



**Westmorland and Furness
Safeguarding Children
Partnership**

WFSCP Early Help Quality Assurance Framework

What is Early Help?

Early Help is the umbrella term that describes our continuum of service response based on the needs of families. This includes preventative and universal services through to targeted and edge of care.

Early Help is about offering the right help, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person. Early Help is a simple concept: it is about changing our culture from an often late reaction to chronic and acute need and re-focussing our activities, along with our collective partnership, on the root causes of social problems. By doing so, outcomes for families improve and intrusive, costly statutory interventions are avoided.

Early Help is about enabling families to have the opportunity to regain control of their circumstances before they escalate into more difficult issues. We will do this by ensuring that we have a joined up early help system which promotes the identification of emerging needs and earlier intervention and that responds using a whole family approach.

Early Help Quality Assurance Framework

Effective quality assurance is fundamental to supporting our continuous improvement and our ability to 'know ourselves' well. Capturing the journey and impact of interventions on the child and family are key underpinning objectives of the Quality Assurance Framework. If we are doing this well, it should enable us to clearly respond to the following questions:

- What do we know about the quality of our services? How do we know it?
- Is anyone better off as a result of our intervention?
- What do our staff tell us about working in this organisation
- What do children, young people and families tell us about their experiences of working with us?
- What are we doing well that we need to do more of?
- What do we need to do to improve?

The Early Help Quality Assurance Framework describes how the WFSCP measures the quality of Early Help Services and Early Help Processes.

The Early Help Quality Assurance Framework will be used to guide services to further embed the use of the whole family approach, demonstrate robust assessments with clear action plans, and provide measurable outcomes for families across Westmorland & Furness. This is important as it will help to improve sustainable outcomes for children, young people and families.

Principles underpinning our quality assurance framework

- The experiences of children, parents and frontline staff are an essential source of quality information
- Quality assurance must be owned and developed locally as well as at a strategic level – business as usual rather than an additional task
- Activity must be underpinned by reflection and learning
- Commitment to improving our ability to evidence outcome information alongside quantitative and qualitative information
- A strength-based approach which recognises the importance of learning from what we do well and incorporates the Early Help Bottom Lines.

Quality and Improvement Cycle



The Early Help Team

The Early Help Team provides a supportive role in developing and implementing effective quality assurance processes. Early Help Officers carry out a range of specific audits, in line with the Quality Assurance Framework. Following each round of audits, quarterly audit report is presented to the Family Help Partnership Board and reported to the WFSCP Performance & QA Subgroup.

The five stages of the Quality and Improvement Cycle

1. Set standards and expectations. What does good look like?

We know what good Early Help looks like. Previous consultation, undertaken by the CSCP identified the following examples of what professionals told us good Early Help is:

- Easily understood with clear expectations, good information and support
- Working with the family to identify needs
- Voice of the child is heard
- Achievable goals with sustainable outcomes
- Has an impact with the needs being met
- Joined up collaborative approach of working with transparency and honesty
- Involves the whole family so safety networks are identified early
- The right help at the right time with timely interventions following a quality assessment

The Early Help Standards have been developed using this information and more recently the 'bottom lines for early help' have been incorporated into this framework. The bottom lines for early help are:

- All assessments will include the seven stages of analysis (past worries, future worries, complicating factors, existing strengths, existing well-being, well-being goals and next steps). These will be clear, solution focused and realistic
- There will be a Family Action Plan
- TAF/Support Network Meetings will be held with every family, and we will use scaling questions to measure progress
- Direct work will take place with the child/young person, in order to capture their voice and understand their lived experience
- Genogram
- Chronologies
- Family/support network Where a family is being considered for transfer to social care, ensure all relevant information is shared, which would include mapping, plans, genograms, and chronologies

2. Undertake Quality Assurance Activity

This will be achieved through a range of quality assurance activities which are focussed on the lived experience of the child and will monitor the quality of the work, including case audits, service user feedback and evaluation, multi-agency quality audit, staff surveys, and supervision to determine if the standards are consistently applied.

Key Quality Assurance activities include:

Audits of early help assessment signs of wellbeing and success

On a monthly basis the Early Help Team will undertake a dip sample of early help assessment signs of wellbeing and success randomly selected from data reports or as requested by the Early Help Officers. Each month 8 Early help assessment signs of wellbeing and success are audited from across the County. The audit can be requested to focus on specific themes and has included:

- Early Help open for a specific period of time, e.g., longer than 2 years.
- Delivered by specific agency types, e.g., Health Visitors.
- Step-down to Early Help.
- Thematic and linked to the WFSCP priorities.

The review of case files allows for a full, in depth look into the recording of the timeliness, quality and effectiveness of interventions being delivered with children, young people and their families. The audit process will also give an opportunity to assess the compliance of the electronic case file on EHM case file (or other information management system) and the quality of the recording.

Whilst compliance and process should be highlighted as part of the audit process the audit should endeavour to focus on the “journey” of the child and their family, the impact that the work undertaken has had on their lived experience and the management of risk and decision making.

Auditors will conduct both a scaling exercise, where the impact of the work undertaken will be scaled out of 10, in addition to providing an overall judgement of the intervention in line with Ofsted grading standards; Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good, Outstanding.

Where the Early Help is found to be ‘Inadequate’ and/or there are unresolved safeguarding issues raised by the process, then the Early Help Officer will directly inform the EHA co-ordinators line manager.

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

In addition to the above, service areas and agencies will conduct their own themed audits against the expected standards. The themes are based on local learning reviews, national priorities; local performance data and any areas other areas should be explored in depth (e.g., as a result of a complaint or review). Additional cases may be audited when;

- The team around the family 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 nine months.
- Where the plan is in place for longer than 12 months the coordinator will be contacted by an Early Help Officer to ensure that the plan is effective.

The intention is that the process is a learning experience and a useful opportunity for a service to view examples of their assessments, to find strengths and evidence of good practice and to identify areas for further improvement.

The audit tool has been developed in line with this framework.

Multi agency audit

Westmorland & Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership provides independent challenge, oversight and involvement in the quality assurance process.

The outcomes from each of the audits are analysed and drawn together into a report. The reports draw out key themes; identify areas for practice improvement and make recommendations. The process also enables us to identify the learning points from areas which are working well and further develop inter-agency working. This is fed back to the Family Help Partnership Board every quarter who will provide recommendations upon the findings of the report. Key learning and recommendations will be reported to the Family Help Partnership Board and the learning loop closes when the feedback goes to the WFSCP Learning & Practice Subgroup.

Performance data

Performance information helps to triangulate themes from audit to provide greater insight into the quality of frontline practice. A comprehensive data set and report is provided for the Family Help Partnership Board. The Early Help team use performance data to drive improvement to practice in the districts.

Feedback

Feedback from children, young people and families will be collected throughout all quality assurance activities.

At the end of the Early Help assessment the co-ordinator completes a closure form with the family. This records qualitative information about the support that the family has received and what impact they feel it has had on their lives. These forms are kept by the agency and also sent to the early help team to close the Early Help Assessment on the system.

Once an Early Help Assessment has been recorded as closed the family will be invited to complete an Early Help Service User Feedback form. The evaluation captures quantitative and qualitative information about the support the family has received and what impact they feel it has had on their lives. The information is collected, a quarterly overview goes to the Early Help sub-group and is disseminated to agencies and services including through Practitioner Forums.

The collation of service user feedback is ongoing as part of the early help process. The early help Team randomly select families to capture their views on the process.

3. Analyse and evaluate the findings – highlight what's working well and where we need to improve

Following audit, the Early Help Team will provide feedback directly to manager or agency involved based on the findings. This mechanism has been designed to promote consistency in the application of the Early Help Assessment process and the Team Around the Family and to support services working with children and families. Themes for learning are identified, shared and inform plans for development and improvement.

4. Work with services to Identify actions in response to QA findings

To support them to:

- Identifying areas for development and improvement
- Identify gaps in service provision
- Identifying issues for supervision
- Identifying training needs for practitioners

5. Close the learning loop – training, strategic planning, policy & procedure, standards

To ensure that:

- The expected standards of practice are understood and regularly reviewed
- Incorporate the learning from audits into policy, guidance and training
- Services take action to improve, e.g., change practice, improve performance, update policy or identify training needs for staff.

Appendix 1

Early help assessment signs of wellbeing and success Quality Standards

Section One – Early Help Assessment

1. The assessment is holistic and identifies the seven stages of analysis (past worries, future worries, complicating factors, existing strengths, existing well-being, well-being goals and next steps). These will be clear, solution focused and realistic.
2. The assessment is factual, evidence based and focused on improving outcomes for the child/ young person in the context of their family
3. The assessment includes an understanding of all significant family history in a chronological way.
4. Family members were included in identifying their family, friends and community network which is detailed and identifies those people important to the family
5. Family members were included in developing their genogram.
6. The assessment is logical, concise and jargon free
7. The assessment includes information from a range of agencies as appropriate
8. The assessment explores and addresses the impact of age, disability, ethnicity, faith/belief, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation
9. The voice of the child/young person is explicit in the assessment process
10. The voice of the parent(s)/carer(s) is explicit in the assessment process (if appropriate)
11. A critical analysis and evaluation of the information gathered from the child, young person and family is present in the assessment
12. The assessment shows an understanding of the history and wider family context and the impact of this on the child or young person
13. The assessment identifies any potential safeguarding concerns and evidences how professionals and the family are managing these

Section Two – Early Help Assessment Plan

1. There is a Family Action Plan which is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely (SMART) and outcome focused
2. The Plan involves the child/young person, their parents/carers (and others affected by the plan) in the decisions taken and encourages them to take on actions themselves where appropriate
3. The Plan recognises risks and outlines how risk can be responded to or reduced

Section Three – Early Help Assessment Review Meeting

1. The review date and time takes into account the specific circumstances of the child/young person and their family
2. TAF/ Support Network Meetings used scaling questions to measure progress.
3. The review considers any newly identified needs and strengths and uses them to inform the next steps
4. The child/young person is present at the review meeting (if appropriate). Their views are sought on planning the next steps and their comments are recorded
5. The parents/carers are present at the review meeting (if appropriate). Their views are sought on planning the next steps and their comments are recorded
6. The outcome of each review is clearly recorded, and the next review date identified (if the Early Help Assessment is not closing)
7. The initial review meeting is set six weeks after the Team around the Family meeting. Subsequent reviews are timely according to the specific needs and actions identified in the plan.
8. The reason for the closure of the early help assessment signs of wellbeing and success is clearly evidenced
9. Where a family is transfer to social care, all relevant information was shared, which would include mapping, plans, genograms and chronologies.