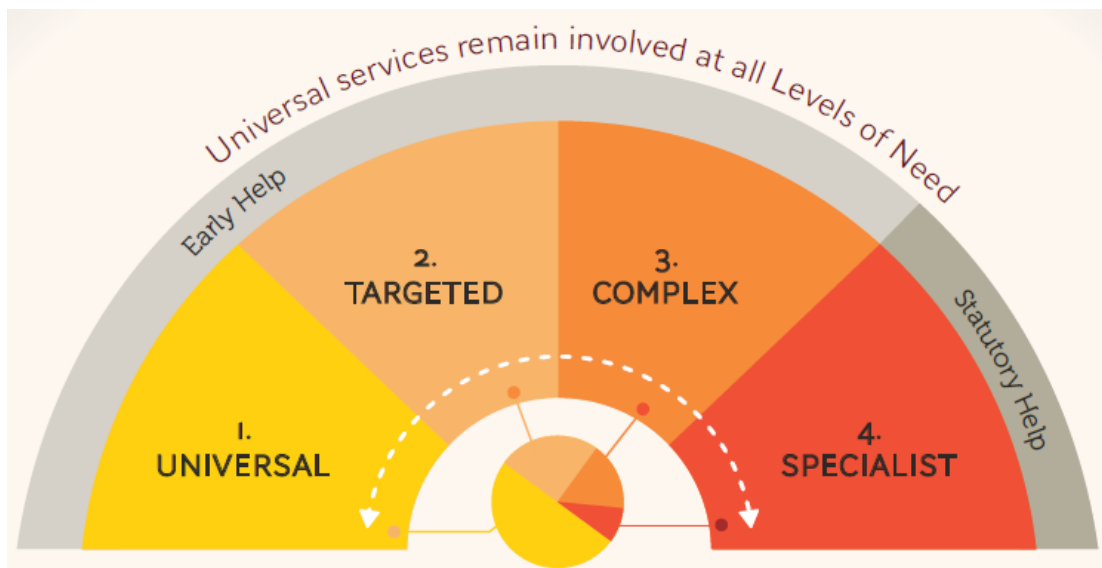




MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHESHIRE EAST



Guidance to support the Levels of Need poster

Draft TN for Cheshire East LSCB approval 24/1/2014

Introduction

This Framework aims to provide all professionals working with children a simple model that will help guide the thinking and practice, and provide a common language for communication between professionals and with families, thus contributing to improved service delivery and better outcomes for children and their families.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 promotes the vision that

‘services are commissioned effectively and that the right help is given to the child at the right time.’
(Page 14, paragraph 16)

In order to ensure this happens, there needs to be a continuum of help and support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families. Service responses are organised in different ways for different levels of children’s needs so clear criteria for taking action and providing help are needed, with clear thresholds for action which are understood by all professionals, and applied consistently. This will be judged by Ofsted through Inspection case tracking.

To assist this, Working Together 2013 requires LSCBs to

‘publish a threshold document that includes:

the process for the early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided; and the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children’s social care for assessment and for statutory services under:

- ***section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need);***
- ***section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm);***
- ***section 31 (care orders); and***
- ***section 20 (duty to accommodate a child) of the Children Act 1989.’***
(Page 14, paragraph 18)

Consistent and appropriate application of thresholds over time will be achieved by

- Communication of a Levels of Need and Thresholds Framework
- Management of practice and thresholds decisions
- Monitoring and Quality Assurance of threshold decision-making

Together these measures will improve the transactions between agencies and the families they are providing or seeking support for.

This document sets out a Levels of Need Framework which will support the consistent practice, management and Quality Assurance of thresholds across the continuum of help provided to children, young people and their families.

This document may not provide definitive answers in respect of individual cases, the ‘Possible Indicators’ provided below are for illustration and are not policy. Some agencies will need to develop more detailed descriptions of their areas of work within this framework. Decisions in day-to-day practice will also be informed by professional judgement. **However, it is expected that professional judgement and managerial decision-making will be consistent with this Levels of Need Framework.**

Principles of the Levels of Need framework

- Safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of ALL services, including those primarily aimed at adults.
- Service responses to children's needs should be based on an appropriate assessment and planning
- Service responses to children's needs should be proportionate to the level of need or risk
- Families and children only have to use specialist services when necessary, when other options have been tried, or considered and deemed inappropriate. Good Early Help can prevent the need for more intrusive statutory intervention.
- Agencies may provide services across different levels of need. In particular, Universal services will remain involved in providing support to children at all levels of need.
- Agencies are expected to work together, to provide a network of professional support for the children and families that are in need. This may involve sharing information with consent (unless there is a clear risk in doing so), coming to a common view of the child's needs, and co-ordinating services so that they provide the best support for the child and family.

This Framework

The needs of children and young people are identified as falling into four broad levels. These are not hard and fast categories, as the day-to-day engagement of services with children and their families is a complex system involving

The levels are

1. **Universal**
2. **Targeted**
3. **Complex**
4. **Specialist**

For each there is

- A basic **Description**
- Some examples of possible **Indicators** – provided as a guide only. Degrees of severity and combinations of factors for individual children need to be understood through assessment and analysis, aided by informed professional judgement.
- The type of **Response** that is expected

Universal support

All children are entitled to Universal Services from Health Visitor, GPs, and Early Years providers, schools and youth services. All Universal Services should provide services to children in a safe environment, having safer recruitment, safeguarding, and Health & Safety procedures, codes of staff conduct, and are ready to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns should they arise.

Children may also benefit from preventative educational programmes for example e-safety through PHSCE. These kind of initiatives do not target children because of any risk or vulnerability

Possible Indicators

Children or young people receive support at the Universal level when:-	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generally satisfactory ➤ Treatments are routine e.g. dentistry, immunisation
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attendance and learning good enough for the child's age
Emotional & behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Behaviour is appropriate for the child's age ➤ Child has a reasonable sense of self-worth
Family & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accommodation has at least basic amenities ➤ Some stable family relationships
Parenting capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parent(s) or carer able to keep the child safe and well

Response

- Continue meeting child or young person's needs as a universal service, in a safe environment.
- Safer recruitment procedures, professional codes of conduct, preventative education e.g. PSHE are all in place for the benefit of all children.
- All professionals ready to identify and respond to any emerging problems, abuse or neglect should it occur.

Early Help

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. (Working Together 2013, Chapter 1)

'Early Help' is the term used for support provided to a child and family by an agency or group of agencies working together when the child's needs are not sufficiently high to need the statutory intervention of Children's social care.

Targeted – extra support from a single agency

Children and young people who would benefit from additional help in order to make the best of their life chances. This may be provided by the Universal service that identified the problem, for example a school providing some pastoral support, or by a referral to one other agency.

Possible Indicators

Typically, children and young people might receive support at the Targeted level because:-	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Health issues which may impact on child or young person's development and wellbeing. ➤ Not registered with GP or Dentist
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Child starting to disengage from learning. ➤ Lack of parental encouragement impacting on the child's learning.
Emotional & behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Behaviour inappropriate to age and stage of development. ➤ Challenging behaviour
Family & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Family unable to access effective support services to meet specific needs. ➤ Experience of bullying
Parenting capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parenting skills inadequate to meet the child or young person's needs.

Response

A practitioner who identifies unmet needs for a child or young person should consider how these needs can best be met, usually by some additional help from within their own agency. Consider using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process to help assess and plan to meet needs.

Cheshire East Consultation Service may be consulted for advice and guidance 0300 123 5012 (option 2)

Cheshire East Family Service is a part of Children's Services in Cheshire East Council. We are aiming to provide Early Help to Cheshire East families, to offer you advice, support and more specialist services when things begin to be difficult – and not wait until little problems grow into a crisis. Our 13 Children's Centres, together with our 4 Family Service Centres, throughout Cheshire East offer you and your children a range of activities, advice, support and help

Complex – multi-agency support

Children and young people who have a range of additional needs affecting different areas of life. Concerns shared by more than one agency, and some co-ordination of support will be needed between the agencies involved. This may also include Children and young people who no longer in need of a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, but still has significant needs requiring support from agencies working together.

Possible Indicators

Typically, children and young people might receive support at the Complex level because:-	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Significant health issues untreated ➤ Health appointments regularly missed.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disruptive or aggressive in school, disciplinary issues, exclusions ➤ Difficulties outside school undermine engagement with education ➤ frequent or long absences, absconding from school, disengagement from education.
Emotional & behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risk taking behaviour impacting on other areas of a child or young person's life. ➤ Anti-social behaviour or at risk of entering the Criminal Justice System ➤ Mental health and emotional well-being and/or behavioural issues.
Family & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Caring responsibilities that impact negatively on a child or young person's life. ➤ Stressful family relationships
Parenting capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor parenting impacting on child and family life causing instability and inconsistency. ➤ Moderate neglect of a child's needs

Response

Agencies should work together to provide a network of support to the child or young person and their family, sharing information with the family's agreement.

Consideration should be given to whether further support should be provided from other agencies such as family support, commissioned services, Youth Engagement Team.

A Lead Professional to co-ordinate support and be primary link with the family.

A Common Assessment (CAF) should be undertaken with child and family to assess their needs, develop and implement an Action Plan and review progress.

In Cheshire East, Early Help for complex issues includes:

- Sure Start Children's Centre
- Family Service Centres
- A range of services commissioned by Children's Services

Cheshire East Consultation Service may be consulted for advice and guidance 0300 123 5012 (option 2)

Specialist

Children, young people and their families who need immediate protection or who require support from a statutory service such as CAMHS, Children's Social Care, or Youth Offending Service.

Typically, children or young people might receive support at the Specialist level because:-	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation ➤ Children/young people with severe or complex needs in relation to disability.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Non-school attendance requiring legal action
Emotional & behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risk-taking behaviour which could lead to significant harm. ➤ Children or young people in the Criminal Justice System ➤ Significant self-harm, eating disorder, psychiatric condition, etc.
Family & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Home environment exposes child to risk or injury or harm to health
Parenting capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parent/carer is abusive, or fails to protect from harm. ➤ Parent is seriously neglectful of child's basic needs ➤ Parent/carer has complex issues e.g. mental health, alcohol/substance misuse, domestic abuse, etc. that significantly compromise care and ability to provide a safe environment for the child.

Response

Concerns about the safety of a child or young person, contact Cheshire East Consultation Service on 0300 123 5012 (option 2), or if there is immediate danger, Police should be contacted.

Children's Social Care will lead multi-agency risk assessment, planning and support through a Child-in-Need Plan, Child Protection procedures, or accommodation by Children's Social Care (see Statutory Thresholds below). Agencies already involved will have a continuing support role within the plan developed for the child & family.

Cheshire East's Child Protection Procedures can be found at <http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/cheshireeast/contents/basic-safeguarding-children-procedures/>

Youth Offending Service will lead multi-agency intervention in response to Youth Court Orders to supervise young offenders in the community and custody.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service will lead multi-agency response to mental health and psychiatric issues.

Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)

Cheshire East Consultation Service handle all initial contact with Children and Families Services regardless of the level of need of the child or family being called about.

This includes all referrals of Child Protection concerns

The service is staffed by qualified and experienced Social Workers and Practitioner Support Officers who will be able to give advice about cases across Targeted, Complex and Specialist levels of need. Where the level of need or concern is not clear, a discussion between a professional and ChECS will aim to come to an agreement about which level of need. The outcome of a consultation with ChECS may be

The Cheshire East Consultation Service is intended to increase the support to all professionals working with children and families, ensuring that early help and support is available to children and families and that they receive the right help at the right time.

Targeted

- advice to a single agency, for example that this is an appropriate level at which to be supporting a child, and what other services might be engaged if a situation deteriorates.

Complex

- referral to Cheshire East Family Service or a Commissioned Service
- Agreement for an agency currently involved to initiate a Common Assessment
- A Common Assessment supported by Cheshire East Family Service
- A Common Assessment supported by a Social Worker

Specialist

- referral to Children's Social Care team for a Child In Need Assessment or Child Protection enquiry

Family Information Service

This service is now part of Cheshire East Consultation Service, and provides a one-stop-shop information service for children, young people and their families on services in Cheshire East, regionally and nationally, for example on childcare to tax credits to guidance on bullying.

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/education_and_learning/family_information_service.aspx



STEP UP and STEP DOWN across the Levels of Need

The Levels of Need graphic can be seen as a windscreen or a speed dial, and is intended to convey visually the notion that as children's needs change over time, they may move across levels of need and back.

The terms 'Step Up' and 'Step Down' are used to describe families that move up or down the Levels of Need. When Cheshire East Consultation Service have a Consultation with a Professional who is currently working with a 'COMPLEX' family under the **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**, and it is agreed that the threshold for a SPECIALIST assessment has been met, then this case will 'STEP UP' to Social Care for assessment. The CAF will be suspended until the Assessment is completed.

Social Care will complete a Combined Assessment with a family, following which there may be the need for a 'Child In Need' 'Child Protection' Plan for a period of time. If the assessment outcome is for the CAF to continue, the suspended CAF will be re-activated.

When Social Care assess that the family are making sustained progress, Social Care will seek to end the Child In Need Plan and 'STEP DOWN' from a 'SPECIALIST' level of need, and for any remaining tasks to form the CAF plan.

A Lead Professional of the CAF should be agreed and confirmed at the final Child In Need meeting where the CAF action plan will be formulated and a CAF review date set.

Social Care – When closing a case on PARIS you must complete the CAF section of the closure summary naming the identified Lead Professional. This information will be collated by ChECS and follow up contact will be made with the Lead Professional after a 6 week period if there has been no CAF review documentation sent to ChECS.

All Agencies – When a case 'STEPS DOWN' from Social Care to a CAF, there is no need to complete a new assessment. The final Child In Need plan will form the CAF action plan which is to be reviewed regularly.

All CAF Assessments, Reviews and Plans are to be sent to: CAF@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Note: If there is only one agency involved with a family following Social Care involvement, it may not be necessary to STEP DOWN to a CAF.

Common Assessment Framework guidance and other materials can be found at http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/education_and_learning/children_and_families/common_assessment_framework.aspx

Statutory thresholds for Children's Social Care

At the Specialist level within Levels of Need Framework, Children's Social Care are responsible for delivering services to children in need under the Children Act 1989. This includes children identified as being

- in need of support (Section 17 of the Children Act 1989) or
- in need of protection (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989) or
- in need of accommodation (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or
- for whom the LA has or is seeking to share Parental Responsibility (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989).

The threshold for Children's Social Care involvement is that the child appears to be in need as set out under the Children Act 1989 :-

A child shall be taken to be in need if

(a) (s) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for her/him of services by a local authority under this Part;

(b) her/ his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for her/him of such services; or

(c) (s)he is disabled

The levels of Children's Social Care involvement are

1. Child in Need Plans
2. Child Protection Plans
3. Care Plans for children accommodated on Care Orders

However, all of these levels of involvement rely on the working together of all agencies to support the family and protect the child, including agencies that provide universal services. See Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) Chapter 2

Child in Need of Specialist Support from Children's Social Care

All children referred to Children's Social Care will be assessed to determine whether they are in need of support, protection or accommodation. The procedure for assessment is based on Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2013) chapter 1, and can be found at <http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/cheshireeast/contents/basic-safeguarding-children-procedures/initial-and-core-assessment/>

The outcome of a Children's Social Care assessment ('Combined Assessment' in Cheshire East may be support co-ordinated through a Child in Need Plan, with a Social Worker acting as a Lead Professional

This support is provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 which states that it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their own families, through the provision, range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

Where a voluntary working partnership with parents or carers proves difficult, this may be considered as a risk factor for harm to the child, and a Child Protection enquiry may be considered.

Children with disabilities

To receive a service a child must fall within the definition of a 'child in need'. This will be decided through an assessment conducted by a Social Worker. The Children Act 1989 defines disabled children as 'children in need' if;

A child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or without speech or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently disabled by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed.

However as part of any assessment Children's Social Care would also look at how the child can access the same opportunities and choices available to all children and therefore considers whether:

'the child or young person has a permanent physical, learning or sensory impairment, or a combination of these impairments, which significantly compromises their ability to access the day to day activities, or opportunities, available to their non-disabled peers.'

To receive a service children and young people are likely to have one or more of the following impairments or conditions which impact on their life:

- Severe learning impairment;
- Severe and permanent physical impairment;
- Communication impairment which has permanent and substantial effect on the child's life.
- A life-limiting health condition;
- Younger children with developmental delay;
- Sensory impairments.

(from

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/social_care_and_health/children_and_families/services_for_disabled_children.aspx)

Child in Need of Protection

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as:

'the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child.'

Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 places the local authority under a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria for establishing significant harm. Whether the harm or likely harm suffered by the child is significant is determined by comparing the child's health or development with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. Professionals must also take account of the child's reactions, and his/her perceptions and wishes and feelings, according to their age and understanding.

It is therefore only through assessment that it is possible to establish whether a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Board Procedures must always be followed and child protection concerns should be immediately raised with Cheshire East Consultation Service, or if risk of immediate danger, the Police.

Cheshire East's procedures for Section 47 enquiries can be found at <http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/cheshireeast/contents/basic-safeguarding-children-procedures/the-section-47-enquiry/>

Where there is risk of significant harm, and a working relationship with parents or carers to protect the child proves unworkable, Children's Social Care and the Local Authority Legal Services will give consideration to the need for a Care Order to acquire parental responsibility and decide where the child will live.

Child in Need of Care/provision of accommodation

Children may need to be provided with some alternative care or place to live to safeguard them from the risk of or actual significant harm. It is the duty of the Local Authority under **Section 20 Children Act 1989 - Provision of accommodation for children: general**, which states:-

Every local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to them to require accommodation as a result of

- there being no person who has parental responsibility for him;
- his being lost or having been abandoned; or
- the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him with suitable accommodation or care.
- has reached the age of sixteen and whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if accommodation is not provided
- to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

Care Orders

A child could also become cared for if care proceedings are initiated by the Local Authority in the Family Court and the child is made subject to an Emergency Protection Order, Interim Care Order or full Care Order.

A Care Order granted by a Family Court allows the local authority to acquire Parental Responsibility for a child. The local authority then has the power to decide where the child will live and with whom. Care orders are given under **Section 31 Children Act 1989 Care and Supervision**. The grounds for an application are that the court must be satisfied that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm either as a result of receiving care that it would not be reasonable to expect a parent to give or as a result of the child being beyond parental control. 'Harm' is defined in the Act as 'ill treatment or the impairment of health or development'. Health includes physical or mental health and development includes physical, social, emotional, behavioural and intellectual development.