



Early Help Assessment

Quality Assurance Framework

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Early Help Assessment Quality Assurance framework

Introduction

The Early Help Assessment is a central part of enabling and ensuring effective and appropriate multi-agency working across the Children's/Young People's Workforce, and should be an integral part of working practice in all agencies. Documents and tools have been developed to support a range of agencies; will ensure that families receive the most suitable support and practitioners are able to offer best practice.

Darlington Borough Council has an obligation with its partner agencies to introduce methods to ensure that the Early Help Assessment process is being conducted in a high quality manner. The framework is endorsed by the LSCB and its implementation will monitor and improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families.

It is expected that all agencies ensure that their staff are following the Early Help Assessment procedure

Voice of the Child and Family

Capturing the journey of the child and family is vital to underpinning the objectives of the Quality Assurance Framework. This is crucial in helping us improve our response to children and families with additional support needs. The evidence gathered from assessments will be used to influence and shape the delivery of services and inform service improvement plans. Tools to enable a consistent capture of the views of children are available at:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care/early-help-assessment/>

Service User Feedback

It is good practice to seek regular feedback from children/young people and families involved in the Early Help Assessment. Feedback from the child/young person and/or parent/carer throughout the EHA process will help practitioners to assess how well the Assessment is going from the family's point of view. This should take place at the end of the assessment and at each TAF meeting.

Service user feedback forms have also been developed to capture the views and experiences of the child, young person and family once the case has closed. This feedback should be shared with the professional's line manager to support their development and supervision and should also be returned to the Early Help Coordinator via ChildrensAccessPoint@darlington.gcsx.gov.uk

Self-Assessment

A practitioner should have received appropriate training and should therefore be aware of what constitutes a high quality Early Help Assessment. A self-assessment checklist should be used as a prompt for practitioners and line managers to self-monitor the quality criteria of every Early help Assessment. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to be aware of the quality criteria and for the line manager to provide appropriate supervision.

The Early Help Coordinator can provide advice and guidance on all aspects of the Early Help Assessment and Team around the Family process. Contact Kelly-Ann Reay – Early Help Coordinator: 01325 405635

Quality supervision

All agencies should follow their supervision policies and procedures with regards to management oversight and professional development of their staff. It is the responsibility of the practitioner's line manager to supervise, coach and feedback on a regular basis during the Early Help process.

New practitioners in Darlington Borough Council should be mentored by experienced staff and receive the appropriate training:

- Induction
- Compulsory Early Help Academy 10 module
- Workshop 1: Introduction to Early Help Assessment
- Workshop 2: Lead Professional Training.

Practitioners from external agencies should be mentored by experienced staff and receive the appropriate training:

- Workshop 1: Introduction to Early Help Assessment
- Workshop 2: Lead Professional Training.

To check dates visit <http://www.darlingtonsafeguardingboards.co.uk/training/training-programme/> and e-mail LSCB.Training@darlington.gov.uk to access a place.

When a new practitioner is undertaking an Early Help Assessment the first 2-3 times, they should have quality supervision throughout the process and thereafter the level of supervision should be agreed with their line manager.

When a practitioner encounters a problem outside of their control they should raise this with their line manager and/or through the safeguarding escalation procedure.

The Early Help Coordinator is also available to provide additional guidance and support throughout. Contact Kelly-Ann Reay – Early Help Coordinator: 01325 405635

Audit of Early Help Assessments

To ensure that there is quality and consistency in practice; both within Darlington Borough Council and external agencies an audit programme will be completed. See the Early Help Audit tool: <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care/early-help-assessment/>

The objective of the audit is to ensure that needs are identified early, the needs are discussed and services have been delivered effectively. The audit will be completed by line managers of staff, identified workers within individual agencies and the Early Help Coordinator. The following areas will be reviewed:

- Early Help Assessment Part A
- Early Help Assessment Part B

- Team around the Family forms
- Service User Feedback forms
- Practitioner Self-Assessment Checklists

The audit will take account of the quality of the Early Help Assessments, The participation of the child, young person and their family, the effectiveness of the Action Plan (Team around the Family) and the satisfaction of services provided.

Audit Cycle

It is recommended that at least 1 case is routinely considered every three months for auditing purposes.

In respect of staff working for Darlington Borough Council, 12 cases per month will be randomly selected.

For staff working within partner agencies, 3 cases per month will be randomly selected.

Additional cases may be audited when:

- The lead professional requests additional support as they feel that progress is not being made.
- When cases are drifting, either because regular reviews are not being held or when the case has been open for longer than six months.

The audit for each case will show an end number value (as shown in the table below), record the quality, and record where feedback has been sent to regarding inadequate Early Help Assessments.

Judgement of Quality of Work	Definition
1 = Outstanding	There is strong evidence of good practice throughout, and there is clear evidence of outcomes and impact throughout
2 = Good	There is evidence of good practice in this case and evidence that the practice of the worker is deemed to be what would be expected
3 = Requires Improvement	Practice standards have been followed but with gaps in assessment, planning and direct work with child/family
4 = Inadequate	Practice standards have not been adhered to and there are gaps in relation to practice

When a cross authority Early Help Assessment is being audited the lead Early Help Contact for that authority will be included.

Completed feedback will be returned to all Early Help Assessment Authors. Where Early Help Assessments are found to be inadequate, the Early Help Coordinator should write to the Early Help Assessment author's manager, offering information, advice and guidance. Feedback discussions with professionals should take place to ensure that the lessons learned are built in to professional development and service improvement.

Feedback and recommendations

The evaluation process of the audit will be conducted by the Early Help coordinator who will feed back to the relevant board.

Performance Reporting

The Early Help Reference Group

The Early Help Reference Group will moderate the audit process and provide recommendations upon the findings of the quarterly reports.

The quarterly report will outline progress made against referral reasons, timescales and the cooperation of agencies.

The report will be used by the local authority and partner agencies to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Early Help Assessment by:

- Monitoring the Early Help Assessment Process
- Identify areas for supervision
- Identifying areas for development and improvement
- Identify gaps in service provision
- Identifying issues for supervision
- Identifying training needs for practitioners

Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB)

The LSCB is a statutory partnership of professionals working together to safeguard children and young people. It is the LSCB's responsibility to monitor, challenge local arrangements and raise awareness of issues in the local community.

The following reports are to be provided to the LSCB:

- **Quarterly**
 - Number of open early help assessments
 - Number of closed early help assessments
 - Assessments by agency (Health, Education, Voluntary agency)
 - % of plans with successful outcomes
 - % of plans stepped down to Children's services
 - % of plans stepped up to Children's services
 - Concerns raised from service user feedback forms.
 - % of plans which have been judged as acceptable in quality
 - % of plans which have been judged as unacceptable in quality
- **Annual**
 - An overview of the year's activities

Governance

The Service Manager is responsible for providing the Head of Service with information relating to values from the Quality review. If any assessments are rated as inadequate, the reason should be investigated by the Early Help Coordinator/Team Manager/Advanced Practitioner and corrective action will be agreed, implemented and reviewed in partnership with the relevant agency to agree corrective action. In the case of repeated poor quality of assessments completed with limited improvement in outcomes, the Service manager will notify the assessment author's manager.

Customer Feedback

The Service Manager is also responsible for preparing a report with the outcomes from the Service User feedback forms to the Early Help reference group. This will feed views and concerns raised e.g. difficulties to engage a service, a service does not exist, training requirements etc.

Monthly Early Help Assessment Audit Process

