

Best Practice Guidance for Children`s Social Care

Step Down to Early Help from Children`s Social Care

- Early help is an OFFER of targeted support.
- All cases that receive an early help offer must have consent from the family – so an early discussion by the social worker with the family and signed consent must be obtained. This consent must be scanned into the Right for Children system.
- Should the family not agree to all information being shared, they must be explicit about what information this is.
- Early help is ALL AGENCIES – health, education, police, childrens centres, youth support, job centre plus and many more, not just the Devon County targeted services (Family Intervention Team (FIT)/Youth Intervention Team (YIT)/Y-SMART/Family Solutions Service (FSS)).
- If a family would benefit from early help input - there needs to be a clear plan with clearly identified areas that need supporting, as most agencies providing Early Help work towards effecting change and offering support. They cannot 'monitor' situations.
- A discussion about what Early Help may be able to offer the family should be discussed with the family before the Child in Need meeting (CIN) or the Team around the Family meeting (TAF) meeting is arranged.
- In all cases, it needs to be considered whether the family are potentially able to solve their own problems with some assistance and support and all workers need to consider a referral to Family Solutions services for a FGC?
- The social worker needs to discuss with the family whom they would ideally most like to be the lead practitioner and discuss this with the relevant practitioner prior to any meeting.
- If there are challenges in identifying Lead Practitioners, Social workers can get support from Locality Officers in each area – contact details found at: www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org/workers-volunteers/early-help.
- There is an expectation that professionals engage with undertaking the lead practitioner role and need to be asked. Clear reasons should be given by any practitioner chosen by a family as to why they are not able to be the lead and challenged if they say they are not able to take this role on.
- If the case has come through the Initial Response team- and a single assessment has been completed - a Team around the family (TAF) meeting should be arranged to discuss the ongoing Early Help plan and intervention.
- If the case has been held at Child in Need level and a child in need meeting is arranged where the plan is clear that it is stepping down to Early help- there is no need to organise another multi-agency meeting (Team around the family-TAF), the lead practitioner should have already been identified and the plan discussed with the family.
- Outcomes of the Team around the family meeting/Early Help plan/Child in Need meeting must be input to Right for Children, with a Case Notes Observation to CareFirst detailing the date and decision to step down.
- The Social worker (either directly or through their Social work team resource officer/Local Business Support) will need to ascertain if the family are already on the Right for Children system- if not- open the family up and open up an Early help assessment (EHA) - and transfer/copy and paste across the analysis from the last assessment (either Child in Need or Single Assessment). LEAVE THE EARLY HELP ASSESSMENT OPEN - DO NOT FINALISE AS OTHER AGENCIES NEED TO ADD THEIR RESPECTIVE INFORMATION.
- If additional support from the targeted Early Help teams (Family Intervention Team/Youth Intervention team/Y-SMART/Family Solutions service) is required - then a Request for Additional Service (RfAS) form needs to be completed- follow the link as indicated in the flow chart - ensure you state what the needs of the family are and why you require that service.
- Only once a multi-agency meeting/Early Help Assessment has been opened and a lead practitioner has been identified can the case close to the social worker and on the social work system. Should the family not engage with the early help plan, this will need be fed back to social care for the records (ensure this is clear at the TAF/CIN).