

Staffordshire Early Help Assessment Guidance Notes

The Staffordshire Early Help Assessment has been designed to be easy to use as a guide for initiating and recording discussions with families where their children may have additional needs. The format is user-friendly and the form can be re-visited and added to over time by the practitioner(s) working with the family, and by the family themselves. It is – first and foremost – a tool to enable practitioners and families to jointly assess needs and to inform a plan in which all will play a part. The objective of that plan will be to ensure that everyone understands their role in actions that will ensure that the additional needs of the child or young person are addressed, and that outcomes for that child – and for their family – improve and are sustained.

The Staffordshire Early Help Assessment is the tool for the county and practitioners are encouraged to use it when they feel that they need to discuss concerns with a child and their family. The form guides that discussion and should prompt recognition of the strengths and resources in families and the communities in which they live. It will inform a plan of action that draws on those resources to achieve improvement for the child or young person. If more than one agency needs to be involved - either from the outset or later on – then the format is one which is familiar and not specific to any one agency and is an ideal tool to support partnership working. It can be added to and updated but there should rarely be the need to start the assessment again.

Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board will monitor use of the Staffordshire Early Help Assessment to ensure that all relevant agencies are using it as a matter of course to support good practice in working with children and families. The SSCB will be looking for examples of where a range of agencies and practitioners have found it useful as a tool to achieve a collective understanding of the needs of children and families. When undertaking an assessment, professionals should pay due consideration to the safety needs of each individual child / young person and to the [Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if a child/ young person already has an assessment and who do I contact when I have started an Early Help Assessment?

Please contact your Local Support Team, to check and to let them know that you have started a Staffordshire Early Help Assessment. The LST can then advise if the child/family is already known to statutory services, and /or if an Early Help Assessment is already in place.

Where can I access the Early Help Assessment pro-forma?

The Early Help Assessment can be found by following the links:

[Partner Agencies: Staffordshire County Council:](#)

[Education: Staffordshire County Council Learning Net:](#)

[Families First:](#)

What if I have questions about how to use the Staffordshire Early Help Assessment?
For general enquiries please contact the Development Officer Hayley Allman on 07817112833.

Families First Local Support Teams will also answer queries on how to use the form: their contact details are on the Staffordshire County Council website and telephone numbers are set out below.

Biddulph – 01782 297812	Leek – 01782 297812	Kidsgrove – 01782 296290
Madeley – 01782 296290	Chesterton – 01782 296290	Uttoxeter – 01283 239617
Paget – 01283 239617	Stapenhill – 01283 239617	Wilnecote – 01827 782004
Glascote – 01827 782004	Burntwood – 01543 334797	Lichfield – 01543 334797
Rugeley – 01543 512318	Cannock (East/West) – 01543 512318	South Staffs (North) – 01902 506160
South Staffs (South) – 01902 506160	Stafford (North) – 01785 854080	Stafford (South) – 01785 854080

How do I use the Early Help Assessment with families?

Practitioners must always obtain consent from a family/child or adult before the Early Help Assessment process starts. Once consent is given, the Practitioner will lead a discussion with the child, and family/adult to reflect upon and record their strengths and needs and this information will be captured on the Early Help Assessment document. The family must confirm their consent by signing the form and they will then be given a copy. The Practitioner will also retain a copy. At this point the family and the Practitioner will decide which services may be invited to become part of the 'team around the child/family' and contributors to the Early Help Action Plan.

Who can give consent for Early Help?

It is best practice to gain consent from an adult with parental responsibility for a child/ young person, and of children & young people. Practitioners must use their professional judgement to decide when and in what circumstances to accept consent from a young person without parental consent. Case law has determined that the child has the capacity to make informed judgements.

The family are partners in effective early help, and securing their early involvement is an important factor. Further information on information sharing can be found on the SSCB website.

[SSCB Information Sharing Guidance](#)

What happens if consent is refused?

If consent to carry out an Early Help is refused, it cannot be undertaken. In these circumstances, the practitioner should deploy a persistent approach to engage the family. Practitioners will need to consider the risks presented to children and young people and refer to the SSCB Threshold model can be used to support decision making and your agency's safeguarding procedures should be followed without delay if a child/young person is considered to be at risk of harm.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)

What happens if consent is withdrawn half way through the Assessment?

In most cases, the Early Help process will stop, unless there is a statutory obligation to continue working with the family. The Lead Worker should document the reason for closing the EHA/ plan and inform the TAC/F members. The Lead Worker should forward a copy of the updated records to their local LST clearly informing them of the reason for closure. If a

child/young person is thought to be at risk as a result of this decision, safeguarding procedures should be followed without delay.

How will information be kept confidential?

All records will be stored securely in line with the agency's retention policy. Only information which is relevant will be shared and children/young people and their parent/carers can ask for information shared to be limited.

Information will only be shared with the informed consent of the child/ young person, or their parent/carer. The exception would be if the information gathered led to concern that the child/young person was at risk of harm or a risk to others.

Consent to Share Information with Staffordshire County Council

We need to share information with Staffordshire County Council to notify them that we require their support or that we are requesting support from other agencies. The information will be treated as confidential and will not be further shared without your prior agreement and consent unless there is a need by law to either (a) prevent harm occurring; or (b) to prevent the law being broken. Staffordshire County Council will use the information to provide support and assistance, to monitor the use of this assessment and they also have a requirement to share data with Ofsted for the purposes of meeting their statutory duties (currently in relation to the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). You can read more about how the County Council will use your data at

[Request access to personal data](#)

Reasons for closure

An EHA can be closed for the following reasons:

- All outcomes successfully achieved
- Child/young person and family have moved outside of Staffordshire
- Consent has been withdrawn and the family / should have disengaged.
- Needs have escalated and statutory service involvement is required

When any of the above reasons apply, then agencies are asked to forward a copy of the updated records to their local LST with the reason for closure clearly stated.

Where an agency continues to have contact with the child/young person, they should continue to monitor the impact of that work and the changes made to outcomes.

What an agency is as referred to in the flow chart?

A business, organisation, group or company providing a particular service.

Children who move across Local Authority Borders

If a child involved in an Early Help is moving in or out of Staffordshire contact the relevant area that the child is moving to/from to ensure smooth transition of information and service provision.

[Protecting children who move across local authority Borders](#)

Completing the Early Help Assessment Form.

About the Child / Young Person Form

When completing this section all the boxes require completing.

A SEPARATE (PAGES 1 & 2) SHOULD BE COMPLETED FOR ALL CHILDREN BEING ASSESSED.

N.B: throughout this toolkit, the term 'child' refers to an unborn baby, child or young person.

"What is life like for this child?"

This section should start with the views of the child themselves, where possible and appropriate. If the child is unable to communicate for themselves, then the Practitioner and adults in the family should take time to consider how life may feel for the child and their assumptions should be recorded as such. If there are a range of views then these should be reflected in the assessment.

Family and Household

When completing this section all boxes require completing.

(PAGES 3, 4, 5, 6) SHOULD BE COMPLETED ONCE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

N.B: 'Family' refers to parents, step parents, carers and their children but can also refer to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends who might also live in the same household.

Practitioners need to explore the existence and identity of other birth children by parents not living within the family home and their contact arrangements with their parents, as in the case of step parents. LST practitioners will also need to identify whether these children are subject to an order, are on a CP plan or have previously been on a CP plan and to which authority. The quality of the EHA, including the extent to which the other members of the family are identified and considered, is reviewed as a matter of course by LST Co-ordinators who must sign it off as a management decision.

Further information available on [Parental Responsibility](#)

Additional Relevant Information

For this section, as well as asking the family, always check with the local LST.

Family Factors

Refer to **the guidance** 'Family Factors' page for specific guidance for the completion of this section.

Further information available on [Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium](#)

Request for Support from Families First Local Support Team

Summarise the types of support - E.g. Help with managing challenging behaviour, improve school attendance, and increase confidence in parenting.

Action Plan and Early Help Meeting (TAC/F)

Who arranges the Early Help (TAC/F) meeting?

The current Keyworker.

What happens at the Early Help (TAC/F) meeting?

The family and professionals meet and discuss the information that was shared and captured by the Early Help Assessment. Everyone agrees what actions they are able to do in order to start meeting the needs of the child and family. This is recorded on the Early Help Action Plan and all attendees should have a copy. **The Multi Agency Meeting Confidentiality Agreement requires reading and signing by the agencies/professionals.**

Early Help meetings are also the appropriate place to decide when to close an Early Help Plan.

Future dates for meetings should be agreed at Early Help meetings, to ensure that pace is maintained and drift and delay are avoided.

What happens at the Early Help meeting?

The family and professionals meet and discuss the information that was shared and captured in the Early Help Assessment. The Focus of the engagement, the actions required to achieve the identified outcomes are agreed and recorded on the Early Help Action Plan.

The actions agreed should be SMART and have a named person responsible for each action. Parents, children/young people should have clear actions for which they are responsible.

The review meeting should consider the progress made against each of the agreed actions; additional actions may be added to the action plan as further needs are identified. When the actions are completed and the family's needs are considered to be sufficiently reduced, the TAC/F will agree that the EHA can be closed.

If the needs of the child/young person and the family increase, the TAC/F can also make the decision to seek further support:

- If other agencies need to be involved, then these should be approached by the Lead Worker
- If the complexity of the issues for the family require intensive support, then the Lead Worker should contact the local Family Intervention Programme (FIP) Team
- If there are safeguarding concerns then the child / family should be referred immediately to First Response or the LAST (if part of the TAC/F) should seek to step-up the case to Specialist Safeguarding

Can the Lead Worker Change?

The Lead Worker can change when it is no longer appropriate or necessary for the practitioner holding this role to be involved in the team. This should be discussed sufficiently early enough at the TAC/F to support the family with this transition. The updated plan should be forwarded to your local LST to inform them of this change

Should an Early Help Assessment be used to record concerns about Special Educational Needs?

Educational settings may choose to use an EHA to record interventions and record progress as part of the graduated response, but there is no requirement to do this if a suitable alternative is in place.

Educational settings are responsible for requesting the involvement of SEN Support Services, for example Educational Psychology Service, Autism Outreach Team, Hearing Impairment Team, Visual Impairment Team etc. Such requests should be made directly to the services required, in line with eligibility criteria and established procedures.

If an assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan is indicated, the request should be made using the appropriate form and sent to the Single Point of Access. If an Early Help Assessment had been undertaken with a family then this should be submitted as evidence to support the application. As the EHA becomes more widely used, there will be a transition so that the EHA will provide the basis for the EHCP request, with supplementary information.

[SEN and Vulnerable Children Request for Support Form](#)

Transition

What happens when a child moves from one setting to another, e.g. primary to secondary school or Early Years setting to primary school?

If the Early Help Assessment and Plan is OPEN it should move to the new setting with the child/ family/adult's consent. This would then require a change of Lead Worker which must be logged with the LST. If this is a planned move then the Lead Worker can manage this by inviting a professional from the new setting to the Early Help review prior to the move.

If the Early Help Assessment and Plan is CLOSED then all paperwork should be retained by the closing agency for the length of time indicated in that agency's policy and a copy forwarded to the LST.

Factors about the Family

When completing the Assessment please refer to the following prompts to ensure due consideration has been given to the full range of factors that may impact on the nature of the early help / intervention required.

It is not intended that you work through every question but use it as a reference point to identify areas that might be applicable to the child/young person and family in question.

About the family

Physical Health:

- Do members of the family have enough healthy food, sleep and exercise?
- Is the family registered with a GP and a dentist?
- Have all children undergone routine health checks/immunisations etc.?
- Are children encouraged to take responsibility for their health and develop self-care skills at a level that is appropriate to age/learning ability?
- Are children reaching their developmental milestones?

Meeting Emotional Needs:

- Is the child/children's emotional wellbeing good?
- Is the parent/carer able to respond well to their child's emotional needs?
- Is there a positive relationship between parent/carer and their child/ children?
- Do children receive the attention, positive feedback, encouragement and support they need to develop positive attachments and resilience?
- Does the child/young person have caring responsibilities for a family member?

Social Networks:

- Does the family have a wider support network e.g. friends, neighbours, extended family?
- Does the family have access to cultural or community services that are important to them?
- Are there or have there been any issues in terms of harassment, bullying etc.?
- Do children within the family spend time with peers/friends and if so are those peers/friends positive influences/age appropriate?
- Are children developing appropriate social skills?

Boundaries & Behaviour:

- Does the family have firm and fair boundaries in place, are these consistently applied and are they working?
- Are parents able to manage any difficult behaviour appropriately?
- Does the family model positive behaviour e.g. being considerate to others and/or moderating aggressive behaviour?
- Are there any current concerns around behaviour?

Home and Money

- Is the home environment safe and does it promote good health i.e. is it clean, warm, appropriate clothing provided etc.?
- Is the family able to successfully manage their finances so that all basic needs are met/bills paid?
- Are there any debts or financial issues that are worrying the family?
- If the family requires additional support to manage their finances is this in place?

Family well-being:

- How do the adults describe their overall wellbeing?
- How do the adults in the family cope with difficulties, or with stress and tension?
- Are there, or have there been domestic tensions between the adults in the family?
- If there are any difficulties are these being managed e.g. therapeutic interventions, medication etc.?
- Do the adults in the family use alcohol or non-prescribed medication to help them to 'cope'?

Keeping Children Safe:

- Is the family aware of important safety issues and do they take appropriate action to reduce risk?
- Do the family discuss safety issues that are appropriate and teach children appropriate responses e.g. bullying, alcohol, stranger danger, internet etc.?
- Are there any safety issues at present e.g. inappropriate relationships/visitors to the home, missing episodes, substance misuse, violence etc.?
- Are there appropriate childcare/supervision arrangements in place?

Education & Learning:

- Does the family prioritise learning, play, reading, early development and other stimulation for babies/young children
- Does the family prioritise/support secondary/further education, employment and training for older children
- Does the family **encourage** positive aspirations for the future?
- Are children of school age attending regularly?

Family Routine:

- Does the family have regular meal and sleep patterns e.g. getting up at regular times?
- Does the family get to where they need to be during the day?
- Does an appropriate level of cleaning and grocery shopping feature in the family's routine to ensure that basic care needs are met?
- Do the family take part in positive activities together?

Progress to Work:

- Are there adults/young people in the family dependant on workless benefits?
- Are adults/ young people preparing returning to work, accessing training, work experience, volunteering, job hunting?
- How many years have the adults/ young person been available for work?

Ethnicity Codes (Page 1 Child and Young Person Form)

White	Mixed	Asian / Asian British	Black / Black British	Other
A1 White British	B1 White & Black Caribbean	C1 Asian - Indian	D1 Black - Caribbean	E1 Chinese
A2 White Irish	B2 White & Black African	C2 Asian - Pakistani	D2 African	E2 Other ethnic background
A3 Traveller of Irish heritage	B3 White & Asian	C3 Asian - Bangladeshi	D3 Other Black background	R Prefer not to say
A4 White Gypsy/ Roma	B4 Other mixed background	C4 Other Asian background		
A5 Other white background				