

## Identifying levels of need and what to do next

Our Continuum of Need document is a guide to assessing and meeting the needs of children and their families. It is not a 'tick list' and should be used as an aid to assist professional judgement and decision making. It is important that assessments of need are based on a 'big picture' view of the child and their circumstances.

Any concerns about a child having been seriously harmed or being at risk of serious harm should be reported immediately by telephone to the MASH on 020 8314 6660. In an emergency always call 999.

This table tells you what action to take once you have identified the level of need using the Continuum of Need document on the next page		
Level of need identified	Early help assessment required?	Referral/action/support
Level 1 Universal	No assessment required	Child, young person or family accesses relevant universal services for advice/support such as GP, school, dentist, children's centre.
Level 2 Universal+	<p>If a single clear issue or area of need identified – early help assessment (EHA) may not be necessary.</p> <p>If a number of issues or needs at Level 2 are identified, an EHA must be undertaken</p>	<p>Offer support yourself, work with a professional partner or direct to relevant universal or early help support service for additional support</p> <p>Contact the early help support service if advice is required: Based on results of early help assessment – access appropriate early help service/s. Establish team around the family (TAF) meeting.</p>
Level 3 Targeted Response	<p>If an early help assessment has already been done, new information should be sent to the services already involved, to update the EHA plan</p> <p>If not already done, EHA should be undertaken and recommendations made for services required to meet assessed levels of need should start to populate a plan.</p>	<p>Appropriate support can be accessed by the lead professional and TAF.</p> <p>Request for targeted family support via the early help panel which may include the commissioned family support service can be made using the help and support section of the online MASH request form following a consultation with the early help team 020 8314 7333.</p>
Level 4 Specialist/Statutory	Likely that an EHA has been done but if not the EHA process should not be used at this point and referral should not be delayed.	Immediate referral should be made to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) using the online request form <a href="http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/MASH">www.lewisham.gov.uk/MASH</a>
<p><b>Safeguarding</b> What to do if you are concerned about the safety of a child or young person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a child is in immediate danger and needs immediate protection you should contact the police and/or the ambulance on 999.</li> <li>• If a child has been harmed or is at imminent risk of significant harm or you need general advice or information about a safeguarding matter please contact the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): 020 8314 6660. For out-of-hours help, contact the emergency duty team (EDT) on 020 8314 6000.</li> </ul>		

## Continuum of Need – London Borough of Lewisham

### Universal services

Features	Level 1 – Universal example indicators	Assessment process
Children with no additional needs and children who may from time to time require additional support that can be met within universal services.	<b>Development needs</b> <b>All children whose needs can be met by universal services will occasionally experience difficulties in their lives which may be attributable to situational factors such as loss and separation, a change in their family's circumstances, illness or other short term detrimental factors such as bullying or being the victim of violence in the community.</b>	Children should access universal services in a normal way or via the IAG pages on the website.  <b>Key agencies that are involved at this level:</b> Education Children's centres Health visiting service Midwifery School nursing GP Youth support services Police Housing Voluntary and community sector Early years childcare settings Schools (including SEN support) Online counselling services Work It Out! Lewisham Parenting groups Adult mental health SALT and drop in Sexual health services Dentist Ophthalmic services Nurseries
	<b>Learning/education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General development is age appropriate</li> <li>Achieving education key stages</li> <li>Good attendance at school/college/training</li> <li>No barriers to learning</li> <li>Planned progression beyond statutory school age</li> </ul>	
	<b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good physical health with age appropriate development, including speech and language</li> </ul>	
	<b>Social, emotional, behaviour, identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good mental health and psychological wellbeing</li> <li>Good quality early attachments, confident in social situations</li> <li>Knowledgeable about the effects of crime and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>Knowledgeable about sex and relationships and consistent use of contraception if sexually active</li> </ul>	
	<b>Family and social relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable families where parents are able to meet the child's needs</li> </ul>	
	<b>Self-care and independence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age appropriate independent</li> </ul>	
	<b>Family and environmental factors</b>	
	<b>Family history and wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive family relationships</li> </ul>	
	<b>Housing, employment and finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child fully supported financially</li> <li>Good quality stable housing/amenities</li> </ul>	
	<b>Social and community resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good social and friendship networks exist</li> <li>Safe and secure environment</li> <li>Access to consistent and positive activities</li> </ul>	
	<b>Parents and carers</b>	
	<b>Basic care, safety and protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents able to provide care for child's needs</li> </ul>	
	<b>Emotional warmth &amp; stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents provide secure and caring parenting – praise and encouragement</li> </ul>	
	<b>Guidance boundaries and stimulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents provide appropriate guidance and boundaries to help child develop appropriate values</li> </ul>	



## Universal plus

Features	Level 2 – Universal plus example indicators	Assessment process
<p>Children and families with additional needs who would benefit from or who require extra help to improve education, parenting and/or behaviours, or to meet specific health or emotional needs, or to improve material situation.</p> <p>May require multi-agency intervention. Lead professional and TAF.</p> <p>Children with additional needs are best supported by those that already work with them such as children's centres and schools organising additional support with local partners as needed.</p> <p>The purpose of this intervention is to address these needs and prevent them escalating to a level that requires targeted services.</p>	<b>Development needs</b>	
	<b>Learning/education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited access to books, toys or educational materials</li> <li>Poor stimulation</li> <li>Identified language and communication difficulties</li> <li>SEN support at school level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional truanting or non-attendance and poor punctuality</li> <li>Some fixed term exclusions</li> <li>Few or no qualifications</li> <li>NEET</li> </ul>
	<b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slow in reaching development milestones</li> <li>Overdue immunisations or checks</li> <li>Minor health problems</li> <li>Inadequate diet e.g. no breakfast, being under/overweight</li> <li>Dental problems and untreated decay – poor dental hygiene</li> <li>Bedwetting or soiling</li> <li>Experiment with tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs</li> <li>Parent has undergone FGM procedure but risk assessment undertaken by health professionals identifies there isn't a perceived risk of the child being subject to the procedure</li> </ul>	<p>An early help assessment should be completed to gain a full understanding of the family's needs, a TAF convened and a plan agreed with the family, agreeing clear outcomes to be achieved and progress regularly reviewed.</p>
	<b>Social, emotional, behaviour, identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty making and sustaining relationships with peers and with family</li> <li>Social isolation</li> <li>Lack of positive role models</li> <li>Exhibits antisocial/antiauthoritarian behaviour</li> <li>Low level mental health or emotional issues requiring intervention</li> <li>Children involved in bullying or low level cyber bullying</li> <li>Lack of empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early onset of sexual activity or at risk of early pregnancy</li> <li>Lack of confidence/low self-esteem which affects behaviour and development</li> <li>Child subject to persistent discrimination</li> <li>Emerging concerns in relation to attachment</li> <li>Low level concern about child being radicalised or exposed to extremism</li> <li>Resistance to boundaries and adult guidance</li> <li>Exhibits aggressive challenging behaviour</li> </ul>
	<b>Self-care and independence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of age appropriate self-care skills and independent living skills that increase vulnerability to social exclusion</li> </ul>	
	<b>Family and environmental factors</b>	
	<b>Family and social relationships and family wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/carers have relationship difficulties which affect the child</li> <li>Child has some young carer responsibilities</li> <li>Family is socially isolated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low level inter-sibling violence and aggression</li> <li>Unresolved issues arising from parents separation and family reconstitution or bereavement</li> </ul>
	<b>Housing, employment and finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcrowding in poor housing conditions</li> <li>Housing arrangements are temporary or insecure</li> <li>Insecure or unknown immigration status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families financial resources impact on child's basic physical needs being met</li> <li>Serious debt or rent arrears</li> </ul>
	<b>Social and community resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are victim of hate crime</li> <li>Poor access to leisure and recreational amenities and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associating with anti-social or criminally active peers</li> <li>Risk of gang involvement or vulnerability to gang activity/exploitation</li> </ul>
	<b>Parents and Carers</b>	
	<b>Basic care, safety and protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inappropriate child care arrangements</li> </ul>	

Two or more services work together to meet child and family needs, coordinated by a service that knows the child/family best.

An early help assessment should be completed to gain a full understanding of the family's needs, a TAF convened and a plan agreed with the family, agreeing clear outcomes to be achieved and progress regularly reviewed.

**Key agencies that may provide support at this level:**

Youth crime prevention services  
Athena service  
Youth service  
The HUB  
Targeted drug and alcohol information, advice and education  
Attendance and welfare, children's centres (e.g. parenting programmes)  
Voluntary and community services  
Prevent  
Job Centre Plus (and other employment services)  
Online counselling services  
Health visitors  
Midwifery  
Schools (including SEN support)  
Portage  
School nursing  
Early years childcare settings  
HOC & housing drop in  
Young carers  
Adult mental health  
Place2Be  
Young Women's Resource Project  
SALT



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community</li><li>• Low level concerns about parental alcohol or substance use</li><li>• Young or inexperienced parents</li><li>• Parental lack of insight into effects of child's exposure to parental conflict</li></ul>	
	<b>Emotional warmth and stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inconsistent parenting, but development not significantly impaired</li><li>• Inconsistent responses to child/young person</li><li>• Failure to pick up on the child's emotional cues</li></ul>	
	<b>Guidance, boundaries and stimulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of routine and inconsistent boundaries</li><li>• Poor supervision within the home</li><li>• Low level physical chastisement that does not cause physical injury</li><li>• Inappropriate parental chastisement e.g. puts child in stress positions</li><li>• Threatening and menacing behaviour towards the child</li></ul>	



## Targeted

Features	Level 3 – Targeted example indicators	Assessment Process
<p>Children and families with complex needs requiring integrated targeted support.</p> <p>Because of the complexity of needs, especially around behaviour and parenting, a multidisciplinary/agency coordinated plan developed with the family is needed, coordinated by a lead professional.</p> <p>Vulnerable children and their families with multiple needs or whose needs are more complex, such as children and families who: have a disability resulting in complex needs, exhibit antisocial or challenging behaviour, suffer neglect or poor family relationships, have poor engagement with key services such as schools and health, are not in education or work long term.</p> <p>The object of the work of the TAF is to enable the family to have their needs met within the universal and additional services tier.</p> <p><b>Where the TAF has attempted to work with the family but serious safeguarding concerns remain, a referral to the MASH is to be made.</b></p>	<p><b>Development needs</b></p> <p><b>Learning/education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short term exclusions or at risk of permanent exclusion, persistent truanting</li> <li>Children who are electively home educated where there are concerns that their educational needs are not being consistently met</li> <li>Parent does not engage with school and actively resists support</li> <li>SEN school support or EHCP</li> <li>No access to books, toys or educational materials</li> <li>Inadequate stimulation leading to developmental concerns</li> </ul>	<p>Where practitioners identify that a child and their family would benefit from a more intensive multidisciplinary response than they can provide, they should discuss this with the family and complete an early help assessment.</p> <p>The early help assessment needs to identify the child's and family's needs and develop a SMART plan to address these.</p> <p>If a more intensive level of family support is needed from the Council's commissioned family support service, a MASH request should be submitted, ticking "<b>help and support</b>".</p> <p>A TAF is to be convened and a lead professional to be identified. There is an expectation that the TAF will have worked intensively together to meet the additional needs of the child and the family.</p> <p>These indicators are meant as a guide but clearly rely on professional analysis and interpretation. If you are in doubt about whether the child's circumstances are at level 3 or 4 you can ask for a consultation with a qualified social worker in the MASH.</p> <p><b>Key agencies that may provide support at this level:</b></p> <p>Mental health services Health Schools</p>
	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child has some chronic/recurring health problems or a disability; badly managed</li> <li>Developmental milestones not being met due to parental care</li> <li>Regular substance misuse</li> <li>Lack of food</li> <li>Unsafe sexual activity</li> <li>Self-harming behaviours</li> <li>Mental health issues emerging e.g. conduct disorder, ADHD, anxiety, depression, eating disorder, self-harming</li> <li>Failure to engage in antenatal services</li> <li>History of FGM in family</li> <li>Parent has undergone FGM procedure but risk of child being subject to procedure is unknown and needs to be further assessed within partnership</li> <li>Growing professional concern about fabricated and induced illness but there is no current evidence of significant harm</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Social, emotional, behaviour, identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child under 18 is pregnant where there are significant social family concerns</li> <li>Low or medium level indicators of CSE (please see LSCB CSE risk assessment guidance and MET strategy)</li> <li>Starting to commit offences and reoffend</li> <li>Prosecution of offences resulting in court orders</li> <li>Child is engaging in cyber activity that potentially places others or themselves at risk of harm</li> <li>Evidence of regular/frequent drug use which may be combined with other risk factors</li> <li>Evidence of gang affiliation and gang related activities</li> <li>Concern about child being radicalised or exposed to extremism</li> <li>Child or young person engaging in risk taking behaviours</li> <li>Mental health/physical needs impact adversely on the care of the child</li> <li>Significant low self esteem</li> <li>Clear concerns about parent and child attachment</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Self-care and independence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills, likely to impair development or compromise safety</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Family and environmental factors</b></p>	
	<p><b>Family and social relationships and family wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History of ongoing domestic violence</li> <li>Risk of relationship breakdown leading to child possibly becoming looked after</li> <li>Child is a young carer and this is adversely impacting on their development and welfare</li> <li>Parental illness or disability leading to inability to provide basic care</li> <li>Concerns about inter-sibling violence and aggression which does not result in significant emotional or physical harm</li> <li>Destructive or unhelpful involvement from extended family</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Housing, employment and finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe overcrowding, temporary accommodation, homeless, unemployment</li> <li>Intentionally homeless</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Social and community resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family require support services as a result of social exclusion</li> <li>Parents socially excluded, no access to local facilities</li> <li>No recourse to public funds</li> <li>Families financial resources seriously compromise child's basic physical needs being met/their general wellbeing</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Parents and carers</b></p>	
	<p><b>Basic care, safety and protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child is left at home alone but this does not seriously place them at significant risk</li> <li>Inappropriate child care arrangements which are consistently prejudicing the child's safety and welfare</li> <li>Health and safety hazards in the home</li> <li>Escalating concerns that parental alcohol or substance use is adversely impacting on the child</li> <li>Parent fails to prevent child's exposure to potentially unsafe situations through cyber activity</li> </ul>	



	<b>Emotional warmth and stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent parenting impacting emotional or behavioural development</li> <li>Parent is unresponsive or fails to recognise child’s emotional needs</li> <li>Parent ignores child or is consistently inappropriate in responding to child</li> </ul>	Attendance and welfare Family support service Drug and alcohol services (e.g. CRI) Athena YOS FNP
	<b>Guidance boundaries and stimulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent provides inconsistent boundaries or responses</li> </ul>	Voluntary & community services (e.g. Young Women’s Resource Project) Prevent Specialist health or disability services Youth services All services listed under additional needs.



## Specialist/ acute

Features	Level 4 – Specialist/ acute example indicators	Assessment process
<p>Children with complex additional unmet needs that require a statutory child-in-need assessment.</p> <p>Children who are at risk of significant harm which require a child protection response or legal intervention.</p> <p>Children who need to be accommodated by the local authority either on a voluntary basis or by way of a court order.</p>	<b>Development needs</b>	<b>Immediate safeguarding concerns/child protection</b>
	<b>Learning / education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chronic non-attendance, truanting, permanent exclusions, consistently poor educational attainment/progress, which are attributable to the parenting that the child is receiving and the parent has consistently failed to cooperate with services at the early help level to address this</li> <li>Children who are EHE where there are significant concerns that the child's educational needs are not being met</li> <li>Inadequate stimulation leading to significant developmental delay</li> </ul>	<p>If a child is at risk of physical, emotional, sexual abuse, or neglect, refer to MASH using the single request form and selecting "protection"</p> <p>Where an immediate response is required because of the child's physical / medical health dial 999 for an ambulance.</p> <p>Where a child's safety is at immediate risk contact the police by dialling 999.</p> <p>After any immediate protective action has been taken you need to speak in person to children's social care. If this incident occurs out of hours contact Lewisham's EDT service.</p> <p><b>A request for help and support or protection form</b> is to be completed and submitted to the Lewisham MASH.</p> <p><b>Children's social care child-in-need assessment.</b></p> <p>Where using the continuum of need a professional considers that a statutory social work assessment of the child's needs and circumstances should be undertaken the single request form should be completed. In submitting such a request the referrer should attach any supporting documentation such as a description of the TAF activity, early help assessments and early help reviews.</p> <p><b>Key agencies that may provide support at this level:</b></p> <p>Children's social care CWCN</p>
	<b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serious physical and emotional health concerns that are consistently not addressed by the parent e.g. failure to thrive, seriously obese/underweight, serious dental decay, persistent and high risk substance misuse, acute mental health problems including self-harming behaviour, risk of suicide, specific physical or medical conditions which require specialist interventions</li> <li>Concern about serious unexplained injury</li> <li>Persistent presentation to professional with injuries: raising concerns about child safety/ parental behaviour</li> <li>Child is at serious risk of FGM</li> <li>There is evidence of FGM from a lead clinician</li> </ul>	
	<b>Social, emotional, behaviour, identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serious persistent offending behaviour attributable to neglectful absent parenting</li> <li>Allegations of child on child sexual harmful behaviour</li> <li>Serious concerns that the child is being sexually exploited</li> <li>Child under 16 is pregnant where there are significant social family concerns</li> <li>Safety and welfare seriously compromised by gang involvement and parents failure to manage these significant risks</li> <li>Complex mental health issues requiring specialist interventions which are consistently not being adequately managed by the parent</li> <li>Frequently go missing from home for long periods which seriously compromises the child's safety and wellbeing</li> <li>Child emotional health and physical safety is compromised by exposure to radicalisation and extremist ideology</li> <li>Child is engaging in cyber activity that places them at risk of harm from others and is not managed by the parent</li> <li>Child goes missing and child's age/level of vulnerability means that welfare and safety is seriously compromised</li> </ul>	
	<b>Self-care and independence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe lack of age appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in significant harm</li> </ul>	
	<b>Family and environmental factors</b>	
	<b>Housing, employment and finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear evidence that a family is destitute</li> </ul>	
	<b>Social and community resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of domestic violence that put the child at serious risk</li> <li>Imminent risk of parental/carer and child relationship breakdown leading to child possibly becoming looked after</li> <li>Child is young carer and this is significantly impacting on their development and welfare</li> <li>There are indicators that a child/young person is at risk of honour based violence or forced marriage</li> <li>Parental illness or disability resulting in inability to provide basic care leading to serious neglect of the child's needs</li> <li>Concerns about inter-sibling violence and aggression which does result in significant emotional or physical harm and is not managed by the parent</li> <li>Child is subjected to physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect</li> <li>Persistent but unsubstantiated concerns about physical, emotional or sexual abuse</li> <li>Child is privately fostered</li> <li>There is nobody with parental responsibility to ensure the child's wellbeing and stability of care</li> <li>Unaccompanied minors</li> <li>Trafficked children</li> </ul>	
	<b>Parents and carers</b>	
	<b>Basic care, safety and protection</b>	
Parent has had a child/children previously subject to care		



proceedings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents mental health or substance misuse seriously compromises the health, welfare and safety of the child</li> <li>• Parent has a history of being unable to care for previous children</li> <li>• Parent has a severe physical or learning difficulty that seriously compromises their ability to meet their child's basic needs</li> <li>• Parental disclosure of serious harm to the child</li> <li>• Parent is unable to assess and manage serious risk to the child from others within their family and social network</li> </ul> <b>Emotional warmth and stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent parenting significantly impairing emotional or behavioural development</li> </ul> <b>Guidance, boundaries and stimulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent lack of effective boundaries set by the parent leading to risk of serious harm to the child</li> </ul>	Youth offending team CAMHS Family support service Voluntary and community services Prevent
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