

# Safeguarding Levels of Need

The levels of need are universal services, early help/prevention, child in need, and child protection. Other terms might be used in your local area, such as 'low-level needs' and 'additional needs', but all will reflect four levels.

Universal services	Early help/prevention
<p>At the level of universal services, a child's needs are relatively minor. Universal provision (e.g. schools, GP surgeries, health services, and Children's Centres), without formal interventions, can meet these needs and could prevent any problems from escalating.</p>	<p>Early help/prevention refers to a child who requires help for a specific need that cannot be met solely through universal provision. The child may be vulnerable or showing early signs of abuse or neglect. The help given at this level could include specialist speech and language services, interventions, specific health provision, or support for a temporary response to an event (e.g. support from the child's school or nursery).</p>
<p><b>Examples may include:</b></p>	<p><b>Examples may include:</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The child isn't reaching their expected developmental milestones.</li><li>• The child is regularly having days off school.</li><li>• The child has poor behaviour at school.</li><li>• The child's parents need help or support with parenting.</li><li>• The child has health problems which can be managed with universal provision.</li><li>• The family needs help accessing services.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The child is recently bereaved.</li><li>• The child is missing education.</li><li>• The child has a severe speech and language problem.</li><li>• The child has problematic family circumstances where abuse seems to be developing (e.g. domestic abuse or parental substance misuse).</li><li>• The child appears to be inadequately clothed or fed (but is not seriously under- or overweight, and the issue hasn't persisted for very long - if either of these things were true, the child would have a higher level of need).</li><li>• The child appears to be misusing substances at a low level.</li><li>• The child appears to be self-harming.</li></ul> <p>While these circumstances are serious, they are not yet at a level where the Local Authority needs to intervene and put a Child Protection Plan in place for the child. However, at this level, an Early Help assessment and plan would be required, in order to coordinate a response for the child and their family.</p>

## Child in need

A child in need is a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services. The child's health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of additional services; or the child is disabled (Local Authority children's services are always responsible for children with disabilities, no matter how well the disability is being provided for).

A child or family is at this level if their issues continue to escalate, or interventions are not working, and it is felt that the needs cannot be met without the intervention of social care, who will coordinate multi-agency help for them.

There should be a sound record of interventions and support offered previously by services to highlight why social intervention is required.

### Examples may include:

- The child has chronic or recurring health problems and their parents have failed to seek treatment.
- The child is a young carer and needs help.
- The child lives in a family unit that is likely to break down.
- The child is homeless or living in severely overcrowded accommodation.
- The child is pregnant or likely to become pregnant (and is over 13 years old).
- The child lives in a family where the standard of parenting is seriously adversely affected due to substance misuse, ill health, or disabilities. For example, if the child is having to provide some form of care to their parents long-term, or if the parent's capacity to look after them is impacted, they are more vulnerable to safeguarding issues, and may need support from the Local Authority in order to thrive.

## Child protection concerns

Child protection concerns are where there is reason to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm because of abuse or neglect. The need to help the child is immediate.

If a child protection concern is identified then it's essential that it's reported to social care through a referral. Social care will then decide whether further action is needed and may hold a Child Protection Conference or develop a Child Protection Plan.

The concern may be that the child is being subject to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect, and can be one single event or a combination of warning signs.

### Examples may include:

- The child has unexplained injuries.
- The child has contact with someone who has been identified as a risk to children.
- The child has experienced or witnessed a serious incident or several incidents of domestic abuse.
- The child is at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation.
- The child is at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) or honour-based abuse.
- The child is beyond parental control (i.e. the parent can't keep them safe from issues such as gangs or drugs).
- The child has chronic non-attendance at school, or is permanently excluded and receiving no education.
- The child is under 13 years old and pregnant.