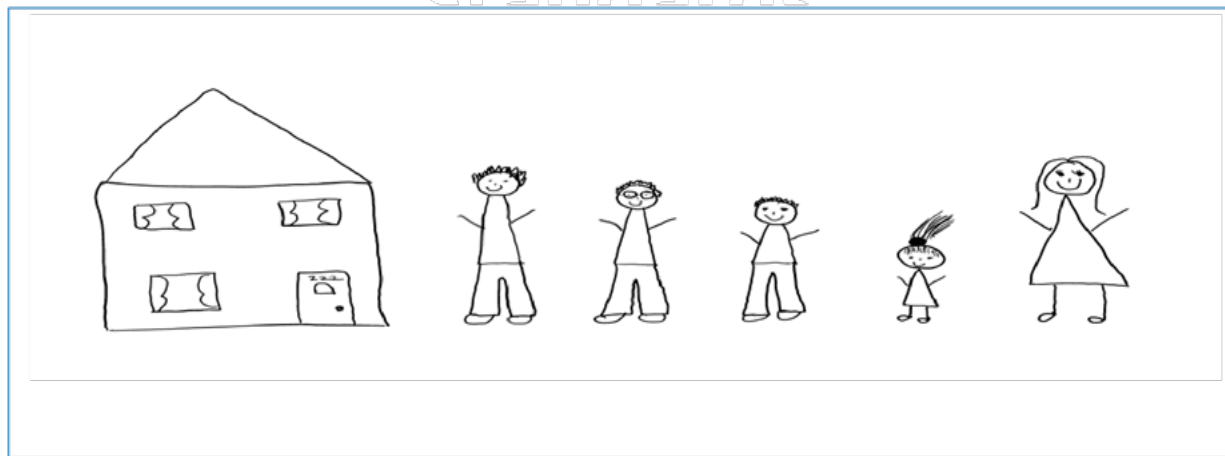


# Your Family's Early Help Assessment Practitioner Guide

Standards



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## **Introduction**

In Wigan how we do things is as important as what we do, and our BeWigan behaviours, Be Positive, Be Accountable, Be Courageous and Be Kind along with our BeWigan manager behaviours, Inspire, Care and Engage are pivotal to this.

Your Family's Early Help Assessment will replace all previous versions of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) across Wigan as of the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023. 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 Wigan. 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:

We want all children in the Wigan Borough to be happy, healthy, and safe; to be listened to and to reach their full potential and thrive. Early Help is everyone's business. When children, young people or their families need help and support, together, we will provide that support at the **right time**, by the **right people** and in the **right place**, taking into consideration the needs of the whole family.

- Devised from Early Intervention & Prevention workshop with key partners 3 Nov 2022. Signed off by WSCP 21<sup>st</sup> Nov 2022.

## The National Supporting Families Outcome Framework

Since April 2015 all local authorities delivering the supporting families programme have been required to have in place a local supporting families outcome plan. In the simplest terms a supporting families outcome plan was required to set out what each local authority and its partners considered to be the right indicators of eligibility and successful outcomes measured at a family by family level against the supporting families headline objective.

### The new national framework has been delivered developed to achieve a number of aims

1. **Increased focus on the current needs of families:** the updated framework seeks to address the current needs of families especially in the context of levelling up and recovering from the impact of Covid-19. Increasing the headline outcomes from 6 to 10 reflects the complexity of families lives and the wide-ranging support provided by local authorities and their partners.
2. **Support the programme aims of helping to re-balance the demand levels in children services and levelling up support for families:** the framework tackles the multiple and complex problems families face such as unemployment financial insecurity risk of homelessness and educational inequality, as well as children at risk from abuse and exploitation and families who are experiencing domestic abuse

3. **Improved consistency across all local authorities:** the framework sets the standard for outcomes family should be achieving and what problems local areas should be focusing on for example the new framework puts a renewed focus on early years housing Child Exploitation and substance use.
4. **Increase use of good evidence and data measures:** suggested data measures for both programme eligibility and successful outcomes are set out in the new national outcomes framework this allows for greater national comparison and wider sharing of good data practises across local authorities and across government.
5. **Reduced bureaucracy:** data checks at the point of outcome submission have been reduced and instead focus on the priority areas of school attendance and accepted referrals to early help or children's social care.

The new supporting families outcome framework sets out ten headline outcomes. Below these outcomes sit descriptors of the family needs that make up the eligibility criteria for the supporting families programme. Each family must demonstrate a **minimum of three** eligibility criteria or family needs are set out in the national supporting families outcomes framework.

That also includes predetermined outcomes that must be achieved with all families before successful family outcome is submitted. The 10 headline outcomes are:

- Getting a good education
- Good early years development
- Improved mental and physical health
- Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance use
- Improved family relationships
- Children safe from abuse and exploitation
- Crime prevention and tackling crime
- Safe from domestic abuse
- Secure housing
- Financial stability



## Consent

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.

Wherever possible, you must consider consent and be open and honest with the family from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom, their information will be shared. You must consider consent where an individual may not expect their information to be passed on. When you gain consent to share it must be explicit, freely given and a record made of what they have consented to.

Working Together 2023 states that for an assessment to be effective...

***The assessment 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.”***

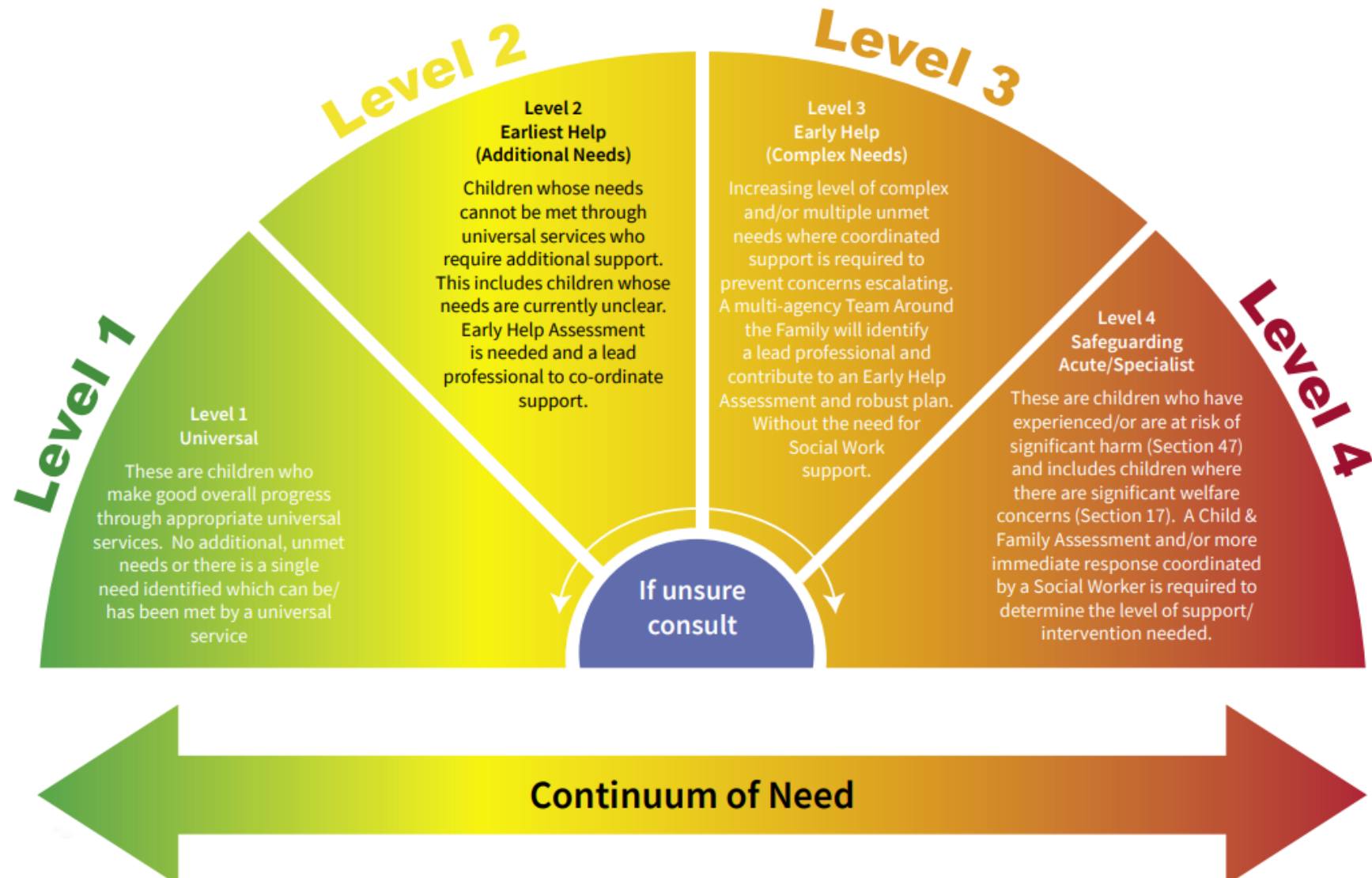
## When can I complete an Early Help Assessment?

The Early Help Assessment can be used by all services to provide the holistic view of the needs within the family and can be used to inform statutory assessments where needs require acute or specialist support. At levels 2 & 3 within Wigan's Threshold of Need and Response Guidance sets out the Team Around the Family approach which is facilitated by a lead professional and supported by a multi-agency Early Help Plan. The lead professional is a member of the children's workforce who takes the lead to coordinate provision for a child, young person and their family. They act as a single point of contact when a range of different agencies are involved. Team Around the Family is a meeting between a child/young person, their family and a group of practitioners who are working with them. The purpose of the TAF meeting is to share information and to create a solution focused plan that will support the needs of the child and their family. The meeting provides an opportunity to consider how appropriate, effective and timely support can be secured, enabling family's needs to be met. The focus of the meeting is to build on the strengths identified within the Early Help Assessment whilst addressing the current worries/concerns.

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.

Please note that Universal Services are available to families at any stage on the Continuum of Need Framework and that successful partnership working is facilitated by effective information sharing and transparent communication.

The model on this page is known as the 'windscreen' and provides a visual explanation of the Continuum of Need.





## **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, previous support within the Early Help Assessment is important. 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 scaling tool integrated, there is further guidance on this within this document.

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 Start Well Early Help Co-ordinator.

### **Providing Early Help via the Assessment & Plan process**

All Early Help Assessments and Plans must either be electronically completed on Liquid Logic or be submitted to the Early Help Assessment Team within Wigan 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 on Liquid Logic or 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. Include contact with 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 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 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.

#### **Separated Parents**

In some families, one of the parents may not be living with the family. In this case, you should encourage the primary carer to provide details to enable you to contact the separated parent, so that you can ask him/her to be involved with the Early Help Assessment. Ensure you are fully aware of the family's circumstances before you do this however, as there may be particular risks to consider before contacting the family.

### **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 are 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.

The assessment explores:

**What is going well for the child and their family?**

- Child and family strengths
- Safety factors

**What are we worried about?**

- What is happening now
- Areas where needs are not being met
- Presenting risks and concerns
- Worries that are impacting on the child's health and wellbeing

**What needs to change to improve the outcomes for the child and their family? (Ensure the child and families views are captured within this).**

- Identify next steps, action required and desired outcomes
- Well-being goals

Consider each of the assessment areas from the whole perspective, starting with the strengths and then concentrating on the presenting issues/concerns. Wherever possible, base comments on evidence, not just opinion and indicate what the evidence is. It is important to distinguish between fact, opinion and observation when recording the information. The assessment must be completed with the child and their family to ensure their views are captured and they are at the centre of the assessment.

**E: 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 them, 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 parent/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.

### Supporting Families – recording identified needs and outcome

The new supporting families outcome framework sets out ten headline outcomes. Below these outcomes sit descriptors of the family needs that make up the eligibility criteria for the supporting families programme. Each family must demonstrate a **minimum of three** eligibility criteria or family needs are set out in the national supporting families outcomes framework.

That also includes predetermined outcomes that must be achieved with all families before successful family outcome is submitted. The 10 headline outcomes are:

- Getting a good education
- Good early years development
- Improved mental and physical health
- Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance use
- Improved family relationships
- Children safe from abuse and exploitation
- Crime prevention and tackling crime
- Safe from domestic abuse
- Secure housing
- Financial stability

[Supporting Families programme guidance 2022 to 2025](#)

## 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.

- ❖ Remember that the GDPR is not a barrier to sharing information, but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
- ❖ Be open and honest with the child/young person and/or their family, (where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
- ❖ Seek advice if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person, where possible.
- ❖ Share with consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, the lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
- ❖ Consider safety and well-being, and base your information sharing decisions on considerations for the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
- ❖ Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure. Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it; is shared only with those people who need to have it; is accurate and up-to-date; is shared in a timely fashion; and is shared securely.
- ❖ Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

**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 from others, 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 others.

#### **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.

## Feeling Safe

- Do you, your family feel safe?
- Home safety?
- Appropriate supervision of children?
- Awareness of sexual health/risk taking behaviours/crime/drugs/alcohol/ grooming/trafficking?
- Risk of child sexual exploitation?
- Internet safety/cyber bullying
- Protecting children from accidents/risks?
- Protecting yourself & children from bullying, racial harassment & domestic abuse?
- Who is in/who has access to your house?
- Road safety?

## Being Well

- How do you feel?
- Substance misuse/alcohol/smoking?
- Mental health and wellbeing conditions/managed?
- Stress management?
- Medication? GP support? Engaged in health services?
- Lifestyle – sleep/diet/physical activity?
- Bereavements?
- Registered at GP? dentist self-care skills/hygiene?
- Babies – breastfeeding/weaning, getting enough sleep, regular exercise?
- Work-life balance?

## Home and Money

- Home conditions?
- Tenancy type/mortgage/council risk of eviction/losing home?
- Issues with neighbours?
- Facilities near your home/community?
- Water/heating/sanitation facilities, sleeping arrangements (overcrowding)?
- Travel/car public transport?
- Disposable Income enough?
- Affording basic care needs?
- Debt/savings?
- Ability to budget?

## Friends, Support and Relationships

- What are relationships within the family like (adults/children)?
- Support from wider community (events/activities/social groups)?
- Supportive/appropriate friends?
- Isolation?
- Social network?
- Supportive family?
- Absent parents?
- Challenging/value of your friends/relationships? Socialising?
- Hobbies and interests?
- Child's Peer groups (positive relationships)?

## Work Education and Learning (including Early Years for 0-5)

- Do you Work?
- Get back to work; volunteering; training; experience of work; qualifications?
- What did/do you want to be?
- Children's school/nursery/college attendance
- Stimulating environment in home?
- Progress made towards employment?
- Achievements?

## Feelings and Behaviours (Goals and Ambitions, feelings behaviour and choices)

- What do you want to be? Aspirations of/for your child?
- What are your family goals? Are your goals achievable and shared?
- Where does the child/young person want to be? How is this supported by the parent?
- What changes would you like to see ie: short term/long term goals? If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- Are your parents positive role models? What are parents expectations of behaviour? Appropriate expectations?
- Discuss how a child's behaviour impacts on others
- Consequences – age appropriate and rewards?
- Consistent parenting across the family? Family routines? Structured routine?
- Promoting independence? Confidence in creating and following rules?

## **What support is available?**

For further information, guidance, or support with completing the Early Help Assessment contact the Early Help Development Team on the telephone numbers below:

### **Early Help Development Team**

**Team Manager:** Hayley McDermott

### **Wigan Council**

**Wigan Life Centre South – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NJ**

**Early Help Coordinators:** [EHCordinators@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:EHCordinators@wigan.gov.uk)

**Early Help Coordinator - Wigan Central & Wigan North:** Fiona Goulding: 07831205736

**Early Help Coordinator – SWAN & PASHI:** Sarah Davies: 07786975904

**Early Help Coordinators – PASHI & LGA:** Nicola Blacker: 07500915230

**Early Help Coordinators – Leigh & TABA:** Katherine Hale: 07795 267 312