North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
Together for All - Thresholds of Need 2019
Introduction

"Working together in North East Lincolnshire, all children and families are safe and happy, with hope and ambition for their future"

This document details how and when to take action to help children if the need arises. It has been developed to help all who work with individual children and/or their families to raise concerns and respond to needs with the best type of support. Support can be provided by any agency, professional, parent/carer, volunteers, children/young person and other family members and should be bespoke to the individual child’s needs.

All children need a secure, loving base to support their development to grow into resilient adults who contribute to society. If they are not nurtured research tells us that this will reduce their ability to reach their full potential in life.

The “Working Together 2018” government guidance specifies that: “In order to safeguard children and to achieve the best outcomes, children and families should receive services in a coordinated way”. This is a shared responsibility between the 3 safeguarding partners (Humberside Police, NHS North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group and North East Lincolnshire Council) and other relevant agencies.

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of whether they live independently of their family or not (as detailed under the Children Act 1989). This includes unborn children and young people with a disability up to the age of 24 years.

This document outlines:
- The thresholds for access to services to support actions required to improve outcomes for children
- The crossing points between early help, safeguarding and child protection
- A focus on getting in early with the right help as outlined in the Prevention and Early Help Strategy

Prevention and Early Help Strategy

Whilst we understand that the majority of families thrive and do well, without the need for support, from time to time, there are some families who require some additional help. We know that there are a number of vulnerable children, young people and families in North East Lincolnshire who are more likely to experience difficulties in their lives and may need support to help overcome them.

Prevention and early help is defined as responding as soon as possible to the needs of children, young people and families who are ‘vulnerable’ to poor life outcomes. It aims to put services in place and offer support before things get worse, to help the family move on from their difficulties and lead happier and healthier lives. Prevention and early help therefore aims to promote better long term life outcomes for families and in doing so, also prevent them needing more intensive and higher cost provision in the future, such as children’s social care or the criminal justice system.

For more information please visit: www.safernel.co.uk/staying-safe-and-prevention/
Our Approach to Support and Safety

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”

In North East Lincolnshire our assessment model includes the Signs of Safety framework as a methodology of practice across the threshold of need. Signs of Safety is a strengths based solution focused model which enables assessment of risk and concerns allowing identification of solutions.

The model considers 4 key questions when assessing a family:

1. **What are we worried about** – we discuss harm and complicating factors
2. **What’s working well** – we talk about existing strengths and the ways in which people positively contribute to the child’s safety
3. **How worried are we on a scale of 0-10?** - enables all to make a judgement on the situation
4. **What needs to happen?** - Who will do what in everyday life to ensure worries/wellbeing concerns are dealt with?

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.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership has adopted a new structure which will strengthen the way in which partners work together whilst continuing to use the Signs of Safety framework. The Signs of Safety framework is designed to enable the participation of children, young people and their families to identify strengths we can build on. Where there are worries, we particularly look at whether the child has experienced harm, the evidence for this, its impact on the child and if there are issues that complicate the situation. We then together consider what the family, practitioners and/or children’s social care can do to support the family to keep children safe, happy and well.

Children, young people and families views and lived experiences are at the centre of all we do across the threshold of need to safeguard their welfare and where possible prevent harm before their needs become more complex.

It is important that all who work with children, families and adults are able to make an assessment of needs and provide support as soon as a problem emerges. This may be at any point in a child’s life from pre-birth through to adulthood.

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**Training**

Safeguarding Children Board training is available on Signs of Safety

[www.safernel.co.uk/work-force-development/lscb-training/](http://www.safernel.co.uk/work-force-development/lscb-training/)
Principles and Practice - How we work with Children and Families

It is important that all practitioners working with children and families understand and operate within a common set of principles which underpin good practice. These principles are informed by our Creating Strong Communities practice model.

Our Principles:

1. Keeping children and young people safe and well is the focus of everything that we do.
2. We ensure that everyone has a voice, is listened to and respected.
3. We all take ownership and responsibility for safeguarding and we challenge and support each other, inviting scrutiny from others too.
4. We all share information and knowledge, learning from each other and so improve our work continuously.
5. We spot issues early and face them together, with bravery and courage.

We are focused, listening, accountable, improving and brave.
Our vision for Children in North East Lincolnshire:

Our Partnership’s vision is to work together to ensure safeguarding arrangements within place are proactive, robust, effective and clear. We will also offer help and support at the earliest point and to enable children, young people and families to have positive outcomes, where they reach their full potential.
Locality Areas

North East Lincolnshire Council have in place ways to support a joined up partnership early help approach through their 4 locality family hub areas.

Our approach to coordinating prevention and early help activity is within each of these locality areas. For further information and support about accessing prevention and early help services please go to: https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/children-and-families/family-hubs/

Safeguarding Children Procedures
For more information on Safeguarding procedures go to: www.safernel.co.uk/local-safeguarding-childrens-board/policies-and-procedures/
What do we mean by Thresholds?

Practitioners generally describe services using tiers of need. This language can often make little sense to children and families which we need to be aware and careful of.

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.

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.

North East Lincolnshire Thresholds of Need and Response

If you are worried about a child contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on: (01472) 326292 or e-mail: MASH@nelincs.gov.uk
Thresholds of Need in North East Lincolnshire

For guidance on the indicators of need that may present at each level please refer to the Levels of Need Guidance 2019. Please note that each level builds on the previous level and the services involved.

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<tr>
<th>Level 1 – Universal Services, Prevention and Self Help</th>
<th>Level 2 – Targeted and Co-ordinated Early Help</th>
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<td>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.</td>
<td>Early Help is about empowering families to come to their own solutions with a little extra help. This is the responsibility of all organisations that work with children and families and can be offered by a plethora of different services. Where an agency feels they need support from other agencies to help a family (and are clear about the help that is needed) a contact form can be used to request additional support from across the 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.</td>
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<td>What we mean: GP, Schools, Nurseries, Family Hubs, Health Visitors, Childminders, Midwives, Voluntary Sector, Housing Services, Police, Probation</td>
<td>What we mean: All the services involved in Level 1, with the addition of: Health Services, Early Intervention Policing teams, NSPCC, Families First Practitioners, Early Help Assessment, Family Network Meetings</td>
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<th>Level 3 – Child in Need (CIN)</th>
<th>Level 4 – Specialist Assessment (immediate safeguarding)</th>
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<td>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. What we mean: All the services involved in Levels 1 and 2, with the addition of: Social Workers, Section 17 of the Children's Act Child in Need, Child in Need assessment, plans and meetings, Complex additional needs</td>
<td>In specialist assessment, the threshold of significant harm informs compulsory intervention in family life and the best interest of the child(ren). Under the Children Act 1989, “significant harm” is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. When children are thought to have suffered or be at risk of significant harm, there is a need to immediately refer concerns to children’s social care and/or Humberside Police. A multi-agency enquiry led by a social worker is needed to ensure children are protected and kept safe. What we mean: All the services involved in Levels 1, 2 and 3, with the addition of: At immediate risk of physical, sexual, emotional harm or neglect, Strategy meetings, Core Group Meetings, Child Protection Conference, Legal intervention, Section 47 of the Children's Act, Multi-agency involvement</td>
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*Early Help and Safeguarding are Everyone’s Responsibility!*

*If a case escalates through the levels the support builds too*
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

Responsibilities of all agencies:

All agencies are responsible for fully assessing and evidencing the need / concerns prior to referring to MASH (if applicable). This applies, both when a family have been offered targeted early help where needs persist, and when needs are assessed as meeting the CIN threshold.

Level 2 – Targeted and Co-ordinated Early Help – All agencies are responsible for helping families by empowering them to find their own solutions with a little extra help. This is the responsibility of all organisations that work with children and families and can be offered by a plethora of different services. Where an agency feels they need support from other agencies to help a family (and are clear about the help that is needed) a contact form can be used to request additional support from across the partnership. When a multi-agency assessment is required to inform planning and ascertain if there needs to be a coordinated, targeted response to support a family at an early help level an Early Help Assessment and Plan must be completed by the referring agency and sent to ehbusiss@nelincs.gov.uk.

Level 3 – Child in Need (CIN) - To report a child welfare concern, the referring agency should complete a contact form and send it to MASH who will arrange for a social worker to commence a full assessment at MASH@nelincs.gov.uk.

Level 4 – Specialist Assessment (immediate safeguarding) - To report a child welfare or child protection concern, the referring agency should complete a contact form and send it to MASH at MASH@nelincs.gov.uk who will arrange for a social worker to commence a full assessment or call 01472 326292 (option 2). If a child is in immediate danger call 999.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”

North East Lincolnshire Council has a single point of access for all enquiries relating to immediate concerns for the welfare of a child or because it hasn’t been possible to improve life for the child by working alongside the family with an Early Help plan. When a worry or concern about a child or family has been identified, the MASH provides information advice and guidance, to the public, as well as professionals, ensuring that the right level of support is established first time, across all levels of the threshold of concern model.

All enquiries will be triaged by a senior social worker and a decision made based on the information received. This will include ‘signposting’ to other services, advice and guidance given to families & professionals on next steps, or support to children in need or in need of protection.

On occasion it is necessary to formally intervene in families where a child’s safety cannot be ensured, and to co-ordinate a multi-agency response to safeguard those children at risk from harm. Support to children and families will be accessed through a social worker within the Children’s Assessment and Safeguarding Service who as well as immediate intervention, will assess, monitor, review and provide services to children in need, children in need of protection and children looked after.
**Recording and Information Sharing**

Knowing when and how to share information is not always easy, but it is important to get it right. Children and families need to feel reassured that their confidentiality is respected. In most cases you will only share information about them with their consent, but there may be circumstances when you need to override this. The most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to safeguard and protect a child.

**The 7 Key Principles of Information Sharing**

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<td><strong>1. Necessary and proportionate</strong></td>
<td>• When taking decisions about what information to share, you should consider how much information you need to release. Not sharing more data than is necessary to be of use is a key element of the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, and you should consider the impact of disclosing information on the information subject and any third parties. Information must be proportionate to the need and level of risk</td>
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<td><strong>2. Relevant</strong></td>
<td>• Only information that is relevant to the purposes should be shared with those who need it. This allows others to do their job effectively and make informed decisions</td>
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<td><strong>3. Adequate</strong></td>
<td>• Information should be accurate and up to date and should clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. If the information is historical then this should be explained</td>
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<td><strong>5. Timely</strong></td>
<td>• Information should be shared in a timely fashion to reduce the risk of missed opportunities to offer support and protection to a child. Timeliness is key in emergency situations and it may not be appropriate to seek consent for information sharing if it could cause delays and therefore place a child or young person at increased risk of harm. Practitioners should ensure that sufficient information is shared, as well as consider the urgency with which to share it</td>
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<td><strong>6. Secure</strong></td>
<td>• Wherever possible, information should be shared in an appropriate, secure way. Practitioners must always follow their organisation’s policy on security for handling personal information</td>
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<td><strong>7. Record</strong></td>
<td>• Information sharing decisions should be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. If the decision is to share, reasons should be cited including what information has been shared and with whom, in line with organisational procedures. If the decision is not to share, it is good practice to record the reasons for this decision and discuss them with the requester. In line with each organisation’s own retention policy, the information should not be kept any longer than is necessary. In some rare circumstances, this may be indefinitely, but if this is the case, there should be a review process scheduled at regular intervals to ensure data is not retained where it is unnecessary to do so</td>
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For more advice on recording and information sharing go to: [http://www.safernel.co.uk/information-for-practitioners/safeguarding-children/](http://www.safernel.co.uk/information-for-practitioners/safeguarding-children/)
Consent to Referral, Assessment and Intervention

Conversations about worries should take place with the family first. This enables practitioners to identify if the family shares their worries and assess what help they might need.

In North East Lincolnshire all practitioners use the Signs of Safety model for assessing the needs of a child and/or family. Should a family need support and they are willing to work with practitioners then they will need to give explicit consent to allow you to make a referral for the support that they need.

Consent means that a family will be fully informed about the information which is to be passed on, who that can be shared with and why.

It is good practice to seek consent to make any referral, however, there are some circumstances where consent is not required to ensure children are protected. For example you do not need consent if having a conversation with the family might place the child or someone else at increased risk of harm, or if doing so could undermine a criminal investigation. This includes making a child protection referral for a child who has made allegations of physical or sexual assault by a parent or carer.

If a practitioner is in doubt as to whether consent is needed the concern can be raised anonymously to the MASH who will be able to advise whether consent is needed.

Professional Disagreement and Escalation

If you do not agree with the decision that has been made on a case, the concern and conflict resolution escalation procedure is designed to assist and guide all practitioners working with children and young people in North East Lincolnshire in finding a resolution. This may be found on the Safeguarding Children Partnership website by following this link: http://www.safernel.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NEL-Safeguarding-Escalation-Procedure-FINAL.pdf
Families that we struggle to engage with

The quality of the relationship between a practitioner and the child/family has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the engagement and progress made. The children and families workforce aims to work effectively, hearing and responding to the voice of families and children.

Safeguarding and child protection work should always be done in partnership with families when a child’s welfare is concerned. It needs to be recognised that not all parents/carers will agree with concerns identified by practitioners and they may refuse an assessment, Early Help or Child in Need support or to participate in developing a family network plan to address worries and concerns. If this refusal is likely to lead to the child being at risk of significant harm then the matter may be dealt with under child protection procedures.

If there are difficulties in engagement between services and families over a long time this leads to an incomplete picture of who is promoting the child’s welfare and keeping them safe. Under these circumstances the practitioners involved can hold a professionals meeting (Collaborative Support and Allocation Meeting (CSAM)), often in a Family Hub, to decide the level of concern and plan a response to promote the child’s welfare. The purpose of the meeting is to share worries and concerns, and map what information is or is not available. It is also important to consider whether a particular agency has a better relationship with the parents/carers and could take the lead in engaging with them.

Each meeting should develop a work plan to ensure the safety of the child and professionals involved. It will also identify who is going to visit the family, what information needs to be obtained and how that information will be shared and when. A subsequent meeting will need to review the effectiveness of the work plan. If progress is not made the case should be considered for escalation into children’s social care. If in doubt, please contact the MASH team on 01472 326292 (option 2).

Further Advice on Families that we struggle to engage with


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