

One Minute Guides - Explaining 'Early Help' consent to families

What is the Early Help assessment process?

The Early Help assessment process is a way of gathering information about children and the whole family in one place and using it to help decide what type of support is needed to help a family. People from different organisations will talk to one another, share information with your consent and work together with you to help to support you and your children.

Why am I being asked to consent to an assessment?

You are being asked to agree to an assessment process so that we can help you and your family. If there are other organisations who are working with you now, or who might need to work with you, getting your consent to sharing information means that we can work with you and with those organisations to produce a single shared plan. The plan will say what will be done, who will do it and by when.

What will happen to my assessment?

The person who leads on completing your assessment (Lead Professional) with you will keep a record of it. They will only share it with those who have also contributed or who need to have a copy. This will be agreed with you when you consent to take part in the assessment process. Once completed your assessment is then sent into the Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) who keep a record on this on a Children's Services file. You will be given a copy of your assessment, and all planning and review records, to keep.

Will the information on my assessment be stored securely?

Your family's assessment will be stored securely in line with general data protection regulations (GDPR) and is only accessible by staff who need to access this and have had appropriate training to access secure and confidential information. The Council respects your family's privacy and will only use your information where it is lawful. Your information will be kept securely and for no longer than is necessary.

Consent to share with 'Stronger Futures' - What does this mean?

The 'Stronger Futures' programme is part of our Early Help support offer within Portsmouth city council. This is part of a government programme to support families through a range of problems. Portsmouth City Council may report back to the government department information about the progress your family is making, but on an anonymised basis; no personal information (names and addresses etc) is shared. To monitor progress we may also gather information from partner agencies, where you have consented to that. The national programme allows us to draw additional funding into the city to continue supporting families.

Can I withdraw consent?

Early Help is voluntary and is about working alongside your family to support you, if you change your mind you can withdraw consent at any time if you no longer wish to continue with the Early Help assessment process. If we think your child may be at risk of significant harm without the help we may need to inform children's social care that you have withdrawn, so they can consider whether any action needs to be taken.

To notify us that you wish to withdraw consent please contact earlysupportreferralpanel@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk

Will my information ever be shared without my consent?

Only where the Council and partner organisations have a duty to share information with one another where they have concerns that an infant, child or young person has been harmed or abused, or is at risk of harm or abuse. In these circumstances we do not need consent to share information.

We may also be required by law to disclose your personal information without your consent for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime/fraud or apprehending and prosecuting offenders (for example to the police, Department for Work and Pensions or as part of the National Fraud Initiative) or where we have a statutory duty to do so.

Further questions or advice?

If you have any further questions regarding consent please speak with your 'Lead Professional' or you may contact Portsmouth City Council

earlysupportreferralpanel@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk

data.protection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk