

## Practitioners Guide to Threshold Criteria for Children in Need and in Need of Protection

This document is produced by the Reading Local Safeguarding Children Board to promote a shared responsibility to meet the safeguarding needs of children and young people.

This document forms part of a more comprehensive set of guidance notes which can be found on the LSCB website ([www.readinglscb.org.uk/information-professionals/threshold-criteria/](http://www.readinglscb.org.uk/information-professionals/threshold-criteria/)). This is a guide only and should not be read as a definitive list of risk factors - you must use your professional experience and if you feel a child/young person is at significant risk, you should make a referral.

Our thresholds are referred to as 'Levels' and we endeavour to be consistent, but occasionally colleagues refer to the different levels of need/support as tiers. The one page guide describes three levels of need, starting at level 2 'Additional Needs'. Level 1 'No Additional Needs' is not described in this document but is included in the Reading Threshold Guidance.

Each level is broken down into three sections based on the standard Government 'framework for assessment of children in need and their families' (see diagram below). Under each section we have grouped the risk factors to enable you to navigate the document more easily and track/compare increasing levels of risk.



Throughout this document any references to child, also include unborn children and young people.

**Children & Young People's Disability Team Threshold Criteria 0-18** - based on the definition of disability set out in the Children Act 1989: 'A child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed.'

Substantial could mean considerable or significant factors that are life changing or limiting, and might include issues to do with risk and dependency. Permanent means existing indefinitely and not expected to improve.

For more information about the LSCB, please see our website: [www.readinglscb.org.uk/](http://www.readinglscb.org.uk/)

**Practitioners Guide to Threshold Criteria for Children in Need and in Need of Protection**

	LEVEL 2 - Additional Needs	LEVEL 3 - Complex and Multiple Needs	LEVEL 4 - Acute Needs
	<p>Some children will have additional needs, they may be showing early signs of abuse and / or neglect and their needs may be unclear, unknown or unmet.</p>	<p>The children are 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 children who are disabled. They may require longer term intervention from statutory, specialist or integrated targeted services.</p>	<p>These are children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm, abuse and neglect, and this is the threshold for child protection enquiries</p>
Development of baby (born or unborn), child or young person	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate diet e.g. no breakfast</li> <li>Developmental milestones unlikely to be met without the provision of additional support services</li> <li>Missing immunisations/checks</li> <li>Regular accidents or A&amp;E attendance, persistent minor health problems</li> <li>Language and communication difficulties</li> <li>Concerns regarding/not addressing, dental hygiene</li> </ul> <p><b>Education and Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some identified learning need</li> <li>Home/school links not well established</li> <li>At risk of, or receiving regular fixed term exclusions</li> <li>At risk of permanent exclusion</li> <li>Patterns of limited attendance at their education setting</li> <li>Limited participation of young person in education, employment or training, or not in education, employment or training</li> <li>Access or risk of access to inappropriate internet material</li> <li>Limited access to toys and books</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional and Behavioural Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting to show difficulty expressing empathy</li> <li>Responds inappropriately to boundaries</li> <li>Child is overfriendly or withdrawn</li> <li>Low risk substance misuse</li> <li>Low level mental health or emotional issues requiring intervention</li> <li>Emerging anti-social behaviour and/or low level offending</li> <li>Regularly or openly expressing anti-social attitudes</li> <li>Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills that increase vulnerability to social exclusion</li> <li>Age inappropriate sexual activity</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some difficulties in family relationships impacting on behaviour</li> <li>Emerging concerns around attachment</li> <li>Age inappropriate caring responsibilities</li> <li>May be perpetuating or experiencing bullying</li> <li>Several episodes of over 16 year old seeking emergency contraception in a short time frame</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child has some chronic/recurring health problems e.g. nappy rash</li> <li>Weight gain or loss becoming a cause for concern</li> <li>Limited or restricted diet/access to food</li> <li>Serious delay in achieving physical and other developmental milestones, raising significant concerns</li> <li>Increasingly frequent and unexplained accidents</li> <li>Child with a disability in need of assessment and support to access appropriate specialist services</li> </ul> <p><b>Education and Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chronic non-attendance, not in education (under 16) or permanently excluded</li> <li>Regular underachievement causing concern at school/nursery</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional and Behavioural Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health issues emerging e.g. conduct; ADHD; anxiety; depression; self harming</li> <li>Child/young person finds it difficult to cope or express emotions e.g. anger, frustration, sadness.</li> <li>Child subject to persistent discrimination</li> <li>Demonstrates significantly low self esteem</li> <li>Moderate risk of substance misuse</li> <li>Child missing from home and concerns raised about their physical and emotional safety and welfare</li> <li>Failure or inability to address serious (re)offending behaviour, or continuous breaches of curfew/order with other risk taking behaviour, that impact on their welfare and safety</li> <li>Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to impair development</li> <li>At risk of being drawn into extremism</li> <li>Unsafe sexual activity/under 16 year old seeking emergency contraception</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor peer relationships and/or difficulty sustaining relationships</li> <li>At risk of sexual exploitation</li> <li>Teenage pregnancy (under 16 years old)</li> <li>Relationships with carers characterised by inconsistencies</li> <li>Child has attachment difficulties</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disclosure of abuse of any kind, including sexual abuse or physical injury caused by another</li> <li>Child/young person has severe/chronic health problems affecting their safety</li> <li>Development milestones not met causing faltering growth/failure to thrive</li> <li>Lack of food linked with neglect, causing failure to thrive</li> <li>Child not accessing or refusing medical care endangering life/development</li> <li>Non accidental injury</li> <li>Severe disability-child/young person relies totally on other people to meet care needs</li> <li>Has undergone or is at risk of female genital mutilation</li> </ul> <p><b>Education and Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical/learning disability requiring constant supervision</li> <li>Child is out of school/no school place</li> <li>Complex learning needs likely to meet the criteria to initiate an Education, Health and Care needs assessment</li> </ul> <p><b>Emotional and Behavioural Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acute mental health problems e.g. severe depression; threat of suicide; psychotic episode</li> <li>Puts self or others in danger e.g. persistent and high risk substance misuse, involved in extremist activity, dangerous sexual activity</li> <li>Severe emotional/behavioural challenges or unable to display empathy</li> <li>Serious or persistent reoffending behaviour likely to lead to custody/remand</li> <li>Abusing other children</li> <li>Severe lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in significant harm</li> <li>Child is left 'home alone' without adequate adult supervision or support and at risk of significant harm</li> <li>Child missing from home 3 times in 90 days and/or missing for more than 24 hours</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being sexually exploited</li> <li>Severe attachment problems</li> <li>Significant risk of forced marriage or actual forced marriage</li> <li>A young person who has directly suffered significant harm through domestic abuse</li> </ul>
Parents & Carers	<p><b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent requires advice on parenting issues/poor parenting skills</li> <li>Haphazard use of safety equipment</li> <li>Young inexperienced parent</li> <li>Inappropriate child care arrangements</li> <li>Some exposure to dangerous situations in home or community</li> <li>Engagement with some services is poor</li> </ul> <p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some concerns around physical needs</li> <li>Teenage pregnancy</li> <li>Unnecessary or frequent visits to doctor/A&amp;E</li> <li>Parent stresses starting to effect care of child</li> <li>Parent struggling to meet their own emotional needs</li> <li>Parental substance misuse that may impact on the health or development of the child unless appropriate support provided</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent boundaries</li> <li>Lack of routine</li> <li>Child/young person spends considerable time alone</li> <li>Child/young person is rarely offered new experiences, has limited access to leisure activities</li> <li>Inconsistent responses to child</li> <li>Child not given the opportunity to form other positive relationships</li> <li>Childs key relationships with family members not being kept up</li> <li>Difficulties with attachments</li> </ul>	<p><b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic care not provided consistently e.g. child regularly dirty &amp;/or smelly</li> <li>Parents have found it difficult to care for previous children</li> <li>Inappropriate care arrangements</li> <li>History of previous child protection concerns</li> <li>Chronic or acute neglect where food, warmth and other basics often not available</li> <li>Child has multiple carers; no significant relationship to any of them</li> <li>False or non-compliance with some services</li> <li>Child is often scapegoated in the family</li> </ul> <p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental health (mental or physical) or problems with substance abuse impacts on their ability to meet the needs of the child</li> <li>Mother who has been subjected to female genital mutilation</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erratic or inadequate guidance provided</li> <li>Parents struggle/refuse to set effective boundaries</li> <li>Parents regularly involved in anti-social behaviour</li> <li>Child not receiving any positive stimulation or new experiences or activities</li> <li>Child perceived to be a consistent 'problem' by parents</li> <li>Child exposed to contact with individuals who pose a risk of physical or sexual harm to children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disclosure from parent of abuse to child</li> <li>Child has no one to care for him/her</li> <li>Requesting young child be accommodated</li> <li>Allegations or reasonable suspicion of serious injury, abuse or neglect</li> <li>Parents unable to provide 'good enough' parenting that is adequate and safe</li> <li>Parents own needs mean they cannot keep child safe</li> <li>Previous child(ren) have been removed from the parents care</li> <li>Parents involved in significant crime or anti-social behaviour that puts children at significant risk</li> <li>Parents unable to restrict access to home by dangerous adults</li> <li>Unable to manage severe challenging behaviour without support-high risk of family breakdown</li> <li>Parents inconsistent, highly critical, rejecting or apathetic towards child</li> <li>Parents actively unwilling or refusing to engage with services</li> </ul> <p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental health (mental or physical) or problems with substance abuse significantly affects the care of the child</li> <li>Suspected /evidence of fabricated or induced illness</li> <li>Parent unable to explain injuries</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No boundaries set by parents</li> <li>Child beyond parental control</li> </ul>
Family & Environment Factors	<p><b>Family History and Functioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/carers &amp; extended family have relationship difficulties which may affect the child</li> <li>A child has experienced loss of a significant adult</li> <li>Parent has physical/mental health difficulties</li> <li>Age inappropriate caring responsibilities</li> <li>Family is becoming isolated in their community</li> <li>Family seeking asylum</li> <li>Parents have limited formal education</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing and Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family facing homelessness</li> <li>Insufficient or inappropriate bedding</li> <li>Low income plus adverse additional factors which affect the child's development</li> <li>Overcrowding/poor housing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Family History and Functioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of domestic abuse incidences</li> <li>Family has serious physical and mental health difficulties</li> <li>Risk of family relationship breakdown leading to need for child to become looked after outside of family network</li> <li>Family has become socially isolated</li> <li>Child is privately fostered</li> <li>Pre-birth assessment where a history of past child protection concerns</li> <li>Child or family need immediate support and protection due to harassment/discrimination and have no local support</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing and Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiencing frequent moves</li> <li>Serious debts/poverty impact on ability to have basic needs met</li> <li>Risk of eviction or proceedings initiated</li> <li>Unaccompanied asylum seeker</li> <li>Intentionally homeless decision or imminent</li> <li>Homeless 16 &amp; 17 year olds</li> <li>No access to funding/community resources</li> <li>Unhygienic &amp; cluttered living conditions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Family History and Functioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic abuse is persistent, chronic and significant</li> <li>Destructive/unhelpful involvement from extended family</li> <li>Family involved in criminal activity; parent or sibling has received custodial sentence</li> <li>Individual posing a risk to children or known to a household</li> <li>Parents are deceased and there are no family/friends options</li> <li>Chronic substance misuse impacting child development</li> <li>Parent wishes to relinquish baby or child for adoption</li> <li>Pre-birth assessment indicates unborn child is at risk of significant harm</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing and Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsafe home environment –family used for drug taking, prostitution, illegal activity</li> <li>Extreme poverty/debt impacting on ability to care for child</li> </ul>