

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY HELP TO PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

WITNESS SUBMISSION

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SUMMARY OF EARLY PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION IN HILLINGDON / ROLE OF YOUR SERVICE OR ORGANISATION

I work in the Early Help Co-ordination team which is within the Key Working Service, and part of the council's Early Intervention Service. The team's role is to act as a 'front door' to the key working service and be the link between children's social care and Early Intervention and Prevention Services. My team is responsible for the Early Help Assessment (EHA), Team Around the Family (TAF) and ensuring that the Lead Professional role is embedded across partner agencies throughout Hillingdon.

Access to the Key Working Service for partner agencies is via the Early Help Assessment (EHA). The Assessment tool was designed with partner agencies from Hillingdon's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to ensure that the process was inclusive of all agencies from the onset, following guidelines suggested in Working Together 2015. The EHA and TAF processes are overseen by the LSCB.

My team ensures that all agencies working with families with children aged 0-18 are aware of Hillingdon's Early Intervention and Prevention Services and the offer of a range of services that are on offer from Children's Centres, Youth Programmes and the Key Working Service. We do this by attending service area team meetings, training events and offer 1:1 bespoke training for all agencies.

All partner agencies can access an e-learning programme and there is detailed guidance for practitioners and a leaflet for parent/carers, please see Appendices 1 and 2. There is a website which provides information for practitioners and residents. My team also offer practitioners advice on the EHA process when required.

Early Help principles:

Assessing Need

- The Early Help Assessment (EHA) will be the tool used to help families and professionals identify needs and how these may be met.
- All family members will be supported to contribute to the EHA.
- The EHA will be most effective when undertaken with the professional who knows the family best.
- The EHA will be considered a 'live document', shared and updated as circumstances change with the aspiration of achieving a 'tell us once' approach.

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- The family's wishes with respect to the sharing and storage of EHAs will be paramount.

Intervention Planning

- The child/family is maintained in the universal context wherever possible.
- Professionals will have good local knowledge of and be able to access the local services that can support children and families.
- When additional needs are identified, the targeted service is brought into the universal provision to add to the support being provided in the universal context.
- Where the family may need to access a number of targeted services the Team Around the Family (TAF) approach will be used to manage the process and ensure activity is integrated and seamless.
- The lead professional role is central to the successful delivery of co-ordinated services.
- All professionals within the children's work force will understand and undertake the lead professional role where appropriate.
- Intervention plans will build on the existing strengths of the family.
- All family members will be supported to develop the intervention plan and review its effectiveness.
- Where at all possible there is one integrated intervention plan agreed by all relevant parties. However, it is recognised that some services are legally required to have their own plan, but all plans will correlate and support each other.
- Targeted services are withdrawn when the need has been met.

We have also recently recruited EHA Champions. EHA champions are identified from service areas outside of the local authority to give their colleagues advice on the EHA and TAF processes. I meet with the EHA champions every quarter in person and communicate any updates via email. The EHA champions give the champions the opportunity to discuss any barriers they may be facing with the EHA tool and accessing Early Intervention.

To ensure the smooth running of processes between social care and early intervention and prevention services I work closely with social care, and I am the named link person for early intervention. I attend social care team meetings on a bi-monthly basis, I am available for discussion by phone or email and I make sure I speak with social worker managers at least once per week in person and ask them if they have any cases or queries they wish to discuss.

The TAF is a multi-agency meeting with the relevant practitioners and the family present. My team will support practitioners with arranging the first TAF meeting and assist with the formulation of any outcome based TAF plan and identify the relevant lead professional. Once a lead professional is appointed my team will no longer attend meetings but the Lead Professional keeps the team informed of the review TAF meetings and can contact the team for further advice and support when needed.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

The number of Early Help Assessments (EHA) from January 2015-August 2015 is currently 92 which is the same figure for the same period in 2014 which demonstrates the tool is being used consistently.

The aim of my team is to increase the number of EHA's completed across partner agencies, particularly schools

The number of Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings held for the period January 2015-August 2015 were 68 which is slightly lower when compared to the same time period in 2014; this is likely to be due to recent changes within service processes.

With recently increased capacity in the team it is envisaged that the number of EHAs and TAF meetings will increase in line with increased communications, training and awareness.

The number of 'step down' TAF meetings from social care has increased in 2015 and this trend is likely to continue with the new link between the two teams.

The EHA and TAF process provides positive outcomes for families which is demonstrated in the case study in Appendix 4. The family in this particular instance felt they were "stuck" and after successful intervention said that the TAF was a "wonderful process" and that things would not have changed for the family without the TAF meeting.

COMMENTS ON PROVISION OF SERVICES E.G ANYTHING THAT YOU THINK COULD BE IMPROVED OR DONE DIFFERENTLY ETC.

- Consistently ensuring all relevant colleagues are aware of and using the EHA process and tools. This is a challenge as our ambition is to enable and ensure usage across all internal and external partner services. We aim to continually increase and improve application with ongoing communication with partner agencies, and attendance at service area meetings, and continued review.
- The development of a service specific area to support families who are struggling with children's behaviour due to ASD/ADHD is an area requiring focused attention.
- Meeting the needs of children with emotional well-being issues is also a key issue. The development and implementation of the CAMHS Strategy is an important development in response to these needs.
- A single database to facilitate information sharing across agencies would help improve service provision to families and identify those of need of early help at an earlier stage.

- Some agencies are reluctant to take on the Lead Professional role as they feel they are being given extra responsibilities. Through training, information and support it is hoped that this view will change in time.