

# WORKING TOGETHER 2023

## CHAPTER 3: PROVIDING HELP, SUPPORT AND PROTECTION



### Introduction

*'All families can face challenges that make parenting difficult. Often families are able to overcome challenges themselves or with the help of relatives, friends, and services, such as schools, youth services, health visiting and mental health services. However sometimes families will have more significant needs that require more intensive help and support'*

In Sandwell we have developed the 'Multi-Agency Threshold Guidance; Continuum of Help and Support' to help us ensure that the right support and services are in place for all children and families whatever the challenges are that they may find themselves facing. This document is for all partners across Sandwell and helps us to be able to offer the right support, in the right place and at the right time. Please note that this is currently under review with the introduction of Family Help from September 2024.

### Section 1: Early Help/Family Help

*'Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support.'*

Early Help/Family Help is a voluntary approach meaning all help and support on offer should be discussed with children and families and their consent gained before anything is put in place.

The earliest support is often offered by universal services. These are services that are available for all children and families, such as education, health services, youth services, faith settings and community settings such as Family Hubs. All professionals working in these settings already offer a wide range of support to children and families through their interactions with them, preventing them from needing more specialist support. Over the last 12 months in Sandwell we have seen 9 different organisations taking on this key role for the families they are working with, making a real difference to the outcomes for those children.

Some Early Help/Family Help services are co-ordinated by a Lead Professional, where a family has 2 or more unmet needs and a multi agency approach is more beneficial and reduces the need for the family to repeatedly retell their story. The Lead Professional for this family should be the best suited person from the services already working with them, such as the health visitor or school. They will usually have the best/most trusted relationship with the family in order for the support to be most effective in creating change.

### Multi-agency Threshold Guidance: Continuum of Help & Support'



STRENGTHENING MULTI AGENCY PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Document Title	Version / date	Next Review Date
Multi-agency Threshold Guidance	01.11.2023	November 2025
Multi-agency Threshold Guidance	02.12.2023	2025
Multi-agency Threshold Guidance - Appendix 1	01.11.2023	April 25
Multi-agency Threshold Guidance - Appendix 2	02.12.2023	2025
Multi-agency Threshold Guidance - Appendix 3	02.12.2023	2025

You can access Sandwell's Multi-agency Threshold guidance by clicking the picture above.

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Some families may need a targeted approach where the children and/or family have multiple needs that are more complex or require more intense support. In Sandwell the Lead Professional for this family is often from within the Strengthening Families Service or Family Hubs.

[Click here for training around the role of the Lead Professional](#)

**Identifying children and families that would benefit from help**  
Everyone working with children and families, either paid or in voluntary unpaid roles, should;

- Know when and how to share information, considering when consent or parental awareness is needed to do so
- Be able to recognise all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Have an understanding of Domestic Abuse
- Have some awareness of new and emerging trends that may pose a risk of harm, such as online harm, bullying or exploitation
- Be aware that families can experience multiple needs at once

Some children and young people may be more in need of Early Help support, such as young carers, SEND young people, those that experience bereavement, children being drawn in to anti-social behaviour or are frequently missing. Some children may live in homes where there is substance misuse, mental ill health, have a parent/carer in custody or are a privately fostered child.

**The role of education and childcare:** All children 5-16 are legally entitled to full time education suited to any educational needs. It is essential for children's progress, development and wellbeing and is a protective factor against wider harms.

Having almost daily contact with children, education services are in a unique position to be able to identify concerns early and, as appropriate, address these or support the family into early help services. All staff in these settings should have some awareness of how children's experiences can impact their behaviour, attendance, progress and wellbeing.

Where children are not receiving an education this could be an indicator of neglect, abuse or exploitation. These children and families may need additional help support.

It is important that, where children are being electively home educated, information is shared with Sandwell's Home Education Team as well with partners already working with them.

### Early Help for Sandwell Children and Families

Strategy 2022-2024

Working together to provide

- ✓ the **right support**
- ✓ in the **right place**
- ✓ at the **right time**



You can find Sandwell's Early Help Strategy by clicking on the picture above above.

You can find Sandwell's Early Help Assessment and guidance by clicking the link below;  
<https://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/key-safeguarding-issues/earlyhelp/early-help-assessment/>

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To find out more about the Partnership STaR Practice Model please click the link below.

<https://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/key-safeguarding-issues/starpracticemodel-integratedfrontdoor/>

All partners should work closely with education services in order for information to be shared appropriately and effectively to ensure children and families get the right support in the right place at the right time.

### **Effective assessment of the need for early help/Family Help:**

Where a family has 2 or more unmet needs and a multi agency approach is needed, a multi-agency assessment should be completed. In Sandwell we use the Early Help Assessment.

All Early Help Assessments should only be commenced with the agreement of the child and/or their parents or carers, involve the family, capture the voice of the child and include information from all services working with them.

Consideration should be given to specific needs including; those where English is not their first language, family members who may have additional learning needs, young parents, fathers or male carers, parents who identify as LGBTQI+, or those who are care experienced themselves.

If a family does not consent to an Early Help Assessment this is not an excuse not to take action. We should aim to understand why, provide reassurance, explain the process and what support could be gained, and look for other ways for needs to be met using services and professionals that have an existing relationship with them. This can strengthen and provide coordination of the support already in place and may open up opportunities to bring additional services onboard.

The wider family network should also be considered, such as family, friends and community support already in place that could support the family to make changes without further professional intervention.

Most families in Sandwell want the best for their children and may need a little additional support for a short period of time. Early Help/Family Help should support improved family functioning and build on their existing strengths to establish routines that work for them and enhance their own problem solving skills.

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To find out more about the Integrated Front Door please click the picture below.



### Section 2: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

*'Under sect 17 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities are under a general duty to provide support for children who are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services, or the child is disabled.'*

**Assessment and support-** All assessments undertaken and support offered should be reflective of the Partnership STaR Practice Model.

The purpose of a Child in Need assessment is;

- To gather information about the child and family
- Analyse their needs and the level of any risk of harm, including harm outside the home
- Decide what package of support is needed based on Sandwell's continuum of help and support
- Provide support to address concerns and support sustainable change to improve outcomes for the child
- Identify support from within the family's existing network

All assessments should;

- Be child centred and include the views and voice of the child as well as their family
- Take into account any communication needs of the child and their family members
- Build an understanding of the child's strengths, interests, identity and culture
- Aim to understand the individual needs of each family member and how these interact with each other
- Be holistic
- Support parents and care givers to understand the child's experiences
- Be outcome focused
- Be inclusive of all aspects of the child's life
- Be coordinated ensuring the family experience a seamless process with a single plan of action
- Take into consideration previous assessments or packages of support
- Be based around the Assessment Framework
- Be completed within 45 working days

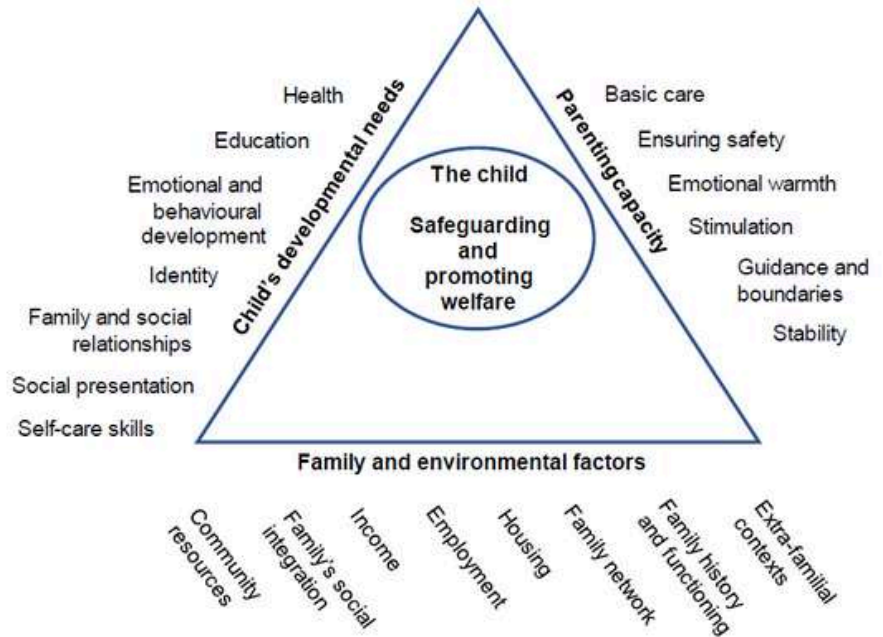
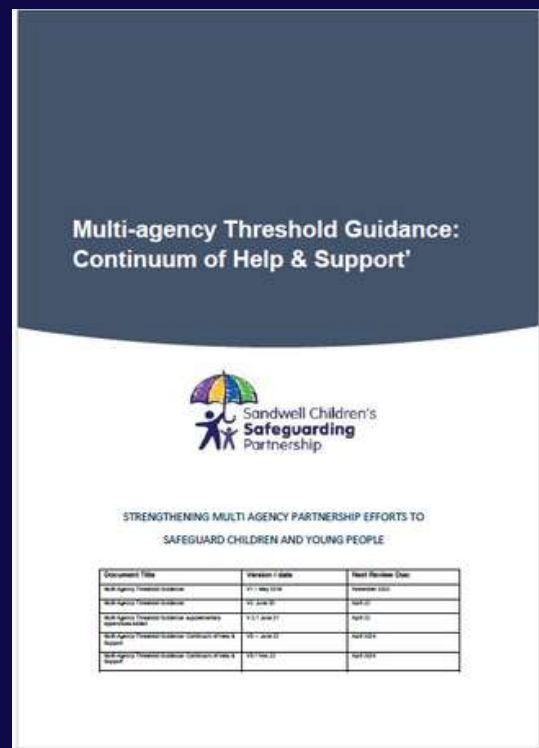


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Click the picture below to see Sandwell's Multi Agency Threshold guidance, Continuum of help and support. of help and support.



**Requests for support from Children's Social Care:** The process for requesting additional support from Children's Social Care in Sandwell for a child or young person and their family is currently under review. Sandwell are moving towards a conversational model which will go live later this year (Autumn 2024). It will give an opportunity for Sandwell Children's Trust to really understand the concerns that professionals have as they will be able to ask questions and gather pertinent information quickly, which is not always possible to glean from a request form.

Anyone that has a concern about a child should consider if a request for additional support from Children's Social Care should be made, exploring all other avenues of help and support first.

Where it is thought there is a risk of significant harm, a request for additional support from Children's Social Care should be done immediately.

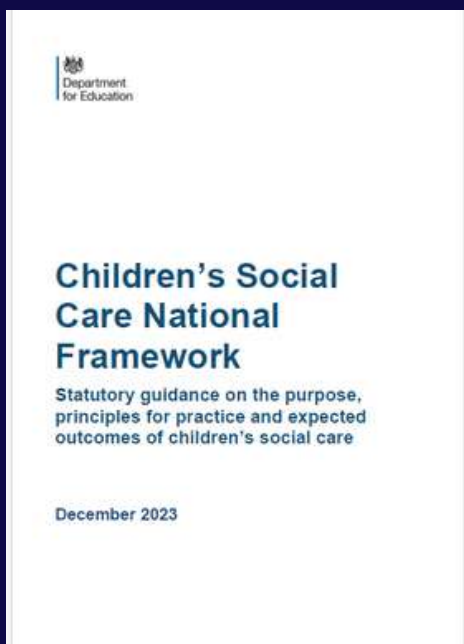
**Provision of support and services for a Child in Need:** The Lead Professional for a Child in Need can be from a range of professionals across the partnership and does not have to be a social worker. The most appropriate person will be identified with support from Children's Social Care. All lead professionals should receive effective supervision to support them with this role. How this will work in practice in Sandwell is still under consultation and will be published as part of the updated Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in December 2024.

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Click the picture below for the Children's Social Care National Framework Care National Framework



**Focusing on outcomes-** The Lead Professional should develop an outcome focused plan in partnership with the multi agency services supporting the child and family, to include the views and input from the child and their family.

Plans should:

- Be clear and measurable
- Be strengths based, building on the strengths and skills of the family
- Be reviewed regularly to ascertain progress made and if this is good enough to meet the needs of the child
- Safeguard children where there is abuse, neglect and exploitation or other harm outside of the home
- In the case of disabled children or those with additional needs it should support the family to continue in their caring role and that appropriate practical support is in place

### Section 3: Child Protection

*'Under sect 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.'*

Children in need of protecting may include those who are experiencing abuse or neglect in their family home and those who are being harmed or exploited outside of the family home. If a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm they meet the threshold for child protection enquiries to be undertaken. The lead professional for child protection enquiries should always be a social worker.

For children in need of protection professionals should;

- Put the needs of the child first
- Speak to the child at the earliest opportunity and seek to understand their lived experience
- Work with the family to build trusting and cooperative relationships
- Consider a wide range of information from other professionals as appropriate

The Children's Social Care National Framework sets out the national multi agency standards for all professionals that may be working with a child in need of protection. It is applicable to all professionals working directly with children and families in any capacity.

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### Useful Links

You can find the full Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 document here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

You can find Sandwell's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements on the SCSP website here:  
<https://www.sandwellcsp.org.uk/about-us/>

You can find the full Keeping Children Safe in Education document here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

You can find the full Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

You can find the full to Keeping Children Safe in Out of School Settings document here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice>

All professionals working with children and families should;

- Be able to recognise potential signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Listen carefully to what children are saying and notice any changes in behaviour
- Observe and record concerns
- Speak with children in a way that is age appropriate and meets their level of understanding
- Share information as appropriate with relevant agencies/ organisations
- Escalate concerns where needed
- Follow local processes for requesting additional support for children and families
- Never assume that someone else has or will share information and report concerns
- Work collaboratively with other professionals and with children and their families
- Contribute to assessments and attend meetings/conferences where necessary

Assessments for children in need of protection should follow the same format as children in need and work to the same timescale of 45 working days.

The child protection plan should;

- Ensure the child is safe from harm
- Promote the child's health and development
- Support parents and family networks to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child
- Set out what support and resources need to be provided by which agency
- Be outcome focused and measurable
- Have regular review points where progress made can be determined and if it is good enough

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### What's coming...

**Chapter 4-**  
Organisational Responsibilities

**Chapter 5-**  
Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

**Chapter 6-**  
Child Death Reviews