

Early Help Assessment Guidance

About the Early Help Assessment (EHA)

In Bracknell Forest we have adapted the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to create the Early Help Assessment (EHA). The change is in response to consultation with our partner agencies conducted in 2019 – 2020. Following this feedback, the EHA aims to be more streamlined whilst remaining user-friendly.

The Early Help Assessment (EHA) aims to:

- help the early identification of unborns, children and young people's additional needs and promote coordinated service provision to meet them
- be an empowering and joint process between a professional and a family to ensure that our children, young people and families get the right help at the right time.

In order to do this, a good quality assessment and action plan is required at the earliest point, to reduce the need for more specialist intervention or statutory service later on. The EHA uses Signs of Safety, a strengths-based approach to working with children and families.

For an assessment to be effective, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states that:

'It should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and their parents/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.'

These reasons summarise when an EHA can be considered

Designed for when	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have consent from the family and child, if age appropriate• You have concerns about the progress or wellbeing of a child• Needs are not clear or are not being met• Support from outside agencies may be required
Need not be done	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you do not have consent• When progress is as expected• When needs are clear and can be met by the family or assessing agency

The EHA provides a consistent, holistic approach using common language to assess the child and family's needs. The family should be involved in the assessment and encouraged to work in partnership with practitioners and other professionals to achieve their goals. Comments should be based on evidence, which is stated and not just opinion. When completing an assessment, it is important to distinguish between fact, opinion and observation.

It is paramount that the voice of the child and views of the family are captured and remain at the centre of this assessment.

To help you capture the voice of the child there are some resource sheets see **EHA Toolkit** which you may find useful, or you may adapt as appropriate.

The Early Help Assessment is the first stage of Bracknell Forest's range of support measures to support children, young people and families. Children's needs do not remain static, and they may experience different needs, at different points throughout their childhood. As children's needs become more complex, services are likely to be increasingly targeted and specialised.

For concerns that are not urgent and where immediate action is not needed, but when the child's needs are wider than your service can address on its own, more specialised, targeted services are required. All professionals must follow the [multi-agency threshold guidance](#) and may make either an **Early Help referral** or a **Safeguarding referral**.

You may attach the most recent Early Help Assessment or Review to the referral, to evidence work or support previously offered or undertaken and outcomes. Should you need further help or advice with the process please email

Early.Help@bracknell-forest.gov.uk and one of the team will get back to you.

Link to online Early Help and Safeguarding referral forms:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/keeping-adults-and-children-safe/protecting-children/report-child-abuse-or-concern-about-child>

The completed Early Help or Safeguarding Referral will be reviewed by a manager, and once a fuller picture about the case is established, a decision will be made on the most appropriate action to take. You will be notified of the outcome.

**If you are worried about the well-being of a child, you can phone the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 01344 352005
Out-of-hours 01344 786543
If your concern is more urgent call the police on 999.**

Outcomes of an Early Help Assessment (EHA):

Outcomes of an Early Help Assessment can be various depending on the discussion with your practitioner and others supporting you and your family. See the outcomes below:

- It could be that no further action is necessary as changes may have been identified and put in place which have been successful on review. The EHA could therefore close.
- If ongoing needs have been identified these will be identified in the action plan and monitored by the setting with regular review within 12 weeks of the EHA being completed. You will be included in the review process and have an opportunity to share any progress or barriers you have experienced/observed. This process continues until agreed actions are completed, needs can be met at universal level, and the EHA can close.

Outcomes of an Early Help Assessment (EHA) continued:

- If the needs identified show that progress is not being made, either in the initial EHA or on review, the threshold **may** have been reached for targeted support. Support is available from a range of agencies best suited to address these needs. The practitioner will discuss this with you and if necessary, with your agreement, make an online Early Help Request for Support. See link below for further information:

[Early Help referral | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

- If safeguarding issues have been identified during the Early Help Assessment process it could be that a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) referral is needed, see the following link for more information:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/keeping-adults-and-children-safe/protecting-children/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-mash>

Further related information please follow the links below:

To help practitioners across the children's workforce in Bracknell Forest recognise neglect, please see link below:

http://berks.proceduresonline.com/bracknell/p_respond_abuse_neg.html#def_ch_abuse

For information and guidance on the threshold, please see the link below to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Threshold Guidance

[BF Childrens Thresholds Guidance Feb 2021.docx \(bracknellforestsafeguarding.org.uk\)](http://www.bracknellforestsafeguarding.org.uk)

This guidance provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people and families, and aims to help identify circumstances when children may need additional support to achieve their full potential.

For information about making an online Early Help referral please see the link below:

[Early Help referral | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

For information about safeguarding issues, please follow the link to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) below:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/keeping-adults-and-children-safe/protecting-children/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-mash>

Further details around safeguarding children and adults can be found on the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board link: [Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk)