

Early Help without Borders

Best Practice Guidance for Early Help Cross-Border Working

Agreement between Local Authorities;
Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol,
Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Somerset,
South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to set out best practice for children and young people's services in using the Early Help single assessment, formerly known as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) across Local Authority boundaries.

It is acknowledged that practice will vary between Local Authority areas. For example, some areas may have multi-agency teams, or a Single Point of Access to their services, others do not. This variation in practice is regarded as a strength, which increases innovation and opportunities for improving service delivery; it is not necessarily a barrier to effective cross-border working.

This guidance will assist children's services to work in the best interests of children and young people to achieve improved outcomes and fulfil their potential. It is not concerned with maintaining organisational boundaries.

Partners in each Local Authority area will need to promote the guidance and consider how it will be used in practice.

For the purpose of this guide, the term 'cross border working' refers to differences in working practice between two Local Authorities that might share a border and positive attempts to resolve working issues that might arise as a result. In many instances, the Local Authority areas will share a border, however there will be exceptions.

2. Key Principles

- Any practitioner working with a child, young person or family who identifies an unmet need should consider how best they can meet those needs, regardless of where the child / young person lives, or the location of the practitioner.
- The experience of cross border assessments and service delivery should be seamless for children, young people and families and flexible for practitioners.
- The home address of a child/young person defines the 'Home' Local Authority for responsibility regarding processing and coordinating requests for Early Help and single assessments for Early Help.
- The practitioner should check which Local Authority is the home Local Authority for each child/young person prior to initiating any early help assessments or requests for help / referrals for additional services. Where a child lives in a different Local Authority to that of the practitioner's agency, they will need to contact the home Local Authority or read these notes for guidance. (Please see page 14 for contact details.)
- Practitioners are expected to travel across borders to attend any relevant meetings including Team Around the Child / Family (TAC/F) Meetings.

- Practitioners are not expected to deliver services outside their normal areas of delivery, unless prior agreement has been made between the practitioner and their line manager.
- Where Schools, Early Years, Youth Services, Voluntary agencies or Health professionals are located in a different Local Authority to that of the 'home' Local Authority of the child / young person, it is recognised that there may be difficulties over accessing resources, as means of access and thresholds for services may vary between Local Authorities. Where a child or family is disadvantaged through this process, the case may need to be considered flexibly and individually by all organisations involved in the TAC/F and action plan, across both Local Authorities involved.
- Wherever possible Early Help Managers/Coordinators/Leads will seek to resolve issues by direct discussion or via the Cross Border Working Group.
- Practitioners involved in an Early Help assessment of need or request for help / referral to another service, who identify at any stage that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, must follow their local safeguarding procedures. It is best practice to inform the child/young person and family that that is happening **unless doing so is likely to expose the child/young person to further risk**. Practitioners should always seek local advice if they are unsure.

South West Child Protection Group:

The South West Child Protection Group outlines standard operating procedures for multi-agency safeguarding. The link is [South West Child Protection Procedures](#)

3. What to do if working with a child/young person in

Bath and North East Somerset

- Check whether or not an Early Help Assessment (CAF) has already been completed with the Integrated Working Team in Bath and North East Somerset on 01225395021.
- If an Early Help Assessment (CAF) is open, then you will be put in touch with the Lead Professional. With parental consent you will be able to access the CAF and join the TAC. If there is a closed CAF, with consent, this may be shared with you.
- If there is no existing Early Help Assessment (CAF) and you have consent, complete an assessment with the parent and child, including contributions from any other agencies.
- Secure signed parental consent and comments, and where appropriate those of the child/young person.
- Send the signed paper copy or electronic version securely to the Integrated Working Team at CAF@bathnes.gov.uk or Integrated Working Team, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Lewis House, Manvers Street, bath, BA1 1JG.
- Assessment and Information Officers will make a response to all cross border Early Help Assessments (CAFs) and will help to identify the next steps including whether a TAC is required and who should chair and coordinate this meeting.
- At the TAC/F meeting the needs will be confirmed, the action plan will be completed, a Lead Professional will be appointed and a review date will be set.
- The Lead Professional will need to discuss support needs with his/her line manager and the management of subsequent TAC/F reviews.
- Further practical support to complete Early Help Assessments (CAFs) can be offered by the Assessment and Information Officers within the Integrated Working Team.

Training

Multi-agency training is available on the Early Help assessment (CAF) and the role of the Lead Professionals/Team around the child for practitioners and Managers.

<http://bathnes.learningpool.com>

Other sources of support and useful documents:

B&NES Integrated Working Web pages:

- Early Help to support families webpage
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families>
- Early Help Assessment (CAF) webpage

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families/early-help-caf>

- Lead Professional & Team Around the Child webpage
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support-families/lead-professional-team>
- Early Help Offer
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/early_help_offer_bath_and_north_east_somerset_1.pdf
- Thresholds for assessment
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Children-and-Young-People/ChildProtection/threshold_for_assessment.pdf

Bristol

Any concern about the well-being of a child or young person should come through "First Response". They will be able to assess the referral and ensure it is referred to the correct team. First Response can refer directly to Social Care Units and Early Help Teams.

www.bristol.gov.uk/firstresponse or telephone: 0117 9036444

Anyone who works with children has a role in safeguarding and child protection. Professionals can refer to First Response using the First Response Online Form
<https://www2.bristol.gov.uk/form/child-or-young-person-request-support-or-report-concern>

However, if you are concerned about an immediate risk or harm to the safety of a child it is essential that you phone the First Response Team and share your concerns on 0117 903 6444.

If a child has already had an Early Help assessment in another authority and the child and family are moving, please contact one of the following area Early Help offices to discuss the case before handover.

North Early Help 0117 3521499 or earlyhelpnorth@bristol.gov.uk

South Early Help 0117 9037770 or earlyhelpsouth@bristol.gov.uk

East Central Early Help 0117 9415886 or earlyhelpeastcentral@bristol.gov.uk

The Bristol Thresholds Guidance describes our processes in more detail and can be found here:

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/children-and-young-people/bristol-safeguarding-children-board>

Gloucestershire

In Gloucestershire we have developed a graduated pathway of early help and support for all children and young people and their families with additional needs.

The Graduated Pathway is Gloucestershire's response to ensuring Early Help is available to all children, young people and their families with additional needs, whether these are educational, social or emotional needs or a disability.

The Graduated Pathway can be found [here](#).

All supporting tools and guidance can be accessed through Information for Practitioners/Graduated Pathway of Early Help and Support on [glofamilies directory](#).

If you are working with a child from Gloucestershire who you think would benefit from support using the graduated pathway please contact the Early Help Coordinator based in the locality where the child/young person and their family live to check if support is already being offered.

Locality	Email	Telephone
Cheltenham	cheltenhamearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328160
Cotswolds	cotswoldsearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328101
Forest of Dean	forestofdeanearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328048
Gloucester	gloucesterearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328076
Stroud	stroudearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328130
Tewkesbury	tewkesburyearlyhelp@gloucestershire.gov.uk	01452 328250

- If a My Plan/My Plan+ is open, then you will be put in touch with the Lead Practitioner. With parental consent you will be able to access the My Plan/My Plan+ and join the TAC/TAF. If there is a closed My Plan/My Plan+, with consent, this may be shared with you.
- If there is no existing support through the graduated pathway and you have consent, complete a My Plan or My Assessment & My Plan+ with the parent and child, including contributions from any other agencies.

If a child has already had an Early Help assessment in another authority and the child and family are moving, please contact the Early Help Coordinator as outlined above to discuss the case and to support you with the handover.

North Somerset

Working Together (2015) has set out new and increased expectations on how we identify vulnerable children in North Somerset to provide appropriate multi-agency Early Help responses that meet their needs. This is set out in the North Somerset Safeguarding

Children's Board Threshold Criteria. The provision of early help services is part of a continuum of help and support in North Somerset, responding to the different level of needs of children, young people and families, please visit:

The North Somerset Threshold document gives clear criteria for taking action and providing help across the full continuum.

<http://www.northsomersetlscb.org.uk/uploads/files/750.pdf>

If you are working with a child/young person and you believe that Early Help support is needed then:

- Check whether or not an Early Help Assessment has already been completed with the North Somerset Early Help Advisor on 01934 426329.
- If the child is receiving Early Help support already then Early Help Advisor will provide you with contact details of the families Early Help co-ordinator. The Early Help Coordinator with parental consent will share information with you and invite you for TAF meetings.
- If there is no Early Help support currently in place and you obtained parental consent, the Early Help Advisor will send you a word copy of Early Help Assessment to complete with the parents and child, including contributions from any other agencies.
- The completed Early Help Assessment then needs to be shared with the family, signed by parents and send securely to: Gosha.Port@n-somerset.gcsx.gov.uk
- The Early Help Advisor will discuss the case during the Early Help and High Impact Families (troubled families) Triage weekly meetings, to identify an Early Help coordinator and will inform you about next steps

Families moving out of the North Somerset Local Authority area:

- The North Somerset Early Help coordinator, who works with family will contact you to share information with parental consent and you might be invited for a TAF meeting where the case hand over will take place.

How do I find information about Early Help?

The Early Help section of North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board website holds many useful documents including user guides and new pdf versions of the Early Help Assessment and the Early Help Plan: <http://www.northsomersetlscb.org.uk/early-help.htm>

If you want to ask any questions about North Somerset Early Help process The Early Help Advisor will be happy to work with all agencies and provide support on how to deliver Early Help for a North Somerset family or child. Please, send your queries to:

EarlyHelp.AssessmentFeedback@n-somerset.gov.uk or contact the Early Help queries phone number on 01934 426329.

Somerset

When a child, young person or family is in need of support it is important to identify the best way forward at the earliest opportunity. The Somerset Early Help Assessment (EHA)

(Including the multi-agency request tool) helps children, their family and practitioners working with them to clearly record their current situation, strengths and needs, followed by a Team Around the Child (TAC) plan which will help the family to improve their lives.

If a child or young person reveals they are at risk of suffering actual or likely significant harm, the practitioner should follow the local safeguarding process immediately. Please click [here](#) to visit Somerset's Safeguarding Children's Board website.

If you require any advice or support with completing an Early Help Assessment, please contact:

The Early Help Advice Hub:

Email: EHACoordinator@somerset.gov.uk

Telephone: 01823 355803

The following information is aimed to guide Lead Professionals working with cross border families or with those moving to a neighbouring county.

Cross Border families living in Somerset:

- Please read 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset – Thresholds for Assessment and Services' (www.somerset.gov.uk/SSCBThresholds).
- ☐ Please call or email the Early Help Advice Hub to check if there is already an EHA in place for the child 01823 355803 or EHACoordinator@somerset.gov.uk
- ☐ If there is an existing EHA, you will be given contact details for the identified Lead professional.
- If there is no existing EHA, please complete section 1 – 3 of the EHA and send this to the Early Help Advice Hub, before completing the whole EHA with the family. For more information please refer to the [Somerset Early Help Assessment \(EHA\) \(including the multi-agency request tool\) Practitioner Guidance](#).
- In order to complete an EHA you must gain consent of the parent or person with parental responsibility for the child. It is good practice to also gain the child's consent, where you are confident that they understand what they are agreeing to.

Families moving out of Somerset:

- If you are Lead professional for a family who are moving out of Somerset, it is imperative this is made clear to the Early Help Advice Hub at the earliest possible opportunity. The EHA, with the family's permission, can be transferred to their new local authority. Ensure the family are aware of what will happen next.
- ☐ A TAC meeting should be convened at the earliest opportunity by the Lead Professional. The Lead Professional will be expected to attend this meeting for a smooth hand over of services for the family. If the Lead Professional is not able to attend the TAC meeting they should liaise closely with the local authority the family are moving to, to ensure all information has been shared.

Useful contacts and documents:

- ☒ Somerset EHA paperwork can be found at: <http://professionalchoices.org.uk/eha/>
- ☒ EHA queries should be directed to:
EHACoordinator@somerset.gov.uk or 01823 355803
- ☒ Somerset Children and Young People Plan: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/plans/children-and-young-peoples-plan/>

South Gloucestershire

- Contact Access and Response Team (ART) to discuss whether the family is known to any services already: Tel: 01454 866000 or email Accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk
- If there is no prior involvement discuss with the Access and Response Team what may be required to meet the needs of the child, young person or family. If needs are unclear or there are more than two agencies involved with the family you may be asked to initiate an Single Assessment Framework early help (SAFeh) with the family in order to develop an integrated action plan across agencies.
- If needs are clear you may be able to make a Request for Early Help to an appropriate service, by completing the ART request for help form.
- You may need to gather more information on the family for the Single Assessment Framework early help, and convene a Team Around the Child or Family (TAC/F) meeting in order to develop an early help action plan. You may contact SAFehsupport@southglos.gov.uk for advice and support or ring 01454 86 4682/5734 /4680.
- The SAFeh initiator is the Lead Professional until the first TAC/F meeting has happened, when it will be formally agreed who should take on this role.
- Reviews will need to be coordinated by the Lead Professional at regular intervals, and consideration should be given to holding this in the context of a TAC/F meeting, or at the very least with the family. Suggested intervals are usually 6 weekly, to a maximum of 3 months. (dates for the next review should be set at the first meeting and each subsequent review.)
- If you want to attend any South Gloucestershire SAFeh training contact hrworkforcedevelopment@southglos.gov.uk

Other sources of support and useful guidance

- SAFehsupport@southglos.gov.uk – Early Help Partnership Workers. Tel: 01454 86 4682 /5734 /4680.
- Link to South Gloucestershire [Single Assessment for Early Help \(SAFeh\) Toolkit](#)
- Link to [South Gloucestershire Council website](#)

- Link to [South Gloucestershire Safeguarding](#)

Early Help single assessments initiated on any child / young person or family that lives in South Gloucestershire should be submitted to SAFeh support, PO Box 298

The Council Offices, Access and Response Team, High St, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 0DQ

Tel: 01454 866000 Fax: 01454 864380 (check before sending a fax)

Accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk (Only email confidential information securely)

accessandresponse@southglos.gcsx.gov.uk (only use from a secure, compatible email address)

Wiltshire

- Check whether or not a CAF has been completed with the CAF Team on 01225 713884, or via CAF@wiltshire.gov.uk (initials and DOB only please, this is not a secure email address). If there is a CAF in place, you will be given the details of the lead professional.
- If there is no CAF in place and you have consent then you should complete one with the child/ young person and family, with other agencies inputting as appropriate. The Wiltshire CAF Form can be found at www.wiltshirepathways.org along with details of how to register the CAF. If you prefer to use your own areas CAF assessment, then please complete a Wiltshire consent page to allow us to register the CAF.
- The CAF completer should register the CAF by sending a copy along with the completed consent page to The DCE Coordination Team, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN
- A Team Around the Child Meeting should be convened within 15 working days by the CAF completer, and the lead professional be confirmed at that meeting.
- If support is needed, then please contact the CAF team. Details of Wiltshire Training are at www.wiltshirepathways.org
- If you want to discuss Early Help Services, please call the Early Help Single Point of Contact 01225 718230.
- For SEND Queries please contact SEND Single Point of Contact - 01225 757985 or visit Wiltshire Local Offer Website - <https://www.wiltshirelocaloffer.org.uk/>

4. Transferring an Early Help Assessment / Request when a family moves across boundaries

- Ask the family if they wish to access further support in the new Local Authority in order to share information with new Local Authority. **Consent is required.**
- Make contact with the new host authority and transfer information to the identified person. See contact details below.
- The old host authority should consider the need for convening a TAC/F meeting where required to handover to review needs and agree the next action plan.
- Ensure the child and family are aware of the handover process and are clear what is going to happen next.
- Old host authority will close interventions and the new host authority will record information and take appropriate action.

5. Contact Details of Early Help Leads

Local Authority	Title/ role	Contact details
Gloucestershire	Early Help Coordinators Sarah Murphy – Service Leader, Early Help & Family Support	Cheltenham 01452 328160 Cotswolds 01452 328101 Forest of Dean 01452 328048 Gloucester 01452 328076 Stroud 01452 328130 Tewkesbury 01452 328250 sarah.murphy@gloucestershire.gov.uk Tel: 01452 328060
South Gloucestershire	SAFeh support Early Help Partnership Workers Access and Response Team Early Help Partnership Officer	Safehsupport@southglos.gov.uk Tel: 01454 86 4682 /5734 /4680. Accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk 01454 866000 heather.churchill@southglos.gov.uk Telephone : 01454 864680 Mobile : 07748622433
Bristol	Early Help Co-ordinators	North : 0117 3521499 earlyhelpnorth@bristol.gov.uk East Central : 0117 9415886 earlyhelpeastcentral@bristol.gov.uk South : 0117 9037770 earlyhelpsouth@bristol.gov.uk
North Somerset	Early Help Advisor: Gosha Port Information about Early Help	Telephone: 01934 426329 EarlyHelp.AssessmentFeedback@n-somerset.gov.uk http://www.northsomersetlscb.org.uk/early-help.htm
Bath & North East Somerset	Assessment and Information Officers, Integrated Working Team	CAF@bathnes.gov.uk Telephone : 01225 395021
Somerset	Early Help Advice Hub	ehacoordinator@somerset.gov.uk 01823 355803 http://professionalchoices.org.uk/

Wiltshire	CAF Team Richard Harris Early Help Team Leader (North)	01225 713884 CAF@wiltshire.gov.uk Telephone 01225 757962 richard.harris@wiltshire.gov.uk Secure e-mail: richard.harris@wiltshire.gcsx.gov.uk
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