

Essex County Council - Family Operations Briefing on introduction to Family Operations Requests for Support Form (FORS) Form

Requesting Support from Family Operations

1. Introduction

This short briefing note reflects a change of approach to accessing services from ECC Family Operations. No longer will partners need to use separate forms to access Children's Social Care, (ECC 999 form) or for Family Solutions (Essex Request for Support Form). One form is being introduced to access both strands of the Family Operations offer i.e. Children's Social Care & Family Solutions.

2. Summary and context

In March 2015 the Family Operations Hub was formed as a result of an amalgamation of the Initial Response Team & the Early Help & Advice Hub. This brought together access to advice and guidance, Family Solutions and Children's Social Care all in one team. The rationale behind this amalgamation was to ensure that children, young people and families receive a timely and appropriate response to their needs in line with the Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex guidance.

The next logical stage was the introduction of a single FAMILY OPERATIONS REQUEST for SERVICES form (FORS form). The concept of the FORS form has been well received by partners; a consultation during November 2015 on the layout, wording etc. resulted in 220 multi-agency professionals contributing their thoughts informing the final version.

3. Family Operations Request for Support (FORS) Form

- The format of the FORS form combines a request for either support from Family Solutions (level 3) or Children's Social Care (level 4). It follows a strength based approach in order to identify the appropriate level of support.
- The form reflects SET procedures with regards to requiring consent from families to support a referral to Family Solutions or Children Social Care. It also reinforces SET procedures in recognising that consent should not be a barrier to requests where there is immediate risk to the child (this should be phoned in to the Family Operations Hub – priority line).
- The FORS form will go live on **Monday 22nd February 2016**.

Transition Period - There will be a transition period that will last until **Thursday March 31st 2016**.

From Monday 22nd February 2016 the Family Operations Hub will continue to accept ECC 999 and ERSFs, processing them in the same way as a FORS form i.e. the needs identified and evidenced will inform which service needs to be accessed. From **Friday 1st April 2016** the FORS form will then be the only form accepted by the Family Operations Hub. Forms completed on older forms will be returned to the requestor with links to the FORS form.

Automatic replies to partners during the transition period will remind requestors of the change of form, where to download it from as well as the transition deadline

4. Support for Partners

- Information regarding the new form will be disseminated via communications to all partners and through various networks.
- The FORS Form will be available from the following webpages:
 - ESCB - www.escb.co.uk/
 - ESAB - www.essexsab.org.uk
 - Family Solutions - <http://essex.gov.uk/familysolutions> (additional guidance available)
 - Early Years - <http://dnn.essex.gov.uk/eycp/Safeguarding.aspx>
 - Schools School Info-link Safeguarding page to direct schools to Family Solutions web page
 - Health Internal Safeguarding pages link to Family Solutions web page

Ongoing activities to support partners in effective requests for support and understanding levels of need will continue throughout April-July 2016. These will take place through current networks with partners.

5. Ongoing Developments

As part of the ongoing developments to improve services for partners and the public accessing support for families, an online form will be developed. The benefits of using online will be:

- The online version of the FORS form will be secure.
- Partners will be able to send a request without having to upload documents (consent may be requested at a later date).
- The online version of the form will guide partners to ensure the request is completed effectively.

Information about this will be shared at a later date.

For more information please contact:

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