



Early Help

2015

CHILD PROTECTION – SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE’S RESPONSIBILITY.

THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT COVER CONCERNS WITH REGARD TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN CURRENT DANGER OR AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM IF YOU ARE REPORTING A CHILD IN DANGER OR AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM PLEASE FOLLOW ALL WALES CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES.

RISK TO THE LIFE OF A CHILD OR THE LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS IMMEDIATE HARM REQUIRES ACTION TO SECURE THEIR IMMEDIATE SAFETY

REPORTING PROCEDURE

“If any person has knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a child is suffering, has suffered or is likely to be at risk of harm, it is their responsibility, to ensure that the concerns are referred to Social Services or the Police, who have statutory duty and powers to investigate and intervene when necessary.”

Staff should first discuss their concerns with their manager/designated member of staff who will then make the appropriate referral. Staff should not worry about being mistaken about concerns regarding a child/young person’s welfare, as they will always be taken seriously by the statutory agencies.

It is imperative that staff do not conduct their own investigations as this can have serious implications for any subsequent Police or Social Services enquiry.

The initial referral should be made by telephone in the first instance to the **Children’s Services (Safeguarding and Family Support) Assessment Team on 01656 642320** and followed up within 48 hours with a written referral.

Reporting concerns out of office hours contact the emergency duty team on **01443 743665**.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT (All Wales Child Protection Procedures)

“A child is abused or neglected when somebody inflicts harm, or fails to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection via an inter-agency Child Protection plan.”

There are four categories of abuse:

- ❑ Physical
- ❑ Emotional
- ❑ Neglect
- ❑ Sexual

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in order to protect children. Significant harm is defined in the legislation as ill treatment or the impairment of health and development. It describes the effects of sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect, or a combination of different types. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 section 47 (1) (b) to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. A single, serious event of abuse, such as an incident of sexual abuse or violent assault, might be the cause of significant harm to a child. However, more frequently significant harm occurs as a result of a longstanding compilation of events, which interrupt, change or damage a child's physical and psychological development. The significant harm resulting from the corrosive effect of long-term abuse is likely to have a profound impact on the future outcomes for the child.

Domestic Violence

Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 amends the Children Act 1989 by expanding the definition of "harm" to include "seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another." Although not all will be affected in the same way, living with domestic violence can adversely affect children's healthy development, relationships, behaviour and emotional wellbeing. The risk of harm to a child should always be considered in cases where domestic violence is identified.

EARLY HELP

INTRODUCTION

There are 3 early Help Hubs (EHH) in Bridgend. Within each hub there are a range of professionals who can offer support to children and their families. If a professional identifies that a child or their family needs additional support they should submit a 'Request for Help' to the Early Help Administration team, using the email earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk.

USING A THRESHOLDS OF NEED MODEL TO SUPPORT PRACTICE

Threshold levels of Intervention act as a guide to professional decision making aiming to maximise opportunities for the right level of support to be offered at the right time, to ensure that a child or young person's needs are met in a proportionate, robust and timely way, improving life chances and keep children and young people safe. The thresholds should always be viewed as a clear and fluid continuum, responsive to changing circumstances and environments through which children may travel both down and up and will on occasion be accessing services across the continuum, as need determines.

It is also intended that this model be used to enable practitioners and their partner agencies to communicate their concerns about children using a common format, language and understanding of levels of need, concern and/or risk for children, young people and their families.

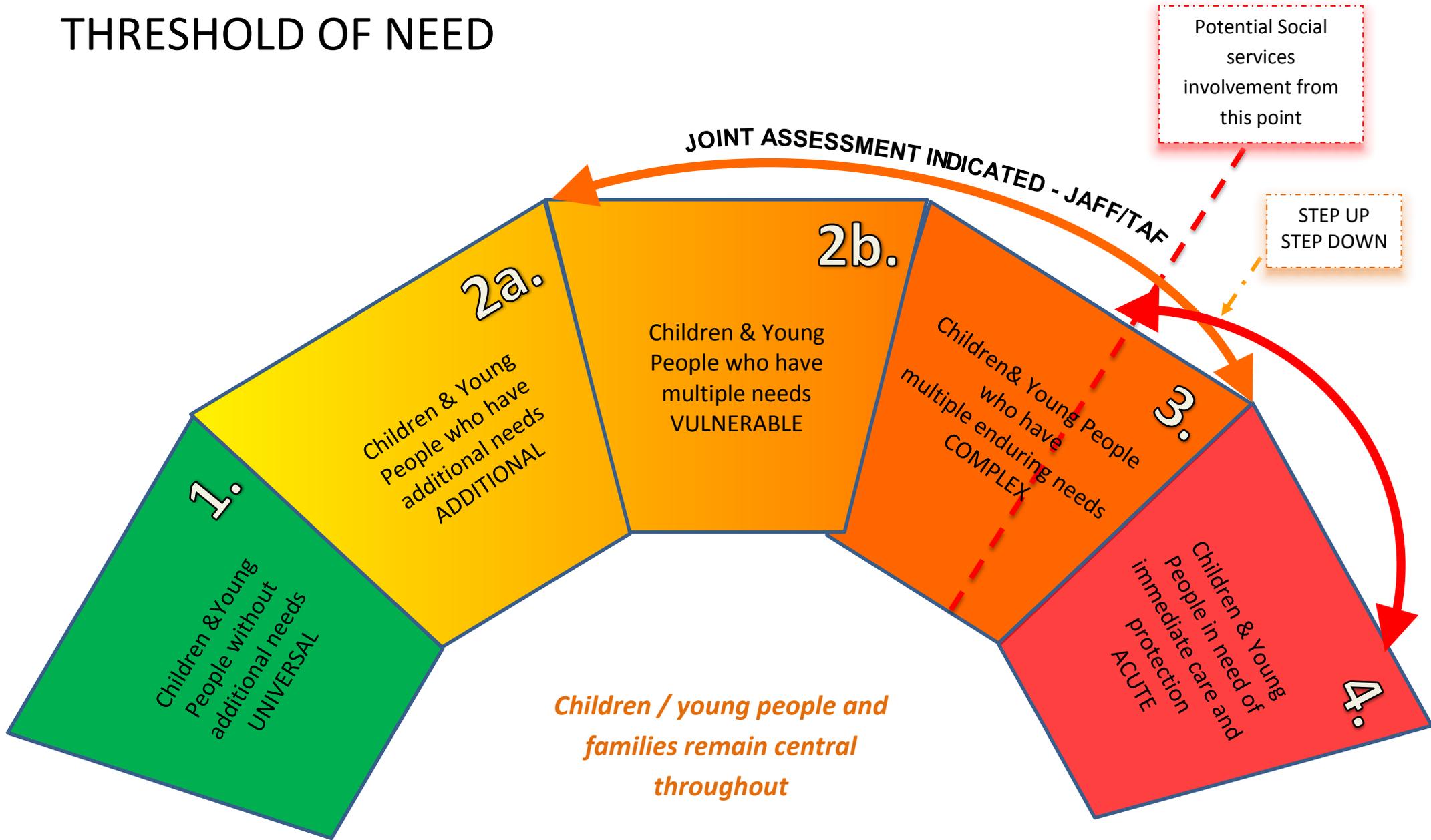
USING THE MODEL TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Having identified an overview of a child and family's needs, practitioners will be able to use the detailed threshold examples to reach an understanding of the most appropriate services to respond to identified need this is expected to aid consistent and rationalised decision making.

JOINT ASSESSMENT FAMILY FRAMEWORK – JAFF

The JAFF has been redesigned to interface with the Assessment Framework domains used throughout children's services. Incorporating a balanced strengths and needs approach. Referral information has been restructured to encourage anyone with concerns or worries about a child or young person to complete a request for help form.

THRESHOLD OF NEED



THRESHOLD OF NEED

UNIVERSAL

1.

At this level, support is 'universal', which means that it is generally available to all children and young people, such as schools, leisure centres, GP surgeries. Children and young people are making good overall progress across all areas of development. It is likely they live in a protective environment where their needs are well understood and met. These children need no additional support other than those universally available within public services.

a) ADDITIONAL

Children and young people who need additional support, this may relate to their health, educational or social development. Support is required to improve the chances of reaching their full potential, if not identified and addressed at an early stage, these issues may escalate and become increased concerns under level 2b or 3.

2.

b) VULNERABLE

Children, young people and their families have a range of needs. Multi-agency support is required to reduce levels of vulnerability and/or to reduce risk taking behaviours. If needs are not met then children's health, social development, or educational attainment may be significantly impaired. A Joint Assessment (JAFF) is required along with the appointment of a Lead Professional who will coordinate the support through the establishment of a Team around the Family (TAF).

COMPLEX

3.

Children with complex needs which appear chronic and enduring, these children are considered highly vulnerable or living in the greatest level of adversity. The needs of many of these children and young people can be met through a Joint assessment and plan (JAFF) with a lead professional coordinating support. There will be occasions when a child or young person requires a STEP UP* specialist assessment and support from a range of specialist agencies.

** See STEP UP Procedure*

ACUTE

4.

Children in need of immediate care and protection, this is the most urgent category and always requires an immediate referral to children's social care. These are children and young people whose care is so compromised as to place them at risk of significant harm and in need of a Child Protection Plan, and all children and young people already subject of a Child Protection Plan.

This level includes children and young people who are identified as at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority, and all children and young people already looked after by the local authority. These children/young people will be subject to the 'STEP DOWN' process once safety is secured. **See STEP DOWN Procedure*

CONTINUUM THRESHOLD FOR LEVELS 1 TO 4

Level 1 No additional needs, requiring universal service support

Universal Example Indicators

Developmental Needs

Learning / Education

- Achieving key stages
- Good attendance at school/college/training
- No barriers to learning
- Planned progression beyond statutory school age

Health

- Good physical health with age appropriate developmental milestones including speech and language

Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Identity

- Good mental health and psychological well-being
- Good quality early attachments, confident in social situations
- Knowledgeable about the effects of crime and antisocial behaviour
- Knowledgeable about sex and relationships and consistent use of contraception if sexually active

Family and Social Relationships

- Stable families where parents are able to meet the child's needs

Self-Care and Independence

- Age appropriate independent living skills

Family and Environmental Factors

Family History and Well-Being

- Supportive family relationships

Housing, Employment and Finance

- Child fully supported financially
- Good quality stable housing

Social and Community Resources

- Good social and friendship networks exist
- Safe and secure environment
- Access to consistent and positive activities

Parents and Carers

Basic Care, Safety and Protection

- Parents able to provide care for child's needs

Emotional Warmth and Stability

- Parents provide secure and caring parenting

Guidance Boundaries and Stimulation

- Parents provide appropriate guidance and boundaries to help child develop appropriate values

Assessment Process

No joint assessment required

Children should access universal services in the usual way

Key universal services that may provide support at this level:

Education

Early Years Health visiting service

School nursing

GP

Play Services

Youth/Community resources

Police

Housing

Level 2a-2b Low to Vulnerable Targeted Support

Low to Vulnerable - Example Indicators

Developmental Needs

Learning / Education

- Occasional truanting or non-attendance
- School action or school action plus
- Identified languages and communication difficulties
- Reduced access to books, toys or educational materials
- Few or no qualifications
- NEET

Health

- Slow in reaching developmental milestones
- Missing immunizations or checks
- Minor health problems which can be maintained in a mainstream school

Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Identity

- Low level mental health or emotional issues requiring intervention
- Pro offending behaviour and attitudes
- Early onset of offending behaviour or activity (10-14)
- Coming to notice of police through low level offending
- Expressing wish to become pregnant at young age
- Early onset of sexual activity (13-14)
- Sexual active (15+) with inconsistent use of contraception
- Low level substance misuse (current or historical)
- Poor self esteem

Self-Care and Independence

- Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills that increase vulnerability to social exclusion

Family and Environmental Factors

Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being

- Parents/carers have relationship difficulties which may affect the child
- Parents request advice to manage their child's behaviour
- Children affected by difficult family relationships or bullying

Housing, Employment and Finance

- Over crowding
- Families affected by low income or unemployment

Social and Community Resources

- Insufficient facilities to meet needs e.g. transport or access issues
- Family require advice regarding social exclusion/discrimination/hate crimes
- Associating with antisocial or criminally active peers
- Limited access to contraceptive and sexual health advice, information and services

Parents and Carers

Basic Care, Safety and Protection

- Inconsistent care e.g. inappropriate child care arrangements or young inexperienced parent

Emotional Warmth and Stability

- Inconsistent parenting, but development not significantly impaired

Guidance Boundaries and Stimulation

- Lack of response to concerns raised regarding child

Assessment Process

2a. No Joint Assessment required where additional needs can be met through universal and single targeted agency intervention.

E.g. Programmes aiming to build self-esteem and enhance social/life skills
Positive activities/nurture groups, parenting programmes/ group

Early years or in school assistance to reach expected milestones

2b. A Joint Assessment should be completed with the child & family when multiple issues are identified requiring a multi-agency response

Key agencies that may provide support at this level:

Early Help Services.

Flying Start

Health, education

Educational psychology

Voluntary & community services

Level 3 Complex Additional needs requiring integrated targeted support JAFF/may require STEP UP

Medium Risk - Example Indicators

Developmental Needs

Learning / Education

- Frequent Short term exclusions or at risk of permanent exclusion, persistent truanting
- Statement of special educational needs
- No access to books, toys or educational materials

Health

- Disability requiring specialist support to be maintained in mainstream setting
- Physical and emotional development raising significant concerns
- Chronic/recurring health problems
- Missed appointments – routine and non-routine

Social, Emotional, Behavioural, Identity

- Under 16 and has had (or caused) a previous pregnancy ending in still birth, abortion or miscarriage
- 16+ and has had (or caused) 2 or more previous pregnancies or is a teenage parent
- Under 18 and pregnant
- Coming to notice of police on a regular basis but not progressed
- Received fixed penalty notice, reprimand, final warning or triage of diversionary intervention
- Evidence of regular/frequent drug use which may be combined with other risk factors
- Evidence of escalation of substance use
- Evidence of changing attitudes and more disregard to risk
- Mental health issues requiring specialist intervention in the community
- Significant low self esteem
- Victim of crime including discrimination

Self-Care and Independence

- Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills, likely to impair development

Family and Environmental Factors

Family and Social Relationships and Family Well-Being

- History of domestic violence
- Risk of relationship breakdown with parent or carer and the child
- Young carers , Privately fostered, children of prisoners, periods of LAC
- Child appears to have undifferentiated attachments

Housing, Employment and Finance

- Severe overcrowding, temporary accommodation, homeless, unemployment

Social and Community Resources

- Family require support services as a result of social exclusion
- Parents socially excluded, no access to local facilities

Parents and Carers

Basic Care, Safety and Protection

- Physical care or supervision of child is inadequate
- Parental learning disability, parental substance misuse or mental health impacting on parent's ability to meet the needs of the child
- Parental non compliance

Emotional Warmth and Stability

- Inconsistent parenting impairing emotional or behavioural development

Guidance Boundaries and Stimulation

- Parent provides inconsistent boundaries or responses

Assessment Process

Joint assessment may be used as supporting evidence for 'STEP UP' to specialist / targeted support if indicated

Statutory and/or specialist services assessment (NB The Joint assessment does NOT diminish or replace the need for statutory or specialist assessment)

A Joint assessment may be indicated to support child/family STEPPING DOWN' from acute/complex threshold

Key agencies that may provide support at this level:

Early Help Hub Services

Children's social care

Other statutory service e.g. SEN services. Specialist health and/or disability services

YISP

Youth Offending Team

Targeted drug and alcohol services

CAMHS

Specialist family support services

Voluntary & community services

Services at universal level

Level 4 Acute needs requiring specialist or statutory integrated response Initial Assessment - S17 Child in Need OR child protection Section 47. STEP DOWN as needs/risk diminish.

High Risk - Example Indicators

Developmental Needs

Learning / Education

- Chronic non-attendance, truanting
- Permanently excluded, frequent exclusions or no education.

Provision

- No parental support for education

Health

- High level disability which cannot be maintained in a mainstream setting
- Serious physical and emotional health problems

Social, Emotional, Behavioural,

- Behaviour resulting in serious risk to themselves/ child and others
- Failure to address serious (re)offending behaviour.
- Known to be part of gang
- Complex mental health issues requiring specialist interventions
- At identified risk of sexually exploitation
- Teenage parent under 16
- Under 13 engaged in sexual activity
- Frequently missing from home for concerning periods of time
- Young people experiencing current harm through their use of substances
- Young people with complicated substance problems requiring specific interventions and/or child protection
- Young people with complex needs whose issues are exacerbated by substance use

Family and Environmental Factors

Family History and Well-Being

- Information resulting in suspicion of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect
- Child witnessing domestic violence/abuse
- Parents are unable to care for the child
- Children who need to be looked after outside of their own family

Housing, Employment and Finance

- No fixed abode or homeless.
- Family living in extreme poverty

Social and Community Resources

- Child or family need immediate protection due to community threat/exploitation/ harassment / discrimination

Parents and Carers

Basic Care, Safety and Protection

- Parent is unable to meet child's basic needs

Emotional Warmth and Stability

- Parents unable to recognise or respond to emotional needs.
- High risk of family breakdown

Guidance Boundaries and Stimulation

- Not observed/Inappropriate/harsh & Inconsistent

Assessment Process

Additional services:

A Joint assessment may be used as supporting evidence to gain specialist / targeted support

Statutory or specialist services assessment (NB A Joint assessment does NOT diminish or replace the need for a statutory or specialist assessment)

Key agencies that may provide support at this level:

Children's Social Care inc Looked After Children's provision

Specialist health/ disability and/or Education services

Police

Domestic Abuse Services

Youth Offending Team

CAMHS

Specialist Family Intervention services

Voluntary & community services

Services at universal level

R.A.G RATING

The GREEN, AMBER, RED, indicators are used at referral / incident stage to assess risk and allocate services appropriately and proportionately to presenting need.

Levels of Need	Level 2a - Single Agency Response	Level 2b Multi-Agency Response	Level 3 – Complex	Level 4 – Acute
Who	2a & 2b. Children with low level additional needs that are likely to be short-term but are not being met. Child's needs are not clear, not known or not being met. Children and their families who have a range of needs requiring multi-agency coordination.		Complex needs are likely to require intervention from integrated targeted services and/or specialist services. High level of unmet needs. More complex level 3 may meet the 'STEP UP' threshold for Children's Social Care intervention.	Acute needs requiring statutory intervention from Children's Social care. This includes meeting the required level of threshold for child protection intervention
Features: Children and Young People	From households where parents/carers are under stress, possibly impacting on their parenting capacity. Children or Young People whose health & development may be adversely be affected without multi-agency intervention. 2b Joint assessment required; Lead Professional identified, TAF process initiated.		Children and Young People who are unlikely to enjoy a reasonable standard of development or health and are at risk of negative outcomes without the provision of co-ordinated targeted services. Children and Young People at risk of offending. Children and Young People Missing from Education. Integrated, Joint assessment (JAFF) required; Lead Professional identified, TAF process initiated. 'STEP UP' to Children's Social care maybe required.	Children and Young People who have suffered or are at risk of suffering significant harm. Where there are serious concerns about his/her health and development or deemed to be suffering neglect and/or abuse.
Possible Indicators: Children and Young People	Slow in reaching developmental milestones. Unanticipated, dramatic or sustained behaviour change. Health issues/problems which can be maintained in mainstream education.		Frequent short-term exclusions at risk of permanent exclusions, persistent truanting. Psychological/emotional/social development raising significant concerns. Chronic/recurring health problems requiring specialist input.	Chronic non-attendance, truanting. No parental support for education. High level of need which cannot be maintained in a mainstream setting. Information/evidence of physical/sexual/emotional abuse/exploitation and/or neglect.

STEP UP/STEP DOWN

As we know the needs of children & young people and their families are not static, these may escalate e.g. in the face of a crisis or unanticipated incident, equally they may diminish, e.g. as a result of a successful intervention, an increase in protective factors, reduction in risk and enhancement of resilience.

Evidence tells us in such circumstances a seamless integrated transition between thresholds is indicated, which can assist a family to maintain positive momentum or indeed manage a crisis or incident, without additionally and instantly losing the input and support of the lower threshold agencies.

The STEP UP/STEP is underpinned by the fundamental principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The Early Help Hubs (EHH), Child In Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), and Looked After Children (LAC) systems are all multi-agency and multi-disciplinary processes which differ only in terms of their threshold focus.

PRINCIPLES ACROSS THRESHOLDS OF NEED

- ✓ The child's welfare and safety is paramount.
- ✓ Children and young people's welfare is everyone's responsibility.
- ✓ Investment in early intervention and preventative programmes to achieve sustainable positive outcomes for children and young people requires the commitment and participation of all agencies.
- ✓ When a child's needs change, all services need to ensure that existing support including assessments undertaken are integrated and facilitate a seamless transition between thresholds of need.
- ✓ Intervention and planning is underpinned by a child centred, holistic assessment with a balanced focus on both the needs and strengths of children young people and their families