Framework for decision making: Right Conversations, Right Help, Right Time

(South Tyneside Threshold Guidance 2023)

Introduction

This guidance has been developed to help and support practitioners working with children and young people across all agencies and organisations to have a shared understanding of the needs of children and young people so that responsive decisions can be made about the best way to support families.

Local authorities working with partner organisations and agencies have specific duties to safeguard and protect the welfare of the children in their area and everyone who comes into contact with children and young people has a role to play.

Our ambition is for all infants, children and young people to be safe, happy, healthy and able to achieve their potential.

This guidance sits alongside and is complimentary to, existing STSCAP Procedures which can be found at https://www.proceduresonline.com/nesubregion/

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Using a strength-based model

In South Tyneside, we are committed to promoting and using a strength-based approach across our multiagency workforce when working with children, young people and families. The approach is based on four key principles:

✓ Acknowledging the **rights and values** of children and families

✓ Recognising that families are **experts** in their own experiences

✓ Working **alongside** families to find their own strengths, solve their own challenges and develop their own positive networks

✓ Hearing and valuing the **voice of the child**, championing what is right for them

Understanding Thresholds

A threshold is the point at which professionals discuss and 'weigh up' what is happening for a family and whether actions, or different actions, are needed to meet a child/young person's needs.

Understanding levels of need is essential to this process and is vital to providing a multi-agency intervention that will help children and young people achieve their full potential.

A smooth transition through the levels of need is essential to ensure families receive support in a timely way. Movement between levels of services should happen fluidly by ensuring that information is shared appropriately, and that evidence of involvement and interventions are recorded systematically.

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Using professional judgement

The indicators contained in this guidance are intended to **facilitate conversations**, not replace them.

Practitioners must use common sense when using the indicators to help in their assessment of need, using good **evidence-based practice** and up to date research to support decision making.

The indicators should be used alongside **professional judgement** and form part of a wider discussion about how best to meet the needs of a specific child or family. The indicators are designed to support the consistency of response to children, young people and their families.

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Understanding levels of need

Universal
Families have the capacity to support themselves, or their needs can be met by universal services.
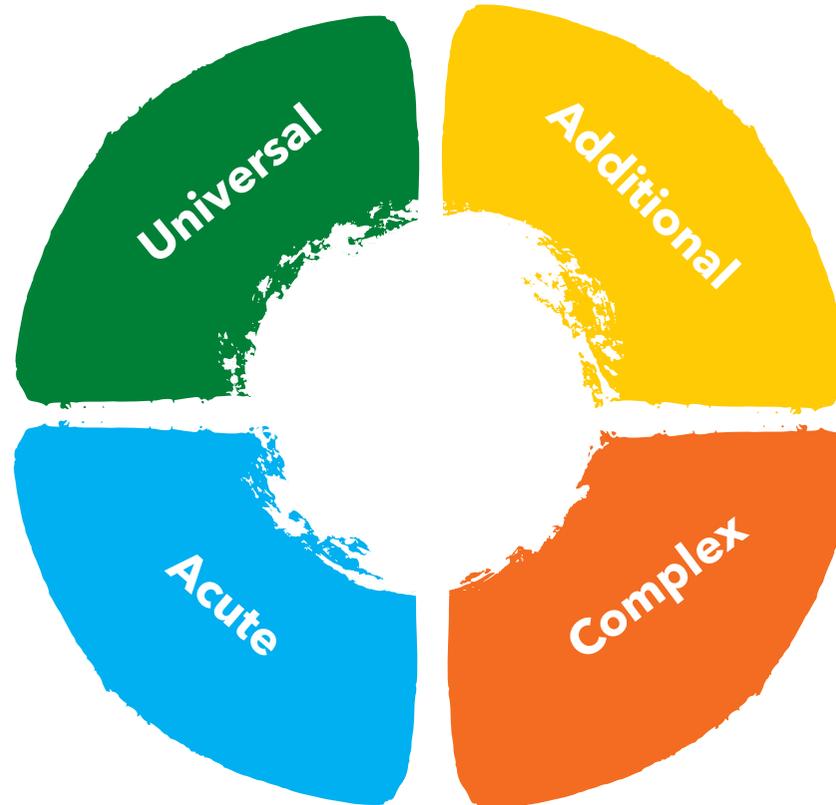
Additional
Children, Young People and Families are experiencing additional needs which need some support to reduce the likelihood of the situation becoming worse.

Acute
Children and Young People where their need is having a major impact on their expected outcomes and there are serious concerns about their safety.

Complex
Children, Young People and families with complex needs which are having an impact on their expected outcomes.

Universal

Additional

Acute

Complex

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Ensuring the right response

A range of support available through Family Hubs, schools, health services and the community.
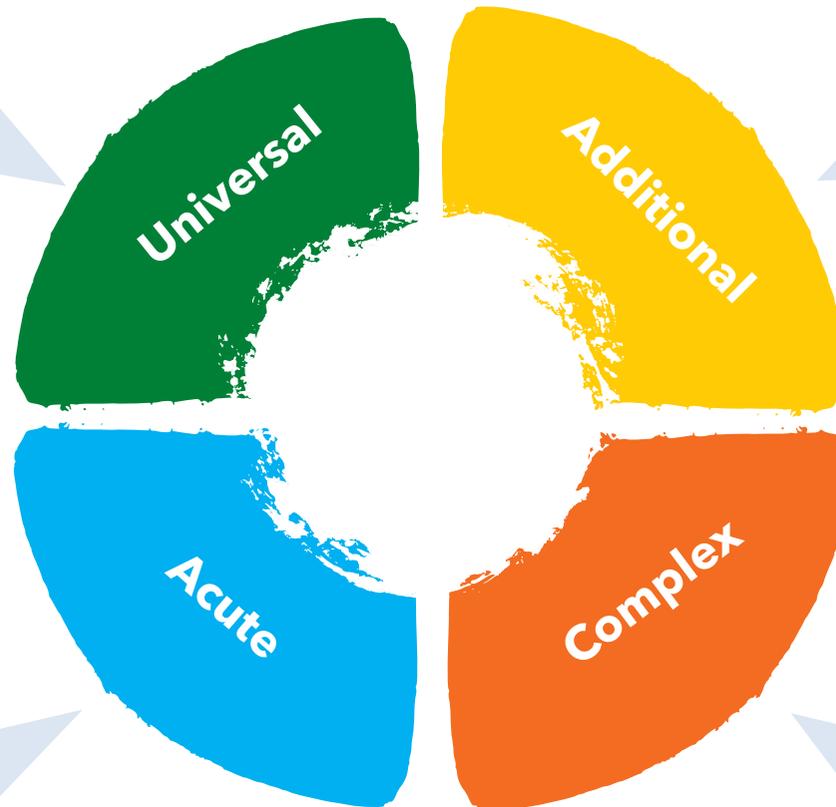
An **Early Help Assessment** and Plan should be completed

Note: A range of intervention programmes are available through the **Request for Service**

Universal

Additional

Acute

Complex

Request a Social Work or Early Help response by completing a **Multi-Agency Referral Form**

Request an Early Help response by completing a **Multi-Agency Referral Form**

Note 3 or more of the 10 **Supporting Families Criteria** must be met for allocation to an Early Help Family Worker

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Physical, Emotional and Mental Health	Presentation and Self Care
• Good physical health, age-appropriate development e.g. speech and language. well-balanced diet, healthy weight, good mental health • Child requires additional support as a result of a disability. Need is met by parents and universal provision • Meeting developmental milestones • Developmental checks/ immunisations up to date • Regular dental / optical / audiology care Health appointments kept. • Good level of hygiene • Sexual knowledge, understanding, development and activity are age appropriate • Knowledgeable about sex and relationships and consistent use of contraception if sexually active. • Teenage pregnancy - consider age/ maturity/ consent and social circumstances	• Feelings/ actions demonstrate appropriate responses • Ability to express needs • Able to adapt to change • Able to demonstrate empathy, feelings of belonging and acceptance • Positive sense of self and abilities • Confident in social situations and able to socialise appropriately. • Good mental health and psychological wellbeing
Learning and Education	Behaviour
• Appropriate home learning environment • Access to books and toys, opportunities to play • Good attendance at school/college/ training/childcare • Achieving education key stages • Planned progression beyond statutory school age • No concerns are raised for the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of the child/ young person. • Language development is normal for age and ability of child in the context of cultural/language difficulties	• Age-appropriate awareness of substances, alcohol and risks • A good state of emotional health and resilience • Age-appropriate sexual activity.

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Relationships	Extra familial harm
• Stable family where parent/carers can meet the child's needs • Good relationships with siblings • Child / young person has secure family and social relationships • Consistent extended reliable network of family • Amicable divorce or separation • Good relationship with parents and carers • Good relationship with partners (older children and young people)	*This box is intentionally blank*

Guidance boundaries and stimulation	Adult behaviours
• Parent/carer provides appropriate guidance and boundaries to help child develop. • Parent/carer models appropriate behaviour within the community • Parent/carer providing learning, leisure and play opportunities. • Parent/carer provides secure and caring parenting – praise and encouragement	• Income and resources appropriately meet family's needs. Parents able to manage finances effectively • Good quality stable housing/amenities • Parents able to provide care for child's needs e.g., food, drink, appropriate clothing, medical and dental care • Parent/carer able to provide care for child's additional needs or disability • The home environment is materially safe and meets the child's needs • Respectful communication
Support networks and community resources	
• Consistent extended reliable network of community support • Family integrated into the community • Access to community resources	

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Universal - Ensuring the right response

Help and support at the universal level
• A range of support available through Family Hubs, schools, health services and the community. • Families should access universal services in the usual way, using the referral process for each individual service.

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Additional - Indicators of Need - Child development

Physical, Emotional and Mental Health	Presentation and Self Care
• Minor recurring health problems • Inadequate diet e.g., no breakfast, being under/overweight • Child requires additional support as a result of a disability. Need is met by parents alongside more specialist provision • Delay in reaching development milestones • Delay in toilet training, bedwetting or soiling • Missing some routine health appointments • Teenage pregnancy where additional support may be required consider age/ maturity/ consent and social circumstances • Age-appropriate occasional experimentation with smoking/alcohol • Child/ young person low in mood, feeling alone or presenting as unhappy or misunderstood • Limited self-confidence and insecurity • Emerging pattern of minor accidents or injuries	• Some insecurities around identity expressed • Inconsistent ability to socialise appropriately • Emerging concerns in relation to sense of belonging or being included by others/ or excluding themselves from others • Low level mental health or emotional issues requiring intervention • A child or young person who has vulnerabilities (including emotional) which may expose them to risk or exploitation (criminal or sexual) • Early onset of sexual activity or at risk of early pregnancy • Concerns child/ young person subject to discrimination • Emerging concerns regarding hygiene
Learning and Education	Behaviour
• Limited access to books, toys, the internet or educational materials • Not always engaged in learning – poor concentration, low motivation/interest • Occasional truanting or nonattendance and poor punctuality • Not reaching full educational potential • Pattern of school absences and/or some fixed term exclusions • Language slow to develop for age and ability of young person in the context of cultural/language difficulties • Some emerging learning or disability needs that require assessment and support	• Child/young person has occasionally gone missing from home for short periods. Support needed to prevent further episodes. • Exhibits aggressive behaviours that challenge • Inappropriate sexualised or personal behaviour • Finds it difficult to cope with anger, frustration or upset. • Child/ young person at times not able to show empathy • Difficulty making and sustaining relationships with peers and with family • Exhibits antisocial/anti - authoritarian behaviour. Resistance to boundaries and adult guidance

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Additional - Indicators of Need - Family and Network

Relationships	Extra familial harm
• Parents/carers have relationship difficulties which affect the child/ young person • There are isolated incidents of minor physical and/or emotional violence in the family. Children were present but did not directly witness it. Despite abuse, victim was not prevented from meeting the needs of the child • Concerns about sibling aggression resulting in emotional or physical harm • Concerns that family relationships are impacting negatively on child's wellbeing • Acrimonious divorce or separation impacting on child or young person • Concern that child is living with or has contact with a family member or adult that may have a negative impact on child's well-being	• Family history of criminal gang involvement or low-level criminal activity • Concerns that familial or cultural pressures are impacting on the child's well-being • Low level concern about child/ young person at risk of being radicalised or exposed to extremism • Emerging concerns of gang affiliation and/or peer/contextual influences • The family comes from a community that is known to practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) • Children involved in bullying/may experience bullying or low-level cyber bullying • Concerns that family is a victim of hate crime • Associating with anti-social or criminally active peers

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Additional - Indicators of Need - Family and Network

Guidance boundaries and stimulation	Adult behaviours
• Parent/carer provides inconsistent boundaries or responses • Parent engages in anti-social behaviour within the community • Inappropriate chastisement • Not enforcing boundaries which then impact on routines • Parent/carer do not provide access to learning, leisure and play opportunities • Parent/carer are able to access inclusive learning, leisure and play opportunities due to child's additional needs or disability. • Inconsistent parenting, but development not significantly impaired • Failure to pick up on the child's/young person's emotional needs • Parent/carer requires low-level support to meet the needs of a child/young person with a disability • Child/ young person lacks a consistent routine • Child/ young person is left at home alone for a short period and this has not compromised his/ her safety (consider age and vulnerability)	• Reduced or low income, financial / debt difficulties are developing / increasing • Overcrowding / poor housing conditions • Parents' employment status has negative impact on child's well-being • Unsecure or unknown immigration status • Early or low-level concerns of neglect • Parental capacity is impaired by; learning difficulties/disability, illness or other additional needs or disability • Low level concerns about parental alcohol or substance use. Drug and/or alcohol use is impacting on parenting but is not yet significantly impacting on the child's safety. The child is currently meeting their developmental milestones but there are concerns that this might not continue if parental drug and alcohol use continues or increases • The parent's capacity to meet the child's needs are impaired episodically by mental ill health or disability and additional support could offset harm to the child • Emerging concerns about parenting skills/capacity that require support • The parents/carers express some intolerant views and react inappropriately to those who do not share their views .
Support networks and community resources	
• Inconsistent / small network of community support • Poor access to leisure and recreational amenities and activities	

Additional – Securing the right response

Help and support at the additional level

- Support can be offered as a single agency response, using each service's referral and assessment process.

- Extra support can usually be provided by those that already know them—for example their school, college, or pre-school, NHS community services such as Health Visiting, or any youth activities they attend.

- When there are a range of worries at this level, that cannot be met by a single agency, an EHA could be completed.

- Any professional can be the Lead Professional. They will work with the family to better understand and assess the needs of the child and the family.

- The EHA helps people to co-ordinate support, with the plan setting out what everyone will do on a day-to-day basis to support the child's wellbeing, even when things become difficult. Help and support from the previous level may also be offered.

- A range of intervention programmes are available through the **Request for Service**

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Complex - Indicators of Need - Child development

Physical, Emotional and Mental Health	Presentation and Self Care
• Child / young person has some chronic/recurring health problems or a disability; not being managed appropriately by parent • Increasing concern regarding the child/ young person's diet or development • Developmental milestones unlikely to be / not being met due to parental care • Persistent presentation to professionals with numerous health concerns: Raising concerns about child safety / parental behaviour • Delay in toilet training, bedwetting or soiling impacting on the child's health and wellbeing, not being managed appropriately by parent • Overdue/ missed immunisations or health checks/ unless explicitly declined • Dental problems and untreated decay– poor dental hygiene • Hygiene problems / dental health impacting on the child / young person's presentation and health • Teenage pregnancy where there are identified concerns or vulnerabilities for the parent and/or child • Consider learning disabilities/ mental health, substance/alcohol dependency problems that compromise their ability to parent to an acceptable standard • Regular substance/alcohol misuse • Evidence of regular/frequent drug use which may be combined with other risk factors • Mental health issues emerging e.g., conduct disorder, anxiety, depression, eating disorder • Frequent accidents/injuries	• Escalating level of concern of low self-esteem and confidence affecting emotional presentation, behaviour and identity • Frequently unable to socialise appropriately resulting in social isolation. Lack of positive role models • Frequently bullied or frequent perpetrator of bullying • Emerging mental health or emotional issues requiring mental health assessment by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services • Child/ young person is engaging in cyber activity that potentially places others or themselves at risk of harm • Starting to commit offences and reoffend • Disruptive / challenging/ dysregulated behaviours at school or in the neighbourhood • Low or medium level indicators of exploitation (criminal or sexual). Sudden display of unexplained gifts / clothing • Child subject to persistent discrimination e.g., racial, sexual orientation or disabilities. • Emerging self-harming behaviours. Referral made to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for specialist assessment

Learning and Education	Behaviour
• No access to books, toys, internet or educational materials • Poor stimulation • Poor school attendance and punctuality • Not engaged in education or reaching education potential • No planned progression beyond statutory school age • Short term exclusions or at risk of permanent exclusion, persistent truanting • Parent does not engage with school and actively resists support • Delayed/regressing language skills for age and ability of young person in the context of cultural/language difficulties	• Emerging sexually harmful behaviours • Lack of empathy

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Relationships	Extra familial harm
• Risk of relationship breakdown leading to child/ young person possibly becoming cared for • Emerging or established concerns about the impact of patterns of abuse, including coercive control, by an abusive parent on children's emotional welfare, and the capacity of the parents to consistently meet the emotional, social and physical needs of the children despite the efforts of the non-abusing parent • Concerns about escalation of sibling aggression resulting in emotional or physical harm • Concerns that family relationships are impacting negatively on child's well-being and at risk of further deterioration • Infrequent and unreliable extended family support that is impacting negatively on child's well-being • Acrimonious divorce or separation with ongoing negative impact on child or young person. The impact and support needs of the child / young person are rarely recognised or met by the family • Concerns about family gang involvement and patterns of criminal activity • Concerns that familial or cultural pressures are significantly impacting on the child's well-being • Child is living with or has regular contact with a family member or adult that is known to be a risk to children. Parents are aware and are able to supervise contact and manage risk	• Evidence of gang affiliation and peer related – need, harm and risk beyond the family (Contextual safeguarding) • Emerging concerns regarding the likelihood of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) • Frequently go missing from home which compromises the child's safety and wellbeing, and concerns child could be at risk of exploitation • Concern about child/ young person being radicalised or exposed to extremism • Hate crime is impacting on the child/ young person's development

Guidance boundaries and stimulation	Adult behaviours
• Parent/carer provides inconsistent boundaries or responses/ Parent enforcing unrealistic boundaries and guidance • Parent/carer engages in frequent anti-social behaviour within the community resulting in a negative impact on child's well-being. • Low level physical chastisement that does not cause physical injury • Threatening and frightening behaviour towards the child/young person • Parent/carer consistently do not provide access to learning, leisure and play opportunities • Parent/carer are unable to access learning, leisure and play opportunities due to child's additional needs or disability • Inconsistent/erratic parenting impacting on emotional or behavioural development • Parent/carer is unresponsive or fails to recognise child's/young person's emotional needs • Parent ignores child/ young person or is consistently inappropriate in responding to child/ young person	• Family's financial resources impact on child/ young person's basic physical needs being met • Poverty/ debt/ gambling impacting on parent's ability to care for the child/ young person • Unsuitable accommodation (e.g. overcrowded /hazards/ poor state of living conditions and repair) which is impacting on the child/ family • Intentionally homeless/living in a hostel • Unsecure or unknown immigration status and /or no recourse to public funds resulting in negative impact on child • Parental capacity to provide basic care is impaired by; learning difficulties/ disability, illness or other additional needs or disability • Drug/alcohol use has escalated to the point where it is beginning to impact on the children's health, development and well-being. Parent is willing and able to engage with services • Physical or mental health needs of the parent/carer is impairing capacity to meet the needs of the child and is impacting on the child's health and development • Parenting skills and capacity require support and negatively impact on the child's development and well-being • The parents/carers express intolerant views, react inappropriately to those who do not share their views and negatively impact on a child's wellbeing or development • Patterns are emerging that the child/ young person is left at home alone, but this does not seriously place them at significant risk (consider age and vulnerability)
Support networks and community resources	
• Family is socially isolated. Infrequent and unreliable extended community support that is impacting negatively on child's well-being • Associating with anti-social or criminally active peers. • Difficulty accessing community resources and targeted services impacting on the child • Marginalised from the community	

Complex – Securing the right response

Help and support at the complex level

- Request an Early Help response by completing a **Multi-Agency Referral Form**

- The analysis and judgement carried out by the Front Door will determine the next steps for the child. This may include allocation to an Early Help Family Worker to identify the family's strengths and worries to understand the level of need. Help and support from the previous levels may also be offered

- Where there are concerns about Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA) the screening tool should be completed to assess the level of risk. The screening tool is available via a link on the Safeguarding Partnership Website

- Three or more of the 10 **Supporting Families Criteria** must be met for allocation to an Early Help Family Worker. The ten areas are set out in the graphic below and more detail can be found in the Supporting Families Outcomes Plan and Framework

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Acute - Indicators of Need - Child development

Physical, Emotional and Mental Health	Presentation and Self Care
• Serious physical health concerns that are consistently not addressed by the parent e.g., failure to thrive, seriously obese/underweight, very serious dental decay • Specific physical or medical conditions which require specialist interventions and concerns regarding parents/carers capacity to meet the needs of the child • Professional concern or evidence of fabricated and induced illness • Significant delay or regression in toilet training, bedwetting or soiling with related concerns regarding emotional health and wellbeing • Allegations of significant sexually harmful behaviours • Teenage pregnancy where there are identified safeguarding concerns for the parent and/or child • Persistent and high-risk substance/ alcohol misuse resulting in harm or risk of harm to the child/ young person • Serious emotional health concerns that are consistently not addressed by the parent/carer, acute mental health problems including self-harming behaviour, risk of suicide • Evidence of difficulty walking, standing or sitting • Reluctance for seeking medical support • Persistent presentation to professionals with injuries: Raising concerns about child safety/ parental behaviour • Concern about injury to non-independently mobile children. • Child with unexplained injury	• Poor and inappropriate self-presentation • Complex mental health issues requiring specialist interventions which are consistently not being adequately managed by the parent • Child under 16 is pregnant where there are significant social/ family concerns • Child/ young person subject to discrimination which places the child/ young person at risk • Frequently going missing from home for long periods which seriously compromises the child's safety and wellbeing and there are concerns regarding exploitation • Hygiene problems directly affecting the health and development of the child/ young person and there are concerns regarding parents/carers capacity to meet the needs of the child

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Learning and Education	Behaviour
• Failure to stimulate and no interest in the child/ young person's education and there are attendance issues as below • Chronic non-attendance, truanting, permanent exclusions, consistently poor educational attainment/progress • The parent has consistently failed to cooperate with services at the Early Help level to address learning/ education • Children who are home schooled where there are significant concerns that the child/ young person's needs are not being met • Serious concerns are raised for the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of the child/ young person. Child/ Young person is not in Education, Training or Work (NEET). • Very delayed/regression or absence in language development • Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) support in childcare or education setting with identified safeguarding concerns	• Harmful sexual behaviour • Relationship breakdown between child and parent • Significant relationship issues • Unable to establish and unable to maintain positive family/peer relationships • Forms inappropriate attachments. Totally withdrawn. • No ability to socialise appropriately e.g., friendships, peer adult relationships • Alienates self from school / social situations. Consistent victim or perpetrator of bullying • Serious persistent offending behaviour attributable to neglectful absent parenting

Acute - Indicators of Need - Family and Network

Relationships	Extra familial harm
• Imminent risk of parental/carer and child/ young person relationship breakdown leading to child/ young person possibly becoming cared for • Sustained or persistent and chronic neglect which is impacting on the child's development and well-being. • Concerns about persistent sibling aggression resulting in significant emotional or physical harm. • Family breakdown related to child/ young person's behaviour difficulties. • There is nobody with parental responsibility to ensure the child/young person's wellbeing and stability of care • Child is living with or has regular contact with a family member or adult that is known to be a significant risk to children. • Family breakdown and parent/carer not willing or able to care for the child/ young person any longer – requesting the child/ young person to be accommodated by the Local Authority. • Concerns about the impact of domestic abuse from the abusing parent on the children's emotional welfare, and the capacity of the parents to consistently meet the emotional, social and physical needs of the children despite the efforts of the non-abusing parent • Severe domestic abuse that leads to a child being traumatised, injured or neglected. • Incident(s) of serious and/or persistent physical violence in family. • Incident(s) of violence occur in presence of child.	• Significant concern about radicalisation and extremist ideology • Subject to peer/ gang culture and pressure • Signs or disclosure that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has taken place. • There are risks to others as a result of a young person's radical / extremist views • Child/ young person is engaging in cyber activity that places them at risk of harm from others and is not managed by the parent/carer • Concerns that children may be trafficked or unaccompanied minors. • Child is believed to be at risk of 'honour'-based violence. • Concern that the young person is under familial or cultural pressure or duress to marry against their will or wishes. • Family gang involvement and / or criminal activity places child at risk of harm. • Intention to travel to an area of conflict (do not discuss making a referral with the family). • Concerns of significant risk/exposure relating to exploitation (criminal or sexual). Sudden display of unexplained gifts / clothing • Parent is unable to assess and manage serious risk to the child/ young person from others within their family and associates within social network • The child's parents, or other close associates, support violent or extremist ideologies or are actively involved with extremist groups.

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Guidance, boundaries and stimulation	Adult behaviours
• Consistent lack of effective boundaries leading to risk of serious harm to the child/ young person • Child/young person/ parent persistently behaves in an anti-social way within the community which is impacting on the child/young person • Threatening, verbally aggressive and frightening behaviour towards the child/ young person • Use of physical violence to manage behaviour causing physical injury • Parent/carer consistently do not provide access to learning, leisure and play opportunities resulting in increased need, risk and harm for the child • Parent/Carer require assessment of need in support of a disabled child • Parent/carer are unable to meet the needs of a disabled child. • Inconsistent, highly critical and apathetic, parenting significantly impairing emotional or behavioural development • Parent/carer requires assessment of need in support of a disabled child/young person • Parent/carer unable to meet the needs of disabled child/young person.	• Parent unable to appropriately manage finances impacting on child/ young person's basic physical needs being met • Chronic poverty/ debt/ gambling impacting on parent's ability to care for the child/ young person. • Physical accommodation is placing the child/ young person at risk • Deliberate avoidance of authority and intervention by professionals resulting in multiple moves impacting on the child / young person • Parent/ child at risk of exploitation or modern slavery. Unsecure or unknown immigration status and /or no recourse to public funds resulting in negative impact on child • Child is unaccompanied • Health and safety hazards in the home compromises safety • Parental illness or disability affecting ability to provide basic care / parent/carer illness or disability resulting in inability to provide basic care leading to serious neglect of the child/young person's needs • Parental/carer drug and/or alcohol use is at a problematic level and the parent/carer cannot carry out daily parenting. This could include blackouts, confusion, severe mood swings, drug paraphernalia not stored or disposed of, using drugs/alcohol when their child/young person is present, involving the child/young person in procuring illegal substances and dangers of overdose • Physical or mental health needs of the parent/carer significantly affect the care of child/young person placing them at risk • Parental/carer disclosure/ thoughts of serious harm to the child/ young person • Parent has a history of being unable to care for previous children • Child is left at home alone and as a result placed at risk (consider age and vulnerability)
Support networks and community resources	
• Family unable or unwilling to access community resources and targeted services placing the child at risk • Persistent hate crime occurrences	

Acute – Securing the right response

Help and support at the acute level
• Request a Social Work response by completing a **Multi-Agency Referral Form** • The request may result in a statutory assessment or convening a strategy meeting to understand the needs of the child and the level of worry. The analysis and judgement will determine any the next steps for the child. Help and support from the previous levels may also be offered. • If you need an urgent referral for a child at immediate risk of harm, please telephone ISIT on 0191 424 5010. All telephone referrals must be followed up by completing the below Multi-Agency Referral Form within 24 hrs. • If you are worried about an immediate risk of **significant** harm to a child, it is essential that you contact the police on 999. You should notify ISIT on 0191 454 5010 or 0191 456 2093 (outside office hours). • The Local Authority has a duty to make enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's wellbeing. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies, should be initiated where there are concerns about all forms of abuse, exploitation, physical, sexual, emotional, neglect.

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