Early Help Guidance 2018

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to clarify and update guidance to practitioners and managers in Bolton to deliver Early Help Support to children, young people and families. The guidance includes tools to ensure compliance with Bolton's Framework for Action (2014), support multi-agency working and improve quality.

Early Help

Early Help is the support that is delivered at the Every Child, Level 1 and Level 2 of Bolton's Framework for Action. It includes universal interventions that are offered to an entire population to prevent problems developing and targeted support to particular children and families with additional needs.

The purpose of Early Help is to support the well-being of children and families by tackling emerging needs at the earliest opportunity and prevent them from getting worse. This means working with children and families to engage and include them as equal partners and to support them to access additional services that can promote positive outcomes.

Effective Early Help may be delivered at any point in a child's life; pre-birth onwards about any issue which is impacting or could affect their development and well-being, including education and health safety.

Working Together to Safeguard Children – a Guide to Inter-agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children 2015 identifies that supporting children to achieve these outcomes is more effective when local agencies work together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help
- Undertake an assessment
- Provide Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family to improve outcomes for the child

Early Help Framework

In Bolton, the Early Help Assessment and Action Plan provide a standard assessment approach to enable those working with children and families in need of Early Help to identify and respond effectively. The assessment will help identify:

- The child's level of need
- Which needs must be prioritised
- What actions are needed to meet needs
- Whether a child needs to access additional support from named services
- Which outcomes are to be addressed

Some agencies will be required to undertake specialist assessments. It is important that the information from these actively contribute to and inform the Early Help Assessment and Action Plan.

Those receiving Early Help Assessments should use the information received to contribute to further specialist assessment. This should avoid the need for children and families to re-tell their story and reduce the likelihood of falling in to the trap of 'start again syndrome'.

Early Help & Complex Families Hub

There may be cases where a family has multiple and complex needs and is at risk of escalating to Social Care. The Lead Professional can seek additional advice and guidance from the Early Help and Complex Families Hub. Additionally, where an Early Help Assessment has been undertaken and Child Action Meetings taking place, but the family are not making progress and are causing concern, there is an additional option of the lead professional submitting the case to the Early Help and Complex Families Hub multi agency panel. The Panel aims to support the Lead Professional to identify additional goals and actions which may help the family make progress and will offer the Lead Professional additional support.

Contents

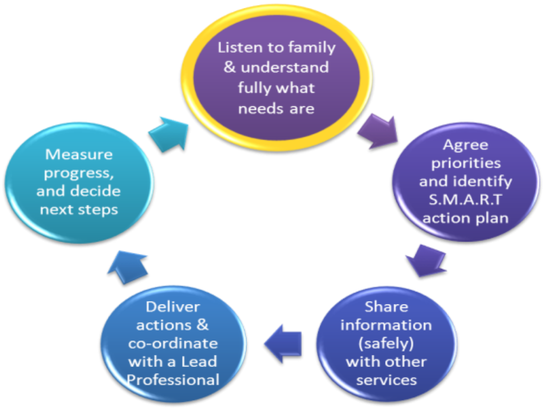
Bolton Integrated Working Team

Early Help Assessment Framework - A Quick Guide to completing assessments

1	**You have a concern about a child/young person, need to share information, or need to access a targeted or specialist service for the child/young person.** Talk to your line manager and decide whether it is a child protection concern. If it is, **follow Local Safeguarding Board procedures. If the child already has a social worker, contact them to discuss your concerns. If the child doesn't currently have a social worker, the first step is to ring MASSS**: 01204 331500 If it is not a child protection concern , follow the steps below:
2	**Check who else is involved with the child and whether an Early Help Assessment is already completed.** To do this you can contact the IW team: 01204 331394 or by email: boltonISA@bolton.gov.uk This will tell you who else is involved with a child or young person and whether or not an EH assessment has already been undertaken. If there is an EH assessment in place, contact the Lead Professional. Discuss the issues with them and agree whether an Action Meeting is needed or whether to update the Early Help Assessment (this will be done at the next review).
3	**Obtain consent from parents/carer/young person to undertake the assessment** Parents and/or the young person need to agree to undertake the assessment. If consent isn't gained, then you should not continue. The only exception to this is when you are sharing information without consent – for example, to protect children from harm, or to prevent crime.
4	**Undertake the assessment** Collect information with the parents/carers and/or young person. You may choose to use an appropriate assessment tool. This can be done informally with the family, using your own paperwork, or assessment methods, but must be transferred onto the Early Help form and signed by parents/carers/young person. You can include information gathered from other practitioners involved with the child or young person, but agree this with the family. If needed, an Action meeting can be called to gather all the information. Families should always be at the centre of this process and should agree what is recorded on the EH assessment. Identify strengths as well as needs, include useful factual information and professional observations but avoid putting in opinions. If you are using the Early Help Assessment to request an additional service from a targeted or specialist agency, include relevant information relating to the issues for which you are seeking specific support. Recording information thoroughly will prevent families having to repeat personal information, and help other agencies understand what is needed.
5	**Agree Action Plan** When information is gathered and recorded, work with the family to agree what the information means and what goals everyone will work towards to make positive change. These decisions will inform your action plan. The action plan should include actions to be undertaken by the family, what your own service will do and identify an additional or specialist service from another agency. Try to be specific about what is required. If you are not sure that another service can meet the need/issue you are trying to address, then you should contact them in advance of completing the action plan.
6	**Set Review date** A review should be agreed in every case. It may be possible to do this very informally, if all the issues identified have been addressed. Reviews can be undertaken with the family and the Lead Professional or it may be necessary to call a Child/Young Person Action meeting with the family and everyone involved. The Early Help Action plan should be reviewed and updated and if needed, new actions identified. If at this point, it is agreed with the family, that all the issues identified on the Early Help Action Plan have been addressed satisfactorily, and positive change has been achieved, then it should be closed. This should be noted on the review and a copy sent to the IW team.
7	**Information Sharing and Storage Consent** It is essential that parents/carers/young people give their 'informed' consent for the information to be stored and shared. This means that the person giving consent needs to understand why information needs to be shared, who will see their information and what will be done with that information. In this section, list all the people with whom you intend to share the Early Help Assessment and Action Plan - those that need the information in order to provide a service to the child or young person. Each time a review is undertaken, the consent section should be reviewed to consider if any agencies need to be added (or removed). It should be made clear to parents that the form will be stored electronically, and will be not shared with anyone not identified in the consent section. The form is signed by the parent/carer/young person. A copy should be given to the family, a signed copy kept by the service/organisation undertaking the Early Help process, and copies sent to everyone identified in the consent section. In addition, a copy should be sent to the IW team for quality and monitoring purposes – contact details are on the form.
8	**Early Help & Complex Families Hub** Where a family has multiple and complex needs and is at risk of escalating to Social Care. The Lead Professional can seek additional advice and guidance from the Early Help and Complex Families Hub. Additionally, where an Early Help Assessment has been undertaken and Child Action Meetings taking place, but the family are not making progress and are causing concern, there is an additional option of the lead professional submitting the case to the Early Help and Complex Families Hub multi agency panel. The Panel will support the Lead Professional to identify additional goals and actions which may help the family make progress and will offer the Lead Professional additional support. Email: Earlyhelphub@bolton.gov.uk or telephone: 01204 337072

The IW team can provide advice and support. Contact us on 01204 331392 or 01204 331394. Further information and a copy of the form is available on our web-site www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk Here you'll also find fuller guidance and other supporting documentation.

Early Help Key Messages



Using the Early Help Framework to help children, young people and families is the best way to work with them to help make improvements and prevent things from getting worse. Before responding to a presenting issue by rushing to make a referral to a specialist agency, make sure you have listened to the parent/young person to get a full understanding of their circumstances. Then, agree with the family what the main priorities are and how you work towards achieving these.

Only at this point, will you know whether specialist services are needed and what you want them to do. Review and if necessary adapt your action plan to make sure it is making a difference and to keep the family motivated in achieving changes. This fits with Bolton's agreed way of working with families identified in the Framework for Action.

Being child - centred and working with the family

- Make sure that the child/parent's views and opinions are sought and recorded.
- Make sure that you consider the age and stage of the child's development to make sure that language and actions are appropriate and also to inform your expectations and concerns.
- Keep the family involved and informed.

Understanding needs fully through assessment

- Make sure that you get a whole picture of the child, including the strengths and difficulties.
- Use appropriate assessment tools to get more information about the issues of concern.
- To get the full picture, we sometimes have to ask difficult questions, be prepared for this and think about the best way of doing it so as to keep the family on board.
- Make sure that you avoid delay or drift as Early Help depends on putting the right help in place as soon as possible. Families will also get fed up if the process drags on.

Understanding the Early Help information and what to do about it

- Consider all the information gathered during the assessment.
- Look for any gaps and discrepancies and how you will resolve these.
- Discuss the information with the family and agree what it means, (including strengths and needs) and how it impacts on them.
- Make decisions with the family about what changes are needed.

Use Smart Action Planning to make Early Help a useful process

- Identify specific goals and actions that are relevant to the changes you are trying to achieve and avoid wish lists or vague statements.
- Make sure the actions you have identified can be measured for progress.
- Set realistic timescales for actions and changes.
- Set dates to review progress and adapt plan if needed
- Know when you will have achieved your goals and you have come to the end of the process.

Early Help Framework
Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the Early Help Framework?**
Using the Early Help Framework is the best way to help children, young people and families make improvements and prevent things from getting worse. Before responding to a presenting issue by rushing to make a referral to a specialist agency, make sure you have talked to the parent and young person to get a full picture of the child/family circumstances. Once you have gathered all the relevant information, agree with the family what the main priorities are and what changes you will work towards achieving and how this will happen. Only at this point, will you know whether specialist services are needed and will have a better picture of what you want them to do. To make sure you know that you have made a difference and to keep the family motivated in achieving changes, it will be necessary to review and if necessary adapt your action plan. The Early Help Framework has been developed to support this work with families. A standardised form has been introduced to record this process which fits with Bolton's agreed way of working with families – the Framework for Action.

2. **Who is the Early Help Framework for?**
Any child or young person who is not developing as expected in line with their peers or has additional needs that are not being met by the current service/s working with them.

3. **The Early Help process has a strong emphasis on consent – what if the family doesn't agree to the assessment or information being shared?**
Sometimes the parent may be apprehensive about what the Early Help Assessment involves and may be reluctant to agree to the take part in the process. It is reasonable to assume that few parents will know about this process, and when they hear about assessment, information sharing and the involvement of other professionals some may worry about what it may lead to. Some may be particularly worried that professionals will take over and they will lose control over their own lives. It is really important to take the time to explain to parents/young people about the process and what is intended to be achieved.
An Early Help Assessment cannot go ahead without consent from the child s parents (unless the child themselves is of sufficient age and understanding and has consented in their own right see 5 below). You will need to consider whether this leaves the child at greater risk and whether a referral into Children's Social Care is justified. However, there may be alternative ways of dealing with this situation. Consider whether you have done all you can to 'sell' the Early Help process to them. Is it worth having another conversation or perhaps could they speak to someone who has already experienced Early Help support? 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 how to offer support in a less structured or formal way. Your work can still carry on but perhaps in a less coordinated way than you would have liked. You will need to make sure you record all that you have done with regard to the Early Help process and the reasons why this has been unable to proceed.
Seeking consent should always be the first option. That's why the process of doing an Early Help assessment has such a strong emphasis on consent and the form asks practitioners to record that consent has been given. **In most circumstances you should only record and share information on an Early Help form with the informed consent of the child or parent.** However, if there are concerns that a child or young person may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, it is important that information is shared. The concern must not be ignored. If you are not sure whether there is a reasonable cause for your concerns, then you should talk to your manager or contact MASSS for advice. The decision to share information without consent in the best interests of the child should be recorded in your own system. Any Early Help forms that do not clearly state that consent has been given to share the information will not be recorded as Early Help processes, rather as non-signed forms on the system.

4. **Should the child be included in the assessment?**
As the Early Help Assessment is about the young person - their views should be sought. Even younger children may also be able to make a significant contribution to the carrying out of an assessment. Eg when completing a EH assessment, the practitioner asked a 6 year old "How do you think things can be made better?" "How could the service make things better between you and your mother?" - She was able to offer ideas which were very relevant. This also meant that she was able to understand how extra services were being delivered to help her.

5. **Can a teenager give consent for an EH assessment without their parents knowing? Can you use the consent of a young person?**
   It is presumed in law that a child aged 16 and older will have sufficient understanding to decide about consenting to share their own information. Think about whether you need the young person's consent to speak directly to their parent. National guidance is clear that children aged 12 or over may generally be expected to have sufficient understanding – this decision must be made on a case by case basis, taking the child's maturity into account. However it is recommended that practitioners should always encourage children less than 16 years to involve their parents where possible.

6. **What sort of information do I need to gather in the assessment?**
   Make sure that you get a whole picture of the child, including the strengths and difficulties. Use appropriate tools where needed to get more information about the issues of concern. Think about what a child of this age/stage of development who is progressing as expected and meeting their developmental milestones would be like. To get the full picture, difficult questions sometimes have to asked, make sure you are prepared for this and think about the best way of doing it so as to keep the family on board. Do not delay in using the process with the family, as Early Help depends on putting the correct support in place as soon as possible.

7. **Do I have to gather information for every box on the form?**
   It is always beneficial to other practitioners to give as much information as you can to build a picture of the child or young person. This helps to show that it is understood what is needed by other services. Consider the areas where you have lots of information and complete these first. Remember that you should be including the child/young person's strengths as well as their needs during the discussion, initially some areas may be sparse but gathering information from other relevant agencies or following discussion or you will find that additional information can be added. Including all relevant information stops families from having to repeat their information many times. Future reviews of the assessment and action plan may identify more information over time.

8. **What if the parent is very negative?**
   When children run into difficulties parents can sometimes focus on all that's going wrong in the family. This can easily turn into negative thinking about the children and themselves. When practitioner is trying to carry out an assessment, this can sometimes make it difficult to ask questions, and difficult to obtain the balanced assessment that the EH assessment looks for. In one situation, allowing Dad some space to voice his concerns first meant that he was then able to hear the practitioner's questions. Having another worker there also helped to keep the discussion on track. Solution Focused questions helped him to identify strengths, achievements and goals reached. Talking to Dad about what had worked before helped to create a more balanced way of viewing the current situation.

9. **What about when parents seem unaware that their own issues are impacting on their children?**
   Sometimes when undertaking an assessment about what's happening in a family it identifies that parents have difficulties in their own life which are likely to be causing difficulties for their children. However, the parents themselves may not see it this way. If the practitioner raises this the parent may become defensive and disengage to a point where an Early Help assessment is no longer possible because their consent to proceed is withdrawn. In one situation the practitioner found that when they asked the parents what they thought needed to be different for the children to change for the better, the question helped them identify the significance of mental health and substance misuse issues in their own lives.

10. **Where do you start when there are a lot of difficulties?**
    Carrying out an assessment at an early stage will sometimes bring practitioners into situations which turn out to be more complicated than was initially expected, but still not within the threshold for other services to take over. Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start. In one situation where a 17 year old had a number of difficulties presenting at the same time, simply asking the young person what the priority was for her enabled a decision to be made. This increased the likelihood that the young person would engage in subsequent action plan.

11. **What's the best way to ask questions which may be awkward?**
    Collecting information which helps to build a holistic picture of a child or young person in difficulty can mean that the practitioner has to go beyond what the parent is concerned about. In some circumstances this can feel awkward and intrusive. One practitioner has commented that the Early Help form itself provides a useful platform for covering all the areas that need to be asked about. Identifying the filling in

of the form as a task to be carried out by the practitioner and parent/young person together, can allow the assessor to take one step back from the process, instead of being the person driving the process. The practitioner can then say "Well, now we need to look at this section…"

12. **What if only one parent is agreeing to an Early Help Assessment?**
National guidance states that the consent of one parent is sufficient, so if parents are living separately you should normally obtain consent from the parent the child is living with. However each situation is different and you will need to manage each case carefully. Consider whether it is in the best interests of the child to include both parents. Both parents may be legally entitled to receive the information recorded on the form, so consider the way information is recorded. Be careful not to exacerbate situations and potentially put people at risk.

13. **What's the best way of using the background information my service already has?**
In some situations the child, young person and their family will already be well known to the practitioner and they may have a lot of information. Addressing everything that is known in an Early Help Assessment could easily be overwhelming to the service user, especially distressing historical information. This might even lead to the service user/s withdrawing their consent to proceed. If you consider that it may be more helpful to go through the existing information before carrying out the assessment with the family, and recording this in advance on the form, then be clear that you will need to spend time clarifying the information you have recorded, concentrate discussion on current pressing concerns and get agreement about what information can be shared. It may be necessary to reword some of the original recording if the family does not feel their circumstances have been represented clearly. It will not be helpful to present a family with a completed assessment and action plan and expect them to sign it off.

14. **What does analysing the Early Help assessment mean?**
The Early Help process is about gathering relevant information and using it to decide:
    - Are there any gaps in the information gathered?
    - What are the risks and strengths?
    - Has your view changed now that you have completed the assessment?
    - How will you prioritise what needs to change?
    - How does the information help you to respond to the young person's needs effectively?

    By using the assessment process and analysing the information, a sound action plan can be put in place to identify what needs to change and how this can be achieved. This make sure that any requests for additional support from specialist services are based on evidence and form part of a plan, not just simply vague referrals.

15. **How often should I review and update the EH assessment and Action Plan?**
It's really important that the Early Help process is seen as a way of working and not just a form filling exercise. For this reason, reviews should be held with the family and if necessary other agencies (either informally or by holding a Child Action Meeting). Any new relevant information should be considered and progress on the action plan identified. The guidance advises that the reviews should be held every 8-10 weeks. A common sense approach should be used – if for example every half term would make more sense, or you are waiting for an intervention to be completed before deciding how successful it has been then it would make sense to arrange a review around this. If the child or young person has long term additional needs then you may wish to complete a full review of the Early Help Assessment every 6 months by adding any information you have gathered from other work you or other practitioners have completed with the family.
If issues are escalating or you have other concerns then you should review earlier, if at any time you are concerned about the safety or welfare of the child or young person, then you need to ring MASSS for advice or to make a referral.

16. **What if there's already an Early Help Assessment and Action plan in place for the child I am concerned about?**
Contact the current Lead Professional and ask what has been identified and what actions are being delivered (you will need the consent of the family to do this). If you feel that you have additional information or a concern that is not being addressed in the current action plan, then discuss with the Lead Professional and then decide what the next steps should be. It could be that the Lead Professional reviews the action plan with the family, or a Child Action Meeting is called or together you have increased your concerns of the risks and need to escalate the situation by involving Social Care. It may be helpful to

consider at this point if the current Lead Professional should continue or whether you are better placed to take this role. Whatever you decide should be agreed with the family.

17. **How can I access an existing Early Help Assessment?**
Ask the parent or contact the IW team to find out who is the Lead Professional of an existing EH assessment. Speak to the Lead Professional and explain your involvement with the child/family and ask to see a copy of the existing EH assessment. Agree whether you should attend any Child Action Meetings that are being held. The Lead Professional may have to clarify if they have consent to share the information with you, so there may be a short delay before you can have access to it.

18. **If I have concerns about more than one child in a family do I have to do an Early Help Assessment for each child?**
If I have concerns about more than one child in a family do I have to do an Early Help Assessment for each child? In many cases, it is better to complete a family Early Help Assessment. Some information will be the same for all the family, however it is important to consider how each of the children are 'impacted' by the family circumstances as this may vary depending on their strengths and age/development stage. One family plan will less confusing than individual ones, and it is more helpful for the family to have one Lead Professional who is their main point of contact. For larger families where children are at different schools etc, it may a good idea to ask a worker to liaise with others in relation to that child's part of the plan, but it is really important to keep everything manageable for the Lead Professional to ensure that all info is fed back to them.

19. **Who arranges the Child Action Meeting (CAM)?**
The first Child Action Meeting will be arranged by the person who has completed the Early Help Assessment Form with the child or young person – at this point they will take the lead professional role. Once it has been agreed at a Child Action Meeting who will take on the Lead Professional role, they will co-ordinate any further Child Action Meetings and the ownership of the Early Help Assessment and Action Plan will be transferred to them.

20. **What do I do if other practitioners don't turn up for Child Action meetings?**
If one of the CAM members is unable to make a meeting, then they should be contacting the LP to let them know. They should be prepared to give a written report in their absence, or at least give some information verbally that can be shared at the meeting.
If a practitioner has just not turned up then it would be acceptable to contact them afterwards to share any relevant information or decisions made by the meeting in their absence that may affect them. If one agency is persistently absent then this should be followed up directly and if necessary escalated through line management. One manager talking to another manager often solves the problem.

21. **When and how do I close an Early Help Assessment?**
When the Early Help Assessment and Action Plan form is reviewed with the young person or family if all the outcomes have been met and there are no other concerns, it can be closed. It is important that this is agreed by everyone involved with the child or young person.
Reasons for closing an Early Help Assessment may be:
- The child or young person's needs have been met
- The outcomes identified are achieved
- The family no longer wish to engage with the process
- The family have moved out of the area
- The issues have been raised to a statutory level and specialist assessments are in place

A copy of the final EH assessment and action plan needs to be given to the young person/family. A copy should also be kept with the Lead Professional. Send a copy to the Integrated Working Team stating that it should be closed, so that they can update their records.

22. **Where do I get a blank Early Help Assessment form from?**
A copy of the EH form and guidance documents can be found on Bolton's Safeguarding Children Board website: www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk
For further advice on how to use the Early Help process please contact the Integrated Working Team on 01204 331394 or e-mail boltonISA@bolton.gov.uk
To access Early Help training, refer to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training Programme and contact the Training Shared Service Centre to book on 01204 337600 or e-mail Trainingsharedservicecentre@bolton.gov.uk

23. **How do I record a signature on the electronic Early Help Assessment?**
Those signing the form should sign a paper copy which is held on the Lead Professional case file. Electronic copies of the form should have the name of the person giving permission for the information to be shared recorded on it, a declaration that it has been signed: 'signature held on paper copy in file' and the date of the signature.

24. **When I have completed an Early Help Assessment what do I do with it?**
When you have completed the assessment and recorded it, consent to share the information should be confirmed by asking the young person/parent to sign the form identifying which services can receive the information. A copy should then be given to the parent/carer or the young person and shared securely with *everyone who has been identified*. You should keep a signed copy of the form in the child or young person's file and store this securely. The IW team does not circulate forms on your behalf.
What information is stored by the IW team and where?
The IW team checks that consent has been recorded on the form and makes sure that contact details of the Lead Professional is recorded on the ONE system. Details of the Lead Professional are recorded along with the date the Early Help Assessment was completed or reviewed. The information on the document is not recorded on the system as yet. The copy is then kept for 6 months pending a multi-agency quality assurance group meeting.

25. **How can I find out what services are available to support the child/young person?**
Bolton's local directory of services can be found at: www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk
The Integrated Working Team can also try to help: 01204 331394 or email boltonisa@bolton.gov.uk

The Early Help & Complex Families Hub may also be able to help: 01204 337072 or email Earlyhelphub@bolton.gov.uk

26. **How does the Early Help form work when making a referral to Children's Social Care?**
Sometimes you have been working to an action plan for some time, and the families' needs are either not improving or are actually escalating despite your efforts. The first step should always be to contact The Early Help & Complex Families Hub by phone and discuss your concerns. It is likely that the Hub Manager will ask for supporting information and the previous use of the EH process gives the structure for sharing this information and identifying what has previously been delivered. The Hub will provide advice and support where you may be advised to continue to use the Early Help process or they may advise you to submit the case to the Early Help & Complex Families Hub Panel.

27. **Do I need consent from the family to share the form in these circumstances?**
As before, seeking consent to share the information should always be the first option. However, if there are concerns that a child or young person may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, it is important that information is shared. The concern must not be ignored. If you are not sure whether there is a reasonable cause for your concerns, then you should talk to your manager. The decision to share information without consent in the best interests of the child should be recorded in your own system.

28. **How the Early Help is process Quality Assured.**
A quality assurance framework has been developed to support quality at every level. There is a checklist for practitioners, line managers, service managers and multi-agency group. There are also evaluation sheets for parents and children/young people. Guidance supports the framework and suggests when it might be used at each level. A multi-agency group meets 3 times a year to review a random sample of 50 Early Help Assessments, following which recommendations are made for service managers to cascade to practitioners, plus guidance and training may be updated. The framework can be found on the Safeguarding Board website.

29. **What training is available to support the Early Help process?**
A wide range of training is available to support Information Sharing, Early Help Framework and the Lead Professional role. There are also supporting courses such as Assessment Skills, Chairing Meetings etc. All training is delivered as part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training programme. The programme is available on the Safeguarding Board website and can be booked via the Training Shared Service Centre: trainingsharedservicecentre@bolton.gov.uk

30. **What support should I expect from my manager?**
As a practitioner using the Early Help process, you should be able to seek support and advice from your manager and receive appropriate supervision. The expectations and role of managers is set out in National Guidance and in Bolton a half day course for managers is delivered at least once/year.

31. **Where can I access other Early Help guidance and support documents?**
There is a large range of guidance and support documents available on the Bolton Safeguarding Children website: http://boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/working-with-children-and-young-people/early-help-and-working-together/

32. **What happens to an Early Help Assessment when a child moves from one setting/service to another?**
When an Early Help Assessment is in place for a child/young person, this means that they have identified needs and there is an action plan in place that usually involves your agency, family members and other services. When a child moves from your setting, it's really important that the plan carries on with a new Lead Professional. The family shouldn't have to start again from the beginning or wait for things to get worse. New agencies working with the child or family need to know about the family and about previous support that's been provided.

Planned transitions – between services, for example - midwife to health visitor, nursery to primary; when a case 'steps down' from a targeted service to a universal one

Before the move, talk to the parent + child (if they are old enough) about the need for the Early Help process to transfer to the new service. If the information and action plan needs to be updated do this before the transfer. If Child Action Meetings are being held – this can be agreed here. Make sure you invite the relevant worker from the new service to the meeting. **Often services have transition processes already in place, where an Early Help Assessment is in place, transfer of this should be part of the process.**

Agree with the new service who will take on the role of the new Lead Professional.

Update the EH form with any new information, including the name of the new LP.

Share the updated EH form – a copy to the family, a copy to the IW team and **an electronic copy** to the new Lead Professional, so that they can carry on with the review process.

Set a review date with the family and the new Lead Professional. This way everyone will be clear that the action plan is ongoing and is clear about expectations.

Support for the new Lead Professional – if this way of working is new to the new Lead Professional, then remind them that they can access support from the Integrated Working Team.

Unplanned moves – for example when a family move area, or stop contact with a service before a transfer can be made

If you are the Lead Professional and are the owner of an Early Help Assessment, but are no longer able to contact the family – then the EH form should be closed. Send an updated copy to the IW team with the reason for closure so that the system can be updated. Copies of the EH form should be kept in the child's record for a minimum of 6 years, in accordance with retention schedules.

Early Help information and action plans can still be accessed by new services working with the family, so long as the parent (or child if they are old enough) gives their consent for you to have the information. Contact the original service with details of the consent and request an electronic copy is sent to you. Remember to send an updated copy to the IW team, so that they can update the system with the name of the new Lead Professional.

33. **When should I use the Early Help & Complex families Hub?**
You can contact the Hub at any time for advice and support in relation to Early Help families- Telephone: 01204 337072 or Email: Earlyhelphub@bolton.gov.uk.

Where an Early Help Assessment has been undertaken and Child Action Meetings taking place, but the family are not making progress and are causing concern, the lead professional can submit the case to the Early Help and Complex Families Hub multi agency panel. The Panel will support the Lead Professional to identify additional goals and actions which may help the family make progress and will offer the Lead Professional additional support.

Quality Checklists

Practitioner checklist

This checklist should be used by practitioners completing Early Help Assessments for the first time. Practitioners who haven't completed one in the last 3 months should also use the checklist to ensure that processes are followed consistently and are compliant with guidance.

		Y	N
1	Have you completed the form electronically? **This is a mandatory requirement**	☐	☐
2	A check with the IW team has been done to find out if there is an existing EHA or Lead Professional?	☐	☐
3	All basic details are recorded correctly: child name/gender/date of birth/address (inc postcode)/ contact telephone number/ethnicity/parent/carer details/disability/language or communication info	☐	☐
4	Are your full contact details recorded in the Lead Professional section?	☐	☐
5	Is the date recorded that the Early Help Assessment was completed/reviewed?	☐	☐
6	Are the details of which parent and/or young people were present at the assessment recorded?	☐	☐
7	Are the comments and views of the family recorded and attributed to them?	☐	☐
8	Is plain language used and kept free from jargon and abbreviations?	☐	☐
9	Have the family agreed to the information being shared with services and are they listed on the form?	☐	☐
10	Is the name of the person who signed the form recorded on the electronic copy and a statement recorded that a signed copy is kept in files?	☐	☐
11	Is the date that the form was signed recorded?	☐	☐
12	Are the electronic and hard copies stored securely?	☐	☐
13	Can the electronic copy be accessed by a deputy or line manager?	☐	☐
14	Have you explained to the family the reason why you need to carry out the assessment?	☐	☐
15	Have you explained to the family that the purpose is to gather relevant information to help decide what actions are needed, who else needs to be involved and that by sharing the information, other services will have what they need to know without the family having to repeat their information?	☐	☐
16	Does the assessment focus on what the child + family want to achieve?	☐	☐
17	Are both strengths and needs identified in the assessment?	☐	☐
18	Is the assessment comprehensive, relevant to the issues/concerns and includes all the information that other services might need?	☐	☐
19	If guidance tools or specialist assessments have been used, is a summary of the findings included in the EHA?	☐	☐
20	Does the conclusion identify what needs to change and how this will be achieved?	☐	☐
21	Does the action plan related to the original reason for starting the assessment?	☐	☐
22	Are all identified actions S.M.A.R.T.?	☐	☐
23	**Review**		
	Is new information recorded on the reviewed Early Help Assessment?	☐	☐
	Is it clear whether the process should be continued or closed?	☐	☐
	If a new Lead Professional needs to be appointed – has this been agreed and recorded on the form?	☐	☐
	Has an electronic copy sent to them?	☐	☐
24	**Has a copy of the form (including each update) been sent to the Integrated Working Team?**	☐	☐

Manager/Service Checklist

This checklist should be used by the Safeguarding Lead or Service Manager and reviewed on an annual basis

	Managing Early Help Checklist
1	Are you able to describe the Early Help you offer in your service? Actions for you:
2	Is it agreed who will undertake Early Help Assessments and the LP role? Actions for you:
3	Have relevant staff had Early Help Training and can they demonstrate the required competence to use EH processes? Actions for you:
4	Are supporting documents and tools easily available in your service? Actions for you:
5	Do you know how many EHAs your service has started, who has completed them and when they are due for review? Actions for you:
6	Do you have a safe central place to store completed EHAs? Actions for you:
7	Do your staff always complete an EHA before calling a Child Action Meeting? How do you know this? Actions for you:
8	Do you monitor the quality of EHAs completed by your staff? Actions for you:
9	What support do you give to those who act as Lead professional? Actions for you:
10	Does your service transfer EHAs and LP role in any transition arrangements? Actions for you: