Liverpool’s Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT)
Practitioner Guide and Quality Assessment Checklist

This Guide is to help practitioners initiate an EHAT and sets out the process that should be followed to:

• identify when engaging partners is appropriate
• how to agree Actions for families and partners
• how to record and review the EHAT
• how to ensure good quality EHATs that will lead to improved outcomes for families.

You should always make reference to Liverpool safeguarding children’s board levels of need framework when needs have been identified and initiate an EHAT when it is clear those needs can be met by agencies working together to provide support, or you should contact Careline (233 3700) when needs require social care support. Responding to Need Guidance and Levels of Need Framework liverpoolscb.org

The EHAT Process

Step 1: Prepare:
You have recognised that a child or children of a family require more than one agency to provide support to improve family or child/ren circumstances.
Does an EHAT exist? contact your nearest Early Help Hub (see page 4)

Step 2: Discuss:
Complete an EHAT with the family and child/ren, making use of all the information you have gathered and obtain consent from the parent and child/ren where age appropriate.
Always make sure the voice of the child and parent(s) are captured.
You should consider information needed for all sections, but you can only complete with what information you know or the parent is able and willing to share.
Try to engage the parent(s) in sharing information that can put concerns into context without being intrusive, and where it clearly evidences those identified needs.

Step 3: Deliver:
Agree actions with family and which agencies should be involved. Confirm that you will be the link person until a Lead Professional is identified once all relevant agencies are engaged. Make sure consent is given and plan for the 1st Team Around the Family Meeting (TAF). Always make sure the EHAT records all relevant information for a holistic overview of needs
The EHAT Process - Simple Overview

**Pre-EHAT**

A pre-EHAT is available for specific agencies (e.g. GPs, Adult Services, Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue) as these agencies may have concerns that indicate an EHAT is required, but they are not best placed to initiate.

Pre-EHAT is completed by agreed agencies (where parent has consented to receive support) and a copy of this is sent to a service (if known), who will undertake the EHAT or to the nearest Early Help Hub. A copy of the Pre-EHAT should always be sent to the Early Help Hub (see page 4).

**EHAT**

Concern Identified – Obtain agreement from parent(s) to proceed with EHAT and begin to gather all relevant information to initiate EHAT.

Check if an EHAT already exists by contacting the nearest Early Help Hub (see page 4)

YES – You will be told who is the Lead Professional, make contact to discuss the needs identified

NO - Begin EHAT

Register EHAT with Early Help Hub.

Plan for first Team Around the Family (TAF) as soon as possible.

Quality Assure – make sure you and your supervisor are confident that all relevant information is recorded appropriately and a clear and holistic ‘picture’ of need has been captured. If in doubt about what to include (or not) – contact your service/agency EHAT Champion liverpool.gov.uk/EHAT (information or professionals).

Share copy of EHAT with services/agencies agreed with family so everyone is clear on their respective involvement. A copy of the EHAT needs to be given to the Early Help Hub to save for audit, inspection etc.

Following the 1st TAF meeting, Lead Professional maintain regular reviews whilst EHAT is open (best practice is every 3 months). Reviews will make sure Actions do not ‘slip’. **Reviews can be ‘virtual’ meetings with all partner services/agencies – but should take account of progress being made by all involved.**

Provide copy of Review documentation to Early Help Hub for Audit, Inspection and Quality Assurance. Always make clear if there is a change in Lead Professional.

**CLOSE EHAT** – when all actions have been met, and there is no further need for support, with agreement of family. Ensure a final review form confirms closure and a copy is sent to the Early Help Hub.
What makes a good quality EHAT?

A good quality EHAT is one that captures needs and actions fully and concisely. It gives a clear ‘picture’ of family needs and what steps need to be taken, by whom and by when to help the family move out of need and into self-reliance.

A good quality EHAT – including Reviews, capture progress being made, the direction service support is going and the ‘journey’ travelled by the family. It prevents families having to repeat their ‘story’ to the variety of services/agencies that may be engaged in providing support.

A Good Quality EHAT is more than a form – it is a way of working that embeds joint working between services/agencies for the benefit of families, and is underpinned by strong child/parent/carer engagement and ownership.

- Set the scene/picture of needs clearly and concisely
- EHAT should include some information that describe the needs identified or the positive achievements being made and strengths.
- Jargon and agency specific terminology should be avoided
- Names, Dates of birth, relationships have to be accurate and make sense to others who do not know the family
- Comments have to be unambiguous (e.g. how often is frequent? – state how frequent)

**Approach** is very important, as this creates the supportive environment that builds trust and cooperation for families, and has to be with the family – not done to the family.

- Evidence should be informed by FACTS
- Has to be non-judgemental
- Owned by the author/initiator
- Analysis should be linked to observations
- Child(ren) and Family fully engaged from the outset – and EHAT records this
- Recognise strengths as well as needs
- Comments attributed to identified people
- Views of family balanced (e.g. “mum says” is also reflected in practitioners observations)
- Conclusions are strong, clear and achievable

**Action Planning** is very important, as this clarifies who is responsible for doing what, by when and is the tool that keeps progress on track so that families can see and feel progress is being made and efforts are being recognised.

- Make clear who is responsible for doing what by when
- Actions must be achievable in timescale (be aware of service waiting lists etc)
- Include simple (small step) actions as well as longer term goals

**Reviewing**. Reviews keep track of progress and ensure agreed actions are carried out.

This is important so that families feel supported and develop their own strengths to become more resilient and less reliant on support for the future. It can also prevent matters escalating to a higher level of need.

- Reviews can be ‘virtual’ or actual Team around the Family Meetings – the important thing is that it happens and is recorded and is fully informed by all partners.
- Recorded Reviews should be shared so all involved are aware of progress, and a copy sent to EHAT Coordinator for Audit, Inspection and Quality Assurance.
- As needs change, so might the Lead Professional – this should be agreed with the family, and the EHAT Coordinator must be notified.

**Early Help Directory**

This is a web based directory for families and practitioners working with families. This directory is being reviewed in order to fulfil the responsibility for the Local Authority to provide Early Help, and all directory services are being ‘tagged’ to make sure users can see at a glance how services provide support linked to the LSCB Levels of Need Framework. ehd.liverpool.gov.uk
Further Support for Practitioners
A programme of EHAT Champions is being developed across the City. These are identified agency representatives who will embed ownership, good practice and quality Early Help Assessments within their own agency. After your own line manager, they should be your first point of contact when you need to discuss an Early Help Assessment. They will:

- Maintain regular involvement in Citywide information sharing sessions to support practitioners in their respective agency
- Be a first point of contact for enquires relating to EHATs and provide advice and guidance
- Ensure strong quality assurance arrangements are in place
- Identify learning and development needs relating to EHAT in their respective agency

You should always follow your agency safeguarding policy and LSCB guidance by contacting Careline (0151 233 3700) where you believe there is a risk of significant harm. If family can not be encouraged to engage or are difficult to contact, consider the need to contact the Careline after following your own agency safeguarding policy.

Early Help Assessment Co-ordinator, will lead the EHAT Champion support arrangements, and can be a point of contact for further support, should your Agency EHAT Champion be unable to assist or not be available.

For further information and to find out your EHAT Champion contact
Email: EHAT.team@liverpool.gcsx.gov.uk
Tel: 0151 233 5772

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Early Help Hubs (for checking EHATs registered)

North:
Altvale Communiversity  Tel: 0151 233 1359
Email: EHLHnorth@liverpool.gcsx.gov.uk

Central:
Lime Hub  Tel: 0151 233 6156
Email: EHLHcentral@liverpool.gcsx.gov.uk

South:
Belle Vale Children’s Centre  Tel: 0151 233 5772
Email: EHLHsouth@liverpool.gcsx.gov.uk
Quality Assurance begins with you!
EHAT quality assurance checklist

Identify Needs Early
- Is the reason for Early Help clearly explained/captured, and can these needs be met through multi-agency support? □
- Have parent(s)/child(ren) been made aware that there are concerns, and that multi-agency support is being considered? □
- Have you checked if an EHAT (or CAF) is already open? □
- Do the parent(s)/child(ren) understand the purpose of the Early Help Assessment, why and how information about them will be used and shared? □
- Has consent been given to share information following the Assessment □

Assess Needs
- Have all sections to capture strengths and needs been considered, and captured where facts are known and have been discussed? □
- Are facts captured accurately represented, or where judgement or opinion is given, is this qualified by somebody and why? □
- Does the Assessment focus on what needs to be achieved? □
- Are all personal details correct and accurately spelt? □
- Is it clear, concise and understandable: If someone does not know the family but needs to work with them, can they make sense of the Assessment and agreed actions? □
- Have the views of individual children and parents been strongly captured and accurately represented? □
- Has the consent section of the Assessment been explained and signed? □
- Has the Assessment been carried out and recorded without prejudice or discrimination and reflects unbiased expression of opinion and experiences? □
- Is the Assessment non-judgemental, and follow organisational codes of practice for recording/writing public documents? □

Delivery of Services
- Have all actions from the Assessment been carried forward to the Delivery Plan and Review document? □
- Has a Team around the Family meeting been arranged? □
- Has a Lead Professional been identified, and is this with parent’s agreement? □
- Have parent’s/children’s views been captured and demonstrate their agreement with service involvement? □
- Are there appropriate actions for family members as well as those identified for service/agency support? □
- Has agreed support taken account of most appropriate and best value interventions? □
- Do all agreed actions ‘fit’ with longer term objectives for future family resilience? □
- Are all agreed actions SMART, with solution focussed objectives? □
- Were all decisions understood by everyone involved? □
- Does everyone involved understand the process and next steps? □
Review

- Are Reviews planned for realistic timescales, and where longer than best practice guidelines (3 monthly) is there a reason why a review will be longer than best practice? □
- Have agreed actions been reviewed and achieved or carried forward. Where actions have been cancelled or not met, is it made clear why? □
- Has any new information been considered and captured, and led to new actions where appropriate? □
- Have family members been involved in the Review, and have their views been used to inform next steps and future actions and appropriately recorded? □
- Is progress being made between reviews and is there evidence of improved outcomes? □
- If there are any barriers to progress, are these being raised/escalated, and services/agencies being held to account for their support? □
- If there is a need to ‘hand over’ the Lead Professional role, is this happening with full agreement of partner services and family members? □
- Have the EHAT Team been kept up to date with information about reviews? □