

LEICESTERSHIRE CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICE

DISABLED CHILDREN'S SERVICE

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT FROM THE DISABLED CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK SERVICE (September 2017)

This guidance is to help to identify children who, through disability, meet the threshold criteria for the Disabled Children's Service and to establish their eligibility for services, including appropriate assessments.

A request for an assessment can be made to Children and Family Services (First Response) for any child with a disability or young person from birth up to the age of 18 years and, who is resident within Leicestershire County.

Following the acceptance of the referral, there will be an assessment of need by a Social Worker from the team. Services will be provided in accordance with the assessed need.

Where the young person is 17½ or over, it is expected that consultation would take place between Children and Adult Social Services and, it may be agreed that a joint assessment would be appropriate.

Leicestershire Children and Families Service makes a distinction between general Children in Need services and the needs of children with severe or profound disabilities and provides a specialist service for this group.

This criteria for access to an assessment and /or support from the Disabled Children's Social Work Service is based on the definition of disability set out in the Children Act 1989, which states that: -

"A child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed."

Within Leicestershire, to be eligible for specialist support from the Disabled Children's Service, a child or young person must have a disability that has been formerly diagnosed, and be permanent or long term and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- A severe or profound learning disability;
- A severe or profound physical disability;
- Significant or profound sensory disability;
- Complex and permanent medical needs;
- Life threatening illness;
- Severe communication disabilities or behavioural difficulties but related to the child's disability;
- Severe developmental delay;

- A combination of disabilities, which individually are not severe but together cause as much stress as a very severe disability;

And

- Be in the categories of Priority 1 or 2 as set out in the Pathway to Service Document.

The threshold does **not** include children with

- Mental health disorders, unless in conjunction with a learning, physical or communication disability.
- A diagnosis of ADHD or ADD unless in conjunction with a learning, physical or communication disability.
- A disability or disabilities that are not severe.
- Behavioural problems due to social/environmental factors (i.e. not associated to a disability).

Although rooted in the Children Act, Leicestershire County Council embraces the social *model of disability*, and acknowledges that although Children's impairments can create difficulties in their lives, many of the problems they and their families face are due to negative attitudes, prejudice and unequal access to the things necessary for a good quality of life.

This criteria is not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive but aims to ensure that the Disabled Children's Service supports the most severely disabled children. In cases where it is not clear whether or not a child/young person meets the above criteria, discussion should take place with the Disabled Children's Service Service Manager.

The Occupational Therapy Team has different thresholds for the provision of service and a case open to the team does not mean the child will meet the criteria for access to an assessment by a Social Worker from the Disabled Children's Service.

Where there are children in the family who are disabled and non-disabled: In a situation where a family is made up of children, one or more (but not all) of which have a disability and one or more of the children are a child in need/child in need of protection/looked after, then a decision will need to be made about whether the Disabled Children's Service or another social work service within Children and Family Services should provide support. This will depend upon the circumstances of the case, for example, the extent to which there are wider areas of assessed need beyond that of the child's disability.

The guiding principles behind this should be the welfare of the child and the need to see the whole child, within the context of the family and the wider community. N/B: From the perspective of the child and family the issue of 'which team or service' manages the case should not impact upon the quality and type of support to be offered. This should always be based upon the assessed need of the child and family and will be coordinated through a 'team around the family' approach.

Registration on the Disabled Children's Service register is not sufficient evidence that a child meets the criteria for a service from the Disabled Children's Service as the Register includes children with a wide range of special/additional needs.

Where there is uncertainty, the application of concepts “substantial and permanent” could help make good judgements.

- Substantial means considerable or significant factors that are life changing or limiting, and might include issues to do with risk and dependency
- Permanent means existing indefinitely and not expected to improve. However, there must be sufficient flexibility to take account of intermittent or episodic conditions

All Teams and Services within Children and Families will work with Disabled Children. Disabled Children not meeting the threshold for the Disabled Children’s Service can still be considered as children in need of social care or early help support, but they will access support through those teams and service areas.