

# Continuum of Need Criteria



## Introduction

This is the Newcastle Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Level of Need Criteria guidance. This is for all practitioners, agencies and services that work with or are involved with children, young people and their families. The aim of the criteria is to deliver a model for joined up working, setting out the level of need across a continuum, however it is important to note that this does not represent a fixed definition of need or checklist. The Level of need criteria document should be used alongside professional judgment and form part of a wider discussion about how best to meet the child/ young persons and or family's needs. It should be used to enhance professional judgment and discussions about individual children and their families.

## Levels of need

Children and Families Newcastle aim is for all families to receive the right level of support at the right time. This may mean professionals and services working with families are required to offer and deliver a higher level of support to the families. We recognise levels of need are fluid at times, and we understand families may move across the level of need according to their circumstances.

Universal needs	Children and Families with emerging needs	Children who require targeted support	Children who require a safeguarding response
At this level, services are universal meaning they are available to all children and young people	These children are deemed to require some additional support, without this they may not reach their full potential due to emerging needs	These are children who have clear unmet needs, who require support from the Family Help service	Children requiring immediate protection

**Level 1:** Childrens needs are met by universal services. Universal services are available to all children, these children are achieving their outcomes and making good progress. Universal services include Schools, Childrens Hubs, libraires and leisure centres, GP's, Health Visiting, Midwifery services, school nursing, early years, mental wellbeing promotion, dentists, opticians to include a range of services provided by voluntary and community services. As such these services support resilience and may support families to prevent needs from emerging.

**Level 2:** Children and families with emerging needs may require extra support, this may be provided by services within level 1 to include support within the Community Family offer. The Community Family Offer includes access to groups, activities and support delivered in our Best Start Family Hubs and network sites, parenting support groups and evidence-based programmes and one to one support for up to 12 weeks to help families meet emerging needs. [Enquiry link for CFO.](#)

**Level 3:** Children who require family help targeted or family help child in need support under section 17 provided by the Family Help Service. Those children who require family help targeted may have emerging, complex or multiple needs or there maybe risks which are manageable and the child is not identified as 'in need' under section 17. Those children identified as being 'in need' under section 17, are children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without services, or their health or development is significantly impaired without support being provided in addition assessment or support maybe required for a child with a disability. [Please refer to Additional Needs Threshold document.](#)

**Level 4:** Children who require a Child protection response. These are children and families who there are significant child protection concerns about and require a safeguarding response. Enquires made by Children and families Newcastle will require support from other agencies and organisations in order to ensure the children are appropriately safeguarded and a coordinated multi agency plan is determined.

### **Community Family Offer:**

Family Partner  
Family Practitioner  
**'Our Family Plan'**

Level 1 and 2  
Duration: approx. 12 weeks\*



### **Family Help:**

Family Help Key Worker  
Social Worker  
**'Family Help Assessment & Plan'**

Level 3  
Duration: determined by need



### **Child Protection:**

Social Worker  
**'Child Protection Enquiry  
Assessment and Child  
Protection Plan'**

Level 4  
Duration: determined by need



\* Please note, these time frames do not apply to our responsive groups and evidence-based programmes, which often run for longer than 12 weeks.



## **Allocated/Key Work in CFN**

### **Making a enquiry**

Children and Families Newcastle Connect is the team which receives requests for help and support as well as safeguarding enquiries. Following receipt of this information, the enquiries are triaged in accordance with the level of risk and need.

When considering making an enquiry to Children and Families Newcastle to request support, please refer to level 1 (Universal Services) of the criteria in the first instance to ensure the family have been offered support at these levels prior to making a request. If you still feel an enquiry is required, please detail within your enquiry for support what has already been offered to the family by yourself or any other services. It is important for Children and Families Newcastle Connect (CFN Connect) to understand what support may have already been tried, what has worked for the family as well as what may not have worked and why. It is important to detail the family's network to share who is supporting the family, this may be other family members, friends or other people within the community and community services.

If you are making a enquiry because you are worried and have a level 4 child protection concern. It is important you share all relevant information relating to the family, clearly outlining what your concern is and what the impact to the child/ children is. It is also as important for the purposes of decision making when considering the level of need, to share what is working well for the family, who is helping the family within the network and if there has been any previous intervention or support provided to the family to include by whom. It is imperative wherever possible in order to understand the child's journey, ensuring they have been spoken to and their views obtained as well as any siblings views or any other children you believe there may be a risk or transferable risk to.

To make an enquiry please refer to [Enquiry link for CFO](#).

## **Family Agreement**

Children and Families Newcastle have a relational and restorative approach to practice, working with families rather than doing to them. It is therefore important that you discuss your concern with the parents / carer of the children in the first instance wherever possible, you must also advise them you are making an enquiry to Children and Families Newcastle Connect in order to seek the family's agreement prior to submitting your enquiry. The parent / carer needs to be made aware they are giving their agreement for their personal information and personal circumstances to be shared between agencies.

Only where there is a clear Child Protection concern (level 4) and there is reason to believe by approaching the parent/ carer that the risk to the child would escalate, can enquiries be made without the family's agreement. Following receipt of enquiry, the information will be shared and discussed with parents, professionals if required and other family members if deemed necessary to ensure the safety of a child, it is only in exceptional circumstances this may not happen. It is important to maintain positive working relationships with families therefore they need to be aware of the information shared with Children and Families Newcastle.

## **Advice and Support**

If you require any support or would like to discuss your concern when deciding whether to make an enquiry regardless of the level of need, you can do so by contacting Children and Families Newcastle Connect (CFN Connect) on 0191 277 2500. You will be asked to leave some basic details and will receive a call back from a Social Worker or a CFN Connect Practitioner within the team, enquiries will not be taken over the telephone unless they are urgent child protection enquiries however CFN Connect are happy to provide advice and support if this is required.

## Level 1 - Universal needs

Children with Level 1 Needs	Indicators	What needs to happen
	<b>Parents or Parenting Capacity</b>	
These children's needs are mainly met by the care their family are able to offer. At this level services are universal meaning they are available to all children and young people.	<b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/carers are able to provide for the child's needs and able to protect from danger in the home and elsewhere.</li> <li>Parents/carers provide secure and caring parenting, showing warmth, love, praise and encouragement.</li> <li>Parents/carers able to provide appropriate guidance and boundaries to support the child to develop appropriate boundaries and values.</li> </ul> Parents/carers are following <a href="#">Lullaby Trust safe sleep guidance</a> , with no identified vulnerabilities impacting parenting capacity or decision-making.	These children require no higher level of support than what is able to be offered universally, this includes Education services, Health Services, Housing, Dentist, Police, Voluntary sector.
	<b>Family and Environmental Factors</b>	
	<b>Family and Social Relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive family relationships or network who provide a sense of wellbeing</li> <li>Good healthy relationship with siblings</li> <li>Age-appropriate living skills</li> </ul>	

- Positive relationships with peers and age-appropriate relationships

#### **Social and Community Resources**

- Social and friendship networks exist
- Positive peer groups
- Access to health, education, social and community resources in the neighbourhood

#### **Housing, Employment and Finance**

- Adequate housing with at least basic, facilities to ensure the child's needs can be met
- Appropriate levels of cleanliness and hygiene being maintained
- Sufficient income to meet the family's essential needs, used appropriately

### **Child or Young Person's Developmental Needs**

#### **Learning/Education**

- The child/ young person has access to toys and books or other learning materials
- The child/young person has access to education provision appropriate to age and ability
- The young person has access to employment, to include work-based learning appropriate to age and ability.
- The child/young person is acquiring a range of skills/interests, experiences of success/achievement.
- Attendance meets expectations (above 96%)

#### **Health**

- Physical health, growth and nutritional status are appropriate to the child or young person's age, development and any identified health needs.
- Good physical health with age-appropriate developmental milestones, including speech and language.
- Health appointments maintained
- Developmental checks/immunisations are up to date
- Adequate diet, hygiene, clothing (consider in line with age)
- Regular dental and optical care accessed

#### **Social, Emotional and Behavioural, Identity**

- Behaviour and responses are appropriate to age and situation (physical and emotional)
- Good quality attachments, the child is appropriately comfortable in social situations.
- Has an understanding about the effects of crime and antisocial behaviour (appropriate to age)
- Able to adapt to change



- Able to demonstrate empathy
- Positive sense of self and abilities
- Demonstrates feelings, a sense of belonging and acceptance
- Engages in leisure or social activities

#### **Self-care and Independence**

- Developing an age-appropriate level of practical and emotional skills
- Ability to discriminate between 'safe' and 'unsafe' contacts
- Good level of personal hygiene
- Age-appropriate independent skills

## **Level 2 - Children and Families with Emerging needs**

<b>Children with Level 2 needs</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>What needs to happen</b>
	<b>Parents or Carers Capacity</b>	
These children are deemed to require some additional support; without this they may not reach their full potential due to emerging needs. These needs may be able to be met and supported by the Community Family Offer.	<b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers requiring advice and/or support around parenting issues e.g. basic routines, boundaries and the implementation of these, home conditions, appropriate and safe childcare arrangements, low level behaviour management.</li> <li>• Professionals beginning to have concerns about the child/young person's physical needs being met.</li> <li>• Parental stressors beginning to affect the child/young person's safety.</li> <li>• Poor supervision or attention to safety issues inside or outside of the home.</li> </ul> Parents/carers are following <a href="#">Lullaby Trust safe sleep guidance</a> . There is a history of vulnerabilities which may impact parenting capacity and decision-making.	The professional identifying the concern should speak with the parent/carer about these to discuss support available. Professional should ask questions to determine the context as to why the concern may be emerging/present to understand the underlying causes of the issue in order to

determine the level of support which may already be available to the family.

The professional should consider the family history/situation to gain the best understanding of the family's needs and level of this need.

Professionals should consider completing 'Our Family Plan' as an alternative to submitting an Enquiry to CFN. This allows professionals known to and trusted by families to continue their work with them, supported by the Early Help Advice team within the Community Family Offer. Information on how to draw up an 'Our Family Plan' and to request support from the Early Help Advice

		team can be found <a href="#">here</a>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Family and Environmental Factors</b></p> <p><b>Family and Social Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers have relationship difficulties or there is frequent which may affect the child.</li> <li>• Parent/ carers request advice or support to manage their child's behaviour</li> <li>• Suspicion of domestic abuse</li> <li>• Parental physical/mental health issues whereby the parent/carer is not emotionally available to the child/young person</li> <li>• Family has limited support from wider family and/or friends</li> <li>• Child/young person identified as a young carer</li> </ul> <p><b>Social and Community Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child and/or family experiencing harassment/discrimination</li> <li>• Lack of support network impacting on the family's ability</li> <li>• Child/young person socially or physically isolated</li> <li>• Advice or support needed to access support services for a disabled child where their parent/carer is managing otherwise.</li> <li>• Child associating with peers who are involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour.</li> <li>• Family demonstrating anti-social behaviour towards others</li> </ul>	

	<b>Housing, Employment and Finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate/poor/overcrowding housing</li> <li>Families affected by low income/debt/living with poverty affecting access to appropriate services to meet the child's needs</li> </ul>	
	*Family seeking asylum or refugees	
	<b>Child or Young Person's Developmental Needs</b>	
	<b>Learning /Education</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerning school attendance, issues with punctuality - attendance below 90% (context must be considered)</li> <li>School considering suspension / exclusion due of the child / young person's behaviour</li> <li>Language and communication difficulties linked to other unmet needs</li> <li>Identified learning needs, SEND support plan/EHCP process linked to other unmet needs</li> <li>Limited access to books, toys or educational materials.</li> <li>Child/young person not engaged in learning, poor concentration, low motivation and interest.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging or signs of developmental delay</li> <li>Concern regarding diet, hygiene</li> <li>Child/young person/parent or carer not attending routine appointments as required causing impact to child</li> <li>Persistent minor health problems where there may be a support need</li> <li>Child/ Young person not accessing dental care when required</li> <li>Low level mental health or emotional difficulties to include self harm for the child/ young person or parent/ carer</li> <li>Child or adult low level substance use whereby this is impacting on the child</li> <li>Accident and Emergency Department attendance giving cause for concern</li> <li>Concerns regarding faltering growth and/or excess weight, where weight and/or growth are outside expected parameters for the child or young person's age and developmental stage, with evidence of impact on physical health, development or wellbeing</li> <li>Encopresis /enuresis (soiling and wetting)</li> <li>Child smokes tobacco or vapes</li> <li>Child displays sexualised behaviour at a young age or inappropriate sexual behaviour at any age</li> </ul>	

(please use [Brooks Traffic Light Tool](#) when considering this)

#### **Social, Emotional and Behavioural Identity**

- Disruptive/challenging behaviour including in school or within early years setting often reflecting distress, unmet needs, or difficulty with emotional regulation
- Emerging anti-social behaviour and attitudes and or low-level offending
- Child is a victim of bullying or bullying others
- Difficulties in relationships with peers and or with adults
- Friendships or relationships inappropriate for age
- Low Self Esteem
- Concerns about sexual development and behaviour

#### **Self Care and Independence**

- Inappropriate use of social media
- Friendships or relationships inappropriate for age
- Lack of age-appropriate behaviour or independent living skills
- Not always adequate self-care (age related)
- There is risk outside of the home- single or isolated evidence of wider contextual risks, low level anti-social behaviour, age appropriate risk-taking, experimentation or peer conflict, substance use without evidence of exploitation, coercion criminality or significant vulnerability

### **Level 3 - Children who require Family Help (Targeted) or Family Help (Child In Need) Support**

<b>Children with Level 3 needs</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>What needs to happen</b>
	<b>Parents or parenting capacity</b>	
Children who require family help targeted or family help child in need support under section 17 provided	<b>Basic Care, Safety and Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parent is struggling to provide adequate care</li> <li>• Child/young person regularly left alone unsupervised or with adults who are unable to meet their needs (the context, age and ability need to be considered)</li> <li>• The parent/carer is unable to protect from danger or significant physical, emotional or sexual harm within the home or elsewhere.</li> </ul>	The professional identifying the need should discuss this with the parent/ carer to better understand the family's

<p>by the Family Help Service. Those children who require family help targeted may have emerging, complex or multiple needs or there maybe risks which are manageable and the child is not identified as ‘in need’ under section 17. Those children identified as being ‘in need’ under section 17, are children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without services, or their health or development is significantly impaired without support being provided in addition assessment or support maybe required for a child with a disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are neglect concerns whereby food, warmth and other basics are not available</li> <li>• Parental/Carers mental health problems significantly affect the care and/or emotional wellbeing of the child/young person</li> <li>• Parental/Carers mental health problems detrimentally affect the care and/or emotional wellbeing of the child/young person</li> <li>• Parental/Carers learning difficulties or disability have a direct impact on the child’s mental/emotional or physical health or development.</li> <li>• The child is exposed to ongoing domestic abuse</li> <li>• Parents/carers consistently failing to meet a child’s learning needs resulting in harmful impact upon the Childs wellbeing.</li> <li>• Parent or carer no longer wanting to care for the child/young person and/or moving between different adults to provide care impacting on their stability and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Parents/carers are not following <a href="#">Lullaby Trust safe sleep guidance</a> or providing a safe sleep environment but are willing to work with agencies. There may be current vulnerabilities which are impacting parenting capacity and decision-making.</li> </ul>	<p>circumstances. Professional curiosity is essential in being able to determine the level of need linked to the concern. Professionals should therefore ask questions to better understand the underlying causes of the issues to assist them when determining the family's level of need.</p> <p>The case will be assessed/supported under Family Help Targeted or Family Help Child In Need.</p>
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## Family and Environmental Factors

### Family and Social Relationships

- There is evidence or disclosed incidents of domestic abuse (Police Protection notifications/Operation Encompass Information)
- The family functioning is significantly impacted by problems of physical, Mental health or substance use.
- The parent has received a custodial sentence and there are worries about the adult who may be responsible to care for the child
- There is risk of the family breaking down leading to the need for the child to become cared for outside of the family network.
- The child is a young carer who has need which cannot be met via universal services or Level 2 intervention
- Unaccompanied and Asylum-Seeking child/ young person
- The child is [privately fostered](#)

### Social and Community resources

- The child or family need immediate support and protection due to harassment/discrimination and have no supportive network
- There are risks outside the home - These children may be at increased risk of exploitation within their communities and given their complex needs they may be more vulnerable to this risk and may require some specialist support from agencies due to there being evidence of ongoing, repeated, escalating; Child criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, gang affiliation, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism, missing and exploitation indicators to include trafficking. This evidence should demonstrate a pattern of harm, rather than isolated events, unless a single incident is of such seriousness that it indicates immediate risk.

### Housing, Employment and Finance

- Vulnerable homeless young person
- Very poor home conditions which require urgent attention which may lead to the home being unsafe for the child

- Extreme financial difficulties/poverty impacting on ability to have basic needs met and no access to finances, or no recourse to public funds or community resources
- No basic amenities provided to include food, water, heating
- Children/young people who may be victims of modern-day slavery
- Children and young people of an appropriate age who are unable to leave the family home (imprisoned)

## Child or Young Persons Developmental Needs

### Learning / Education

- Child not in education or missing from education due to parental neglect in conjunction with safety concerns for the child

### Health

- Parent or carer failing to take the child/young person to health appointments, leading to delayed assessment and/or treatment and impacting their physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- A child / young person with a disability whose needs cannot be met via universal or level 2 intervention
- The child using alcohol or substances impacting on their health and wellbeing
- Significant delay in achieving physical and other developmental milestones.
- Frequent accidental injuries to the child/young person requiring hospital treatment/admission.
- Serious mental health issues impacting on the child/young person's life day to day requiring specialist intervention.
- Risk factors relating to Female Genital Mutilation (consider if female family members have undergone FGM)
- Child has concealed pregnancy or has not booked in to maternity services

### Social, Emotional and Behavioural identity

- Child/young person diagnosed with disordered attachments that have severe impact on them (consider impact to siblings/parents/carers)
- Serious self-harming: suicidal thought in a child who is not accessing appropriate mental health support
- Sexual development and behaviour which may be indicative of abuse  
Inappropriate harmful sexual / abusive behaviours towards others (please use the Brooke Traffic Light Tool)  
Regularly missing or absent from home and suspected to be at risk



- Suspected that the child is being criminally exploited or involved in county lines
- Evidence of radicalisation of the child (radicalisation of the parents / carers must also be considered).

#### **Self care and Independence**

- Young person is living independently and not coping
- Poor self-care for age and development including Hygiene
- Child or young person is regularly engaging in risk - taking behaviour despite professional intervention
- Suspicion / Evidence the child is being groomed and parent is unable to intervene appropriately

### **Level 4 - Children who require a child protection response**

**Children with  
Level 4 needs**

**Indicators**

**What needs to  
happen**

#### **Parent or Carers Capacity**

#### **Basic Care, Safety and Protection**

- Parents / carers unable to provide 'good enough' parenting that is adequate and safe
- Parents have or may have abused neglected the child and or young person
- Parents / carers fail to seek appropriate support when the child / young person has been harmed
- Child or young person beyond parental control in a position of risk
- Parents / carers fail to recognise harm the child / young person has or could have experienced within or outside of the home
- Severe adult mental health, physical health problems or substance use which means that vital parenting roles are not undertaken
- Child has not been protected from sexual / abusive situations
- Forced marriage of a child / young person under the age of 18 years old
- Parents / carers expose the child/ young person to extremist practices, including the child may have experienced or be at risk of Female Genital Mutilation
- Parent has concealed pregnancy

- Pre-birth assessment indicates the unborn baby is at risk of significant harm
- Parents/carers are not following, or there are significant concerns they are not following, [Lullaby Trust safe sleep guidance](#). There are current vulnerabilities which are impacting parenting capacity and decision-making.

## Family and Environmental Factors

### Family and Social Relationships

- Persistent exposure of Domestic abuse to the child / young person
- Adult victim of domestic abuse is assessed as high risk and the child / young person is at risk of significant harm
- An individual who is known to pose a risk to children has access to the child / young person, parents unable or unwilling to adequately protect them from this risk
- Child that needs to be cared outside of their immediate family or parents / carers due to abuse or neglect

### Social and Community Resources

- Forced marriage of the child / young person under the age of 18 years old

### Housing, Employment and Finance

- unsanitary or unsafe home conditions which are a risk to the child/ young persons health and safety

### Learning / Education

- Parents / Carers who will not engage with services to include Family Help to improve the child/ young person's education needs to include attendance, ultimately resulting in educational neglect concerns.

## Child or Young Persons Developmental Needs

### Health

- A child or young person is at risk of significant harm due to serious and ongoing drug and/or alcohol misuse, presenting a level of risk that cannot be effectively managed within the community
- Child has acute mental health difficulties resulting in serious risk to the child or to others

- Suspected Non-accidental injury/Abuse, Neglect
- Bruising in a non-mobile infant
- The child/young person has undergone FGM
- Fabricated and induced Illness

#### **Social, Emotional and Behavioural Identity**

- Failure or inability to address complex mental health difficulties requiring specialist intervention
- Extreme, Violent or abusive behaviour that has resulted in a serious risk to a child and others to include a parent/carer
- Under 13 years old engaged in sexual activity
- Concerns RE: coercion to engage in sexual activity under 18 years old
- Child / young person has been sexually assaulted or abused; child has committed sexual assault or abuse
- Significant concerns for a child / young person in respect of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, trafficked or modern-day slavery (assessed as high)
- Child/ Young person has been/is being groomed and parents are unwilling or unable to safeguard
- Concerns about potential radicalisation
- Child subject to MAPPA
- There is significant, persistent, or escalating harm occurring outside the home, where extra-familial risks (e.g. exploitation, serious violence, gangs, missing) are the primary concern, parental capacity is not the main driver of harm, and risks are not reducing despite family intervention. Cases require specialist contextual safeguarding (ROTH), are supported by multi-agency evidence, and typically involve PREM-level exploitation concerns.

#### **Self-care and Independence**

- Child / young person is left home alone without adequate adult supervision or support and at risk of significant harm (consider age and development)
- Child / young person is displaying serious behaviours resulting in significant harm despite professional interventions
- A child or young person has contact, both online and/or in person, with individuals known to pose a sexual, physical or emotional risk, and there is evidence of a risk of significant harm alongside parental or carer inability or unwillingness to protect.

