



Levels of Need

Guidance to support your professional judgement in responding to the needs of children and young people in Worcestershire

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Introduction - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

This guidance aims to support the **application of professional judgement** and actively encourage **conversations** within and between agencies when responding to the needs of children and young people, in particular concerns about risk and harm.

It provides a common language and an agreed model across the children's workforce in Worcestershire for responding to need.

For services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children ([Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), DfE 2015, page 8) this, and all other phrases in blue throughout this document are hyperlinks to relevant web resources.

This Guidance Is For EVERYONE...

...but especially frontline practitioners, managers and safeguarding leads within all those agencies who work with children and young people or with their parents/carers.

There is an expectation that, where there are concerns about a child's welfare or impairment of health and development, agencies will work together to offer additional support to the child and/or family.

However, if you are worried that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and needs protection

- **Contact the Police on 999 if a child is in danger and needs immediate protection.**
- **Otherwise contact the Family Front Door on 01905 822 666 from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.**
- **Out of office hours (5.00pm to 8.30am weekdays and all day weekends and bank holidays) contact the Emergency Duty team on 01905 768020**

It is your responsibility to:

Know your own agency's procedures and who your safeguarding lead is.

Know and use Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board's Child Protection Procedures. These are provided in an online manual at the following link:

[Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures for Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin \(West Mercia\)](#)

Demonstrate professional curiosity. Actively check out your understanding and seek further information rather than just accept what you have been told at face value. This may involve asking difficult questions, and 'thinking the unthinkable.'

Discuss your concerns and share information. If you are worried about a child or young person

- talk to your agency's Safeguarding Lead and your Manager, check your agency's records, check the child's Single View if your agency has access.
- talk to others in your agency who know the family, and any other professionals you know are involved
- Be prepared to work with other agencies as part of a team to support the family



[Information Sharing and Confidentiality](#)

Keep case notes up to date, recording all relevant information, other professionals involved, decisions and actions taken.

'Think Family.' Always consider the impact of an adult's complex needs on the children and young people in the family (and vice versa) and share information with other agencies if appropriate. Services for vulnerable adult family members may be important in improving family life for a child.

Escalate professional concerns. If at any stage you do not feel that the response to your concerns is appropriate, or you are concerned about the effectiveness of the multi-agency plan for a child or young person, you have a responsibility to escalate those professional concerns.



[Escalating concerns when there is professional disagreement about a safeguarding children response](#)

Child Sexual Exploitation

The sexual exploitation of children and young people is a form of abuse described in the government guidance document as:

"involving exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of their performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

It can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability."

What do I need to do?

Discuss your concerns with your supervisor, manager or safeguarding lead.

Read and use the [CSE Identification Tool](#) to inform your professional judgement.

Consider if the current indicators show that

- there is evidence that the child is at immediate risk or suffering CSE, and so is in need of protection, or
- there is evidence that the child is at possible risk or is vulnerable to CSE, and so is in need of prevention.

then in all cases refer to the Family Front Door using the [Cause for Concern Notification](#)

If it is **not** a child-specific concern, e.g. concerns about an adult or a location, contact the Family Front Door for advice.



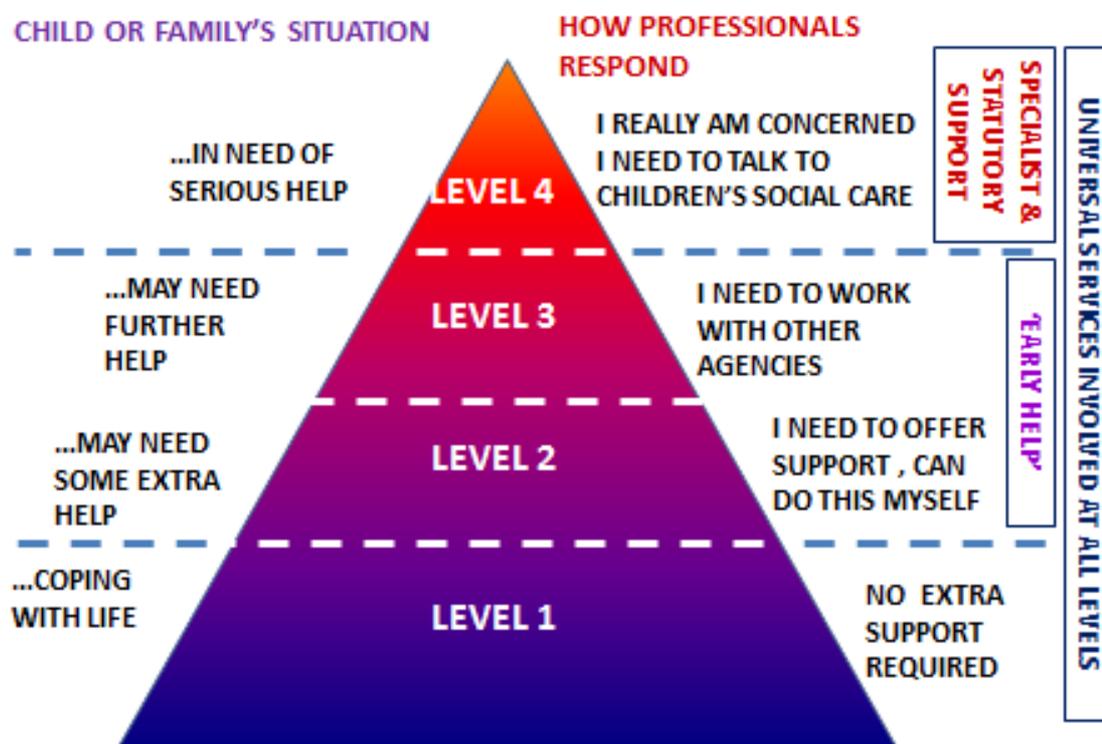
Further useful guidance can be found at the following links:-

- [Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation](#)
- [Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation](#) (HM Government 2015)

Levels of need in Worcestershire

In Worcestershire, we think of children's needs across four levels, each requiring a different type of response from the range of services that are available.

- Level 4: Specialist and statutory services to meet critical/acute needs
- Level 3: Complex Needs
- Level 2: Targeted support to meet additional needs
- Level 1: Universal support



Children and young people can access services from different levels at different times in accordance with their changing needs, whilst continuing to receive universal services throughout their childhood.

Specialist and statutory services to meet critical/acute needs - Level 4

'...IN NEED OF SERIOUS HELP'

At this level there is evidence or reasonable cause to suspect that

- a child or young person's health or development is likely to be impaired without services, i.e. that has critical or acute needs.
- they are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.
- in danger and needs immediate protection.

Contact should always be made to Children's Social Care using the [Cause for Concern Notification](#)

Potential Indicators (not an exhaustive list)

- Children where physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect is suspected - See [Definitions and Recognition of Abuse and Neglect](#) in the Child Protection Procedure, where you will find the following:-
 - The Definition of Significant Harm
 - Categories of Abuse and Neglect
 - Recognising Physical Abuse
 - Recognising Emotional Abuse
 - Recognising Sexual Abuse
 - Recognising Neglect
 - Impact of Abuse and Neglect
 - Risk Factors in all Forms of Harm
- Children where the following is suspected:
 - [Allegations of harm by a person in a position of trust](#)
 - [Children and young people who abuse others](#)
 - [Female Genital Mutilation](#)
 - [Forced Marriage](#)
 - [Trafficking](#)
 - [Fabricated or Induced Illness](#)
 - [Child Sexual Exploitation](#)
 - [Honour based violence](#)

- Children whose parents are unable to provide care, for whatever reason.
- Children who disappear or are [Missing from Home or Care](#) regularly or for long periods.
- Children who are in contact with persons who have been assessed as [Posing a Risk to Children](#)
- Children whose health and development are adversely impacted because parenting is compromised as a consequence of:
 - [substance misuse](#)
 - learning difficulties
 - physical disability or severe/ complex medical conditions
 - mental health issues
 - [domestic abuse](#)
 - prolific offending/in custody
 - poverty
- Children whose behaviour is dangerous or involves extreme risk taking.
- Children who are experiencing extreme [Bullying](#) that adversely impacts their health and development
- Children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless
- Children whose health and development is adversely impacted by non-engagement with services
- Where a [pre-birth](#) assessment identifies an unborn child's health or development is adversely impacted
- [Children with Disabilities](#)
- Children who are young carers and wish to exercise their right to an assessment.

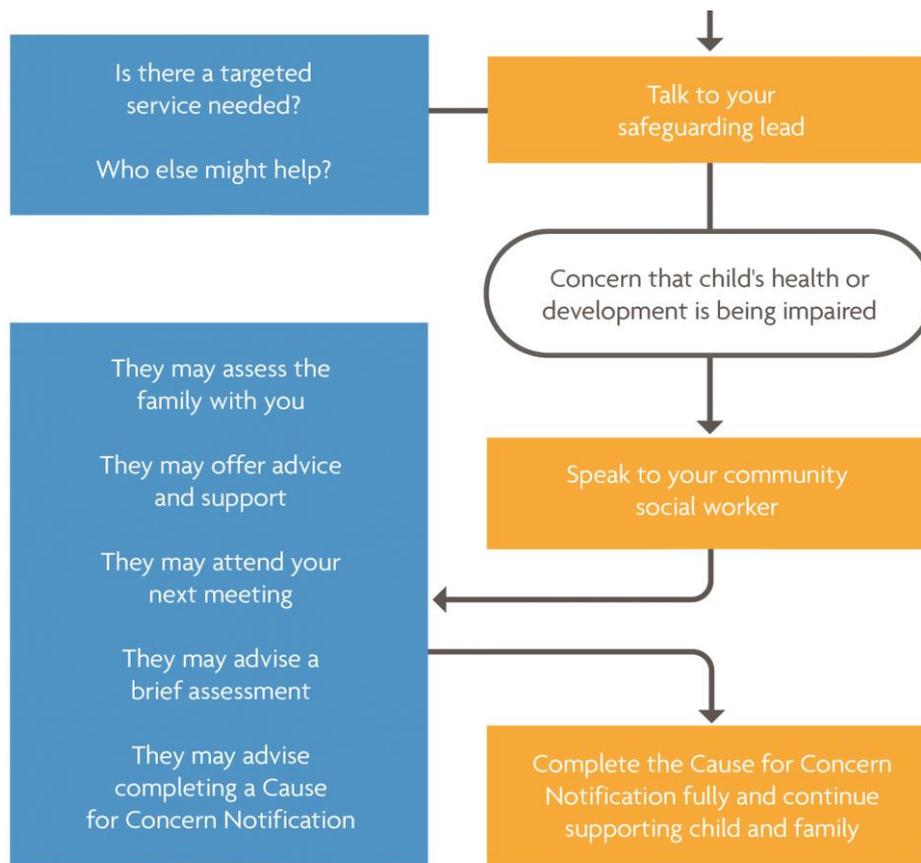
What do I need to do if a child is in danger and needs immediate protection?

- Phone Police
- Phone the Family Front Door
- Complete the on-line [Cause For Concern Notification](#) full and continue working with the family

What do I need to do if a child is at immediate risk of significant harm?

- **Discuss your concerns without delay** with your safeguarding lead, or manager.
- Phone with the Family Front Door
- Complete the on-line [Cause For Concern Notification](#) full and continue working with the family

For all other concerns



What happens next?

- The Family Front Door will share information appropriately
- Children's Social Care will take a decision as to what is required.
- You will be informed of the decision taken within 24 hours

Agencies already involved with a child and family will have a continuing support role in all of these instances.



[Managing Individual Cases where there are concerns about a Child's Safety](#)

Complex needs - Level 3

Levels 2 and 3 in this framework are together referred to as '**early help**', 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 to prevent the child's health and development becoming impaired.

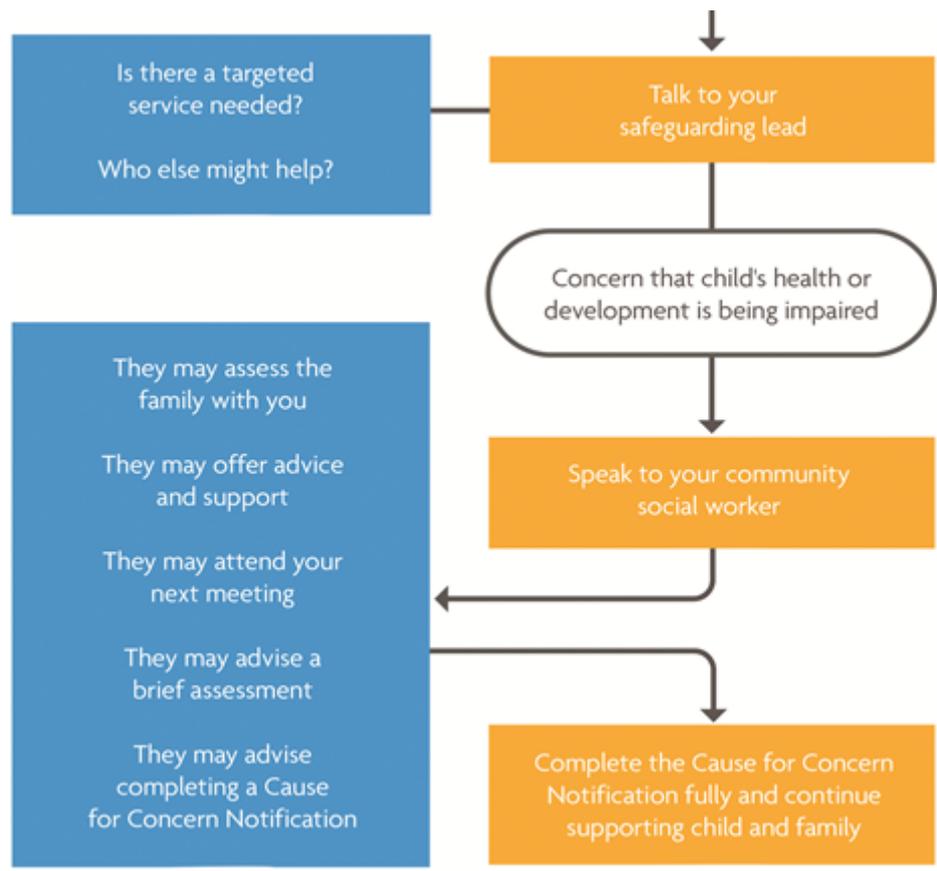
'...NEED FURTHER HELP'

At this level, children and young people will have complex needs to the extent that their health, development and wellbeing will be impaired without intervention. They may have difficulties across more than one area of their lives, and they may require some extra support from more than one agency. Agencies involved with a child and their family will need to work closer together as a team to provide co-ordinated support.

Potential Indicators (not an exhaustive list)

- Children with a significant emotional and/or behavioural disorder
- Children persistently absent and/or excluded from school
- Children beyond parental control
- Children in families without permanent accommodation
- Children with an acute or chronic health condition (including morbid obesity) where there is non-attendance for appointments or poor engagement with treatment compliance, where this will have a significant impact on the child's health
- Children involved in escalating criminal activity or anti-social behaviour
- Children involved in substance misuse
- Children in households where parent(s) are struggling to parent as a consequence of:
 - Mental health issues
 - Substance misuse
 - [Domestic abuse](#)
 - Learning difficulties
 - Poverty
 - Offending/in custody
 - Physical disability
 - [Young Carers](#)

What do I need to do?



Services Available

In addition to services involved at levels 1 and 2

- Connecting Families (in development)
- Substance Misuse Service - [Swanswell Charitable Trust](#)
- Education support services,
- Community health services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS),

Further useful guidance can be found at the following links:-



[Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education](#)

[Children of Parents who Misuse Drugs](#)

[Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)

Targeted support to meet additional needs - Level 2

'...MAY NEED SOME EXTRA HELP'

This level is for children and young people who would benefit from additional help in order to prevent the child's health and development becoming impaired and make the best of their life chances

Potential Indicators (not an exhaustive list)

- Children whose parents have difficulties managing their behaviour
- Children in families where there is poor hygiene (including dental hygiene)
- Children identified by school as requiring additional educational support
- Children with additional health needs that require extra support
- Children involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour
- Children in households where difficulties in adult relationships have the potential to impact on the child if early help and support is not offered
- Children who require support to access appropriate leisure and community activities in order to promote their development and enable them to reach their potential
- Children where there are behaviour/mood changes which could indicate a change in their mental health and wellbeing
- Children with unhealthy/poor diet and/or concerning weight gain/weight loss
- Children starting to have unauthorised absences from school
- Children involved in substance misuse.
- Children of families seeking asylum
- Children involved in unhealthy relationships (potentially risky sexual behaviours)

What do I need to do?

- **Discuss your concerns** with your supervisor, manager or safeguarding lead.
- Consider how these needs can best be met, perhaps by some additional help from within your own agency or by a referral to one other agency.
- Check the [Advice, Information and Guidance for Professionals](#) web pages to find out what other services might be help.
- Consider using a framework such as the early help assessment to help assess and plan to meet needs. Assessments such as those used in the Healthy Child Programme may help identify needs for Early Help.

Services available

[Children's Centres](#) currently offer a range of early help services to families with children aged 0 to 19 across each of the six districts.

School Health and Health Visitors

[Family Support](#)

Services provided or commissioned by schools such as counselling, and nurture groups.

From October 2016, some prevention and early intervention services will be different. We will be developing an integrated prevention offer for 0-19s which will bring together functions delivered by Health Visiting, School Health, Children's Centres and Parenting Support. In addition to this there will also be targeted family support service for vulnerable families, with complex needs, on the edge of social care.



Further useful guidance can be found at the following links:-

[Preventing youth violence and gang involvement Practical advice for schools and colleges](#)

[Drug advice for schools \(DfE and ACPO\)](#)

Universal support - Level 1

'...COPING WITH LIFE'

Life is generally ok for children and their families, and that includes dealing with the 'normal' difficulties and challenges of life and of growing up. They usually cope with these through their own resilience or with the support of family and friends. Some additional information or advice may help, but additional support from outside the family is not needed.

All children are entitled to Universal Services from Health Visitors, 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 Personal Social Health & Economic Education (PSHE). These kinds of initiatives do not target children because of any risk or vulnerability.

Potential Indicators (not an exhaustive list)

- **Health** - Generally satisfactory, routine treatments are carried out e.g. dentistry, immunisation.
- **Education** - Attendance and learning is at least satisfactory for the child's age
- **Emotional & behavioural development** - Behaviour is appropriate for the child's age, and the child has a reasonable sense of self-worth.
- **Family & Environment** - Accommodation has at least basic amenities, and there are some stable family relationships.
- **Parenting capacity** - Parent(s) or carer able to keep the child safe and well, and cope with the challenges of growing children and family life.

What do I need to do?

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.

Where 'normal difficulties' occur, listen to and acknowledge the child or family's issues and concerns. Offer advice or information or suggest sources they can access. Support their resilience and ability to help themselves.

All professionals ready to identify and respond to any emerging problems, abuse or neglect should it occur.

Statutory thresholds for Children's Social Care

Children's Services are responsible for assessing the need of children for support services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. **Support services can be co-ordinated and delivered by services other than Children's Social Care where there is no role for a Social Worker as lead professional.**

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) (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 (Section 17 of the Children Act 1989)
- 2 Child Protection (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989)
- 3 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).

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.

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'***.

Child in Need of Protection

Where there is evidence or reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, Children's Services has a duty under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries. The Children Act 1989 states that **significant harm** is *'the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child.'*

[The Definition of Significant Harm](#)

Section 47 enquiries may involve Police and Health professionals, and any other agency with involvement with the child or family. This may lead to a Child Protection Conference and Plan. [Section 47 enquiries](#)

Where there is risk of significant harm, and a working relationship with parents or carers to protect the child proves this is not possible, 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.

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren