

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) for professionals

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

Those signing the Early Help forms should sign a paper copy which is held by the Lead Professional agency. If you are sending in the forms electronically you can type in the space where the signature goes the words 'signature held on file' and record the date of the signature.

Can I do an Early Help Assessment or be a lead professional without being Signs of Safety trained?

If you have identified that there are emerging needs, then that family needs to have an assessment as soon as possible. There are methods of Signs of Safety throughout the assessment but not having received training yet will not be a barrier to starting the EHA. You can contact the EHA Advisors for support in understanding how to complete the EHA in the short term, with a view to booking on either monthly workshops or training lead by the EHA Team, or the Signs of Safety training lead by the Tameside Safeguarding Partnership panel.

What do I do if a child's parents won't consent to an Early Help Assessment?

Early Help Assessments cannot go ahead without consent from the appropriate parent(s).

You will need to consider whether this leaves the child at greater risk and consider a referral into Children's Social Care if this is the case.

However, there may be alternative ways of dealing with this situation. Have further discussions with parents, and provide the EHA Parental Guidance leaflet. Each situation is different, but it would best practice to try to understand the barriers for them not providing consent and try to overcome these. If the answer is still no, and you feel the child is not at risk, or the situation is not meeting the thresholds for social care services, then you will need to consider what support you can still offer and how to provide this in a less structured or formal way. It will be worth revisiting the possibility of an EHA with the family after a short period of time and evidencing that you have tried to provide this support.

How do I involve other professionals in the EHA process?

Make sure you ask the family and other professionals for their information - everyone needs to be part of the assessment and plan. As part of the EHA process they should also be invited to the review meetings. If a professional member is unable to make a meeting they should contact the lead practitioner to let them know. They should give a written contribution in their absence that can be shared at the meeting, focused on What is working well, What they are worried about and what they feel needs to happen. Additionally providing any VOC if this is relevant.

If there are any difficulties in obtaining information from particular professionals, please contact the EHA team.

Can a teenager give consent for an Early Help Assessment without their parents knowing?

The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines help people who work with children to balance the need to listen to children's wishes with the responsibility to keep them safe. In certain situations where parents are not consenting for an EHA but a young person will benefit from support, it could be decided to consider, if the young person can consent to an EHA in their own right. This would have to be decided case by case, taking the views of the young person and maturity into account.

What if only one parent is agreeing to an Early Help assessment?

An EHA can still be completed with the consent of one parent with PR. If parents are living separately you should normally obtain consent from the parent the child is living with and the other parent should be notified so they can be involved in the process. However, each situation is different and you will need to manage each situation carefully so as not to exacerbate situations and potentially put people at risk.

If I have concerns about more than one child in a family do I have to do an Early Help Assessment on each child?

Early Help assessments should take account of the needs of the whole family and therefore yes all the children within the family household should be included. Some of the information regards the household will remain the same for the children, but on the EHA individual children should be reflected regards both strengths and worries. The assessment will then inform the plan, which may have actions regards individual children, but should still remain a joint plan for the family.

What if a child lives in another borough?

Every Local Authority has its own arrangements for Early Help, but the Early Help Assessments across the boroughs are similar. It has been agreed across the North West authorities that each LA will accept another authorities forms. Tameside based professionals should complete a Tameside EHA and then follow the Early Help procedures for where that family reside.

So for example if a school in Denton complete a Tameside EHA but the family live in Stockport, they can still complete a request to Stockport MASSH and send the Tameside EHA with it. Similarly, if a Manchester school have completed a Manchester EHA but the family reside in Tameside, they can still submit a MARS request and send the Manchester EHA with it.