**Children with Disabilities: Early Help Pathway Procedures**

Introduction

At Torbay, we recognise that children with additional needs and disabilities and their families may require a variety of additional support, at various times in their lives from both universal and statutory services. We believe that children should be supported in the right way, and at the right level according to their assessed needs.

Whilst every child with a disability is a child in need, and every family caring for a child with a disability has a right to request an assessment of need, it may be the case that this assessment determines a low level of support, through the provision of Short Breaks or another intervention, which addresses the identified need to a point whereby statutory intervention is no longer required, and support can be provided under universal service through Early Help.

Often, the needs of a child with a disability are unlikely to significant change in a short period of time and the support identified will be required on an ongoing as opposed to short term basis; this can mean that children with disabilities are disproportionately supported as Children in Need for significant period of time, which for children and families can feel unnecessary, invasive and intrusive. We do not believe it is fair or proportionate for children and their families to be supported at level four in terms of threshold, at statutory Child in Need (s17), simply because the provision of a low level service is required as a result of the child’s needs and there are no other support or safeguarding issues identified.

This document sets out the expectations and procedures when assessment determines that a child can be supported at level three Early Help, including the expectations in respect of visiting, updating assessment, planning, Targeted Help plan reviews, supervision, oversight of ongoing provision and escalation back to level four.

Process

Any referral for assessment in relation to support for a child with disability is co-ordinated through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and this will remain the case.

The Children With Disabilities Team will usually only provide services to children and young people who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long term adverse effect at a severe or profound level. The factors which will be applied to determine whether severe or profound are set out in the table below.













Should eligibility criteria for the Children with Disabilities Team be met, a single assessment is then initiated, which will consider the needs of the child centrally, and what support the child and their family may need as a result of the impact of the child’s disability on their health, education, wellbeing and functioning. This includes a parent/carer assessment and relevant signposting to resources that a parent/carer can access in their own right.

Following the outcome of the assessment, it may be determined that service provision is proportionate and in line with the identified needs of the child; this may be a form of Short Breaks (access to Playscheme or Saturday Club; ongoing enabling support; support through Direct Payments) or other identified support from an external agency. The single assessment is then used as the basis for a presentation to the Access to Resources Panel which provides agreement and endorsement of the proposed package for a set period of time. If there is a plan to step the child down to Early Help following this ATR presentation, this will be made known at the point of the presentation and a twelve month review date will be booked at this point with a demarcation that this is an annual twelve month review of the agreed package accompanying the anticipated annual review Early Help assessment.

**The finance request will need to be inputted in LCS at this point for the ongoing provision of the service; no end date should be selected.**

The single assessment will be the mechanism by which the allocated social worker and Team Manager form the foundation of an analysis of the level of need being experienced by the family; this will include consideration of what service provision is available, and how this will address the needs as identified within the assessment. A decision will be reached as to the safety and suitability of exploring a step down to Early Help in line with the step down protocol and associated Liquid Logic guides and appropriate management oversight added to the child’s file to outline the actions taken in line with the step down process.

**When stepping a child down from CIN (in LCS) to Early Help (in EHM), please ensure that the main document selected to inform this step down process is the most recent single assessment.**

Expectations in respect of children with disabilities being supported under Early Help

At the point of step down, the most recent single assessment

 will form the foundation of the assessment driving forward the child’s Early Help plan.

Visits to the child will take place at least every twelve weeks and will be recorded appropriately on the child’s EHM file.

A Team Around the Family meeting will be held every six monthly, to review the plan in place to support the child and the family; this will also be recorded appropriately on the child’s EHM file.

Supervisions will be led by the Children with Disabilities Team Manager and recorded appropriately on the child’s EHM file; these will take place at minimum of twelve weekly.

Early Help assessments will take place annually. These assessments will focus on:

* The assessed needs of the child, with a particular focus on any new health or social care needs and the impact of the child’s disability on their ongoing functioning.
* Whether the needs of the parent/carer have changed due to changes in family functioning or circumstances, or the needs of the child.
* Updating information from partner agencies working with the child and the family as part of the Team around the Family plan.
* How the child is being supported to prepare for independence and any additional support required in respect of transition.
* Whether the current service provision is appropriate in meeting the assessed needs of the child or the parent/carer.

If the assessment indicates that there are significant changes in respect of the needs of the child, or that the current service provision is not sufficient in meeting these needs, a re-referral for statutory assessment under s17 will be required (see below).

The updated Early Help assessment will be the form used for presentation at ATR, to review and renew the ongoing service provision; there will be no requirement for an additional ATR form to be completed.

ATR will be attended annually, in line with the updating of the Early Help assessment.

Escalation from Early Help to Child in Need

There will be circumstances whereby escalation is required to Level Four and reassessment under s17.

These include:

\*a child is entering the formal stage of transition (aged sixteen and above) and joint working with adults is required.

\*safeguarding concerns are identified.

\*there is a significant change to a child’s needs, or disability, which is impacting on the child or changes to a family’s circumstances which impact significantly on the parent/carer role and capacity.

\*the identified provision is no longer meeting the identified needs of the child.



At this stage, a re-referral to LCS will be required.

Any concerns regarding escalation will be raised and discussed with the Children with Disabilities Team Manager and appropriate decisions recorded on the child’s file.