

13 December 2017

Dear Colleagues

### **Using the Early Help Assessment & EHA Form in Schools**

Following my letter to all agencies in November, a number of queries and concerns have since been raised by several schools. I have been asked by the Head Teacher Associations to circulate my response to all schools to ensure consistency and clarity.

Firstly, it might help to restate what we are trying to achieve by the Early Help Assessment & EHA Form, namely:

- The Early Help Assessment process is a key part of our multi-agency holistic approach to improving the outcomes of vulnerable children in Somerset.
- The Early Help Assessment process applies as much to a pupil with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as it does to a pupil with welfare concerns, and may help shape the SEN Support arrangements for a child as part of a school's graduated response and review process. You will be aware that in Somerset that we have an overrepresentation of pupils identified with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (**SEMH**) needs requiring SEN support. For more guidance in relation to SEND see: <https://slp.somerset.org.uk/ipost/iPost%20Documents/Somerset%20Guidance%20EHCP%20Nov%202017.pdf>
- The EHA Form has been widely introduced to remove the 60+ separate referral/service request forms, previously required by a range of agencies. The request to ensure compliance across education services and other agencies has been prompted by concerns from a number of schools about ongoing duplication.

The following guidance may address some of the implementation concerns:

- The EHA form itself can be used both as an early help assessment and, where appropriate, as a service request tool.
- As a service request tool, practitioners should use their professional judgement to inform which sections they complete appropriate to the child's needs and the provision being requested. Specialist services have been asked to make it clear on Professional Choices the information they need to assist in the allocation of provision (i.e. which sections of the EHA require specific criteria to be evidenced). <http://professionalchoices.org.uk/children-young-peoples-services/>

- Relevant information can be attached to the EHA, where this avoids duplication of information.
- The EHA form can be used without parental consent provided the referrer has recorded reasons for proceeding without consent. Such a referral may be appropriate in relation to non-school attendance where a family are unwilling to address the concerns. In most cases where a referral is being made a school will already be in dialogue with the parents/carers and an EHA should already have been considered at an earlier stage.
- The EHA process and form is not required where a school is seeking support in relation to addressing workforce development needs, for example training around implementation of the core standards, quality first teaching, or school wide concerns in addressing behaviour, exclusions or attendance issues.

I remain committed to making the implementation of early help arrangements as easy as possible to improve the outcomes for vulnerable children in Somerset, and I am very happy to consider other implementation changes and/or training support. Emily Walters [EWalters@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:EWalters@somerset.gov.uk) will be attending the SENCO Forum meetings in the new term to discuss any remaining concerns.

Thank you for your continuing support and commitment to improving the outcomes for vulnerable Somerset children.

Best Wishes for the Season

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Wooster', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julian Wooster  
Director of Children's Services