

Contents:

Introduction

When should I complete an Early Help Assessment?

Approaches and principles underpinning a good assessment

Providing Early Help via the Assessment & Plan process

How to complete the Early Help Assessment form;

A: YOUR CHILD / YOUNG PERSON'S DETAILS

B: WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD / FAMILY?

C: SERVICES SUPPORTING YOUR FAMILY

D: WHAT'S HAPPENING FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

E: FAMILY RADAR: ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY

F: LISTENING TO YOUR CHILDREN

G: YOUR FAMILY'S STORY

H: NEXT STEPS

I: ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

J: ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL COMPLETING THIS FORM

CONSENT AND SIGNATURES

Additional Guidance for E: FAMILY RADAR: ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Introduction

Your Family's Early Help Assessment will replace the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) across Lancashire as of the 6th September 2021. The Early Help Assessment is an intervention with a family to gather, explore and analyse with them information about all aspects of the child or young person (and their family's) life and then to identify areas where change will address support needs and positively impact on their lived experiences. This is recorded on an Early Help Assessment form which includes the family's Early Help Plan. Your Family's Early Help Assessment is available to all practitioners and professionals working with children, young people, and their families across Lancashire. Working alongside families from a holistic, strength-based approach when areas of support are first identified will stop escalation towards crisis and the need for more intensive and specialist intervention. Through the Early Help Assessment, Plan, and reviews via Team Around the Family meetings the wider partnership of services can provide families with the right support at the right time.

Fulfilling our commitment to families set out below:



Believing your children and young people are valuable and putting your family at the heart of what we do



Ensuring the first professional you approach will do their very best to work with you to get the help and support you and your family need.



Offering a service that is right for you; wherever you are, when you need it.



Doing our best to work with your whole family so you only have to tell us your story once throughout your journey.



Recognising your family's strengths; and valuing your thoughts and ideas as to how we can help you make positive changes.



Working together with other professionals to support your family; Early Help is a shared responsibility.



Creating a positive learning experience that increases resilience and empowers your family to make changes.

It is essential that consent is gained from the family to start the Early Help Assessment. The Early Help Assessment will be completed with and reflect the voice of everyone in the family and the professionals supporting them. Exploring with families/ individual family member's their strengths and needs, the impact on the children and young people and the change required is key to achieving positive outcomes.

Working Together 2018 states that for an assessment to be effective...

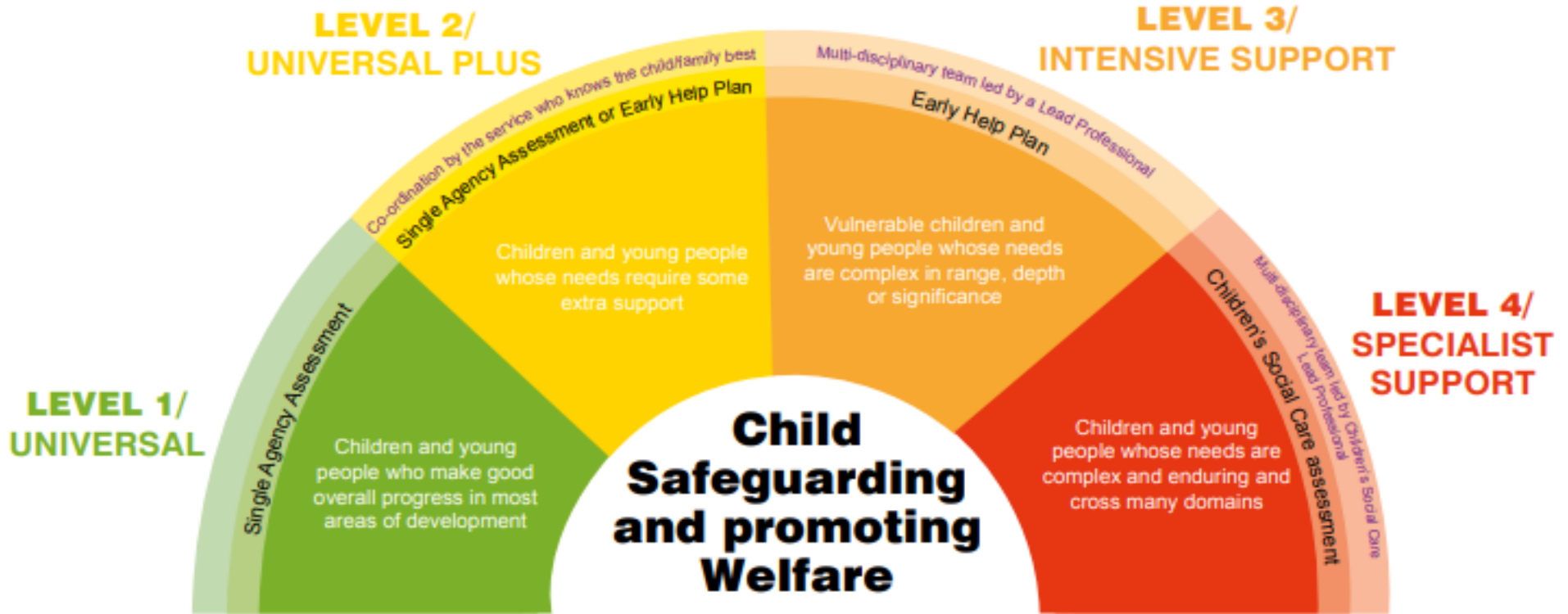
“It should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents or carers, involving the child and family as well as all the practitioners who are working with them. It should take account of the child's wishes and feelings wherever possible: their age; family circumstances; the wider community context in which they are living.”

When can I complete an Early Help Assessment?

An Early Help Assessment can be used to support a child or young person who have identified needs that require additional support within either a single agency or via a multi-agency Team Around the Family due to the complexity and significance of the needs. This is represented as Levels 2 (Universal Plus) and 3 (Intensive Support) on the Pan Lancashire Continuum of Need.

For further information about the Levels of Need, including; examples of services and support and the reason for providing services is available in Working Well with Children and Young People in Lancashire. As stated above any professional can work with a family to complete an Early Help Assessment once they have gained their consent. The earlier on in the child or young person's journey the assessment is completed the more effective the support is likely to be and so at the point of identification of need is recommended.

Levels of Need – At a Glance



Child Safeguarding and promoting Welfare

Information Sharing

Go straight to Level 4 as soon as risk of significant harm is suspected

If in doubt, consult with agency safeguarding leads, or the Duty Social Worker in your area:
Lancashire 0300 123 8720; Blackpool 01253 477299; Blackburn with Darwen 01254 666400

Working Well with Children and Young People in Lancashire

Your Family's Early Help Assessment – Practitioner Guidance- Version 1.1 -Sep 2021 for more information please go to <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/>

Approaches and principles underpinning a good Early Help Assessment

A good Early Help Assessment will be;

- **Strength based** – The family and individuals strengths should be explored and reflected throughout the assessment, support networks, previously used skills and strategies, and the resources available should be considered when planning for change. Positive change must be recognised within Team Around the Family meetings and built on in the review of plans.
- **Built upon the voice of the child / young person** – Whether through discussion, activities or observation and talking to the trusted adults in a child / young person's life their thoughts, feelings, interactions and relationships are clearly evidenced and considered in relation to their needs. This will continue following the assessment, throughout support and Team Around the Family meeting reviews of the plan.
- **Focused on the impact on the child / young person** – The assessment of needs, including those of parents or other significant adults within the household, and the support provided will always be in relation to reducing the impact on the child / young person. As such reviews of progress will be informed by the child / young person's voice. Their thoughts and feelings about day to day life and any change they have experienced due to support will be the barometer regarding the impact of the work completed.
- **Inclusive** – The term family will be used with the widest possible definition. Essential to understanding the child / young person's life is gaining a good understanding of all the relationships they have and who provides them with care. Those who are significant can then be involved in the assessment, support and being part of the decision about what the child and family want to achieve.
- **Trauma Informed and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experience) Aware** – In terms of understanding support needs it is fundamental we are able to recognise and understand the wide-ranging impact of experiencing trauma and adverse childhood experiences on children and young people and their parents. Therefore building trusted relationships, exploring family history, underpinning issues and previous support within the Early Help Assessment is important and an awareness and informed approach will ensure support is empathic, non-judgemental and empowering.
- **Action focused** – The assessment will focus on what the child, young person and their family want to achieve alongside what professionals, families will be actively involved in identifying what needs to happen to make change and reviewing their progress. The assessment is an intervention in its own right and supports awareness raising, exploration and change work. The Early Help Plan will be reviewed every 4 – 6 weeks which will maintain a focus on support and progress, as well as what could happen if no action is taken.
- **Underpinned by a Behaviour Change approach** – Understanding where parents / carers feel they are in relation to the Cycle of Change (Prochaska & Diclemente) is key to ensuring the right level of support and intervention are in place and how soon you might expect to see tangible evidence of change which is significant regarding the impact on the child. The Early Help Assessment has a RADAR, scaling tool integrated, there is further guidance on this within this document and via the e-learning.

In addition to evidencing the above approaches the recording of the Early Help Assessment and Plan must be:

- Accurate, authentic and evidence based
- Clear, concise, and understandable by all those involved, particularly the family and any professionals who may be involved, or who take responsibility for the case at a later stage.
- Systemic –focusing on the various systems within which the children or young people operate (home, setting/school, community, etc.).

And....

- Promote equality of opportunity – The assessment is not biased and gives positive expression to the opinions and experiences of the child and their family without prejudice or discrimination.

If at any point you are concerned about the safety or welfare of the child or young person, seek immediate advice at the end of the discussion using your organisation's safeguarding procedures. Having a discussion about difficult issues can be challenging for the child, family and practitioner.

If you feel you would benefit from further training or support, please refer to the Your Family's Early Help Assessment E-Learning or contact your local Community Senior Family Support Worker within the Children and Family Wellbeing Service.

Providing Early Help via the Assessment & Plan process

All Early Help Assessments and Plan must be submitted to the Early Help Assessment Team within Lancashire County Council whom are, as guardians responsible for the storage of all records. Prior to submitting the Early Help Assessment a Service User number (SU No.) for each child must be requested by sending the full name and date of birth / estimated due date.

The process can be thought of in 4 main stages.

Stage 1 – Identify and respond to the child / young person's needs early and seek consent

- The most appropriate person to support the family discusses with them the needs identified, explains the benefits of an Early Help Assessment and asks if they would like to progress.
- Check with the Early Help Assessment Team to establish if there is already an assessment in place, if not request a Service User number of each child.
- Work with the family to undertake the assessment jointly, ensuring that all child / young people are spoken to alone where age appropriate any contact other services involved.

Stage 2 – Prioritise the areas of need and start to develop the initial Plan

- Explore family networks and identify who may be able to give support and plan a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting.
- Agree with the family Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Realistic, Timely (SMART) outcomes and record them on the assessment within the action plan. Remember to set clear timescales for each individual aspect of the plan.
- Agree with family the sharing of information with other professionals involved in the plan.

Stage 3 – Co-ordinate support through a Team Around the Family (TAF)

- As soon as possible following the completion of the Assessment and Plan, an initial TAF meeting of all professionals supporting the family must be arranged
- Agree the action plan and ensure that all professionals and family members are aware of their responsibilities and contributions to the plan.
- Agree a date for the next Team Around the Family Meeting within 4 to 6 weeks (depending on the level of need) to review the actions and progress made.
- Work with the family over the forthcoming weeks to complete the actions in the Plan.

Step 4 – Review progress through subsequent Team Around the Family Meetings

- The children / young people within the family must be supported to contribute so that their voice is heard and changes to their lived experience (day to day life) are the barometer of progress made.
- An update (strengths and support needs) from all family members and professionals should be gained in relation to the action plan and the wider experiences of the family.
- The scaling RADAR will be re-visited briefly during each TAF meeting as a measure of progress in the parent / carer approach to change.
- Any additional support needs identified and the action required to address these can be included in the plan.
- At the final TAF meeting when the action plan has met the family's needs and there is evidence of positive impact on the children / young person the Early Help Assessment can be closed.
- An exit strategy including signposting to universal services and identified strategies for the family to sustain progress without ongoing intervention should be in place.

How to complete the Early Help Assessment form:

A: YOUR CHILD / YOUNG PERSON'S DETAILS

The primary child or young person's details who you have identified as having additional support needs. If there is more than one child in the household / family this can be reflected in Part B.

B: WHO ARE THE CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD / FAMILY?

Include all children, young people and adults within the household and wider family members not present in the household who play a role in the child/ren's lives. This could include Grandparents; extended family members, parents or carers, partners of parents and absent parents. You will need to ensure they are invited to TAF meetings where there is consent and it is safe to do so.

C: SERVICES SUPPORTING YOUR FAMILY

Please include details of services who are involved with all family members. Remember to have a discussion with the family about who you will share their information with. If there is any professional/agency they don't want to have information shared with this should be recorded here; as you will be approaching these services to contribute to your assessment. You might need further discussion with the family about how this might impact on their action plan.

D: WHAT'S HAPPENING FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

This is where you need to have a discussion with the family about why the Early Help Assessment is being completed. What are the behaviours and needs that the children and young people are presenting with? Please include any additional information from your discussion about what may lie underneath the presenting behaviours and the impact on all family members especially other children and young people within the household.

E: FAMILY RADAR: ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Please discuss each area in turn, looking at strengths and needs, including any information shared by other professionals who you have been in contact with and take into account the impact on all family members. The parent / carer must be asked where they feel they are on their journey in relation to that area of their lives. If you are completing this with 2 parent's record the lowest score as this will ensure that the action plan and support takes this into consideration.

If in your professional judgement you aren't in agreement with the parent / carer please discuss with the evidence for this, and negotiate an agreed description that reflects where they are. This section is key to helping you to formulate your action plan; prioritising the areas of support and identifying actions and the most effective level of support needed to achieve these actions and have a positive impact for the children and young people. For example where the family are achieving in an area of family life there may be no need for any actions and conversely where the family feel stuck they will need more support to effect change.

F: LISTENING TO YOUR CHILDREN

This section is where you will be speaking to children in the family; and where you may choose to use other tools and methods to help you to get an accurate picture of their experiences and thoughts. Remember to talk to all of the children; and to also observe younger children, how they present and interact within their family context.

G: YOUR FAMILY'S STORY

This is where you can record your discussions and understanding of the family in their historic context; this will enable you to understand the presenting needs more fully. Consider whether parents / carers have unresolved / adult issues that are impacting on their capacity to parent their children and young people, for example Trauma and/ or Adverse Childhood Experiences. Discussing previous support they have received and what worked well for them will help you to identify support networks, engagement with services, their resilience, strengths and effective support going forward.

H: NEXT STEPS

Based on all the information so far what are the key priority areas of support needed to make positive change and reduce potential risks for the children and young people in the family. Take into account where the family are, the level of support required and who is best placed to provide that support. All actions need to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely). This action plan will be reviewed and updated at Team Around the Family Meetings and can be added to as throughout the family's journey.

I: ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This your analysis of the information that has been shared with you. You will have had by this time, conversations with all family members; other professionals and specialist services already working with the family or individual family members. You will need to make informed professional judgements that are supported by the information shared by family members, the children and young people; professionals and from your own observations whilst doing your assessment.

Please summarise the unmet needs / areas for support for the children and young people, what are the underpinning reasons including the impact of any adult issues on the children. It is equally important to recognise the family's strengths, wider support networks and capacity to change.

Please ensure you include recommendations as to what needs to happen in order to address the support needs identified, manage and reduce potential risks and improve the lived experience and outcomes for the children and young people within the family.

J: ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL COMPLETING THIS FORM

This section needs to be completed by the professional completing the form. Please take time to complete this section to ensure your contact details are correct and up to date. If your details change in the future please contact us at eha@lancashire.gov.uk

CONSENT AND SIGNATURES

The Early Help Assessment must be completed by a practitioner with the Parents / Carers, as part of this completion it is essential to obtain information from other professionals and services supporting the family (with the families consent) and have completed work with the children and young people to listen to and reflect their voice. The Early Help Assessment can only be completed with a parent or young person (aged 13+) consent and all families must receive a copy of their Early Help Assessment and Plan.

Additional Guidance for E: FAMILY RADAR: ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Journey of Achievement - Steps to Effective Change

STUCK (1)

People are worried about you and your children. They may notice things that you don't recognise yourself, or don't agree with, such as your family's health, your children's behaviour or development. You may be worried or stressed yourself, but don't know how to help your own situation. Maybe you think everybody is against you or you feel that people may judge your situation without knowing the full facts. You don't feel that you are coping very well at the moment, but feel it is difficult to trust anyone. You feel lost and are unsure how to get out of your situation.

READY FOR CHANGE (2)

You are starting to recognise the issues and impact that things like poor behaviour, lack of school attendance or depression/moods are having on both you and your children. However, you sometimes want to engage with some help, but find it hard. You are in a better place than before, you are starting to see things differently and know that other ways of doing things might be effective. You now realise that you are ready to change for the children's sake but do not always commit a lot of energy to this. You are starting to accept help a bit more often, but this is coming from other people at the moment and not yourself.

EXPLORING OPTIONS (3)

You begin to understand that it is you that makes the difference in your family's life and it is you that needs to change. You start to take action to change things with the help of your keyworker, but sometimes things don't work out the way you want them to. Sometimes things become harder at first, before you start to notice a positive difference with your family. But if you persist and are consistent in what you are trying to do, it starts to pay off. At times you may stop and return to your old ways or just give up, or you may be inconsistent in your way of doing things differently. You start to notice small but positive changes in your family life.

TAKING ACTION (4)

You now are starting to understand what works and what doesn't work with your children having explored lots of options. Your children and you feel more in control of the family situation and at times things are going really well. There are still times when you feel unsure and you are not confident that you are doing the right thing. It may be difficult to cope occasionally and you still need the support and re-assurance of your keyworker.

ACHIEVING (5)

You have learnt how to handle things differently and don't feel lost anymore. You may feel that you need occasional help and can reflect back on your Journey of Achievement. You feel happier in yourself and are more confident to cope with minor crises. You feel that you are achieving more positive family results. You are parenting "good enough" without help from a service. You feel confident to take control for yourself.

MAINTAINING CHANGE (6) You can look back and reflect on how much you have achieved, family life is settled and your children are doing well, you believe that you have the resilience to deal with problems and issues as they arise and you have the support networks in place to help you with this. All the changes you have made can be sustained and you are able to continue to improve things for you and your children.