



Right Service, Right Time

Delivering effective support for children and families in Birmingham

Guidance for Practitioners

March 2015 (Version 2)



Delivering effective support for children and families in Birmingham

Foreword

Children and families are supported most effectively and efficiently when services and information sharing are planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way. The vision across Birmingham is to deliver the right service to the right child at the right time, supported by flexible and responsive services.

This framework provides everyone with clear advice about what to do and how to respond if a child and their family need extra help. Underpinning it is our determination to put the child at the centre of what we do. Our aspiration is for Birmingham to be a city where all professionals across the system put the voice of the child at the centre of their planning, decision-making and service delivery.

We need to have a collective understanding of the needs of the child and the family so we can work more effectively together to make a real difference.



Independent Chair
Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board

Introduction

This guidance is for everyone who works with children, young people and their families in Birmingham. It sets out four levels of children's needs: **Universal, Universal Plus, Additional Needs and Complex/Significant.**

The aim is to achieve consistency in understanding and practice, when responding to children, young people and their families who need extra support.

All children access universal services, such as maternity and health visiting, school and youth services. These services are also well placed to recognise and respond when extra support may be necessary. Children will always receive universal services whatever their needs.

There are times, however, when extra support is necessary. This may be because the child's needs become increasingly complex or because of parental or family circumstances.

Children who have additional or complex needs may require targeted

support from a range of services provided by statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations.

We all recognise that, in the vast majority of situations, parents want to help serve the best interests of their children and are best placed to meet their needs. When thinking about how best to support families, an assessment needs to take into account any previous history of support, any vulnerability, risk or protective factors and the context they are living in. This should be considered against the guidance set out in this document.

Some children may do well, even in the most adverse circumstances, while others appear to have little capacity to cope with small amounts of stress. What is important is that



individual families are offered services that will respond to their particular needs.

This guide describes potential indicators of concern for children, young people and their families and should be used to enhance collective understanding of risk. The information needs to inform 'professional conversations' between services to improve the quality and consistency of assessments. There will always be circumstances that are not covered in this guide or particular issues that will rely on the professional judgement of frontline workers and of their managers but overall those can still be understood within this framework.

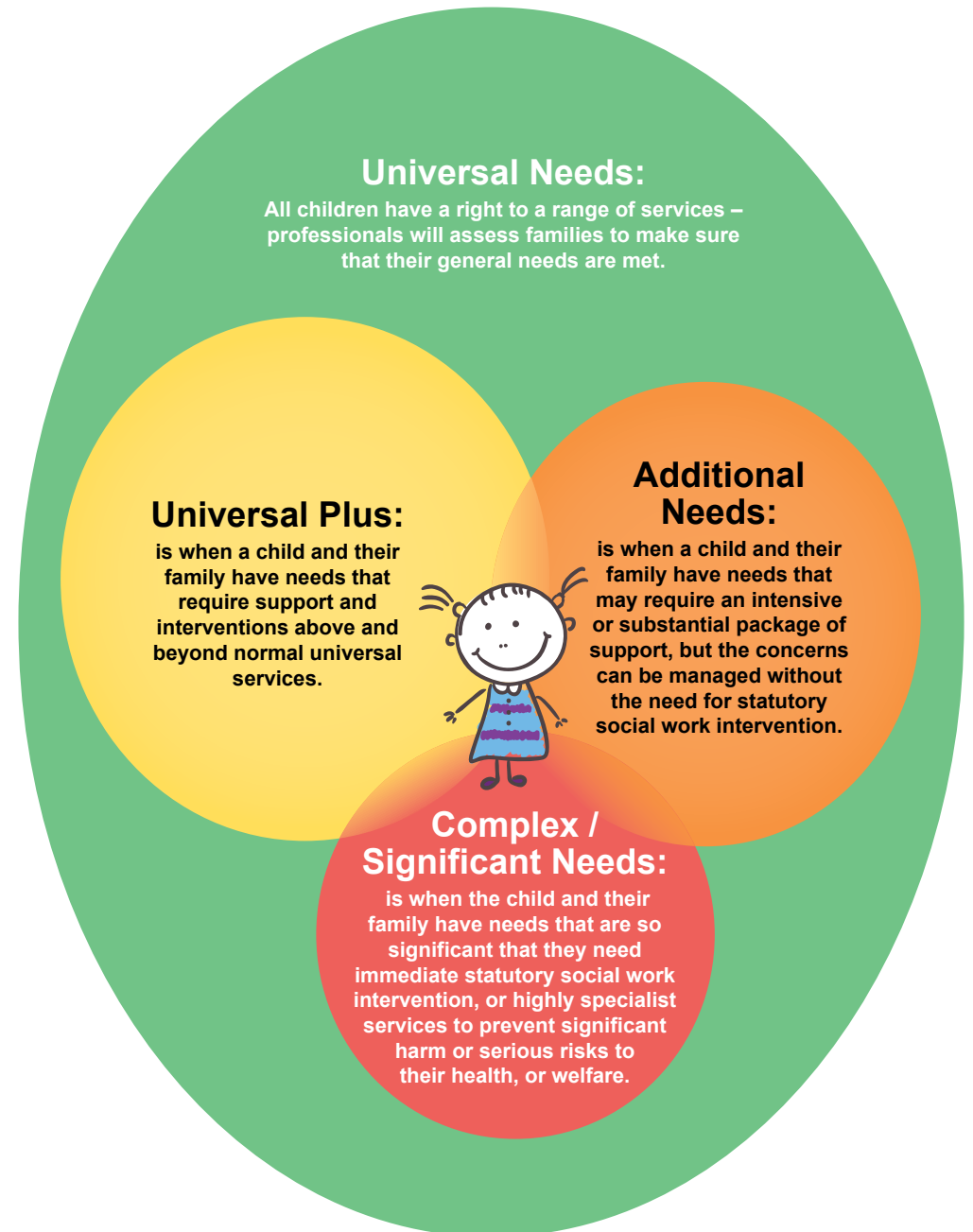
The diagram reinforces that the child is at the centre of all we do. It also shows the relationship between four levels of need;

- **Universal Needs,**
- **Universal Plus,**
- **Additional Needs**
- **Complex/Significant Needs.**

Universal Plus is when a child and their family have needs that require support and interventions above and beyond normal universal services.

Additional Needs is when a child and their family have needs that may require an intensive or substantial package of support, but the concerns can be managed without the need for statutory social work intervention.

Complex/Significant Needs is when the child and their family have needs that are so significant that they need immediate statutory social work intervention, or highly specialist services to prevent significant harm or serious risks to their health, or welfare.



Guiding principles

- Wherever possible, the needs of children and families will be met by universal services.
- As soon as any professional is aware that a child has any additional needs which may require the involvement of more than one professional, they should talk to that child and their family and offer advice and support.
- Do with - not to - and empower families to identify their own problems, needs and solutions. In most cases, outcomes for children will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents/carers to make changes.
- When support is needed, your job is to talk to the child on their own and to the family, work out with them and your colleagues what they need, agree a plan and then share responsibility for making the plan work. (See, Plan, Do, Review)
- We will work with the child and family to help them to help themselves. Once improvement is made, services will reduce or end so as not to create dependence.
- Our aim is always to build resilience in children and families and the capacity to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives.
- We will be open, honest and transparent in our approach to supporting children and their families.
- We will identify problems as early as possible so that the child and their family receive appropriate support in a timely way to prevent the problem from escalating.
- Never do nothing. If you think a family needs support, get involved and help make a difference.
- Professionals should have conversations with each other to agree how to respond to need as well as develop a plan.



Determining need – questions to ask yourself

- Is this family coping?
- Are this child's needs being met?
- Have I ensured that the child has had an opportunity to speak, be heard and listened to?
- What are the relevant factors at the core of the child's needs? Do I have a picture of the family as a whole, their parental capability and environmental factors?
- Have I used this guide to prompt me to think more clearly and understand the situation?
- Have I considered any previous history of support, service involvement and the current risk and protective factors within the family? Think about what the child's experience really is.
- Am I sure about my understanding of the information? If not, take advice in the first instance from your line manager or your agency's safeguarding advisor.
- Have I discussed my analysis of the identified needs with other professionals involved with the child to achieve a more holistic approach?
- Have I discussed my concerns with the child and their family and offered advice and support?
- Have I asked the parents for written consent to my involvement, my assessment and /or referral and to information sharing to help engage services quickly?
- Have I been professionally curious?
- Have I thought about the needs of any siblings?

Put yourself in the child's place!



Universal Plus is when a child and their family have needs that require support and interventions above and beyond normal universal services.

Development needs of child/young person:

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defaulting on immunisations/development checks/health appointments • Minor concerns regarding diet/hygiene/clothing • Slow in reaching developmental milestones
Education and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has some identified learning needs • Patterns of regular absences – school attendance 94-86% • Not reaching educational development potential • Low motivation/not engaged in learning
Emotional/ Behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some difficulties with peer group relationships and with some adults • Evidence of some inappropriate behaviour • Finds managing change difficult
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some insecurities around identity expressed • May experience bullying around 'difference'
Family and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited support from family and friends • Some difficulty in sustaining relationships
Social Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be over friendly or withdrawn or not aware of risk • Age inappropriate clothing and appearance • Change in communication leading to a more guarded/secretive self • Presenting vulnerabilities but not currently at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation
Self-care skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not always adequate self-care/hygiene • Slow to develop appropriate self-care skills

Parent and Carer Factors:

Basic Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor parental engagement with services • Parent requires advice on parenting issues • Physical needs not always met
Ensuring safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some exposure to dangerous situations in home/ community • Parental stress starting to affect ability to ensure child's safety • Lack of emotional warmth • Inconsistent responses to child by parents • Unable to develop other positive relationships
Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spends much time alone • Rarely exposed to new experiences
Guidance and boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can behave in an antisocial way e.g. alcohol, smoking, minor offending behaviour • Inconsistent boundaries offered • Lack of positive role models or existence of significant others who are poor role models
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key relationships with family members not always kept up • Difficulties with attachments

Family and Environment Factors:

Family history and functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced loss of significant adult • May look after younger siblings • Parent has health difficulties • Domestic Abuse with the potential for emotional impact on child/ren
Wider family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited support from family/friends
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor housing • Family seeking asylum or are refugees i.e. no access to public funds
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage earner has periods of unemployment • Parents have limited formal education
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income and lack of financial resources
Family's Social Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family new to area • Some social exclusion problems
Community resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to universal resource

Additional Needs is when a child and their family have needs that may require an intensive or substantial package of support, but the concerns can be managed without the need for statutory social work intervention.

Development needs of child/young person:

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health concerns not accepted or addressed – treatment not being sought/adhered to Multiple health problems/disability Consistently missing required health appointments Over weight/under weight Continence issues Substance misuse inc drugs/alcohol Developmental milestones not met
Education and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning needs continuing to impact negatively Not achieving Key Stage benchmarks School attendance below 85% ≥3 fixed term exclusions or >15 days excluded in any year Permanently excluded from school
Emotional/ Behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in coping with anger/frustration and upset Disruptive/challenging behaviour Emerging, concerning mental health issues e.g. low mood, self harm, emerging eating disorders etc Cannot manage change Unable to demonstrate empathy
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to persistent discrimination Very poor self-esteem Exhibiting extremist language/behaviour/aligned to a gang
Family and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks positive role models Involved in conflict with and between peers/siblings Regularly cares for family member, parent, partner
Social Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provocative behaviour/appearance Hygiene problems Missing from home or change in behaviour/routine suggesting development of inappropriate relationship May be at risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation
Self-care skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor self-care for age Precociously able/required to care for self

Parent and Carer Factors:

Basic Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to engage parents/carer – reject advice/support Parent continually struggling to provide care Parent previously looked after by the Local Authority Professionals concerned basic care will not be provided
Ensuring safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents perceive safety to be a real problem Neglect identified Unsafe situations e.g. DV, criminal activity, drugs, alcohol
Emotional warmth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives erratic/inconsistent poor quality care Parental capacity affects ability to nurture Absence of positive relationships
Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not receiving positive stimulation – lack of new activities
Guidance and boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erratic/inadequate guidance Parent is a poor role model
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has multiple carers Parent in prison Frequent/unplanned moves causing disruption/instability

Family and Environment Factors:

Family history and functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incidents of Domestic Abuse with impact on victim and children Acrimonious divorce/separation Family has serious physical/mental health difficulties Drug use or alcohol dependency by parent/carer Bereavement or loss of family member
Wider family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor relationship/little communication with family Family is socially isolated Housing / poor state of repairs Statutory overcrowding Vulnerable accommodation e.g. friend's house, not secure High mobility e.g. refugee asylum seeking status
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of basic skills hinder parents employability Stressed due to unemployment or 'over working'
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt/poverty impacts on ability to meet basic needs
Family's Social Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents socially excluded Lack of a support network
Community resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access problems to poor quality universal/targeted resources

Complex/Significant Needs is when the child and their family have needs that are so significant that they need immediate statutory social work intervention, or highly specialist services to prevent significant harm or serious risks to their health, or welfare.

Development needs of child/young person:

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe/chronic health problems, developmental delay or disability where treatment not being sought or adhered to Persistent substance misuse Pregnancy of a child under 13 Repeat dental extraction under general anaesthetic (or multiple dental extractions)
Education and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent School refusal if in conjunction with other Complex/Significant Needs
Emotional/ Behavioural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to severe mental health problems Significant impact of traumatic event Deterioration of mental health leading to risk to self and/ or others
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences of persistent discrimination e.g. re ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability Chronically socially isolated Participates in gang activity Participates in extremist actions in language and behaviour
Family and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods accommodated by Local Authority Family breakdown leaves child at risk Child is main carer for family member Subject to physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect
Social Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent poor and inappropriate self presentation Inappropriate relationship with an adult (not family member), frequently missing from home environment At significant risk or already being sexually exploited
Self-care skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglects to use self-care skills due to development delay, learning difficulties or alternative priorities e.g. substance misuse

Parent and Carer Factors:

Basic Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents consistently unable to provide 'positive enough' parenting that is adequate and safe Parent's mental health problems or substance misuse significantly affects care of child Parents unable to care for previous children Domestic violence in pregnancy
Ensuring safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent instability and violence in the home Parent and/or child have significant involvement in crime Parents unable to keep child safe and secure Child's behaviour poses unmanageable risk
Emotional warmth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents inconsistent, critical or apathetic attitude to child may result in significant harm
Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grossly under stimulated
Guidance and boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effective boundaries set or adhered to Perpetrator or victim of significant anti-social behaviour
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beyond parental control Nobody providing appropriate care

Family and Environment Factors:

Family history and functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incidents of Domestic Abuse with a significant impact on victim and child Poor/harmful sibling relationships Young person persistently running away or absconding Threat of forced marriage
Wider family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effective support Destructive/unhelpful involvement Negative influence from family involved in drugs/crime
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical accommodation places child at risk of harm Emergency housing needs as a consequence of fleeing domestic violence/gang reprisal
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to gain employment due to long-term issues e.g. chronic health, substance misuse which impairs capacity
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme poverty/debt impacting on ability to care for child
Family's Social Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family chronically socially excluded No supportive network Community Resources Poor quality services with long-term difficulties accessing target populations

How to access support based on need

All partners working with children, young people and their families should offer support as soon as they identify a need. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible according to their needs, but also be ready to respond if there is an escalation in the child's needs.

Universal Needs covers children who will require no additional support beyond that which are universally available.

Children with **Universal Plus** needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as children's centres or schools, organising additional support with local partners as necessary.

For children whose needs are **Additional**, a co-ordinated multidisciplinary approach is usually best, involving a family common

assessment framework (fCAF) and a Lead Professional to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require.

Complex/Significant Needs are where the child's needs are so great that statutory and/or specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. Examples of specialist services are children's social care, child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) Tier 3 and 4 or the Youth Offending Service.

By identifying and responding to children with **Universal Plus** needs and by providing co-ordinated multi-disciplinary support and services for those with **Additional Needs**, we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

The following guidance sets out action to be taken and support available based on specific levels of need;

Universal Needs – universal services should be accessible to all children and families in Birmingham. The children's information and advice service (CIAS) can assist in signposting professionals to appropriate services available for families in each locality. **0121 303 1888** or email on familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk

Universal Plus – seek advice from the designated manager in your agency. Speak to the family about your concerns. Consider using the family common assessment framework (fCAF) or a specific type of assessment for your service to help record your concerns and what is working well within the family and use it to help create an action plan.

Clarify the range of services your organisation can provide to support the child and their family.

You can also contact the children's information and advice service (CIAS) on **0121 303 1888** or email on familyinformation@birmingham.gov.uk for information, advice and guidance on other services that can support families.

Additional Needs – seek advice from the designated manager in your organisation. Speak to the family about your concerns and gain their consent to the intervention and to information sharing. Where more than one agency is involved in providing support to the family, use the family common assessment framework (fCAF) to carry out a multi-agency assessment and draw up an integrated support plan (ISP). This may need you or a colleague to take the role of lead professional later on.

Help and advice is available from:

- children's information and advice service (CIAS), who can signpost and provide guidance on available services to support families with additional needs in your area.



- the early help brokerage and support team (EHB) for ongoing assistance and guidance on the family common assessment framework (fCAF) visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/caf
- local family support and safeguarding hubs which provide support for lead professionals and convene and chair 'team around the family' (TAF) panels to co-ordinate the provision of services in that locality for children with additional needs. You can find the contact details for local family support and safeguarding hubs at www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk





Complex/Significant Needs – if your assessment indicates that a child is at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, seek advice from the designated manager in your organisation, then contact the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) on **0121 303 1888/ MASH@birmingham.gov.uk**. This will enable you to discuss your concerns with a qualified social worker.

A multi-agency referral form (MARF) should be completed. You should inform the family of the action you intend to take, unless you have grounds to believe this will increase the risk of harm.

The MASH operates between **8.45am and 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.15pm on Fridays**. Outside these hours, please call the emergency duty team (EDT) on **0121 303 1888**.

Where an immediate response is required because the child's physical health is at risk of immediate harm, contact health professionals by dialling **999** for an ambulance.

In an emergency where a child's safety is at immediate risk of significant harm, contact the police by dialling **999**.



UNIVERSAL NEEDS & UNIVERSAL PLUS

Children's Information and Advice Service can provide information on:

- Advice & School Admissions
- Childcare Provision
- Support groups for Families
- What's on for Families in Birmingham – leisure / holiday activities



ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Help and advice available from:

- Children's Information and Advice Service (CIAS) who can signpost and provide guidance on available services to support families with additional needs in your area.
- The Early Help Brokerage and Support Team for ongoing assistance and guidance on Family Common Assessment Framework (fCAF).
- Area based Local Family Support and Safeguarding Hubs provide support for lead professionals and convene and chair Team Around the Family Panels to coordinate the provision of services in that locality for children with additional needs.



COMPLEX / SIGNIFICANT NEEDS

- If your assessment indicates that a child is at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse seek advice from the designated manager in your organisation, then contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This will enable you to discuss your concerns with a qualified Social Worker.
- A multi-agency referral form (MARF) should be completed. You should inform the family of the action you intend to take, unless you have grounds to believe this will increase the risk of harm.



Contact the Children's Information & Advice Service on **0121 303 1888** to access **Early Help Brokerage Support Team, Local Family Support and Safeguarding Hubs** and **Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub**.

In an emergency where a child's safety is at immediate risk of significant harm, contact West Midlands Police on **999**

Where to go for further information

For a copy of Hub directories and further information on how to use this guidance and illustrative case studies please visit www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk

