

Reading Thresholds Guidance

June 2017



Introduction

Working Together (2015) confirms that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) should publish a threshold document to:

- Confirm the process for early help assessment and set out the type and level of early help services.
- Confirm the criteria and level of need for referring to local authority children's services for assessment and statutory services for children in need, including those in need of support, protection, accommodation and care (sections 17, 47, 20 and 31 of the Children Act 1989).

What is a threshold?

This guidance describes the threshold of need and intervention and is a vital tool for professionals and service users. The document aims to:

- Clarify circumstances in which Reading Borough Council Children's Social Care (CSC) and Early Help services will assist and safeguard children, young people and their families.
- Promote a common understanding of the range and scale of the needs of children.
- Create a shared awareness of the different services and interventions available.

Thresholds describe entry points across the range and scale of children's need. This will lead to a response or intervention that will meet that need, appropriate to the level within the threshold document.

Why do we have it?

This guidance provides definitions and indicators for practitioners to assist in the identification of levels of need for children and young people. It is anticipated that the right services can be accessed at the right time and at the earliest opportunity, to help to meet their needs.

This is not a science but an art – use your professional judgement.

Professionals will need to use their judgement when considering both the range and scale of needs in the threshold document as well the resilience and protective factors that surround the child's life. Our guidance is not intended to be prescriptive, exhaustive, or as a document for automatically opening or closing a gateway to a particular service or range of services. It is important that children and young people are not 'labelled' at any level, more that the guide is used for aiding practitioners in making decisions as to what types of service can provide the right help at the right time. Well managed 'step up' and 'step down' processes between levels is therefore a critical element of effective practice and decision making.

Consent

Whilst professionals should in general discuss any concerns with the child and family and where possible seek their agreement to making referrals. This should only be done where such discussion and agreement-seeking will not place the child or others at increased risk of suffering significant harm. Consent is not required for child protection referrals; however you, as the referring professional, would need to inform parents or carers that you are making a referral as stated above, unless by alerting them you could be putting that child or others at risk.

With the exception of child protection, referrals will not be accepted by the Early Help Hub without parental or young person consent being provided. If consent has not been sought or provided, the reason for this should be shared at the time of the referral being made.

Levels of Need

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.

Description of each level:

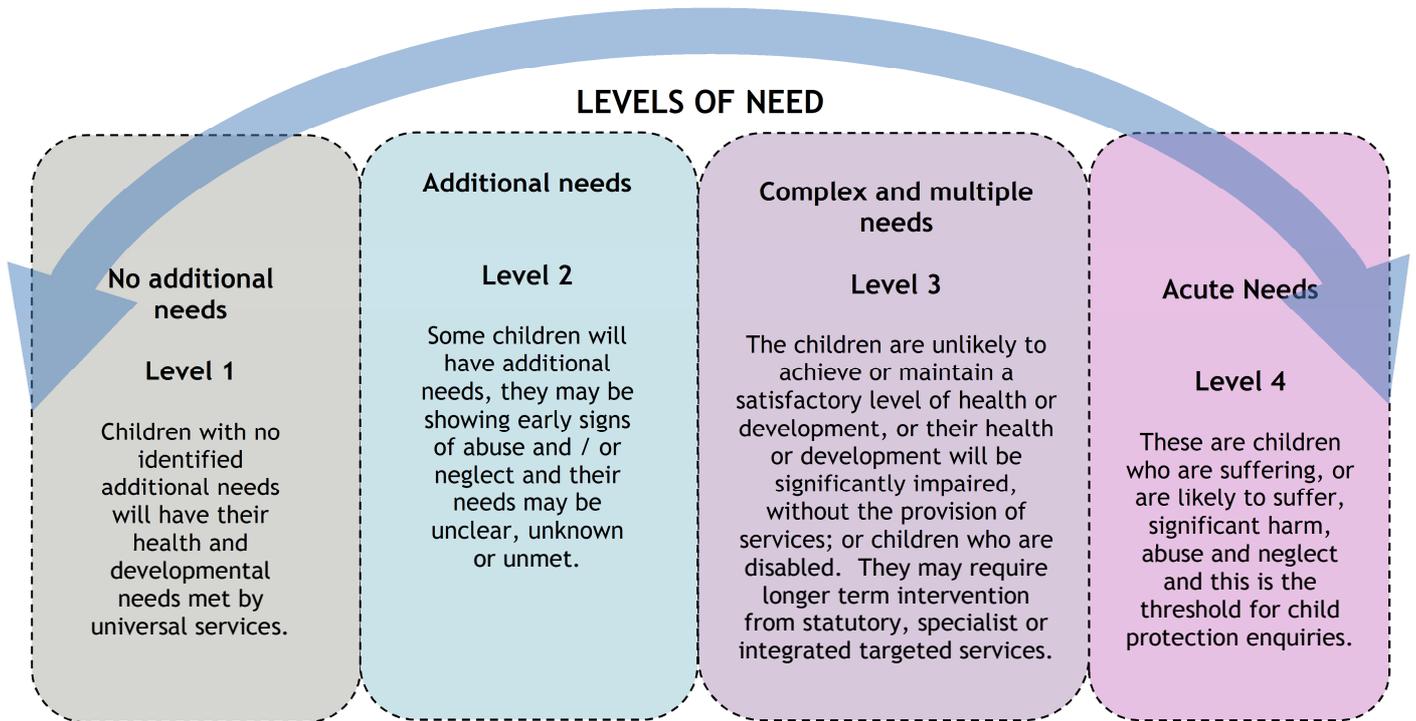
Level 1: No additional needs - children with no identified additional needs will have their health and developmental needs met by universal services. These are children who consistently receive child focussed care-giving from their parents or carers. The majority of children living in Reading receive universal services alone.

Level 2: Additional needs - 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. This is the threshold for a multi-agency Early Help Assessment to begin, this is often known as a CAF. The child's needs will be addressed by accessing support from targeted services delivered within, alongside or outside of universal services.

Level 3: Complex and multiple needs - these are children who 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. The CAF can be used as supporting evidence to gain specialist or targeted support. This is the threshold for a statutory assessment led by children's social care under section 17, Children Act 1989.

Level 4: Acute needs - children are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm, abuse and neglect and this is the threshold for child protection enquiries. Children and young people will be referred to children's social care and dealt with under section 47, 20 or 31 of the Children Act 1989. This will also include children who have been remanded into custody and statutory youth offending services.

This diagram shows the levels of need and the relationship between them. It is important to remember that children and young people will move up and down these levels – they are not static.



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 and protective factors to enable you to navigate the document more easily and track/compare increasing levels of risk.

Like many LSCBs we are using the assessment model that describes three parts of a child’s life;

- Child development
- Parenting capacity
- Family and environmental factors



Description of Thresholds

This section provides a table of information outlining a set of possible descriptors and related protective factors for each of the four levels of need.

Level 1- No additional needs: children with no identified additional needs will have their health and developmental needs met by universal services. These are children who consistently receive child focussed care-giving from their parents or carers. The majority of children living in Reading receive universal services alone.

No additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children attend school regularly • Children who attend GP appropriately and have good health • Children who are reaching developmental milestones and normal growth patterns • Children who appear to be emotionally well adjusted • Children whose education achievement is in accordance with their age, ability, aptitude and attachments • Children who access appropriate play/leisure activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children/Young People with parent/carer who take advantage of universal services • Stable home environment • Support networks in place for family

Level 2 - Additional needs: 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. This is the threshold for a multi-agency Early Help Assessment to begin. The child's needs will be addressed by accessing support from targeted services delivered within, alongside or outside of universal services.

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Development of baby (born or unborn), child or young person	
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate diet e.g. no breakfast • Developmental milestones unlikely to be met without the provision of additional support services • Missing immunisations/checks • Regular accidents or A&E attendance, persistent minor health problems • Language and communication difficulties • Concerns regarding/not addressing, dental hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to seek advice and support when required • Accessing and engaging key universal e.g. GP or targeted health services e.g. sexual health
<p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some identified learning need • Home/school links not well established • At risk of, or receiving regular fixed term exclusion • At risk of permanent exclusion • Patterns of limited attendance at their education setting • Limited participation of young person in education, employment or training, or not in education, employment or training • Limited access to toys and books • Limited participation of young person in education, employment or training • Access or risk of access to inappropriate internet material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting educational developmental milestones • Displays interest, excitement and motivation in learning, play and new activities • In employment, training or working towards a qualification • Achieving expected/predicted targets • Displays curiosity and explorative thoughts and behaviours • Positive/improving attendance at early years setting or school • Parents/Carers have a positive relationship with education setting • Appropriate safeguards and guidance when using technology
<p>Emotional and Behavioural Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to show difficulty expressing empathy • Responds inappropriately to boundaries • Child is overfriendly or withdrawn • Low risk substance misuse • Low level mental health or emotional issues requiring intervention • Emerging anti-social behaviour and/or low level offending • Regularly or openly expressing anti-social attitudes • Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills that increase vulnerability to social exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages and socialises well with peers, family and friends • Positive/good self-esteem and self image • Appropriate dress for age • Indications that bonding and attachments are well formed/forming well • Appropriate behaviour and independent living • Skills • Knowledge of and willingness to access support services for alcohol and substance misuse if appropriate
<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some difficulties in family relationships impacting on behaviour • Emerging concerns around attachment • Age inappropriate caring responsibilities • Age inappropriate sexual activity • May be perpetuating or experiencing bullying • Several episodes of over 16 year old seeking emergency contraception in a short time frame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages and socialises well with peers, family and friends • Indications that bonding and attachments are well formed/forming well • No signs of early onset of sexual activity • 16/17/18 year old seeking emergency contraception appropriately

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Parents and Carers	
<p><u>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent requires advice on parenting issues/ poor parenting skills • Haphazard use of safety equipment • Young inexperienced parent • Inappropriate child care arrangements • Some exposure to dangerous situations in home or community • Engagement with some services is poor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They respond immediately and with concern to issues raised about their child/ren • Basic needs met including appropriate attendance at relevant health checks • Adequate safety measures in the home • Appropriate supervision and parental controls regarding adult materials/content • Family aware of local support services, how to access them and a willingness to engage with services as appropriate
<p><u>Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some concerns around physical needs • Teenage pregnancy • Unnecessary or frequent visits to doctor/A&E • Parent stresses starting to effect care of child • Parent struggling to meet their own emotional needs • Parental substance misuse that may impact on the health or development of the child unless appropriate support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family has access to and uses health services and information appropriately • Impact of ill physical health is none/minimal on parenting capacity • There is no impact on children if family members have emotional or mental health issues • If alcohol misuse is present, a willingness to engage with treatment services
<p><u>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent boundaries • Lack of routine • Child/young person spends considerable time alone • Child/young person is rarely offered new experiences, has limited access to leisure activities • Inconsistent responses to child • Child not given the opportunity to form other positive relationships • Child's key relationships with family members not being kept up • Difficulties with attachments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's behaviour is appropriate and praised accordingly • Parents are aware of what is age appropriate for their child/ren • Parents are confident discussing any issues with their child/ren • Conflicts are resolved in a consistent and fair way • Family communicate any concerns for each other well with concern • The family have a good sense of routine • There is a close support network of friends and family that parents can/do access
Family and Environment Factors	
<p><u>Family History and Functioning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers and extended family have relationship difficulties which may affect the child • A child has experienced loss of a significant adult • Parent has physical/mental health difficulties • Age inappropriate caring responsibilities • Family is becoming isolated in their community • Family seeking asylum • Parents have limited formal education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of extended family in employment, training and education • Close relationship with a positive role model in (extended) family, or a mentor/teacher/youth worker • Accessing a range of extra-curricular activities • Support in place to tackle welfare and family issues e.g. offending behaviour, unemployment • Willingness to accept need for referral and engage in meetings and respond to contact (letters/phone calls/visits)

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
<p>Housing and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family facing homelessness • Insufficient or inappropriate bedding • Low income plus adverse additional factors which affect the child's development • Overcrowding/poor housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation to improve living conditions in place • Support of wider family to improve living conditions • Paying the rent and other priority debts/bills • There is an acknowledgement of the impact of debt, and a plan and support to manage debts are in place • Family knowledgeable and accessing any benefit entitlement • Money is managed well and debt has no impact on family life

If you believe your child falls within this level please complete the following form:

www.reading.gov.uk/childrensreferralform

If you are unable to use the form, please telephone 0118 937 3641, or email

ChildrensSinglePointofAccess@reading.gcsx.gov.uk

The form will be reviewed by the Children's Single Point of Access team where the needs of the child, young person and their family should lead to:

- an allocation of a Reading Borough Council Early Help service
- facilitation to a partnership Early Help service
- provision of advice and guidance

A process chart is available on page 16.

What happens when I contact the Children's Single Point of Access?

- By using the web form an automatic reply will assure you that your contact has been received and you will receive a reference number for future communication.
- If more information is required immediately then the team will contact you to discuss the child
- Within two working days the information will be reviewed and a decision made on who is best to help the child/ family. You will be contacted to confirm the decision they have taken.
- If the contact is with Early Help, the Children's Single Point of Access workers will continue to contact families and practitioners about the child to enable a decision on an offer within 5 working days. This will then be communicated back to you.

Level 3 - Complex and multiple needs: children will have multiple and complex needs and be in need of specialist intervention, sometimes on a long term basis, to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development or to prevent significant impairment of their health and development and / or are disabled. This is the threshold for a statutory assessment led by children’s social care under section 17, Children Act 1989, although services are often provided by a range of other provision outside of children’s social care

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Development of Baby(born or unborn), child or young person	
<p><u>Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child has some chronic/recurring health problems e.g. nappy rash • Weight gain or loss becoming a cause for concern • Limited or restricted diet/access to food • Serious delay in achieving physical and other developmental milestones, raising significant concerns • Increasingly frequent and unexplained accidents • Child with a disability in need of assessment and support to access appropriate specialist services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of health services such as GP, Health Visitor, School Nurse • Engaged with universal service.
<p><u>Education and Learning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic non-attendance or not in education (under 16) or permanently excluded • Regular underachievement causing concern at school/nursery • Received fixed term exclusions and at risk of permanent exclusion • Not in education, employment or training post 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good liaison between family and school • Positive school attendance or alternative education provision engaged with • Engages well in after school and community activities
<p><u>Emotional and Behavioural Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health issues emerging e.g. conduct; ADHD; anxiety; depression; self harming • Child/young person finds it difficult to cope or express emotions e.g. anger, frustration, sadness • Child subject to persistent discrimination • Demonstrates significantly low self esteem • Moderate risk of substance misuse • Child missing from home and concerns raised about their physical and emotional safety and welfare • 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 • Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to impair development • At risk of being drawn into extremism • Unsafe sexual activity/ under 16 year old seeking emergency contraception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of emotional health services including, but not limited to, CAMHS

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor peer relationships difficulty sustaining relationships • At risk of sexual exploitation • Teenage pregnancy (under 16 years old) • Relationships with carers characterised by inconsistencies • Child has attachment difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and access to information and advice relating to contraception and sexual health • Engagement with children/young person’s substance misuse service. • Engagement with YOS
<p>Parents and Carers</p>	
<p>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic care not provided consistently e.g. child regularly dirty &/or smelly • Parents have found it difficult to care for previous children • Inappropriate care arrangements • History of previous child protection concerns • Chronic or acute neglect where food, warmth and other basics often not available • Child has multiple carers; no significant relationship to any of them • False or non-compliance with some services • Child is often scapegoated in the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate access to social care support e.g. short-breaks • Appropriate supervision and parental controls and boundaries including adult material/content. • Appropriate access to support and community services • Parent and carers fully engaging in CAF assessment • Social network outside of the family. • Engagement with appropriate voluntary services i.e. young carers • Evidence of good attachment between parent/carer and child
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental health (mental or physical) or problems with substance abuse impacts on their ability to meet the needs of the child • Mother who has been subjected to female genital mutilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and willingness to access support services for alcohol and substance misuse if appropriate • Parent / carer engaged well with appropriate adult service i.e. Mental Health / Substance Misuse / Disability Services which alleviates pressure on family.
<p>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erratic or inadequate guidance provided • Parents struggle/refuse to set effective boundaries • Parents regularly involved in anti-social behaviour • Child not receiving any positive stimulation or new experiences or activities • Child perceived to be a consistent ‘problem’ by parents • Child exposed to contact with individuals who pose a risk of physical or sexual harm to children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaying positive behaviour in educational setting and community • Regular supportive help from universal/community resources • Appropriate access to parenting skills courses and willingness to receive support to change parenting approach • Sympathetic, empathetic and vigilant teachers available to children • Engagement with voluntary sector provision/ support groups

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Family and Environment Factors	
<p>Family History and Functioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of domestic abuse incidences • Family has serious physical and mental health difficulties • Risk of family relationship breakdown leading to need for child to become looked after outside of family network • Family has become socially isolated • Child is privately fostered • Pre-birth assessment where a history of past child protection concerns • Child or family need immediate support and protection due to harassment/discrimination and have no local support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular supportive help to family from extended family / friends network • The presence of an alternative or supplementary caring adult who can respond to developmental needs of children. • Engagement with domestic abuse support services
<p>Housing and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing frequent moves • Serious debts/poverty impact on ability to have basic needs met • Risk of eviction or proceedings initiated • Unaccompanied asylum seeker • Intentionally homeless decision or imminent • Homeless 16 & 17 year olds • No access to funding/community resources • Unhygienic & cluttered living conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended family able to provide housing support • Accessing welfare rights advice

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What happens when I contact the Children’s Single Point of Access?

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- If more information is required immediately then the team will contact you to discuss the child
- Within two working days the information will be reviewed and a decision made on who is best to help the child/ family. You will be contacted to confirm the decision they have taken.

Level 4 - Acute needs: children are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm, abuse and neglect and are in need of protection and care. This is the threshold for child protection enquiries and children are likely to have already experienced adverse effects and are suffering from poor outcomes. Children and young people will be referred to children’s social care and dealt with under section 47, 20 or 31 of the Children Act 1989. This will also include children who have been remanded into custody and statutory youth offending services.

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Development of baby (born or unborn), child or young person	
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure of abuse of any kind including sexual abuse/physical injury caused by another • Child/young person has severe/chronic health problems affecting their safety • Development milestones not met causing faltering growth/failure to thrive • Lack of food linked with neglect, causing failure to thrive • Child not accessing or refusing medical care endangering life/development • Non accidental injury • Severe disability-child/young person relies totally on other people to meet care needs • Has undergone or is at risk of female genital mutilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of health services such as GP, Health Visitor, School Nurse • Engaged with universal services
<p>Education and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical/learning disability requiring constant supervision • Child is out of school/no school place or permanently excluded • Complex learning needs likely to meet the criteria to initiate an Education, Health and Care needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good liaison between family and school • Positive school attendance or alternative education provision engaged with • Engages well in after school and community activities
<p>Emotional and Behavioural Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute mental health problems e.g. severe depression; threat of suicide; psychotic episode • Puts self or others in danger e.g. persistent and high risk substance misuse, involved in extremist activity, dangerous sexual activity • Severe emotional/behavioural challenges or unable to display empathy • Serious or persistent re-offending behaviour likely to lead to custody/remand • Abusing other children • Severe lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in significant harm • Child is left ‘home alone’ without adequate adult supervision or support and at risk of significant harm • Child missing from home 3 times in 90 days and/or missing for more than 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of emotional health services including, but not limited to, CAMHS

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
<p><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is being sexually exploited • Severe attachment problems • Significant risk of forced marriage or actual forced marriage • A young person who has directly suffered significant harm through domestic abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and access to information and advice relating to contraception and sexual health • Engagement with children/young person's substance misuse service • Engagement with YOS
<p>Parents and Carers</p>	
<p><u>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure from parent of abuse to child • Child has no one to care for him/her • Requesting young child be accommodated • Allegations or reasonable suspicion of serious injury, abuse or neglect • Parents unable to provide 'good enough' parenting that is adequate and safe • Parents own needs mean they cannot keep child safe • Previous child(ren) have been removed from the parents care • Parents involved in significant crime or anti-social behaviour that puts children at significant risk • Parents unable to restrict access to home by dangerous adults • Unable to manage severe challenging behaviour without support-high risk of family breakdown • Parents inconsistent, highly critical, rejecting or apathetic towards child • Parents actively unwilling or refusing to engage with services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate access to social care support e.g. short-breaks • Appropriate supervision and parental controls and boundaries including adult material/content • Appropriate access to support and community services • Parent and carers fully engaging in CAF assessment • Social network outside of the family • Engagement with appropriate voluntary services i.e. young carers • Evidence of good attachment between parent/carer and child
<p><u>Health</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental health (mental or physical) or problems with substance abuse significantly affects the care of the child • Suspected /evidence of fabricated or induced illness • Parent unable to explain injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and willingness to access support services for alcohol and substance misuse if appropriate • Parent / carer engaged well with appropriate adult service i.e. Mental Health / Substance Misuse / Disability Services which alleviates pressure on family
<p><u>Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No boundaries set by parents • Child beyond parental control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaying positive behaviour in educational setting and community • Regular supportive help from universal/community resources • Appropriate access to parenting skills courses and willingness to receive support to change parenting approach • Sympathetic, empathetic and vigilant teachers available to children • Engagement with voluntary sector provision/ support groups

Additional needs threshold guidance	Protective factors to consider
Family and Environment Factors	
<p>Family History and Functioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse is persistent, chronic and significant • Destructive/unhelpful involvement from extended family • Family involved in criminal activity; parent or sibling has received custodial sentence • Individual posing a risk to children or known to a household • Parents are deceased and there are no family/friends options • Chronic substance misuse impacting child development • Parent wishes to relinquish baby or child for adoption • Pre-birth assessment indicates unborn child is at risk of significant harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular supportive help to family from extended family / friends network • The presence of an alternative or supplementary caring adult who can respond to developmental needs of children • Engagement with domestic abuse support services
<p>Housing and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsafe home environment –family used for drug taking, prostitution, illegal activity • Extreme poverty/debt impacting on ability to care for child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended family able to provide housing support • Accessing welfare rights advice

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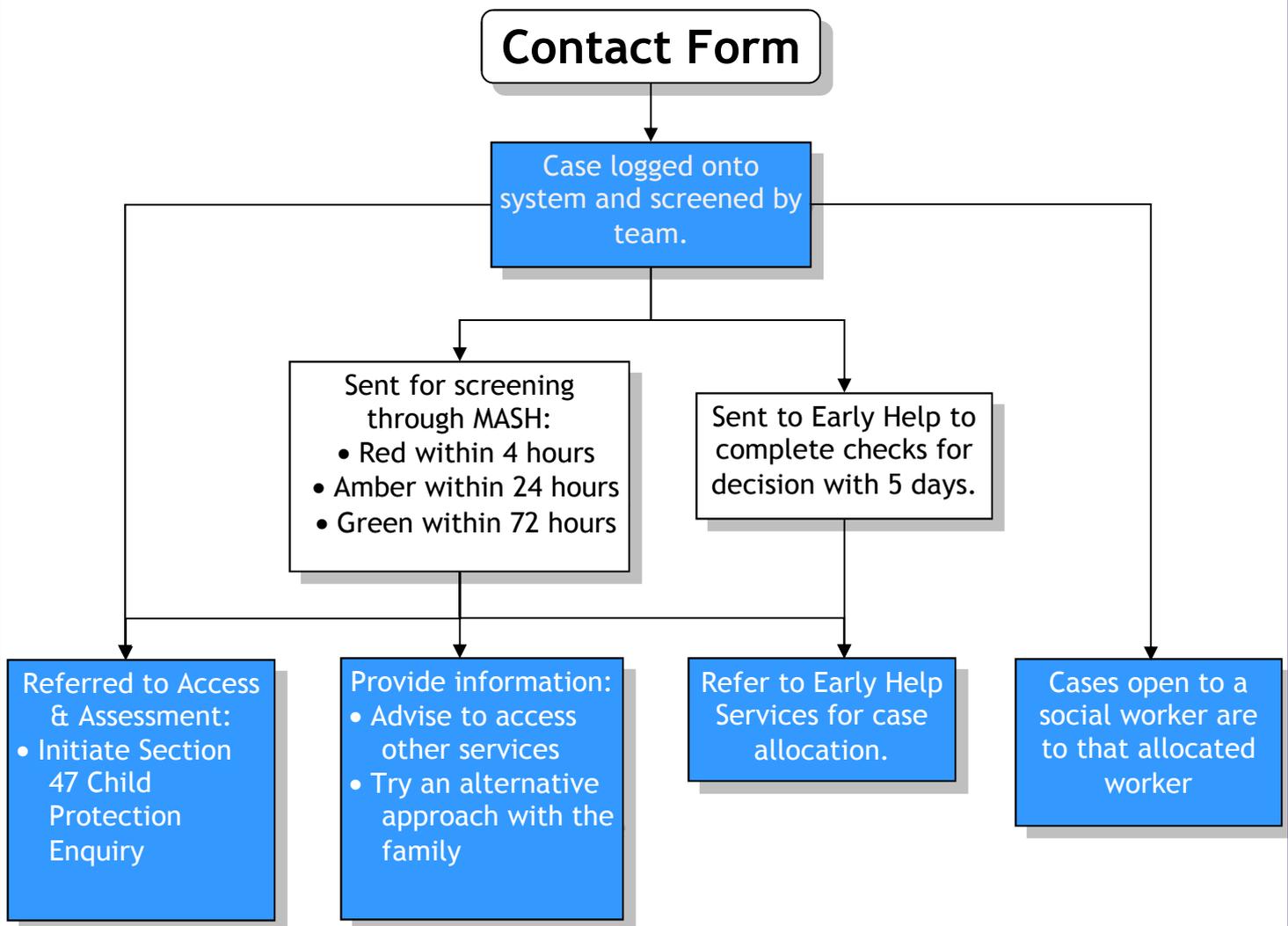
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The Children's Single Point of Access Pathway



Useful Links

Reading LSCB Website: www.readinglscb.org.uk/

(For risk assessment tools and information on subjects including Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation, Neglect and Prevent)

LSCB Online Procedures: <http://proceduresonline.com/berks/>

RBC Website: www.reading.gov.uk/concernsaboutachild

NSPCC website: www.nspcc.org.uk/

