

Leaflet for professionals - brief information on the Early Help Hub

From 1 September 2014, the council's Children's Services and our partners are making significant change to how we organise and coordinate help to children and families, and offer advice and guidance to professionals who work with them.

The changes we are putting in place:

1. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

We are working with the police and other partners to change the way our social workers assess risk to children. The MASH is a first point of contact for concerns around Child Protection and Safeguarding. It replaces Advice, Contact & Assessment Service (ACAS). We are making this change so that our responses can be better joined up and we can target our interventions where they need to be and to the families that really need them.

Contact Details: 01273 290400 or mash@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

2. Early Help Hub (EHH)

We are restructuring how we coordinate support for children and families that don't meet the threshold for a social work intervention or where you feel intervention should happen at an earlier stage. Until now we have had a range of different responses and teams and places you can go for advice and support. For the past year we have successfully run a Youth Early Help model that has meant professionals needed only to complete one referral form when they have been concerned about a child over the age of 11, and we have worked out who is best placed to offer support across the Youth Services, Youth Crime Prevention or the Integrated Team for Families. It has worked so well we want to make the same offer for all age groups. You'll complete the same referral form no matter what age the child, from early years to teens, and we will do the work of getting that information to the services we think is best placed to help.

Contact details: 01273 292632 or earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

3. Threshold document

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has published a Threshold document that will help you to decide if the concern you have for a family or a child is something that should be brought to the attention of the MASH or the Early Help Hub.

4. Replacing the Family CAF with an Early Help Family Assessment Form

We are replacing the Family CAF with a single Early Help Family Assessment. We have changed to a system where the Early Help Family Assessment is more usable for professionals, by splitting the assessment into two sections. The first section holds the basic information about the family, identifies some of the difficulties, the professionals supporting, the views of the family and professionals, and has the signed consent of a family member. To save on time it acts as both **part of the assessment and the referral form for the Early Help Hub**. The second section is for a deeper look at strengths and difficulties across the whole family.

All key documents are available on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/early-help

How will the Early Help Hub Work?

There will be 3 teams in the EHH working together to deal with enquiries and referrals:

- **The Support Team:** The Support Team will take enquiries from practitioners and either deal with the enquiry themselves or pass it on to a colleague in another part of the Hub. They will recommend when a referral should be made to Early Help and manage the administration of all referrals that come in.
- **The Early Help Engagement Team:** The Early Help Engagement Team will assess all of the families that are 'stepped down' (previously known as re-directed) by Social Work to Early Help. This team will be the interface between Social Work and the Early Help Hub including 'step up' discussions.
- **The Family Mentoring Team:** The Family Mentoring Team will offer mentoring, advice, guidance and support to professionals on all aspects of Early Help. They will have some limited involvement with families and processes such as Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings.

Enquiries

The Early Help Support Team is the first point of contact for all enquiries. The Support Team will be formed from staff in the current CAF Support Team and the Family Information Service (FIS). If you have a query or question, for example, about how to help someone access a service, or if you have some concerns around a family that you want to talk through, or are wondering what other support is available in Brighton & Hove, then you can call or email this team. They are available 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. If your enquiry is more complex, and needs more exploration, for example how to engage families who are reluctant to acknowledge or discuss concerns you may have about them, the Support Team will forward your enquiry to the Family Mentoring Team. The Early Help Support Team contact number is 01273 292632 or earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

Referrals

If together, you, the young person or family you are working with feel they could do with more help than you can provide, you can complete an Early Help Referral Form and send it to the Support Team. The Early Help Referral Form and other supporting documents are available at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/early-help

Consent: Referrals to the Early Help Hub require consent to refer and to share information from the client/s, however you do not need consent to make an enquiry to the Hub.

Children's Social Work and the EHH working together

In order to ensure services are as joined-up as possible, the MASH will pass to the EHH any referrals to the MASH that don't meet the threshold for Social Work. This doesn't mean the cases don't require help, it means that the services best placed to provide that help are within universal or early help provision rather than Social Work.

To help in this interface the Early Help Hub has an Engagement Team. The Early Help Engagement Team sit alongside Social Work and will assess all of the families that are 'stepped down' (previously known as re-directed) by Social Work to Early Help. This team will be operate as the interface between Social Work and the Early Help Hub taking decisions regarding what action / intervention is required and by whom either within the EHH itself or by partners. This also includes assessing and deciding when families are 'stepped up' to MASH. The team will provide short term focused interventions / tasks when appropriate.

How do we look at referrals?

You have agreed with a family or young person that **additional help or support is required**.



Complete a **referral form** with the consent of the family, giving us basic information and telling us why you feel additional help is required and email it to earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk



The Support Team will carry out **additional checks** against a range of databases to ensure we are as well informed as we can be about your referral.



Your referral, together with the added information, will be discussed at the **Early Help Hub Weekly Meeting**. This is a meeting of managers across Early Help who assess referrals to see what support could best be offered. Then either:



You will be contacted after the meeting about the additional help we think could be offered, and the timescales for providing it. The Early Help Hub is the direct route to accessing **services such as Youth Service, the Integrated Team for Families, Youth Employability Service, and Youth Crime Prevention**. We may also agree that support will be offered by **school nurses, Health Visitors or other services linked into Early Help**.



The referral might be passed on to the **Mentoring Team** to either:

1. Look more closely into the case, because we feel we don't know enough to make a decision.
2. Offer you support as a professional (similar to CAF or ITF mentoring currently in place).
3. Support you in accessing services that sit outside the Early Help Hub but who we think can help.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happens to the CAFs that are already in process?

The family CAF has been very successful at coordinating professionals and collaborating with families, we want that to continue. It's unnecessary to change all the CAFs out there into Early Help Assessments. If the process is already ongoing then it should continue. However, from 1 September, please stop completing CAFs and start using the new Early Help Family Assessment Form and other forms instead.

2. What if I am unsure if I should be going to the MASH or the EHH?

The threshold document will give you a clear idea of which is the best level of service to approach, but within both teams are professionals that you can consult with. If there are Safeguarding risks and immediate concerns then you should always go directly to the MASH for advice. For all other enquiries speak to the Early Help Support Team.

3. Is this just more paperwork?

All of the changes we are putting in place aim to reduce the amount of paperwork. Once you have completed an assessment you are already in a position to make an Early Help Hub referral if you think it would help. This also means that when a child or a family has a referral completed, the assessment is already part underway.

4. What should I say to families about the changes?

It is important to explain that the Early Help Hub works to a consent and collaboration model. You can explain that it is about being as sensitive to the family's needs as possible and ensuring that the right services are offered.

5. Do I need consent from the families to make a referral?

Yes. We want our work to be as collaborative as possible and that means making referrals for families that they not only consent to but fully understand. The referral form has a consent section that needs to be signed. However, you make an enquiry and ask for advice at any stage without consent. If you need additional support in securing consent please contact the Early Help Support Team.

6. Will the EHH be working closely with schools?

Yes. EHH staff will meet with all secondary schools and the primary schools with larger groups of vulnerable students on a half termly basis to talk through the cases they have referred to EHH and are currently being supported. The schools can also raise concerns about students that haven't yet been referred. This is a development of the work the Integrated Team for Families has carried out over the past two years.

7. Is there any training available?

Yes. The three day Family CAF training course will now become an Early Help training course. On top of this we will be delivering a number of one off sessions and talking at team meetings. We are keen that the transition to Early Help is as seamless as possible and that all professionals are clear around the changes. If you feel that it would be helpful for someone to come and talk to your team then contact the Early Help Support Team to make a request. We are also putting as much information and as many resources as possible online.

If you have any further questions please contact the Early Help Support Team on 01273 292632 or earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk