

Early Help Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

Training and support

Do you need to attend Workshop 1 before participating in Workshop 2 on the new Early Help Assessment Training?

Ideally, yes. The first workshop will provide valuable information into the whole family approach to early help assessments, utilizing the Signs of Wellbeing model. It will cover essential topics to support you to complete worry statements and wellbeing goals, which will support you within the Family Network Action Plan and meetings.

However, attending Workshop 1 is not mandatory. Comprehensive support is available through a detailed, step-by-step guide for completing the Early Help Assessment, found in the toolkit. Additionally, online support sessions for practitioners and assistance from our Early Help Development Officers are offered.

For more information, please email earlyhelpdevelopmentofficer@barnsley.gov.uk.

I have not received any training on the new Early Help Assessment (EHA) and feel uneasy about initiating one.

There is a comprehensive step-by-step guide available through the early help practitioner toolkit that walks you through each section of the Early Help Assessment, offering detailed information on what to include and how to do this with engaging the family network.

Additionally, the guidance includes practical examples with worry statements, well-being goals, scaling and includes how to undertake the family network meetings.

If you need extra support, you can discuss your concerns with one of the Early Help Development Officers by reaching out to earlyhelpdevelopmentofficer@barnsley.gov.uk.

Not receiving the training should not be a barrier for undertaking an early help assessment

Writing an Early Help Assessment

I have just started writing an early help assessment on the old paperwork what should I do?

Starting Monday 6 January 2025, we will no longer accept early help assessments or associated paperwork in the old format.

We would encourage practitioners to use the new early help assessment and associated forms that are now live from the 9 December and are available to download from the early help practitioner toolkit.

For completing the early help assessment, please refer to the guidance and practitioner forums for additional support if needed.

If I am using an old EHA which form, what do I do?

A new assessment is not required unless there have been changes in the family's needs. In your next meeting, you should utilize the current Early Help Assessment (EHA) to formulate worry statements and wellbeing goals, continue engaging with the family network, and agree on an action plan. The actions identified in your existing Team Around the Family (TAF) plan can be transferred to the new documentation, allowing the work and actions to proceed seamlessly.

I have identified that I need to start a new early help assessment because the needs have changed in the family what is the process

If the assessment has been completed using the old Early Help Assessment paperwork, complete the Early Help Assessment closure form and select the option "*closed due to undertaking a new Early Help Assessment*". Send the completed closure form to earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk

You can then carry out the Early Help Assessment using the new form, and once completed, send it to earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk

I am currently undertaking an Early Help Assessment. What should I do?

Please be aware that we will not accept any early help assessments using the old paperwork starting Monday, 6th January 2025. This also applies if the assessment was completed before this date.

If you can complete and submit the assessment before Monday, 6th January, it will be accepted in the current format.

Keep in mind that if the next steps of your assessment identify the need for early help family network meetings, worry statements and wellbeing goals must be identified. The new Family Network Review Action Plan template will need to be used moving forward.

I have several early help assessments open within my organisation how am I expected to manage these changes?

If an early help assessment has been opened in the last six months and still meets the family's needs, use the family network meeting action plan template at the next meeting. A new assessment isn't necessary unless the family's needs have changed.

In the first family network meeting, review the current needs using the early help assessment and TAF action plan.

Formulate the worry statements and wellbeing goals onto the family network meeting action plan gaining the views from all family network members

Use smart action planning like Team Around the Family meetings to outline actions towards these goals with family network members.

If the current assessment doesn't reflect the family's needs, start a new early help assessment during a family network action plan meeting, involving all family members to complete and agree on the assessment and next steps.

What happens if I identify more than 4 worry statements.

The signs of wellbeing and safety model uses four statements which can be linked to the 4 types of abuse:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Neglect
- Sexual

Therefore worries/concerns can be focused around these areas to form a worry statement which needs to be concise and focused.

In the family network meeting, the meeting should focus on up to 4 worry statements and the progress made towards achieving each wellbeing goal. This progress should be recorded in the action plan.

The action plan should include only the current worry statements and wellbeing goals for the family. If these have been met, they do not need to be included in future network meetings. Each organization is responsible for keeping their own records up to date.

If you need more support around how to formulate worry statements and wellbeing goals workshop 1 of the Early Help training will cover this

I am completing the scaling question and there is a difference of opinion what should I do?

Everyone's opinion is valid, and each family member may have different needs and worries. Record all feedback and comments to ensure their voices are reflected in the assessment and family network action plan.

Family network meetings

I am currently the lead practitioner on ongoing EHA with the old paperwork, what are my expectations for running TAF/Family Networks?

First, maintain any scheduled Team Around the Family Networks meetings, informing family members in advance about changes to the early help assessment and the new process, now called the family network action plan.

In the initial family network meeting, all members should review the current family needs using the early help assessment and TAF action plan. They should agree upon worry statements and wellbeing goals for the family, which should be documented in the family network meeting action plan.

Similar to the process used for a Team Around the Family meeting, smart action planning should be in place with family network members to outline the actions required by all parties to achieve the wellbeing goals.

The lead practitioner should type up a copy of the plan, identifying the family need areas and any outcomes being met. Copies of the family network action plan should then be distributed to all family network members, and a copy sent to earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk. Each organisation is responsible for taking their own notes if applicable and updating their records.

The lead practitioner's role includes completing the Family Network Action Plan, as well as updating and circulating it to members during and after the meeting.

Step up and Step down from social care

What happens with the Early Help Assessment when I escalate it to social care?

Whilst the referral is completed by social care the Early Help Assessment should remain open.

Any family network meetings should still be taking place within the timescales of 4-6 weeks. You can also invite the assigned social worker to participate in these meetings.

If the assessment concludes that the family needs to transition to social care, either as a child in need or under a child protection plan, then you can proceed with the closure paperwork for the Early Help Assessment.

What is the process for families stepping down from social care to early help assessment

There are several key steps to follow:

- A step-down meeting must be conducted with the social worker and members of the family network.
- A step-down plan should be developed, utilizing the family network plan to identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) actions, as well as creating worry statements and wellbeing goals.
- A lead professional should be selected. This individual should be the best-suited professional who has an established relationship with the family and can take the lead in coordinating the family network action plan moving forward.
- The social worker or lead professional must notify earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk about the step-down by sending a copy of the family network plan.
- Future family network meetings should be scheduled every 4-6 weeks to ensure ongoing support and progress assessment.

Lead practitioner role

What to do when you can't decide on the lead practitioner role?

The lead practitioner's position is strongly recommended to be the practitioner with whom the family feels they have the best relationship with.

The early help assessment adopts a strength-based approach, emphasizing that sustained change and improved outcomes rely on families building quality relationships with trusted practitioners they connect with.

In the updated early help assessment, a section has been added for families to indicate which professionals in their network they feel they have a positive relationship with. This input should guide the decision on who should take on the role as the lead practitioner for the family.

I don't have the capacity to be lead practitioner what should I do?

Consider the following steps:

In the updated early help assessment, a new section allows families to indicate which professionals in their network they have a positive relationship with. This input should guide the decision on who should assume the role of the lead practitioner for the family.

It is strongly recommended that the lead practitioner be the professional with whom the family has the best relationship, and a professional discussion may need to take place with other relevant professionals in the network to find a way forward to meet the needs of the family.

If you feel that you lack the capacity to be the lead practitioner, first discuss the matter with your line manager to explore possible options. Alternatively, you can email the earlyhelpdevelopmentofficer@barnsley.gov.uk to arrange a further discussion on this issue

I have an Early Help Assessment open but there is just my organisation and the parents

If no actions require the involvement of multiple agencies and the needs can be met by a single agency, an early help assessment is not necessary. For further support on when an early help assessment would be beneficial, please refer to the threshold for intervention guidance.

I am currently lead practitioner but have completed my specific piece of work, but no other professional is willing to lead the Early Help Assessment

The lead practitioner should be an individual who has a good relationship with the family. A section within the EHA allows families to indicate which professionals in their network they feel they have a positive relationship with. This information should guide the decision regarding who should take on the role of lead practitioner for the family.

If there is no suitable person within the family network willing to accept this role, please contact the earlyhelpdevelopmentofficer@barnsley.gov.uk

How do I go about writing the worry statements and wellbeing goals in my next meeting?

Use your next family network action plan meeting, to collaborate with family network members to write the worry statements and wellbeing goals. Use your current assessment and TAF plan to discuss and identify worries and needs. Formulate a shared worry statement and agree on a wellbeing goal. The action plan will then include steps taken by professionals and family members to address the worry.

As a lead practitioner you do not need to do this in isolation it is a collaborative approach with both the family and other practitioners working with them.

Do parents have to agree with the choice of lead practitioner

Parents must agree on who will coordinate and maintain contact with the family to assess their progress. The lead practitioner serves as a single point of contact with both the family and other network members. To ensure that the family remains engaged, and outcomes are sustained, this role should be assigned to someone the family is comfortable working with.

Is there a new closure form

Yes, all associated forms have been changed slightly to reflect the new assessment. These can be located in the early help toolkit

Please can I ask why the deadline for old paperwork is well before the training workshops

There will never be a perfect time to agree on dates, but starting fresh in the new year with a new form seems effective. Training has already begun before the January 6th deadline. Workshops start next week on December 16th, with two lunchtime sessions focusing on the family network plan. Ongoing support is available from early help development officers for assistance with the new early help assessment, which can be online or face to face.

Can I ask why the EHA forms are so long? Could they not be made shorter as these are longer than previous, and this was already a barrier? The length of the form is off putting to families (and professionals) and prevents us from offering the quick, targeted support which many of our families are requiring.

The new assessment is now much shorter version than it is currently. We have streamlined areas such as consent, reducing it from a whole page to a smaller section. Barnsley uses the Signs of Wellbeing and Safety model which has certain requirements. However, the new assessment focuses on three key areas instead of many individual ones:

- What are we worried about?
- What's working well?
- What needs to happen?

Completing the assessment this way identifies, and addresses concerns quickly with an immediate action plan. You can also add or delete rows as needed, within the format showing more boxes than you may currently require.

Is the EHA a word document

Yes, the EHA and associated forms is in a word document for your to edit and write in.