Introduction

This document forms the guidance for practitioners to help them identify levels of need and therefore the appropriate response when a child needs help. This guidance should be read in conjunction with “Together for All – Thresholds of Need 2019”.

The threshold of need (often referred to as the continuum of needs) is a guide for all who work with individual children and/or their families and their managers. Practitioners should always use their professional judgement and take into account; the age of the child, context of the situation and any protective and resilience factors. The key to getting it right for children in terms of identifying a child and families level of need will always be an evidence based professional judgement.

This guidance helps to identify levels of need and how to meet them rather than a list of services that may be accessed. The indicators of concern below are simply examples of how a child may present if they have needs at that level, they are not an exhaustive list and by no means replace professional judgement.

In making a professional judgement about level of need and determining whether to make a child protection referral to children’s social care, professionals should seek guidance and approval from their line manager or safeguarding lead within their agency. Where there is identified harm and/or likely harm and it appears that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) should be contacted immediately on (01472) 326292.
Levels of Support

The “Threshold of Need and Response” is based on the principle that support should be offered as soon as possible at the lowest level proportionate to the assessed needs of the child. Our aim is to support families and prevent things becoming more difficult to enable more families to continue to receive support from universal services.

To help ensure the effective and efficient use of resources across all agencies the provision of services should be within a clear framework following the principles:

- Assessment
- Planning
- Intervention
- Review

Our model considers four levels of support:

- Universal Services, Prevention and Self-help
- Targeted and Co-ordinated Early Help
- Child in Need
- Specialist Assessment (Immediate Safeguarding)

Practitioners need to be aware that Collaborative Support and Allocation Meeting (CSAM) can be used to hold a professionals meeting, to decide the level of concern and plan a response to promote the child’s welfare, it by no means replaces the Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines and procedures. In any case involving the safeguarding of children these guidelines and procedures must be followed.
Families know how and are able to seek out the information they need or can ask for support from services such as the GP and schools. Universal services are accessible whatever the level of concern to help children reach their full potential.

Universal services have longer involvement with children and families and play a key role in helping them throughout their childhood. Services are encouraged to help and support children and families with whom they have contact to resolve need at this level.

**Indicators of Need**

**Child Developmental Needs**
- Physically well
- Developmental assessments & immunisations up to date
- Meets developmental milestones
- Accesses Health services
- Attends school: Success and achievements are celebrated
- Good quality early attachments
- Positive sense of self and demonstrates feelings of belonging and acceptance
- Stable and affection relationship with caregivers and siblings
- Growing level of competencies and understanding in practical and emotional skills

**Parenting Capacity**
- Carers provide for children’s physical and emotional needs and protects from danger and harm
- Shows emotional warmth and encouragement
- Carer provides appropriate boundaries and guidance

**Family and Environmental Factors**
- Supports development through play and access to a range of activities
- Family not living in poverty and have access to reasonable income which will support all areas of the child’s development
Level 2 – Targeted and Co-ordinated Early Help

Children and/or their families need additional agency support or a coordinated multi agency response. It must be remembered that the universal offer is part of the overall Early Help plan.

Where needs are clear a contact form can be used to request additional support from the safeguarding partnership.

Where needs are not clear or are not being met, an Early Help Assessment and Plan would be recommended to coordinate the support, promote integrated working and family participation.

**Indicators of Need**

**Child Developmental Needs**
- Concerns emerging re: diet / hygiene / clothing
- Health problems emerging & not being attended to / not accessing universal services e.g. GP and dentist
- Parents and children need additional support and guidance in reaching developmental milestones (e.g. under stimulation which is impairing development and delaying speech and language)
- Reduced opportunities for play / socialisation
- Substance Misuse / Sexual Health worries
- Emerging Mental Health concerns
- Reduced school attendance (below 90%)
- At risk of permanent exclusion / multiple fixed term exclusions
- Experiencing or involved in bullying
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

For a full guide please refer to Chapter 1 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*
Child Developmental Needs Continued...

- Complex health needs
- Disengaging from education, training or employment post-16
- Child has become recently withdrawn without any indication of why
- Poor/inappropriate peer group relationships
- Family/adult relationships impacting on emotional well-being
- Some observations of inappropriate responses and behaviours
- Displays anger and frustration regularly and is easily upset
- Displays disruptive or anti-social behaviour and low level criminal activity
- Age appropriate self-care skills are limited
- Regularly coming home late or going missing
- Over sexualised dress
- Sexualised risk taking including on the internet
- Unaccounted for monies and goods
- Poor self-image
- Eating disorders
- Low-level self-harm

Parenting Capacity

- Reported parental conflict or lack of parental support / boundaries
- Teenage pregnancy or expectant teen father (under 18) with lack of support from family network or concealed pregnancy
- Poor parental engagement with services
- Parent is struggling to ensure children’s physical, educational and emotional needs are met
- Unrealistic parental expectations or perceived to be a problem by parents
- Previously looked after by the local authority
- Child previously subject of a child protection plan
- Parent is suffering from minor to moderate physical / mental health problems/ learning difficulties (e.g. post-natal depression)
- Parental drug and/or alcohol use (emerging worries about the impact on the child)
- Child treatment in the family shows some inconsistencies.
- Parents are unprepared for parenthood
- Parental sensitivity and attachment concerns emerging

Family and Environmental Factors

- Young Carers
- Emerging early indications of neglect
- Family conflict/difficulties that can involve children
- Has experienced loss of significant adult e.g. bereavement or separation
- Family is socially isolated/excluded
- Debt, poor housing and home conditions which impact on ability to care for children
- Exposure to adult anti-social behaviour and criminal activity
- Poor or overwhelming care coordination for a child with disabilities
- Concerns about the impact of extremist views / radicalisation of child – you should discuss this with your agencies designated safeguarding lead and consider and follow the extremism procedure
Level 3 – Child in Need (CIN)

A Child in Need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or they are disabled.

A referral to and an assessment of need by a social worker is required to decide what ongoing multi-agency support is required to keep them safe, healthy and well. This assessment is shared with the family and together with the social worker and supporting agencies a plan with a focus on actions and outcomes is competed and regularly reviewed.

**Indicators of Need**

**Child Developmental Needs**
- Substantial and life-long disability or health problems requiring specialist service provision
- Life threatening conditions
- Chronic or reoccurring health problems
- Increased mental health needs requiring intensive support, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Persistent and problematic involvement in alcohol and substance misuse
- Children whose behaviour has been sexually harmful
- Dysfunctional family relationships impacting on emotional well-being
- Children who regularly go missing or put themselves in danger
- Long term neglect which significantly impacts on child’s development
- Unaccompanied children
- Dangerous sexual activity and/or early teenage pregnancy
- Young people at risk of sexual exploitation through their own vulnerability or their association with others
- Multiple A & E attendances
- Persistence absence from school with or without adult acceptance
• Child in danger of permanent exclusion / has been permanently excluded. On roll but not engaging with alternative provision

Child Developmental Needs Continued...
• Associated with known criminals or high risk peer group relationships
• Concerns regarding being groomed into Child Criminal Exploitation/organised criminal groups
• Becoming violent, aggressive and anti-social behaviour and involved in criminal activity or in custody
• Difficulties in accepting/identifying race, gender, sexuality which is impacting on emotional well-being
• Impact of repeated domestic abuse incidents

Parenting Capacity
• Mental or physical health problems, learning disability or substance misuse that severely impacts on ability to provide appropriate care for child/family.
• Family / child homeless
• Pregnant care-leavers up to 25yrs where concerns exist about lifestyle and ability to provide suitable care
• Providing substantial care to a child with life-long disabilities whose needs cannot be met by additional support
• Repeated domestic abuse incidents
• Serious parent / child relationship problems which may also result in family breakdown
• History of concerns around parent’s offending behaviour
• Lack of parental cooperation is having detrimental impact on the child’s welfare and safety
• Indicators and concerns of forced marriage/honour based violence/female genital mutilation (FGM) that requires further assessment and parental/sibling disclosure of FGM within the family

Family and Environmental Factors
• All children in homeless accommodation for more than 6 months / housing places child in danger
• Serious debts / poverty impacting on ability to meet family’s basic needs, (heat, food, clothing, hygiene) and ability to care for child
• Escalating victimisation / harassment / poor quality services not meeting the needs of the family or Family is socially excluded
• Continued inconsistencies in parenting leading to significant attachment difficulties
• Family not accessing community resources/services identified for them or not entitled to benefits
• History or current problematic substance misuse (parent / sibling)
• Family involved in criminal activity
• Inaccessible housing or need for aids and adaptations
Some children are in need because they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interest of children, and gives Local Authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering / likely to suffer, significant harm.

At this threshold level, where there is a need for an immediate referral to Children’s Services and/or Humberside Police, a multi-agency enquiry led by a social worker will be undertaken to ensure children are protected and kept safe.

**Indicators of Need**

**Child Developmental Needs**

- Substantial, life-long disability, complex health needs, extreme challenging behaviour, significant learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder with safeguarding concerns
- Severe/ chronic health problems
- Acute mental or physical health need
- No educational provision
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Sexual activity under 13
- Sexual exploitation or is a victim of trafficking
- Criminal Exploitation or victim
- Causes significant harm to other children and young people through violent or sexual offending
- Endangers own life through self-harm/ substance misuse (inc alcohol)/eating disorder
- Experiences persistent discrimination due to race, sexuality, gender, culture
- Is socially isolated and lacks positive role models
Child Developmental Needs Continued...

- Alienates self from others
- Significantly distorted self-image
- Significant low self esteem
- Extremist views
- Unaccompanied asylum seeker
- Pregnancy where there have been previous child protection concerns and/or concerns about risk to unborn child arising from parental health and lifestyle
- Persistent neglect (inadequate clothing, bedding and nutrition) and/or children not achieving developmental milestones despite intensive support
- Indicators and concerns of forced marriage/honour based violence/female genital mutilation (FGM) that requires further assessment and parental/sibling disclosure of FGM within the family
- Subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) or Acceptable Behavioural Contract (ABC) or regularly appearing in court for ASB / criminal activity
- Young carer has significant responsibilities that result in neglect
- Unable to make positive choices for self
- Significant self-neglect due to substance misuse

Parenting Capacity

- Concerns that extremist views / radicalisation may/is causing a child harm
- Child/children previously subject to Child Protection Plan
- Child/children previously removed from parents care
- Families with history of statutory involvement and referrals to Social Care
- Parents/carers do not accept concerns, fail to or are unwilling to engage in extensive support offered
- Victim of crime
- Inconsistent parenting / highly critical / apathetic towards child, impairing the child’s emotional development
- Persistent domestic abuse recurring aggression, controlling behaviours and violence in the home
- Child/young person out of control in the community
- No relevant stimulation appropriate for age, may be inappropriate and harming e.g. exposure to inappropriately sexually explicit material at a young age
- Chronology of missed/cancelled appointments which are showing a significant impact on the child’s physical, mental and/or oral health
- Parents unable to sustain “good enough” parenting that is adequate and safe despite intensive support
- Parent’s mental health problems or substance misuse significantly affecting the care of the child
- Parental delusional beliefs which may harm, target or distress a child

Family and Environmental Factors

- Involved in serious criminal acts that may impact on the child e.g. drug dealing, ASB
- Chronic substance misuse
- Persistent anti-social behaviour within family
- Extreme poverty/debt impacting on ability to care for child/children
- Chronic and long term unemployment due to significant lack of basic skills or long standing issues such as substance misuse / offending
- Accommodation places the child in danger
Family and Environmental Factors Continued...

- No fixed abode or homeless
- Family socially excluded
- Persistent transient families
- Family do not access any services
- Family refuses appropriate services

Worried about a child?

If you are worried that a child may have been harmed or may be at risk of harm, make an online referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

If you have any safeguarding queries, please call the MASH on Tel: 01472 326292 (option 2) (Mon – Fri 8.30am – 5.00pm) or e-mail MASH@nelincs.gov.uk. To speak to somebody outside of office hours, please call the Emergency Duty Team on the same number.

If a child is in immediate danger call 999

For further advice and guidance on North East Lincolnshire’s thresholds or safeguarding arrangements please contact:

The Safeguarding Children Partnership

3 Town Hall Square
Grimsby
DN31 1HX

Tel: 01472 326118