cultural and religious context. It will help to use plain, jargon-free language which is appropriate to the age and culture of each person, explaining any unavoidable technical and professional terms.

The discussion does not have to be highly formal or presented as a 'big event.' You will want to use a method and style that suits you, the child or young person, their parent/carer, and the situation. It is not appropriate to do an assessment without seeing or involving the child or young person.

The key points to remember about your discussion are:

- It is collaborative – you are working with the child or young person and their family to find solutions, and they will often know better than you.
- You should consider the child/young person's and family's strengths as well as needs, and these should be recorded.
- If the child or young person and/or their parent/carer don't want to participate, you can't force them – it is a voluntary assessment. If you are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or young person, seek immediate advice at the end of the discussion.

Completing the form

It is important that as many of the following sections are completed and boxes marked with an asterisk are mandatory:

Is this Child/Young Person open to Social Care?

Please tick yes or no if you know that the child/young person is currently an open social care case. If so and it is not a step down then an EHA should be completed by the social worker only.

Is this a step down to EHATAC?

If the Child/Young Person is now being closed to Social Care and needs further support via an EHA, please tick yes. An EHA can be completed at the closure meeting, preferably by the social worker and a Lead Professional must be identified.

Date of assessment

Section A – Identifying details

Please ensure that as much identifying details are completed as possible. It is also important that the ethnicity and disability sections are also completed.

Assessment Information:

If you have consulted with any other services/organisations regarding the child/young person then you may want to detail this in the “What has led to this unborn baby, infant, child or young person being assessed?” box. Please include all the people present at the assessment and their relationship to the child/young person.

Section B – Details of family

It is important that details of the current family and home situation is completed, this should include:

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Other significant adults that the child/young person may spend time with
- Siblings
- Who lives with the child/young person and who does not live with the child/young person
- Any other relevant details

Section C – Details of person making assessment

It is essential that all details of the person who completes the assessment are filled in as well as the details of the nominated Lead Professional if known. If the Lead Professional is nominated after the assessments has taken place, then fill in the details on the form and notify CSIS.

Section D – Services working with this child

It is essential that the GP details are filled in as this is needed for some referrals to certain agencies. Details of the different services that are working with the child/young person should also be completed; this can include Nursery/school, children’s centre, etc.

Section E - Assessment Summary

You should explore areas around your immediate concern, so as to look behind the presenting issues and come up with a more holistic view. You do not need to comment on every element; include only what is relevant.

The section includes:

- Development of the child – try to detail as much information as possible about the child’s/young person’s general and physical health, emotional well-being such as self esteem, behavioural development, relationship and social skills with family and peers, education - such as at risk of school exclusion.
- Parents and Carers – details regarding basic care, safety and protection, emotional warmth and stability including family environment, frequency of house moves and school changes, encouragement and praise
- Family and Environmental Factors – details regarding family history, extended family support, housing, employment and financial situation, social networks, and issues such as domestic violence and/or substance abuse.

- What are the child/young person's/families strengths and resources, what are their needs – e.g. no additional needs, additional needs, complex needs, risk of harm to self or others

Section F – Conclusions, solutions and actions

With the child or young person and parent/carer identify what changes are wanted, what they can do and what you will do to help this change and what do you want others to do? Make sure they understand what is proposed. Try to focus on what the child or young person and family can do for themselves. Do not make any promises of support on behalf of other services.

Record the child/young person and parent/carer comments on the assessment and actions identified. Give a copy of the assessment to the child/young person or their parent/ carer and explain that they can show it to other services if they wish to, so they don't have to keep repeating their stories.

Section G – Consent statement for information storage and information sharing

Explain that with their consent, the assessment will be stored securely by your agency, and will also be copied to the Early Help Service for logging on a central database.

Once any questions have been resolved, use the box "List of Organisations" to explicitly record which agencies the child or young person and/or parent/carer does and does not consent to sharing their information with, and for what purpose, and also to record any other limits to the consent.

What is a Team around the Child (TAC) meeting?

A TAC meeting is an opportunity for practitioners and families to discuss how additional needs can be met.

The action plan made during an assessment may require the services of more than one additional agency. Ordinarily, the practitioner undertaking the assessment should refer to the necessary agencies and/or call a TAC meeting to ensure their role in the plan can be recorded using the delivery plan and review.

Who is involved?

The EHA author will coordinate and chair the first TAC meeting and invite professionals directly involved in supporting the child or young person to attend the meeting. The Lead Professional will be appointed at this meeting.

Copies of the EHA Form are to be shared with all relevant practitioners that will be attending, before the meeting. Practitioners should bring any additional information along to the meeting as appropriate. Attendance at the meeting is expected of all relevant practitioners. Practitioners unable to attend will take responsibility for informing the EHA Author or Lead Professional and provide information, which can be presented to the meeting in their absence.

It is imperative that the child, young person and/or their parent/carer is also invited to the meeting and has an opportunity to participate in any decision-making. During the EHA assessment the child, young person and their parent/carer must be clearly listened to and they should be involved in recommending what services and support they feel would help.

The meeting venue should be confidential, safe and accessible and the meetings timed to take account of other family commitments.

A key task of the chair is to ensure that all those present, including the family, have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, formulate and review the delivery plan. The discussion can be recorded on the Delivery Plan and Review paperwork.

What are the anticipated outcomes?

TAC meetings will always agree the following:

- Action plan identifying who will be doing what and how this will be measured.
- Named or continuing Lead Professional, as required.
- Date of review meeting.

In addition the meeting may also wish to consider:

- Further assessments.
- Actions by family members.
- Actions by practitioners who are present at the meeting.
- Request for services from agencies not present.

At the end of the review the EHA should either be closed or another review date agreed. Make sure any additions to the desired outcomes/action are made or a new plan drawn up if required.

Consent and information sharing issues should be revisited with the young person, parent and/or carer, and along with the lead professional, should all sign the consent section of the delivery plan and review before distributing to other practitioners and agencies.

If the decision is made to close the EHA make sure you record the reason i.e., needs met, Social Care involvement, consent withdrawn or moved away.

After the meeting, send the signed copy to the Early Help Service to confirm that the delivery plan has been agreed.

What if's

What if the parents/carers/young person doesn't turn up?

If this is the case the Lead Professional will need to try and contact them to see if they are running late. If you get no response the TAC will have to be postponed. A TAC must never proceed without the parents/carers or child/young person.

What if conflict occurs between TAC members?

Should conflict arise in the room the Lead Professional will need to advise that the conversation will need to continue after the meeting? Where the conflict may affect ongoing work with the child or young person escalate this to the Early Help Service.

The role of the Lead Professional

Where a child or young person with multiple additional needs requires support from more than one practitioner, the Lead Professional is someone who:

- Acts as a single point of contact, supporting the child/young person and their parents/carers in making choices and navigating their way through the system. However, the Lead Professional is not an advocate for the child/young person or the parents/carers.
- Ensures that they get appropriate interventions when needed, which are well planned, regularly reviewed and effectively delivered through the EHA delivery plan.
- A practitioner cannot be identified as the Lead Professional in their absence unless this has been previously agreed.
- The Lead Professional is not accountable for the actions/tasks of other practitioners within the group or the group as a whole. Tasks/actions within the group must be defined and recorded in the Delivery Plan and Review and each practitioner is responsible and accountable for their own actions/tasks.

- Although the Lead Professional will usually have the fullest ongoing picture of the child or young person's needs and the impact of action plan, it is the responsibility of all practitioners involved to ensure that the child or young person is protected from significant harm. Therefore if you are concerned that a child or young person may have suffered significant harm or may be at risk of significant harm, you must immediately notify the Referral and Access hub on 0300 300 8585.

More information can be found on

www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0068961/the-lead-professional

The review process

The Lead Professional is responsible for co-ordinating the review process. Other relevant agencies and the child, young person and parent or carer should support this. The review date will be recorded on the plan. A maximum of 3 monthly intervals is suggested.

The following options are suggested for reviewing the action plan:

1. Lead professional to arrange a meeting with the family and all agencies
2. Lead professional to gather reports from all agencies and share with the family
3. Lead professional to confirm actions have been met at review date and share with the family.

The Delivery Plan must be signed by the parent/carers, child/young person (where appropriate) and the lead professional, to show that the next steps are understood and agreed.

TAC Agenda

The TAC agenda should include the following:

- Welcome and introductions (Chair)
- Summary of needs and update since the EHA was written (Chair & Family)
- Opportunity for questions (All)
- Agreement on un-met needs (All)
- Agreement on how needs can be met (All)
- Completion of the Delivery Plan (Chair to complete, also acts as a summary)
- Agreement of the Lead Professional (All)
- Agree on review date (All)

TAC Invitation Letter

Below is a suggested letter to use when arranging a TAC. Please feel free to adapt and change the letter to suit your own agency/requirements.

Name	Your ref:	ABC EFG
Address 1		
Address 2	Our ref:	ABC EFG
Address 3		
Address 4	Date:	DD/MM/YYYY
Postcode		

RE: TAC meeting for (child's name)

Dear Colleague

You should have already been contacted by telephone or e-mail regarding the arrangement of a TAC meeting for the above named child/young person. The TAC has been arranged on (date & time) at (venue). Enclosed is also a copy of the EHA assessment for you to read before the meeting, we do however ask you to permanently delete the EHA once you have finished with it.

Please confirm if you are able to attend the TAC meeting within two working days of receiving this letter. If you are unable to attend please advise the work your agency is able to undertake and the time scales involved so we can add it to the delivery plan.

Yours sincerely

A.N. Other

Job title

Direct telephone

Email

EHA Process Flowchart

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED THAT A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON IS AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM THEN CONTACT THE ACCESS AND REFERRAL HUB ON 0300 300 8585

Practitioner/s identifies need/s of a child/young person

Contact the Early Help Service to establish if an EHA has already been completed by someone else and/or the child/young person are open to Social Care.

If an EHA already exists or the child/young person is an open Social Care case you will be given the details of the Lead Professional/Social Worker for you to discuss your concerns and/or involvement.

Discuss and complete the EHA with the parents/carers and child/young person (if applicable). Gain signed consent and send to the Early Help Service.

If you are unable to gain consent, continue working with the child/young person and log refusal in your own case notes. The EHA Process stops.

Convene a Team around the Child (TAC) meeting with all required agencies, parents/carers and child/young person.

If you are unsure who to contact for the TAC meeting, contact the Early Help Service who will advise you on appropriate agencies.

Complete Delivery Plan and Review at the TAC meeting and forward to the Early Help Service and all TAC members, including the child/young person and their parents/carers.

Continue to hold meetings at regular intervals to review the process until the entire child's /young person's needs are met. Once the needs have been met close the EHA and inform the Early Help Service.

Early Help Service contact details

Postal Address: DC1, Central Bedfordshire Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 1LF

Access & Referral team on 0300 300 8585

E-mail address for all EHA forms, delivery plan and review documentation:

earlyhelp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/eha