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**RELATED GUIDANCE**

See [**Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways, Reporting a concern about a child or young person - guidance for professionals**](https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Documents/NSCB%20Thresholds%20Guidance%202018.pdf).

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5. [**Level 2 – Emerging Needs Require Early Help/Intervention**](https://northamptonshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/pdfs/level_2_emerge.pdf)
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 **1.** **Introduction**

[**Working Together to Safeguard Children**](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/) sets out a clear expectation that local agencies will work together and collaborate to identify children with additional needs and provide support as soon as a problem emerges. Providing early help is far more effective in promoting the welfare of children – and keeping them safe – than reacting later, when any problems, for example neglect, may have become more entrenched. The importance of using a child-centred approach in following the child’s journey is also emphasised. All services which are provided must be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of the individual child in their family and community context.

This document provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people and families; it aims to help you identify when a child may need additional support to achieve their full potential. It introduces a continuum of help and support, provides information on the levels of need and gives examples of some of the indicators that a child or young person may need additional support. By undertaking assessments and offering services on a continuum of help and support, professionals can be flexible and respond to different levels of need in different children and families. Along this continuum, services become increasingly targeted and specialised according to the level of need. Children’s needs are not static, and they may experience different needs – at different points on the continuum – throughout their childhood years.

[**Northamptonshire’s Thresholds and Pathways document**](https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Documents/NSCB%20Thresholds%20Guidance%202018.pdf) provides an overarching framework. Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) provides additional guidance to set out the process for early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided. This includes clarifying the threshold for making a referral to the Northamptonshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for assessment and statutory services under S.17, S.47, S.31 and S.20 of the Children Act 1989.

**Remember** – where there is an immediate need to protect a child because they are being harmed or are likely to suffer significant harm, contact the Police or Northamptonshire MASH.

See:

* [**Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways**](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/thresholdsandpathways);
* [**Northamptonshire Early Help**](http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Pages/early-help-assessment.aspx).

 **2.** **Core Principles when Working with Children, Young People and Families**

* Safeguarding children and young people is everyone’s responsibility; everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play;
* Services should intervene early to tackle any problems as soon as they emerge. For children who need additional help, every day matters;
* The child should be at the centre, their needs are paramount. They must be listened to by professionals and have their voices heard;
* Any services provided to safeguard children and young people must be clearly focused on the outcomes for the child.

Professionals should consider: **The Welfare Checklist to which courts will have regard when deciding whether to make an order in respect of a child (s.1 Children Act 1989)**:

1. The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of his/her age and understanding);
2. His/her physical, emotional and educational needs;
3. The likely effect on him/her of any change in his/her circumstances;
4. His/her age, sex, background and any characteristics which the court considers relevant;
5. Any harm which s/he has suffered or is at risk of suffering;
6. How capable each of his/her parents, and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant, is of meeting his/her needs.

Working Together to Safeguard Children requires each local authority area to publish a local assessment protocol which sets out clearly the arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children’s social care. The assessment protocol should ensure that assessments are timely, transparent and proportionate to the needs of individual children and their families.

**Effective assessment requires all those working with children, young people and families to**:

* Be alert to children and their needs;
* Remember that the child’s needs are paramount. Where professionals provide services to adults they must consider the adult service user in their role as a parent or carer and assess the risks to any children in their care or with whom they have contact;
* Understand their individual role in keeping children safe, and the role of others; and
* Be able to identify symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect and share information with other professionals in a timely way.

 **3.** **The Four Levels of Needs**

1. **Needs are met through engagement with Universal Services** – these are children with no additional needs; all their health and developmental needs will be met by universal services. The majority of children living in Northamptonshire require support from universal services alone;
2. **Emerging needs require early help/intervention** – these are children with additional needs, who may be vulnerable and showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect; their needs are not clear, not known or not being met. This is the threshold for a multi-agency Early Help Assessment (EHA) to begin;
3. **Needs causing concern requiring a targeted response** – these are children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or children who are disabled. They may require longer term intervention from statutory and specialist services. This is the threshold for an assessment led by children’s social care under s.17 Children Act 1989;
4. **Needs require specialist and/or statutory services** – these children are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm. They will require intensive support under s.47 Children Act 1989. This is the threshold for child protection.

See Appendix 1 of the [**Northamptonshire Thresholds and Pathways document**](https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/help-and-protection-for-children/protecting-children-information-for-professionals/Documents/NSCB%20Thresholds%20Guidance%202018.pdf) for the needs met through engagement of with each level i.e. Level 1 to 4.

In addition, the following threshold criteria apply:

**Child provided with accommodation by the local authority under s.20 Children Act 1989**

This can be on the initiative of the local authority with the agreement of the parents, or at the request of the parents. Any person with parental responsibility can at any time remove the child from the accommodation. (s.20 (8))

The child is a child in need who requires accommodation as a result of:

* Having no person with parental responsibility for him/her; or
* Being lost or abandoned; or
* The person who has been caring for him/her being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him/her with suitable accommodation or care (s.20 (1)); or
* Having reached the age of 16, his/her welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if he/she is not provided with accommodation (s.20 (3)); or
* Accommodating the child would safeguard or promote his/her welfare (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation), provided that that person does not object (s.20 (4)).

Before providing accommodation, the local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child’s welfare:

* Ascertain, and give due consideration to the child’s wishes and feelings (having regard to his/her age and understanding) (s.20 (6)); and
* Ascertain whether the parents/person(s) with parental responsibility have given a valid consent:
	+ Does the parent have the mental capacity to consent?
	+ Is the consent fully informed?
	+ Is it fair and proportionate for the child to be accommodated?

**Note** also that, in addition to the above legislation, case-law known as the [**‘Southwark judgment’ (R (on the application of G) –v- London Borough of Southwark (2009) UKHL 26)**](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldjudgmt/jd090520/appg-1.htm) imposes an obligation upon local authorities to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.)

**Care Orders under s.31 Children Act 1989; initiation of care proceedings**

* The child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
* The harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to:
	+ The care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or
	+ The child’s being beyond parental control (s.31 (2)).
* ‘**Harm**’ means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;
* ‘**Development**’ means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;
* ‘**Health**’ means physical or mental health; and
* ‘**Ill-treatment**’ includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical (s.31 (9)).

Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant turns on the child’s health or development, his/her health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child (s.31 (10)).

**Note**: This document was originally developed for the London Child Protection Procedures.

**End**

**The Department for Education has released the updated version of** [**Working Together to Safeguard Children**](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/)**.
The changes will be reflected in this manual at the next update.**