



NEWHAM
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP

Newham's Pathways to Help and Support

Revised December 2019

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Introduction

Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership agencies have recently reviewed our guidance on Pathways to Help and Support, and Levels and Indicators of Need. This was completed in collaboration with agencies and disciplines including Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), schools, children's centres, community and primary health through a number of focus groups and networks.

This guidance is for everyone who works with children and young people and their families in Newham. It is about the way we continue to build relationships, work together, share information and put the child and their family at the heart of everything we do. By having the right conversations, we can navigate the right pathways to help and support to enable families to solve their own problems, find solutions at an early stage and prevent problems from escalating. There may be times when the needs of the family are such that **targeted, intensive** or **specialist/statutory** intervention is the pathway required to support and protect the child or young person.

All children and young people will receive **Universal Services**, such as maternity services at birth; health visiting, school nursing and family support delivered from the Early Help Hub and Families First; school and youth services for older children. Universal Services seek, together with parents and families, to meet all the needs of children and young people so that they are healthy, resilient and able to learn and develop securely. Universal Services are provided as of right to all children, including those with additional and intensive needs.

The guidance sets out:

Levels of Need experienced by children, young people and families in Newham. It offers clarity and support to partners working with them and at what level they should be leading on early support. It recognises the contribution partners make to children, young people and families across the **Continuum of Need** but is intended to provide clarity to practitioners of the levels of need below the threshold for safeguarding and specialist services.

Integrated ways of working together so that we use resources more effectively to bring about positive changes for children and families.

Relationship-based approach helping families help themselves and each other by building on their existing strengths and relationships with the community and wider networks.

Pathways to Help and Support early to enable families to solve or to reduce the impact of problems that have already emerged. However, some children, either because of their own additional needs or because of less advantageous circumstances will need extra help to be healthy, safe and to achieve their potential.

How to use this document:

Approach to Early Help in Newham - Diagram A

This illustrates the overall approach to early help in Newham. It shows where early help sits in the Continuum of Need for children and families, our principles, what we will do together, how we will measure outcomes and where the pathways to support sit. It is designed to show you early help “at a glance” and support the other information in this document.

Pathways to Help and Support - Diagram B

Pathways to help and support provides a framework for everyone who works with children and families in Newham. It provides guidance on the different levels of need which a child may experience, as well as some of the factors that may indicate a child or young person needs additional support to achieve their full potential. The principles underpinning the framework are explained in the diagram.

Continuum of Need - Diagram C

This illustrates the different levels of need we recognise across children’s services in Newham. It shows you what we consider to be emerging need at level one, where early help sits and where complex or acute needs are met by statutory services in children’s social care. This document is our threshold reference for decision making on referral’s received by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and where we might “step up” or “step down” interventions for children and families. You should use this document to consider whether the threshold for complex or acute need has been met before making a referral.

Continuum of Need - targeted and intensive early help - Diagram D

This illustrates how we break down support within Early Help between support which is targeted and support which is intensive, although both can be delivered either by a single or multiple agencies targeted support focusses more on the needs to the child or young person, intensive is more likely to require multiple agencies and require whole family support, though all our early help work is underpinned by a whole family approach.

Continuum of Need - descriptors and indicators - Diagram E

These diagrams outline the descriptors for each level of need and list some of the indicators that might apply in relation to health and wellbeing, education and identity, family and environment. These are not exhaustive and whilst you may find them helpful in determining whether a Universal Service is appropriate or Early Help or statutory intervention are required factors being present does not guarantee a statutory service will be offered as all referrals are considered in the context of the families circumstances.

Continuum of Need - prompts to consider - Diagram F

This provides some guidance on the questions to think about before requesting support, what you need to do and where you make referrals.

Continuum of Need - services and interventions available - Diagram G

This provides details of some of the services available in the different levels of need, if you are working with a child or family at level 1 or 2 you might find this helpful in identifying other sources of support. Where these services are independent of the Council you do not need to make a referral to us to access them, we encourage you to make use of other services to support children and families you are working with.

Pathways to the Community

This is an overview of the pathways for children and families who might be moving between different levels of the Continuum of Need and outlines why planned and consistent transitions are important. You might find this helpful to understand what you should expect when a child or family is moving to your service or what support you need to provide when a child of family is moving from your service to another one.

Early Help Hub - Diagram H

This illustrates how the Early Help Hub works within the MASH to determine the right outcome for referrals where the threshold for early help services has been met and what the range of outcomes might be. This only applies where it has already been determined the threshold for statutory intervention has not been met though there are systems in place to review those decisions where new information arises.

Early Help Support Coordination Panel (EHSCP)

This section explains the early help support coordination panel and outlines how you can make a referral. The panel is designed to support practitioners delivering early help where one of the following applies - More targeted support is required with input from other agencies - Progress with the family is “stuck” and multi-agency input and advice is required - There is an identified need but no obvious lead agency.

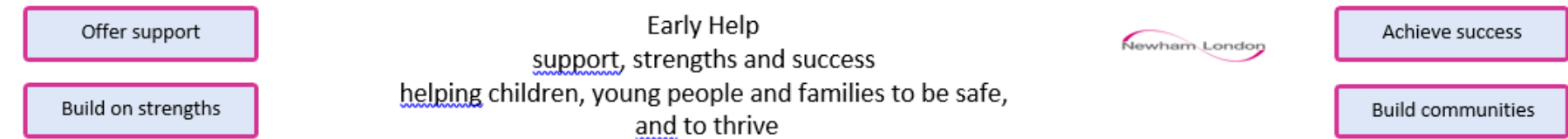
Step down from Statutory Intervention to Early Help - Diagram I

This illustrates the process within children’s social care for children and families to transition to early help from statutory intervention. It is an internal process but is provided for information. You may find this helpful to understand when you are asked to complete work with a child or family after statutory intervention has ended.

Additional Early Help and Support Pathway Information

This table provides some additional information and contact details.

Approach to Early Help in Newham – Diagram A



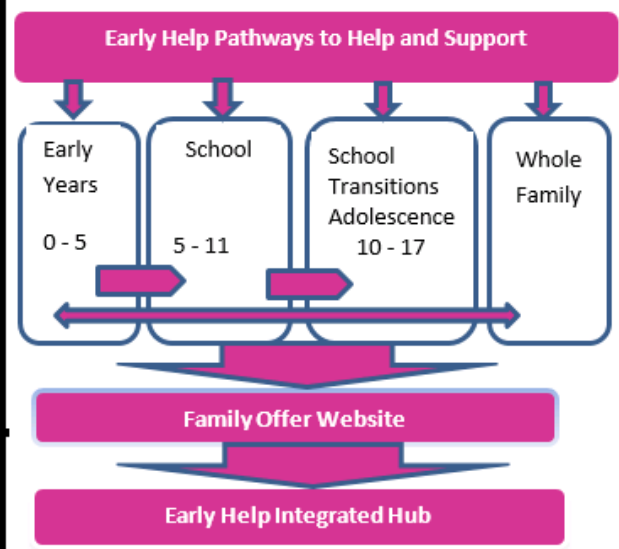
The Early Help offer in Newham brings together local partners who are committed to providing the right support at the right time for families. Working together to build family resilience, prevent difficulties from escalating and to enable better outcomes to be sustained.

- Together we will:**
- Place children, young people and families at the centre of everything that we do
 - Work collaboratively with partners swiftly and effectively
 - Listen, build relationships and agree how best we work with children, young people and families
 - Be ethical when using evidence, data and research to ensure, children, young people and families receive the most useful help and support.
 - Equip children and young people with the tools to stay safe, be resilient and to thrive and flourish
 - Ensure there is a core early help offer across schools, children's centres and other settings.

Newham's Continuum of Need is a graduated approach to levels need of and offers pathways to help, support and interventions for families from prevention - keeping well to targeted, intensive multi-agency through to safeguarding and specialist support for families most in need.

Universal	Targeted	Intensive	Statutory Safeguarding	Child Protection
Prevention / Emerging needs	Additional - Partnership support	Intensive - Multi-agency support	Statutory - Multi-agency support	Child Protection - Multi-agency
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	

- How will we know we are making a difference?**
- Children and young people and families will:
- Feel safer
 - Report improved wellbeing
 - Enabled to know how and where to get help
 - Feel more confident in looking after their children
 - Key measures will show our children succeeding in areas such as take up of nursery places, regular health checks, being school ready, school attendance and attainment, not having statutory services involved, feeling safer, healthy and well.



Newham's Early Help offer is grounded in the principles of 'Early Help being everyone's responsibility' and a commitment to co-production and development of a creative, agile and innovative workforce that is responsive and offers interventions and resources that are accessible for all families with a particular focus on supporting those children, young people families who are at increased risk of poor outcomes due to the impact of adverse or traumatic experiences, risks within the home or adolescent risks outside the home.

Pathways to Help and Support

Pathways to Help and Support provides a framework for everyone who works with children and families in Newham. It provides guidance on the different levels of need which a child may experience, as well as some of the factors that may indicate a child or young person needs additional support to achieve their full potential.

By offering interventions and support on a Continuum of Need, everyone can work in an integrated way and respond flexibly to different levels of need in different families. The framework recognises that however complex a child's needs are, Universal Services will always be provided alongside any specialist additional service.

The framework and approach are underpinned by the following principles:

- Children and young people at all levels of need will use Universal Services
- Children's needs can move from one level to another and those needs are captured just once
- Children should be enabled to move quickly and effortlessly to the required intervention response, without necessarily going through each level
- Commitment to use the Early Help record as the common tool to understand, plan, do and review progress of the family's plan
- Children and young people have a right to have their voice heard and support provided in their own right as well as a member of their family.

We have recognised that LEVEL 2 additional needs/early help is broad and needs can vary between a little bit of help required to more intensive ongoing support through a plan and review approach. In recognition of this we are differentiating between targeted help and intensive help. Targeted help is additional support required often delivered by one agency whilst intensive support often takes a whole family approach, is multi-agency and there will be an early help record/plan with Team around the family meetings.

Quick guide to Pathways to Help and Support

Families needing support can access advice, guidance and support via early year settings, schools, children centres and other community organisations. See information of other agencies on page 19. All universal agencies offer guidance, support and advice and a number will offer targeted support as well as intensive support as defined in diagram D.

For agencies wanting advice and input from other services should contact MASH or the Early Help Hub/Support Coordination Panel via MASH or the EarlyHelpPartnershipTeam@Newham.gov.uk. Professionals who identify children with special educational need and/or a disability should notify the Early Notification inbox so that a child's needs can be assessed for possible specialist support via <https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=10&localofferchannel=0>.

Social Workers in Newham wanting to 'step down' families to Early Help should approach the Early Help team and do this via the internal transfer process.

Diagram C – Continuum of Need

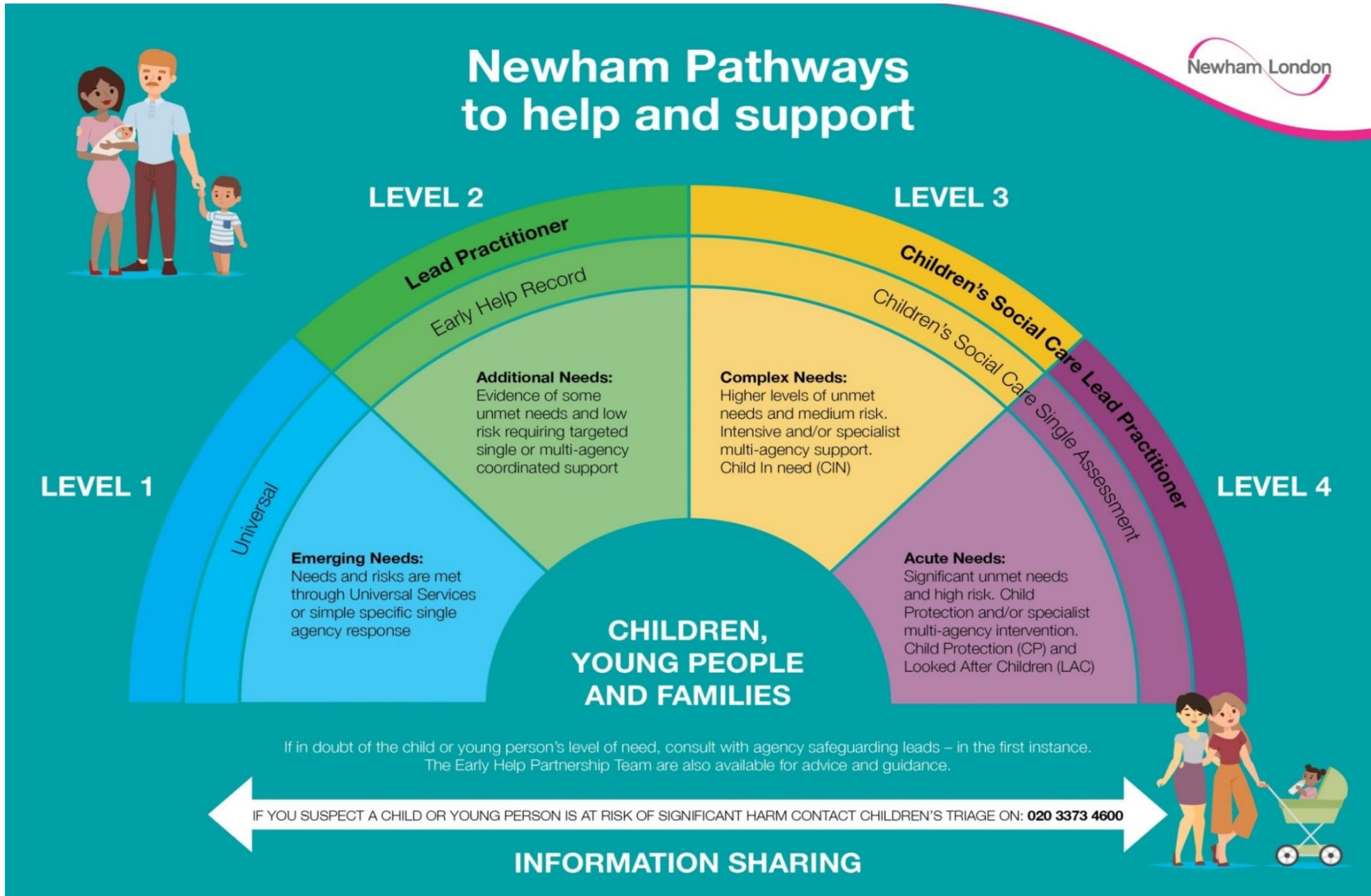


Diagram D – Continuum of Need, targeted and intensive early help

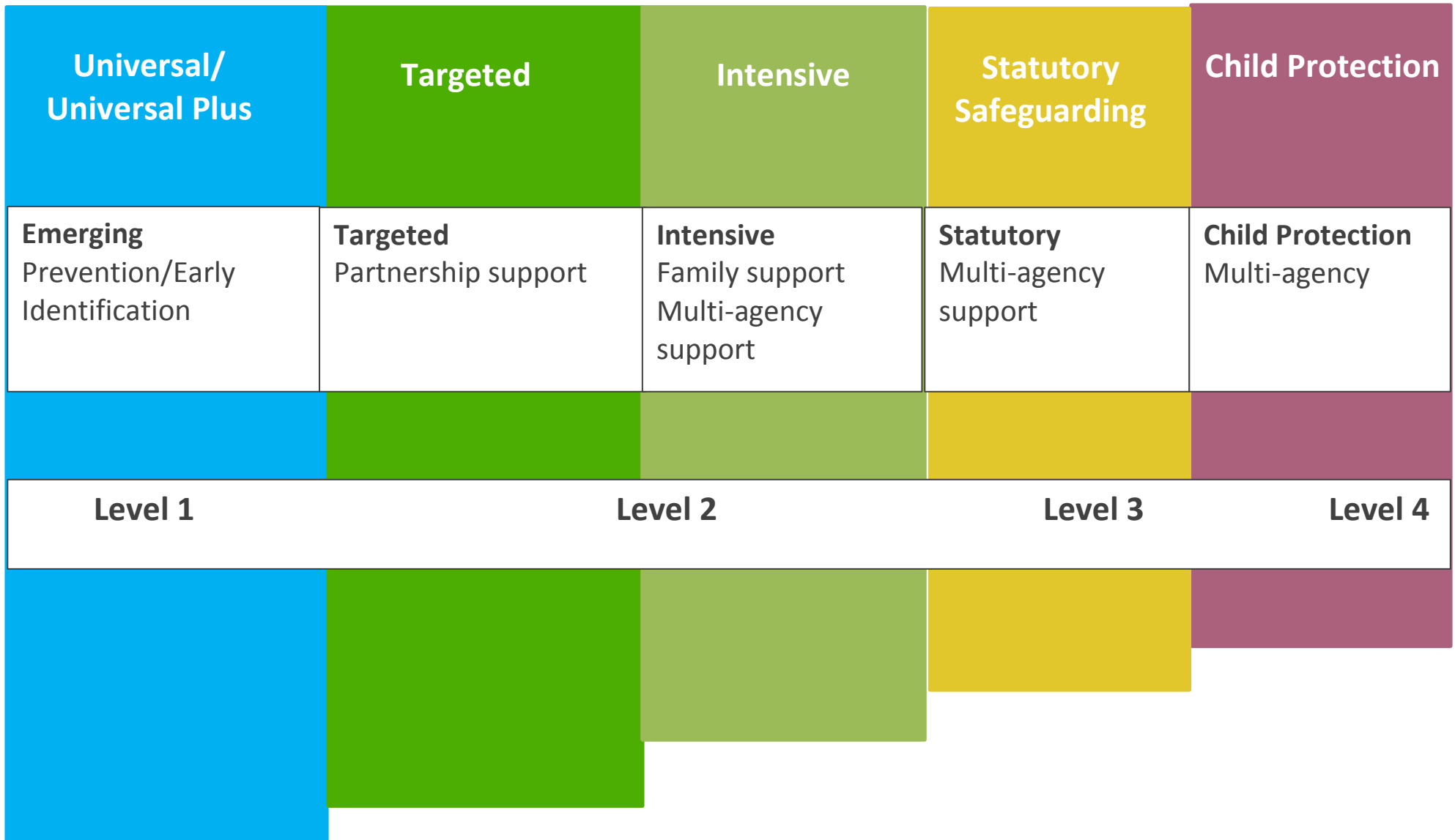
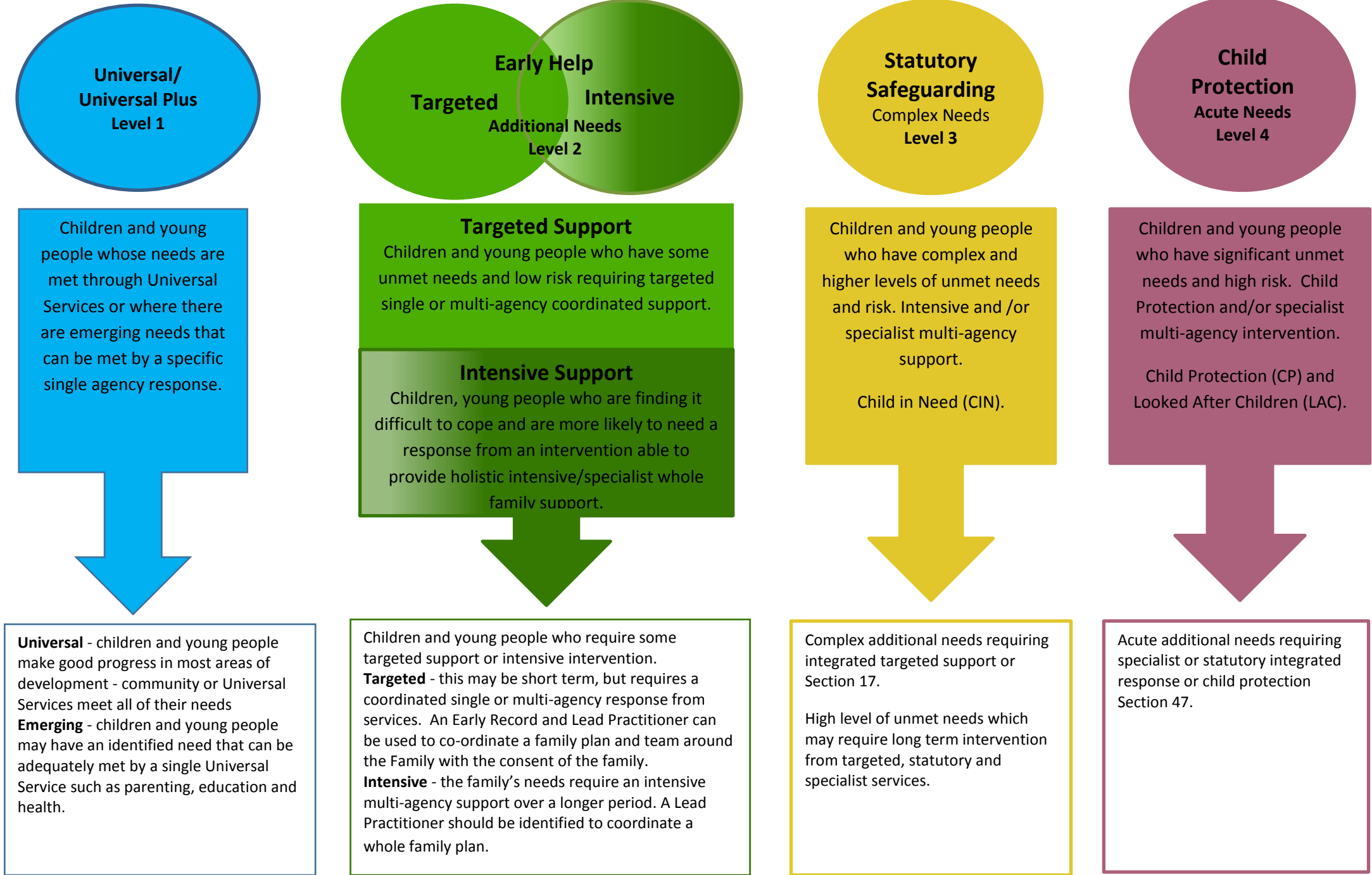
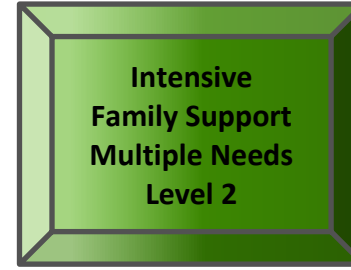


Diagram E – Continuum of Need, descriptors and indicators





Signs and indicators of emerging need that can be supported by a universal service involved with the child, young person and family.

Health & wellbeing

- Slow in reaching developmental milestones
- Missing/poor attendance at medical appointments for example GP, dentist, opticians or hospital appointments
- Not registered with a GP
- Early/unsafe sexual activity
- Frequent illness and infections/minor health injuries/problems/ unnecessarily accessing health services
- Low level mental health or emotional issues of self-harm
- Delayed speech/ language/communication/poor concentration
- Starting to experiment with substances/drugs
- Some relationship difficulties, for example divorce, separation, bereavement

Education & identity

- Declining attendance and punctuality
- Below education levels/not meeting milestones

Health & wellbeing

- Parent ambivalent about ante/post-natal care, e.g.; irregular attendance/missed appointments.
- Slow in reaching developmental milestones, including poor or delayed language and communication
- Refusal to register with a GP
- Non-attendance at health appointments which are impacting on the health of the child or young person
- Deteriorating mental health
- Very frequently significant illness and infections/minor/health/injuries and problems – frequently and unnecessarily accessing health services
- Continuing emotional and behavioural concerns
- Early signs of self-harming behaviour
- Delayed speech or language/poor concentration
- Diagnosed disability or sensory impairment
- Hygiene and self-care needs struggling to be met
- Eating disorders impacting on development and health
- Some evidence of risky use of technology/online safety concerns
- Escalating experimentation with substances/drugs/alcohol
- Difficulty coping with anger, frustration and upset

Health & wellbeing

- Parent doesn't access ante-natal and/or post-natal care.
- Parent/carer substance misuse which has health implications for the child
- Parent/carer mental health/severe bouts of depression/self-harm/threats of suicide
- Risky sexual activity (child/young person)
- Complex medical needs and/or disability
- Non-attendance at essential medical appointments
- Basic care needs are rarely being met
- Significant dental decay that has not been treated
- Serious lack of stability and routine appropriate stimulation, boundaries and guidance
- Complex or multiple health issues being met via a variety of health professionals
- Challenging/disruptive behaviour putting self or others in danger
- Child/young person goes missing from home regularly/for a short period
- Child or young person regularly involved in low level crime or anti-social behaviour
- Child/young person presenting vulnerability risk of sexual or criminal exploitation
- Child/young person at risk of radicalisation through technology or inappropriate relationships

Health & wellbeing

- Parent doesn't access ante/post-natal care where there are complicating obstetric factors posing risk to unborn/new born child. Uses drugs/alcohol excessively whilst pregnant.
- Parent/carer substance dependency and/or domestic violence to a degree which may lead to significant harm for the child
- Child/young person who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of services
- Direct allegation of sexual abuse made by child or abuser's confession to such abuse
- Child/young person suffering or at risk of suffering physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Child/young person assessed as high risk either to themselves or others and early intervention has not made a difference
- Child/young person's repeated allegation or reasonable suspicions of non-accidental injury
- Child/young person presenting with several high-risk indicators of child sexual/criminal exploitation or trafficking
- Child/young person at immediate risk of significant harm arising from radicalisation, travel to conflict zones, or involvement in terrorist activity

- Child/young person requires a differentiated approach to education, additional/adapted to their learning needs
- Child/young person being bullied or demonstrating bullying behaviours
- Older sibling's isolation due to bullying and rejection
- Child/young person presenting increasing challenging behaviour where parents and/or school are finding it difficult to manage

Family & Environment

- Parent with low mood following birth of baby
- High number of children or more than two under 5
- Parent/Carer struggling to address own emotional needs and basic routines
- Periods of unemployment/low income may affect the wider family
- Families subject to discrimination/harassment
- Families where there is emerging parental conflict
- Very young parents who are struggling to cope
- Falling into arrears with rent/utilities
- Inadequate poor housing/home conditions due to overcrowding, lack of heating, bathroom facilities
- Child/Young Person beginning to misuse substances
- Families where concerns are beginning to emerge about substance misuse

- Isolated or unsupported young carer
- Child or young person is associating with peers who are involved in crime or anti-social behaviours
- Child/young person who has started going missing or absent from home.
- Increasing risk of vulnerability to child sexual or criminal exploitation
- Young parent (16 years or under)

Education & identity

- Irregular attendance and starting to have some significant unauthorised absence from school
- Challenging and disruptive behaviour impacting on daily life, achievements and relationships
- Child/young Person refusing to go to school
- Fixed term exclusion, irregular attendance and child or young person starting to have significant unauthorised absence from school

Family & Environment

- Parent struggles to adjust to role of parenthood.
- Parents/carers with mental health issues impacting on ability to parent
- Family relationship difficulties
- Carers with ill health or terminal illness
- Low income or periods of unemployment affects significantly the wider family unit
- Family at imminent risk of eviction through non-payment of rent/utilities
- Families where there is often parental conflict
- Families where there are concerns about domestic abuse
- Poor attachment, stimulation, boundaries or guidance by parent/carers

- Child/young person's escalating anti-social behaviours/offending/reoffending

Education & Identity

- Persistent unauthorised absence from school/risk of becoming NEET
- Repeated fixed or permanent school exclusion
- Child/young person requires specialist educational provision/resources either within mainstream, special school or alternative provision

Family & environment

- Parent suffers post-natal depression. Struggles to adjust to parenthood because of other vulnerabilities, e.g. domestic abuse, substance misuse or learning difficulty
- Repeated incidents of domestic abuse, coercion and control having an emotional impact on the child/young person
- Families where there is complex parental conflict
- Inadequate supervision/ inappropriate care arrangements
- Sexually active (under 13 years)
- Young carer whose caring duties are affecting positive outcomes
- Older sibling's engagement in anti-social/ risky behaviour or illicit earnings
- Young/inexperienced parents with no support
- Family affected by poverty preventing child or young person's basic needs being met
- Parents/carers health including physical/mental/learning disability or substance misuse, impacts negatively on the child
- Prosecution for adult offences resulting in court orders

- Child/young person at risk of forced marriage/honour based violence
- At risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Child/young person is an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC)

Education & Identity

- Child/young person refuses to engage in education, training or employment and is increasingly socially isolated

Family & environment

- Parent suffers severe post-natal depression. Other vulnerabilities e.g. substance misuse, mental ill health, domestic abuse causes serious risk to themselves/their child/children.
- Homeless and not eligible for temporary housing
- Family not entitled to benefits with no means of other support/extreme financial difficulties
- Caring for severely or profoundly disabled child has a significant impact on parent/carers ability to meet the child's needs
- Child/young person whose basic needs are persistently neglected
- Child is left to care for themselves although they are not able
- Older sibling's displaying violence and aggression to family members in the household (Level 3)
- Older sibling involved in criminal behaviour
- Older sibling involved in serious criminality or imprisoned
- Person identified as posing a risk to children living in the home

Diagram F – Continuum of Need, prompts to consider



If you require support for a child or family at this Support Level, here are some questions to ask yourself:

What support is needed and where can I get this? The first step is to have a conversation with the family and offer support or signpost to an agency that can.

Are the family requesting support?
Yes → discuss support required and gain agreement to engage.

Have I tried all my resources? All your in-house resources should be tried before considering involving another agency.

What other services can I contact locally for support, have I tried all these? Please check the online [Newham Family Information portal](#) for other services in your local area.

What do I do next? This will depend upon the support required. Firstly speak with the family to find out about other agencies who may be supporting the family. With the family's agreement other options available may include speaking with:
Family network, Early Help Hub, children's centre, nursery, school, college, local community/charity group, community health, GP or Local Youth Hub

If you require support for a child or family at this Support Level, here are some questions to ask yourself:

What support is needed and where can I get this? The first step is to have a conversation with the family and agree what help is needed. The structured conversation tool that can help to gather the family's information is the **Early Help Record**. The process will result in an agreed family plan that should be coordinated by your agency with an identified Lead Practitioner.

Where can I find resources and interventions that can support the family? Be resourceful and research online for other interventions, utilise the online [Newham Family Information portal](#), Early Help Hub, HeadStart service or your local networks.

What do I do next? If the family are unable to make sufficient progress and you feel intensive Early Help is likely to be the most appropriate support for the family. With agreement to engage from the family go to: [Newham online request for Support](#)

Does my concern meet this Support Level?

Unsure - discuss your concerns with your agency Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Yes → Do I have the agreement to engage? Yes—online portal Request for Support.

No → It is important that you share your concerns with the family and gain their agreement to complete the Request for Support form.

Unsure→ Please speak with family about your concerns and the support required and gain their 'agreement to engage' before completing the Request for Support form.

Has any previous support helped? It is helpful to know what has worked well previously to identify the right support for the family. Please include this in the information you provide.

Do you need advice? Please speak with your agency DSL in the first instance.

What do I do next? Agreement from the family to engage is required especially if intensive Early Help or statutory/specialist is likely to be the most appropriate support for the family. With agreement to engage from the family go to: [Newham online request for support or protection](#)

Does my concern meet this Support Level? Is this an immediate safeguarding concern?

Yes → discuss your concerns with your agency DSL.

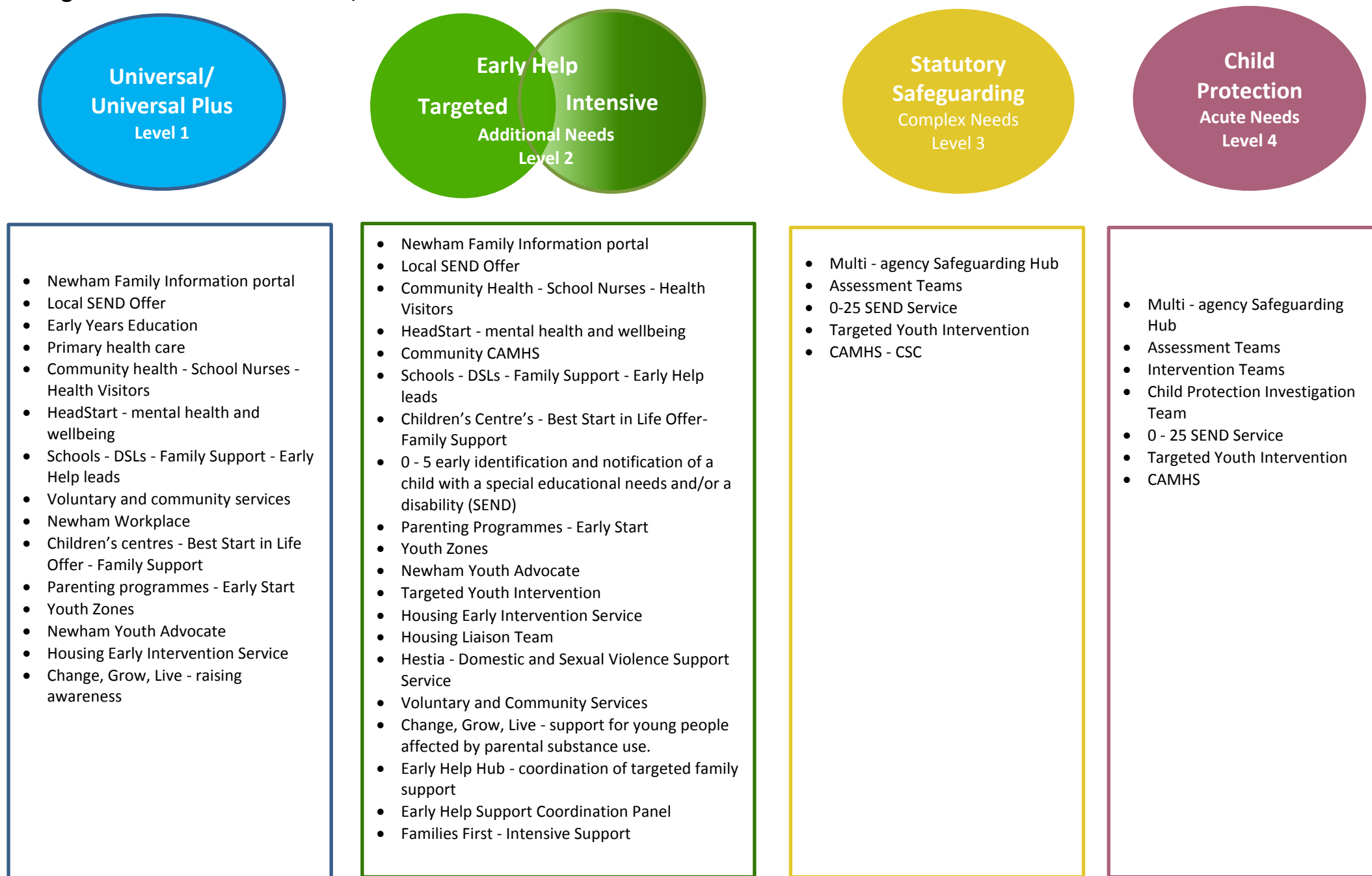
Yes → Do I have the agreement to engage? Yes—online portal Request for Support or Protection. You can contact the Newham Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team to talk through your concerns on 020 3373 4600 and complete the online [Newham online request for Support or protection](#) form.

Do I have agreement from the family to engage? Best practice is to have a conversation with the family to determine the most appropriate pathway of specialist or statutory help and support. However, where engagement with a family may be difficult. This should not be a reason for not sharing information, remember you are acting in the best interest of the child's safety and wellbeing.

Do not delay disclosing information if speaking to the parent might place a child at immediate risk or risk of significant harm.

What do I do next? Go to: [Newham online request for support or protection](#)

Diagram G – Continuum of need, services and interventions



Pathways to the Community

What is Pathways to the Community?

Pathways to the Community is the process for families whose needs and levels of risk are considered to be within level 2 of the Continuum of Need. It sets out the transition pathways in Newham for supporting families to transition from a statutory/specialist intervention (Intervention, Assessment or 0-25 SEND) to a targeted early help service (Families First), or from Families First to Early Help delivered by a Universal Service.

Why is Pathways to the Community needed?

Consultation with multi-agency partners indicated that transitions for families in Newham were not always planned, consistent, or clearly communicated to families or practitioners. Pathways to the Community aims to address this by setting out clear transition pathways and guidance for best practice, to improve the consistency of the transition process for all families and practitioners in the borough.

Planned and consistent transition pathways are important for the:

Family - to be clear about who will continue to support them on their journey. To be a part of the transition plan so they are well informed of their part to play in continuing to make progress and sustaining the necessary changes.

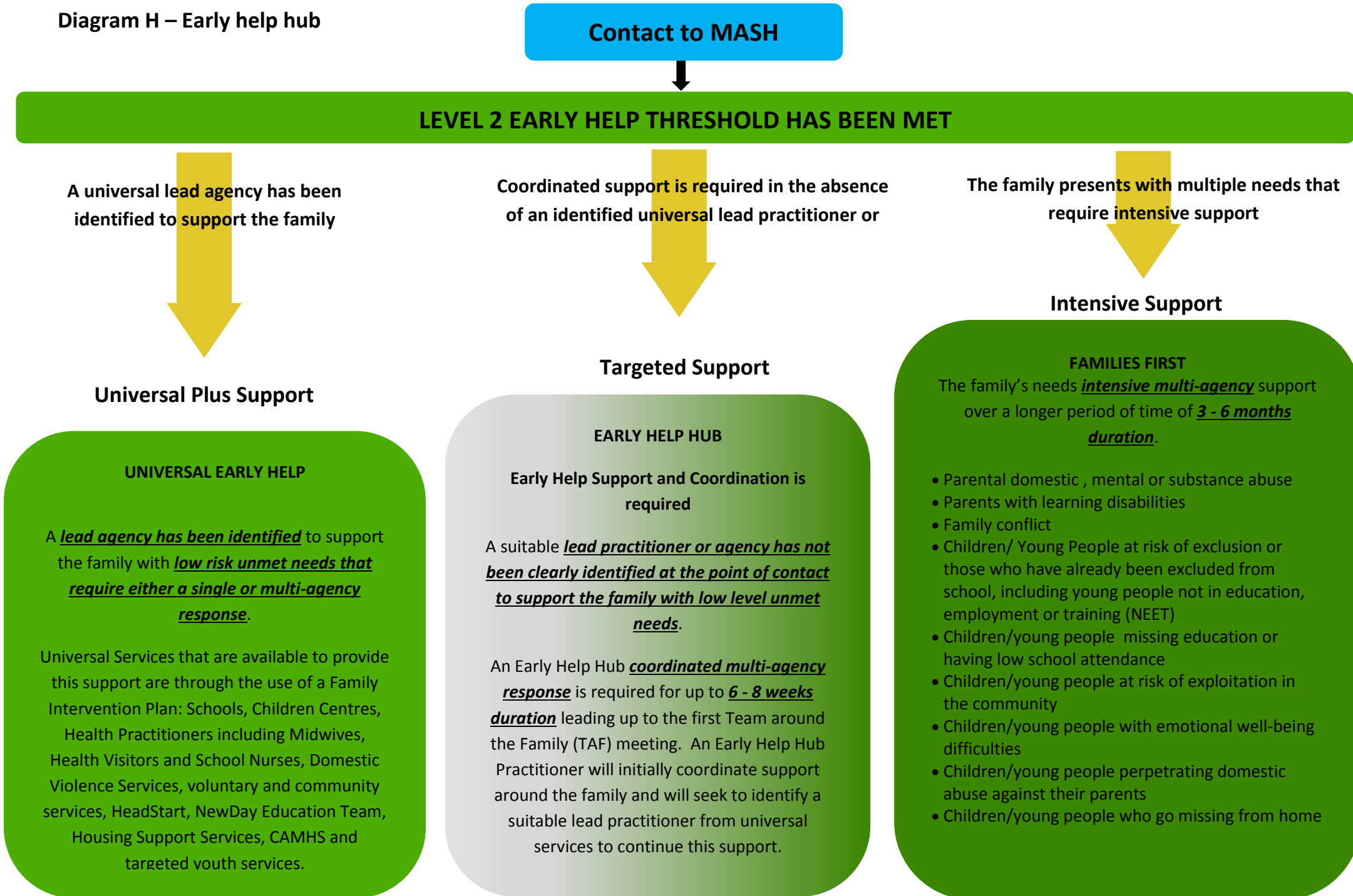
Social Worker - to ensure a smooth transition to colleagues within targeted or Universal Services, when a family is making progress but there are some outstanding needs at level 2 remaining. A planned transition will maximise the opportunity for continued support to the family

Universal Early Help Practitioner and Families First - a well-informed and agreed ongoing Early Help Family Plan enables a team around the family to work together to help the family sustain positive change and outcomes.

Early Help Hub and Panel - to promote a seamless transition to identify the right support, at the right time, from the right people.
One family, One Story

One Family, One Story

Diagram H – Early help hub



Early Help Support Coordination Panel

What is the Early Help Support Coordination Panel?

The Early Help Support Coordination Panel is designed to have the right conversation to navigate the right pathways to help and support to enable families to solve problems and find solutions at an early stage to prevent problems escalating. This may involve providing multi-agency input and to identify a lead professional if required, this can include allocated an Early Help Hub Practitioner to start initial work with the family.

How does it work?

The Early Help Support Coordination Panel will be responsible for ensuring the co-ordination of services to families engaged under Universal Services where one of the following applies:

- More targeted support is required with input from other agencies
- Progress with the family is “stuck” and multi-agency input and advice is required
- There is an identified need but no obvious lead agency

How can I access a Panel?

There is no referral process to the Early Help Support Coordination Panel. Organisations who wish to discuss a family must have the families consent for information sharing and must have the families’ agreement to work with any other organisations or services proposed.

Panel meetings will be organised in 15 minute timeslots and referring agencies will be advised of when their family will be discussed, referring agencies can attend for their own timeslot or the whole meeting if they also wish to contribute to the discussion on other cases.

What do I need to do?

Referring agencies will be asked to present their case in the following format, presentations should be a maximum of 5 minutes to allow time for discussion and summarisation of actions by the chair;

- Family make up - members, ages, diversity factors, known history
- Presenting issue/issues - what is the main thing you are worried about?
- Strengths - what are the families' strengths and who or what are protective factors in the family/community?
- What do you know (evidence), what do you think you know (assumed), what is ambiguous or what is missing?
- Hypothesis - what is your working hypothesis/hypotheses of what may be going on for this family?
- What needs to change and what might be needed to achieve that?
- What are you worried will happen without additional support?

How frequent are the Panels?

Early Help Support Coordination Panels will be held four times per school term and each panel will hear a maximum of 15 cases.

Where are the Panels held?

The panel meetings will rotate through the four existing neighbourhoods (East, West, South and Central) in a host school or children's centre. Agencies do not need to book time slots for the meeting in their own location and can request the meeting most convenient for them.

Additional Early Help and Support Pathway Information

Early Help Offer	Where to find out more
Newham Family Information portal	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/family.page?familychannel=0
Local SEND Offer	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0
Community health - School Nurses - Health Visitors	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/advice.page?id=91Bv7qGMZ1g https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/advice.page?id=G0XTfGx5blg
Community CAMHS	https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/48/Child-and-Family-Consultation-Service
HeadStart- mental health and wellbeing	https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/#
Schools - DSLs - Family Support - Early Help leads	https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/Schools-Directory.aspx?l1=100005&l2=200086
Children's Centre's - Best Start in Life Offer – Family Support	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/family.page?familychannel=3-2
0- 5 early identification and notification of a child with a special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND)	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=10&localofferchannel=0
Newham Youth Advocate	e: rema.begum@victimsupport.org.uk t: 020 8550 0807
Youth Zones	https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/Young-peoples-drop-in-activities.aspx
Targeted Youth Intervention	https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Category/Youth-support.aspx?l1=100003
Parenting Programmes – Early Start	https://www.earlystartgroup.com/parenting/
Hestia - Domestic and Sexual Violence Support Service	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/service.page?id=rw-MflSX3XU
Change, Grow, Live – support for young people affected by parental substance use.	https://www.changegrowlive.org/get-help/help-for-you/young-people/advice-for-young-people/self-help/health-wellbeing
Voluntary and community services	https://families.newham.gov.uk/kb5/newham/directory/results.page?familychannel=1-10
Housing Early Intervention Service	https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/Homelessness-advice-and-support.aspx
Housing Liaison Team	https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/Housing-Liaison-Team.aspx

Information Sharing

Knowing when and how to share information isn't always easy – but it's vital to try and get it right. Children, young people and their families need to feel that their confidentiality is respected. In most cases, you will only share information about families with consent – but there may be circumstances when you will need to override this. Refusal to give consent to share information or to engage with services should not be seen in isolation as a reason to escalate concerns to the next level. This is more likely to alienate the family than secure cooperation.

Building on strengths while being honest about the worries that are identified is the best way of securing both consent, engagement and participation to improve the lived experience of children and their families.

While it is usually good practice to seek consent for making any referral, there are some exceptions when it comes to protecting children. For example, if having a conversation with the family would place the child, or another child, or someone else, or you the referrer, at increased risk of suffering harm you do not need consent. Consent means that the family is fully informed about the services they are being referred to, agree with the referral being made and understand what information professionals are passing on and why.

Six Golden Rules

1. **Data Protection Act 1998:** Remember that the Data Protection Act 1998 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Seek advice from other practitioners:** If you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. **Share with informed consent:** Where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where child safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.

5. **Consider safety and well-being:** Base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.

6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure:** Ensure the information you share is covered by the Data Protection Act 2018:
 - necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it,
 - shared only with those individuals who need to have it,
 - accurate and up-to-date,
 - shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles)
 - record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.