

Children in Need Procedure Manual

Contents

1.	DEFINITION OF CHILD 'IN NEED'	1
	Fig 1: The Assessment Framework	2
2	CONTACTS.....	3
3	REFERRALS.....	3
	Process.....	3
4	INITIAL ASSESSMENTS	3
	Timescales	4
	Recording	4
	Seeing the Child	4
	Outcomes of Initial Assessment	4
	Process.....	5
5	CORE ASSESSMENT	5
	Timescales	5
	Significant Harm	6
	Recording	6
6	Assessment of Young Carers.....	6
7	CHILDREN IN NEED MEETINGS.....	6
	The purpose of the Children in Need Meeting:	6
	Timings and frequency	7
	Involvement of Child & Family	7
	Involvement of other professionals	7
	Outcomes	7
	Process.....	8
8	REVIEWING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED	8
	Timescales	8
9	FIG 2: CHILD IN NEED PROCEDURES FLOW CHART	9
12	TRANSFER OF CASES.....	10
13	CONSENT & CONFIDENTIALITY	10
14	PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS	10
	Appendix Thresholds for Intervention	11

1. DEFINITION OF CHILD 'IN NEED'

A child should be taken to be in need if:

- He/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority.
- His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services.
- He/she is disabled.

(Section 17, Children Act 1989)

1.2. The above definition from The Children Act will be used to decide when a child should be considered to be in need. This has the potential to include large numbers of children. Therefore, local authorities must identify the extent of need and then make decisions on priorities for services. *(Children Act, 1989, Guidance Volume 2)* .In Essex we use the Thresholds for Intervention Policy to determine the priority given to any referral .The provision of services will be based on an assessment of the child's needs.

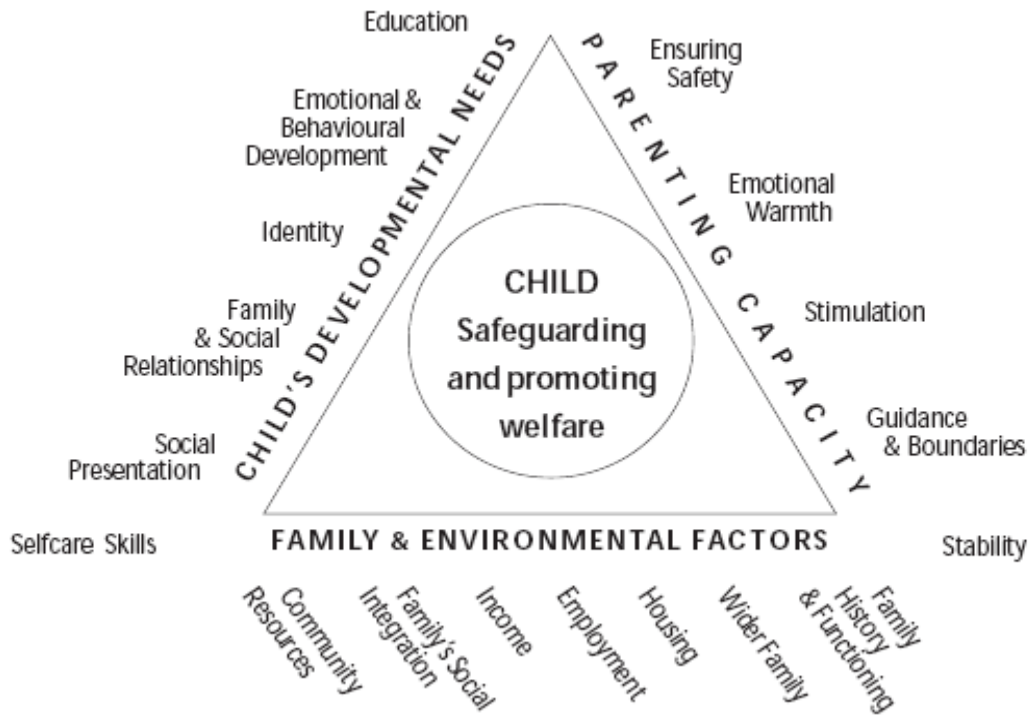
1.3. The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families outlines the process of assessment for children in need.

1.4 Assessments will determine:

- If a child is in need.
- Their level of vulnerability.
- Outcomes sought
- How needs can be met
- Which of their needs should be met as a priority.

Fig 1: The Assessment Framework

The Assessment Framework introduces a systematic approach to the process of gathering information about children who may be in need and their families. The Framework is represented by the following diagram:



2 CONTACTS

2.1 A contact will normally be:

- A request for general information/advice or assistance (Examples: Childminding List; Benefits query, Notification of Intention to Undertake a Statement of Educational Needs).
- Offering a service. (Example; Foster Carer, Childminder).
- Recording significant information on an already open case where assessments **are ongoing**.

2.2. Contacts are always dealt with and recorded immediately on the referral form within SWIFT as **NFA**. Contacts will be entered onto SWIFT as contacts (Currently recorded in the Contacts / What if Book).

3 REFERRALS

3.1 A 'referral' will normally follow from:

- Information received about a child, adult or family which points to the need for further (professional) enquiry or intervention and which falls within the Children in Need Code Definitions.
- A request for an assessment/or service where the thresholds for service may be met.
- Any significant one-off pieces of intake work requiring professional knowledge/skills to resolve.

3.2 The above may apply to a new referral on open cases where the Initial and Core Assessments **have already been completed**.

Process

3.3 The process is:

- Referral recorded on SWIFT
- SW to sign and date referral;
- Enter immediately on SWIFT
- Check case status, i.e., not known, open, closed;
- Locate any previous records or files;
- Team Manager to decide action in 24 hours;
- Team Manager to sign and date decision.

4 INITIAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1 The decision to gather more information following a referral constitutes an Initial Assessment. An Initial Assessment is defined as a brief assessment of each child referred to this department where there is a request for intervention or for the provision of services.

4.2 If the case is closed there should always be a new Initial Assessment even if the last assessment was less than 7 days before. The 7 day timescale for an Initial Assessment commences from the date of the referral.

4.3 **Initial Assessment's should be in proportion to the child's needs.** Initial Assessment's can be short (one telephone call if a Section 47), as long as the managerial decisions for progression to Core Assessment are completed on the Further Action part of the Initial Assessment Form.

Timescales

- 4.4 Within **24 hours** a manager will make a decision based on the information available whether the referral will progress to an Initial Assessment **.Thus work on referrals should not be carried out over several days or weeks.**
- 4.5 All work on Initial Assessment's should be completed within **7 working days** from the point of referral.

Recording

- 4.6 Initial Assessments will be recorded on the Initial Assessment part of SWIFT. At this point the Section 17 and 47 Actions and Agencies Check List, ???????? should be commenced. A check of the Child Protection Register will be completed.

Seeing the Child

- 4.7 The child should be seen by Social Services as part of the Initial Assessment, If however, the child has been seen by another professional i.e. a Health Visitor, teacher it may not be necessary (or appropriate), but this should be agreed by the Team or Service Manager.
- 4.8 If at any point during the Initial Assessment there are concerns about actual or a risk of significant harm and the case enters Sect 47. **the child should be seen by Social Services within 24 hours.**

Outcomes of Initial Assessment

- 4.9 The Initial Assessment will briefly address the dimensions of the Assessment Framework, determining:-
- Whether the child is in need
 - What the needs are and what outcomes are intended for the child
 - The nature of any services required
 - From where and within what timescales these services are to be provided.
 - Whether a Core assessment should be carried out.
- 4.10 Initial Assessments will involve gathering appropriate information on the three areas of the assessment triangle:
- Child development needs
 - Parenting Capacity
 - Family and environmental factors
- By:
- Interviewing family members
 - Seeing the child interact with others and by communicating appropriately with the child, taking into account age, disability, and where the first language is not English
 - Collating and analysing information from other agencies and organisations.

- 4.11 It is important that the child's views and perspective are sought, where this is appropriate, and that the actions recommended are based on this.

- 4.12 Possible outcomes of an Initial Assessment will include:

- No Further action (child is not 'in need')
- Provision of services to address needs
- Continue assessment process by undertaking a Core assessment **whether or not this is in the context of a section 47 enquiry**
- Emergency provision of services where needs are significant and urgent i.e. accommodation, such decisions will be taken **by ???????????????????**, in an emergency **contact the commissioning team directly.**
- The convening of a 'Children in Need' Meeting.

4.13 In all cases where the Initial Assessment (which can be very short) indicates a need for a more in depth assessment of the child's needs and parental capacity to care for the child then the case should progress to a Core assessment.

4.14 The decision to move from an Initial Assessment to a Core Assessment should be taken by the Team Manager in conjunction with the Social worker and recorded on the Initial Assessment Form there should be no Initial assessments worked beyond the 7 day timescale

4.15 Team Managers and Service Managers will call up every Initial Assessment that has gone beyond 7 working days on the tracking sheet.

Process

4.16 The process is:

- Decision to undertake Initial Assessment made within 24 hours agreed by Manager
- Initial Assessment to be completed within 7 working days
- Child to be seen by social worker, if however, the child has been seen by another professional i.e. a Health Visitor, teacher it may not be necessary (or appropriate), but this should be agreed by the Team or Service Manager.
- Assessment recorded on SWIFT.
- Section 17 and 47 Actions and Agencies Check List????????, should be commenced.
- Decision with Manager of next step, i.e., Child in Need Planning Meeting, Strategy Discussion, Core Assessment.
- Outcome of Initial Assessment agreed by Manager.

5 CORE ASSESSMENT

5.1 The Core Assessment is an in-depth assessment of the child's needs and the capacity of the child's parents/care-givers to meet these needs within the wider family and community context. The Core Assessment is led by Social Services but it will involve other agencies or independent professionals who will either provide information about the family or contribute specialist knowledge or advice.

5.2 The involvement of the child, parent or carer is essential to the assessment process as is the focus on each individual child and his/her needs.

Timescales

5.3 Core Assessments will be completed within **35 working days from completion of the Initial Assessment or the decision to hold a Strategy Discussion.**

Significant Harm

- 5.4 At any stage, should there be suspicions or allegations that the child may be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there must be a Strategy Meeting / Discussion and interagency action in accordance with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (1999). The key elements of this meeting should be recorded as a list of points on **????????????????part** of SWIFT.
- 5.5 Assessment of a child in these circumstances is not a separate activity but continues the same process - although the pace and scope of the assessment may have changed. A key part will be to establish whether the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and whether any emergency action is required to secure the safety of the child.
- 5.6 Once it is decided that the matter is a Section 47 then the case should progress to Core Assessment. Although there will be 35 working days to complete the assessment this is different to the Sect 47 Enquiry that will need to progress to ensure the safeguarding of the child.

Recording

- 5.7 Core Assessments should be recorded on SWIFT.

6 Assessment of Young Carers.

- 6.1 Children and Young People providing substantial care for a sick or disabled parent or other family member are entitled under the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 to an assessment of their needs using the Assessment Framework.
- 6.2 The Thresholds Policy should be used to determine priority and the Assessment Framework to assess the impact of the caring role on the child or young person's health or development.
- 6.3 **The Carers Policy states that 'Substantial' should be defined in terms of impact on the carer rather than time engaged in caring. Therefore, the Initial Assessment of a young carer should not be very different to any other assessment, concentrating on the impact on the child or young person's health or development.**
- 6.4 The outcome of such assessments may be:
- Signposting to other universal services.
 - Referral to specialist providers of carers support and services
 - Decision to undertake more detailed Core Assessment.

7 CHILDREN IN NEED MEETINGS

The purpose of the Children in Need Meeting:

- 7.1 The purposes includes:
- Bring the family, child and all those professionals involved with them together.
 - Collate and analyse, in an interagency setting, the information about the child's health and development and the parental capacity to promote the child's welfare.

- To judge if the child is unlikely to achieve or maintain or have the opportunity to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development **without the provision of services.**
- To decide what future actions are required to promote the child's welfare and what the intended outcomes are, including the completion of a Core Assessment.

Timings and frequency

- 7.2 To ensure that Core assessments are completed within the 35 day timescale Children in Need Meetings should take place within **15 days of the completion of the Initial Assessment or the Strategy Meeting/Discussion.**

Involvement of Child & Family

- 7.3 The child and family should be consulted about the meeting and invited and prepared for attendance. It is good practice to involve children and families in meetings. However there may be times this is not possible, e.g.

- The child/young person objects to parental/family involvement.
- The child/family failed to attend – In these circumstances a member of the meeting should be appointed to inform the child/family of the outcome.

- 7.4 Where children parents or carers do not wish to attend efforts should be made to ascertain their views and represent these at the meeting.

- 7.5 In all circumstances the views and wishes of all children old enough to express their views and wishes should be ascertained using what ever medium is appropriate.

Involvement of other professionals

- 7.6 The meeting should include:

- Those with a direct and relevant involvement with the child and family.
- Those who hold relevant information that can be shared in the meeting.
- If, in exceptional circumstances, those working with the child/family feel that it is necessary to convene a meeting where the child and family are not invited or notified of the meeting, this will be considered a Professionals Meeting and not called a Children In Need Meeting.

Outcomes

- 7.7 The intended outcomes include:

- Arrangement for completion of a Multi Agency Core Assessment with family to identify and analyse the child's needs.
- The development of a 'Children in Need' Plan to promote the welfare of the child and meet his/her needs and identify those that will implement the plan.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of actions and services against the intended outcomes for the child.
- If the decision at a Child Protection Conference is not to register then the conference will formulate a **Children in Need Plan** that addresses the areas of significant concern and establishes the intended outcomes for the child and family. Work with the child and family will then progress using the provisions of **Section 17.**

Process

7.8 The process is:

- The child and family should be invited and prepared for attendance.
- The Initial Assessment of the child will be available to the meeting and copies distributed to appropriate members of the family and all involved professionals.
- A clear analysis of the needs, difficulties and concerns that have led to the need for a 'Children in Need' Meeting should be discussed at the meeting.
- The meeting will agree the Children in Need Plan that addresses the needs difficulties and concerns in relation to the child.
- The co-ordination and review of the plan and the membership of any future review meeting will be decided at the initial meeting. The plan will be recorded the Children in Need Plan on ?????? within SWIFT.
- If the plan is not actioned or has failed to meet the child's needs the chair of the meeting must be informed and a decision taken whether to reconvene the Children in Need Meeting before the planned review date.
- The meeting will be recorded on the Sect 47 & 17 Meetings Form ???????) within SWIFT.

8 REVIEWING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

8.1 All childcare cases must be reviewed regularly.

Timescales

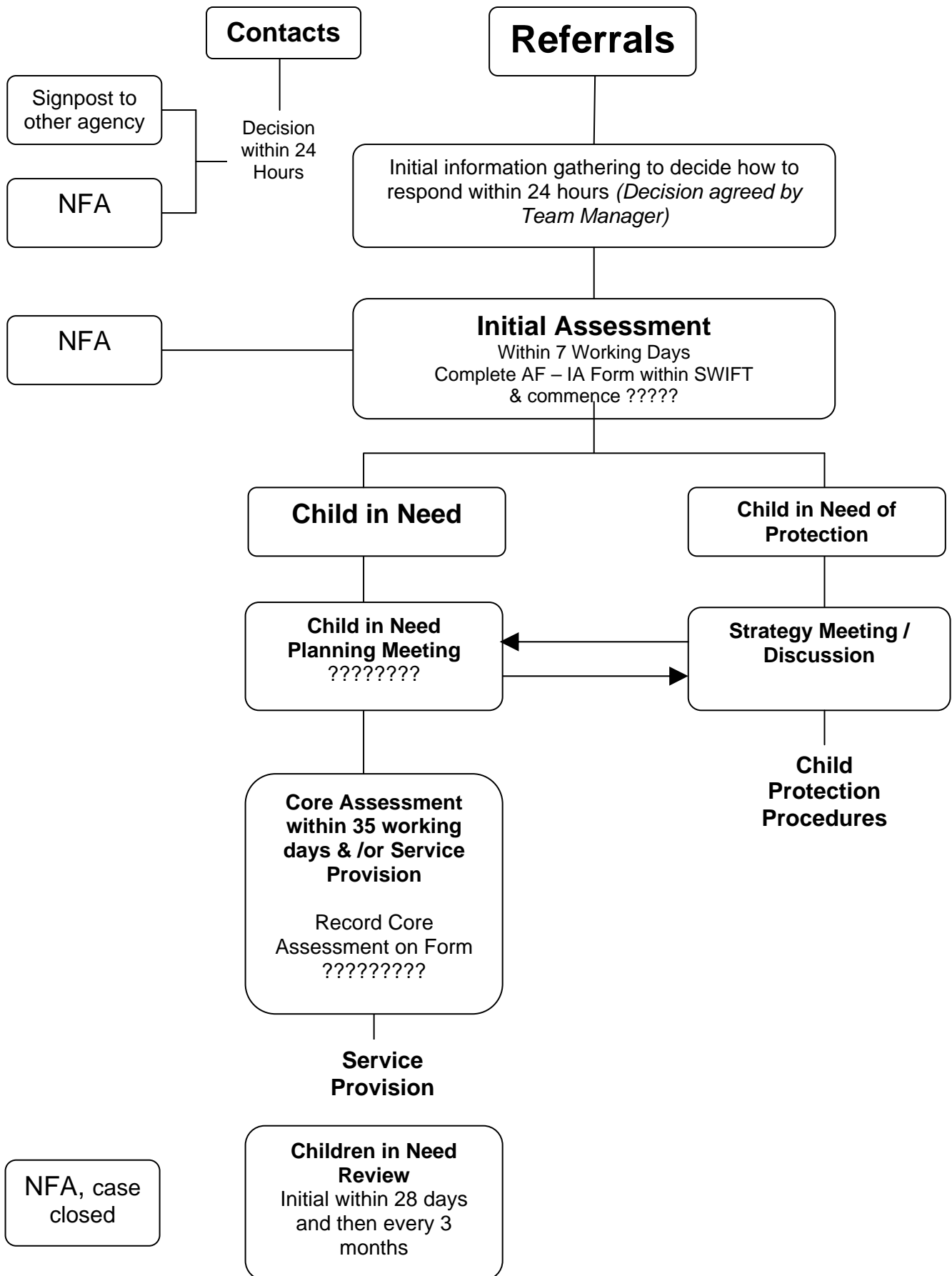
8.2 The timescales are:

- Children in Need cases – An initial Child in Need Review should be held within 28 days and then the second within 3 months and then at 3 monthly intervals
- Children on the Child Protection register – An initial review after 3 months and thereafter every 6 months (unless circumstances arise that require an earlier review)
- Children Looked After - Within 28 days of initial date of accommodation and then three months later, thereafter every three months.

10 APPLICATION for care proceedings

10.1 The role of ??????????????is to ensure that the decision to accommodate or ??????????????????????

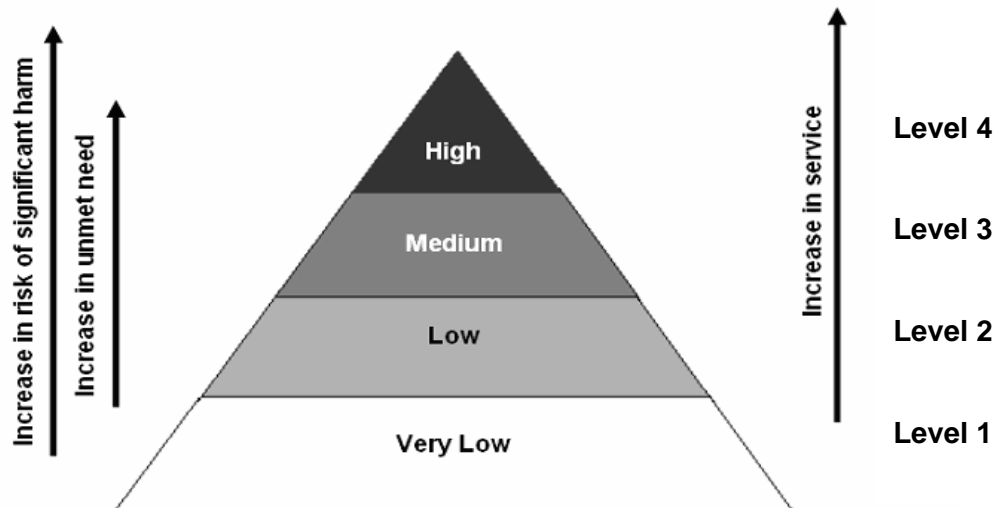
FIG 2: CHILD IN NEED PROCEDURES FLOW CHART



Appendix 1: Thresholds for Intervention

We have adopted four levels of priority based on Hardiker et al levels of intervention described in *Policies and Practices in preventative childcare* 1991 Avebury/Gower.

Pyramid of Need



'Very Low':

- Children from families where there are difficulties that can be more appropriately addressed by universal services.
- Children whose health and development is not being adversely affected.

'Low'

- Children from families where carer(s) are experiencing difficulties which **may** affect the child's health or development.
- Children whose health and development **may** be affected.
- Children that fall within the definition of 'In Need'.
- Children and families where there is a **risk of deterioration** and the child's health or development **may** be affected in the near future.

'Medium':

- Children whose health and development **is or may be** impaired.

'High':

- Children **experiencing significant harm** or where there is a **likelihood of significant harm**. Children at risk of removal from home.

(Based on Hardiker et al model of intervention)

PRIORITY LEVEL	EXAMPLES OF NEED	EXAMPLES OF SERVICES	LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	TIMESCALE
VERY LOW	Parent's separating with impact on child	RELATE	Signposting <i>or</i> Referral to other agencies	
	Low income	CAB, Welfare benefits, Benefits agency, Job centres		
	Lack of access to play and leisure Lack of family and community support	Children's Information Service Community Education Leisure services + BCC Youth Service Parent and toddler groups Pre-school learning Sure Start		
	Child not achieving school potential School non-attending	Education welfare officer pupil support		
	General parenting advice	Parenting programmes Sure Start		
	Cultural/linguistic/access	Interpreters Section 11 funding by relevant agencies Health visitors		
	Employment and life opportunities for older children	Parenting programmes in schools Connexions		
	Sub-standard housing	Housing authorities Community centres		

PRIORITY LEVEL	EXAMPLES OF NEED	EXAMPLES OF SERVICES	LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	TIMESCALES
LOW PRIORITY	Child falls within definition of "In Need"			
	Short term help with family crisis	Short term focussed social work intervention		
	Family relationships impacting on child	Counselling Family work Relate Community based family centres Supported playgroup placements		
	Child has Education/Health problems where home situation is contributory e.g. : Parent is young Parent/carer has physical/learning disability Signs of substance misuse Persistent bullying Domestic violence	Community based 'treatment' centres Adult mental health services CAMH services Adult Learning disability services Education Welfare service Material/financial assistance Home visiting services e.g. Homestart, Health e.g. health visitors Children's centres	Initial assessment	Decision to undertake made in 24 hours
	Child with disability and parents ability to cope is affected Child with disability, but ability to participate in leisure/social activities appropriate to their age/development affected Child with disability whose needs effect development of other children in the family to some degree	Family Link Home support services Residential respite CAMH services Primary and Secondary learning support services Educational psychology Health visitors Young Carers projects		7 working days to complete
Poor parenting impacting on child Children fostered by private arrangement	Parenting programmes Monitoring by social worker/fostering & adoption worker			

	Children who are carers	Adult social services Young carers project		
	Children who offend	Befriending services Pre-court services YOT YMCA Youth Matters SSD statutory requirements		
PRIORITY LEVEL	EXAMPLES OF NEED	EXAMPLES OF SERVICES	LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	TIMESCALES
MEDIUM PRIORITY	Families with established difficulties, including substance misuse, violence	Social work with care managed children in need interagency plan Drug and alcohol services	Initial assessment Core Assessment	7 days 35 working days
	Parenting difficulties	Family centre – individual programmes Outreach and detached Family support		
	Parental mental health problems impacting on parenting capacity	CAMH Young carers project GP/Adult mental health services		
	Child/adolescent with suspected mental health problem	GP CAMH		
	Significant behaviour problems in child	Social work input Primary and secondary learning support services CAMH Health visitor		
	Child with complex disabilities/child with disabilities where parents cannot cope adequately with care needs	Home and outreach support services/consideration of residential respite Sponsored playgroup attendance		
	Child with disabilities unable to access leisure/social activities without substantial	Social work input from CWD teams Statutory educational assessment Health learning disability services		

	assistance	CAMH services Occupational Therapy Child development centres		
	Child with disability, whose needs prevent development of other children in family	Young carers project		
	Children who persistently offend	Supervised programmes through YOT Out of school provision Youth Courts Social services accommodation YOT		

PRIORITY LEVEL	EXAMPLES OF NEED	EXAMPLES OF SERVICES	LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	TIMESCALES
HIGH PRIORITY	Child at risk of significant harm	Social work intensive help and long term support Multi-agency service package	Core assessment	35 working days
	Child with risk-taking behaviour including: prostitution serious substance misuse	CAMH Secure accommodation Drug and alcohol services		
	Child posing a high risk to self/others or vulnerable including: Absconding/running away from home 16-18 year olds leaving care situations of serious domestic violence	Leaving care services Supported accommodation		
	Unaccompanied asylum seekers	Social work support Family placement Counselling Residential care LAC consultant/nurse		
	Section 47 enquiries	Multi-agency services delivered from protection plan		
	Child needing to be looked after outside their own family immediately, following rigorous assessment	Family group conferences Family placement Foster care Residential care LAC consultant/nurse Education		
	Child on supervision or care order Section 20			
	Child with severe emotional and psychological needs with resultant behaviour	CAMH Educational psychology		
	Mental ill health that poses a risk of harm to	CAMH		

	self or others	Secure accommodation		
	Child who persistently commits serious offences	Multi-agency Intensive support and supervision Secure accommodation YOT post custody supervision		
PRIORITY LEVEL	EXAMPLES OF NEED	EXAMPLES OF SERVICES	LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	TIMESCALES
HIGH PRIORITY (continued)	Child with disability and family at imminent risk of breakdown Child with very high level of care needs – completely unable to access leisure/social activities Child with disabilities where needs of other children in family are not met	Family group conferences Respite or sustained accommodation Specialist/therapeutic placements CAMH Family placement Intensive social work input	Core assessment	35 working days