

Gloucestershire Children's Services

Disabled Children and Young People's Service

Eligibility Criteria



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1. Introduction

Disabled children and their families who live in Gloucestershire can receive help and support from a range of organisations. Some of these are run directly by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC); others are in the voluntary or private sectors. GCC provides support through its early help service, locality social work teams and specialist *Disabled Children's and Young People's Service (DCYPS)*.

This document is intended to help parents, carers, children and young people and professionals understand:

- our approach
- the sorts of services available
- how to get help and
- the circumstances that will lead to help being provided by DCYPS.

In writing it we have consulted extensively with our strategic partners, Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum, as well as Gloucestershire Parent Carer Alliance. Their invaluable advice is reflected throughout.

GCC does not wish to intrude in family life any more than is necessary, and only in line with parents' and children's own wishes. We therefore always try to meet needs with the least intrusive intervention necessary, subject of course to our statutory duties. We will always seek to help families access support that is available to all children in your community. This is because we believe services should be inclusive and that children should not be excluded because they have a disability or complex needs. This may mean adapting how a service delivers. Of course, it does not mean that specialist services won't be available should they be needed.

2. Support available

Many children who have care needs arising from disabilities or additional needs will receive the support they and their families need from community and mainstream resources. These are available to **any** family with a child with such needs, without the need for assessment, and include the following.

- a. Family Information Service. This provides a wide range of advice on things like family support, education, childcare and activities. There is a directory website for local services (glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk) that includes both local and national support agency information.
- b. Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS). This service operates to nationally agreed principles, including impartiality of information and empowerment of parents, children and young people. It provides information, advice and support for parents of children and young people from birth to 25 years, and for children and young people themselves. It can also signpost families to other help, including a voluntary and community sector agency that provides support, including short breaks, without the need for a social care assessment (subject to criteria that SENDIASS will explain). The link is: sendiassglos.org.uk.

- c. Activity groups and clubs. These can be found through the *local offer* by following this link: [Support for Families with SEND - Gloucestershire's Local Offer for Parent & Carers | Glosfamilies Directory](#)

3. Additional support

Families of disabled children and young people who feel they need additional support, for example with parenting, managing behaviours and accessing community support, can approach **GCC's children's services on 01452 426565**. Alternatively, they may ask another professional such as a teacher or doctor to contact Children's Services for them using the online multi-agency request form (MARF). This is available through the following link: [Multi Agency Referral Form \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](#). A trained call-handler will discuss with them the issues, needs and potential help. They may decide with the parent, carer or young person to follow one of these courses of action:

- *The provision of information about community resources.*
- *Referral to Gloucestershire's early help service.* This supports potentially vulnerable children, young people and their families as soon as difficulties begin to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will start in the future. It provides support at any and every stage of a child's life: pre-birth, childhood and adolescence. This support is delivered by well-trained practitioners and is not specific to disabled children and those with additional needs.
- *A more in-depth social work assessment.* This will apply when there are complex or multiple needs relating to a child's or young person's social circumstances or disability. The child may require longer term intervention from statutory services to help them achieve good outcomes. Help is based on a *single assessment*¹, completed with the child and their family/carers. This assessment is completed by a social worker from a locality team, highly skilled in assessing need and helping families. Outcomes may include continuing social work input and/or the provision of dedicated help such as direct payments to buy services or short breaks. For children with the most complex and challenging needs arising from their disability, the assessment may conclude help from the specialist DCYPS is necessary.

4. Disabled Children's and Young People's Service (DCYPS) – description

Not all children with a disability or additional needs require a service from DCYPS. Wherever possible, additional help will be provided by other services including Gloucestershire's early help and locality social care teams. Where this is the case, it does not prevent children and families from having access to support such as direct payments and short breaks (subject to assessment).

Children with the *most* complex and challenging needs arising from their disability will receive help from our specialist disabled children and young people service (DCYPS). This comprises the following.

- *A specialist social work team.* This works with children and young people whose disability or additional needs are particularly complex (see Eligibility Criteria below). Its social workers specialise in working with disabled children. They

¹ See Appendix 1

undertake direct work with children, young people and families, and coordinate packages of care and support to meet assessed need.

- *A specialist early help team.* This works with disabled children and young people who do not require a specialist social worker but do need the support of a practitioner with specialist knowledge and skills.
- *Hartwood House, a residential short-breaks unit.* This provides daytime or overnight short breaks for children aged between eight and eighteen years, with a disability, and accommodates up to six children at any one time. It offers a variety of activities to provide opportunities for children to mix with other people and develop new experiences. Examples include cinema visits, swimming, shopping, artwork, music, and development of self-help skills. In line with legislation, it is regulated by Ofsted. Children receiving short breaks are not legally seen as children in care unless they have more than 75 nights per year. If they do have more than 75 nights, care planning regulations² apply. Social workers will always discuss the implications of this with parents and carers.
- *Family Links (short-break day-care and fostering).* This provides daytime or overnight short breaks with carers who are specially trained and approved in line with the Fostering Regulations (a legal requirement). As with Hartwood House, care planning regulations only apply if a child receives more than 75 nights short breaks in a year.

5. DCYPS – eligibility criteria in outline

The *eligibility criteria* help us determine whether a child or young person should receive help from DCYPS. We advise parents and carers to read these criteria carefully and discuss them when contacting GCC's Children's Services. The pathway to a service from DCYPS is via a social work assessment as set out in Section 3 above.

School-age children may be receiving additional support at school, for example through an *education, health and care plan (EHCP)*, or be awaiting assessment for an EHCP.

Pre-school children will have been recognised as falling significantly behind their milestones and be receiving pre-diagnosis interventions.

In addition, they will have one or more of the following.

- a. Global developmental delay
- b. Severe and profound learning disability
- c. Complex behavioural challenges linked to severe and profound learning disability.
- d. Communication needs that have led to the child's inclusion on the pre-school social communication (SCOM) diagnostic pathway.
- e. Complex medical conditions.

² [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424242/20180520-childrens-act-guidance-and-regulations.pdf). Section 6

- f. Severe and profound physical disability.

6. Eligibility criteria – in more detail

Specialist services will be provided by DCYPS if a child's needs meet criterion 6a and at least one of 6b-6f.

The impact of the child's disability or additional needs is such that:

- a. They won't achieve outcomes in line with their potential without total or very substantial support from a person or people outside their family network.
- b. They require specialist mobility equipment or support, for example a wheelchair or a blue badge. This may include conditions with intermittent additional mobility needs or support requirements.
- c. There is a need for help to manage basic self-care functions beyond the age at which children could be expected to manage them independently. This includes eating, drinking, managing continence, personal hygiene, dressing and personal safety.
- d. They need constant supervision throughout the day, or for prolonged periods at night, or both, at an age when most children need less oversight.
- e. They have behaviour arising from their disability that poses serious risks to themselves or others. This may include those children assessed as having a profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), severe learning disability (SLD), global developmental delay or severe or profound physical disability.
- f. They have communication or sensory needs which, without support, severely affect personal safety, which is to say, they are deaf, blind or without speech.

7. Other factors considered

We know that the families of a disabled child can experience a wide range of stresses and challenges. As well as assessing the impact for the child of the disability or additional needs, social workers will also consider the impact on parent, carers and siblings, and additional factors that may add to the overall level of need. This is part of an holistic assessment of the child and family and will help us provide the right support to the family as a whole, as well as the individual child. This means they will consider whether the following apply and how we can help you reduce their impact.

- a. A parent or carer regularly suffers sleep deprivation because of the night-time needs of the child.
- b. There is an adverse impact on the health or safety of a parent or carer, the child or others in the household because of the child's disability or additional needs.
- c. There is an adverse impact on the safety, wellbeing or development of the child's brothers and sisters. This includes safety, physical and emotional health, ability to learn and opportunities for leisure and community engagement. We will consider with families whether siblings have needs as young carers and would benefit from the support of Gloucestershire Young Carers (link: [Gloucestershire Young Carers \(glosyoungcarers.org.uk\)](http://GloucestershireYoungCarers.org.uk)).

- d. There is another person in the household who needs additional help because of their own disability or long-term health needs.
- e. The parent or carer is a sole carer and has a limited support network. There are other significant pressures within the family that may be harmful to the disabled child, for example stressful family relationships, difficulty in meeting financial commitments, domestic abuse and alcohol or drug misuse.
- f. A parent or carer has physical or mental health problems, whether or not they result from their child's disability.
- g. The physical home environment is such that it presents additional risks to the child's health and wellbeing.
- h. There is a risk of a breakdown in the disabled child's care.

8. Safeguarding and children in care

Some disabled children and young people need safeguarding help because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. They receive intensive support and protection under a *child protection plan*. This will be provided by a social worker in a locality team unless the child already receives help from DCYPS.

Some children will need to be looked after by Gloucestershire Children's Services, in foster or residential care. In most cases this will be a voluntary arrangement with parents (under s20 of the Children Act 1989). In a few cases it will be under a court order (s31 of the Children Act 1981) because it is unsafe for the child to remain at home. Again, support for these children will be provided by a social worker in a locality team unless the child also meets the eligibility criteria for DCYPS.

9. Myth-buster

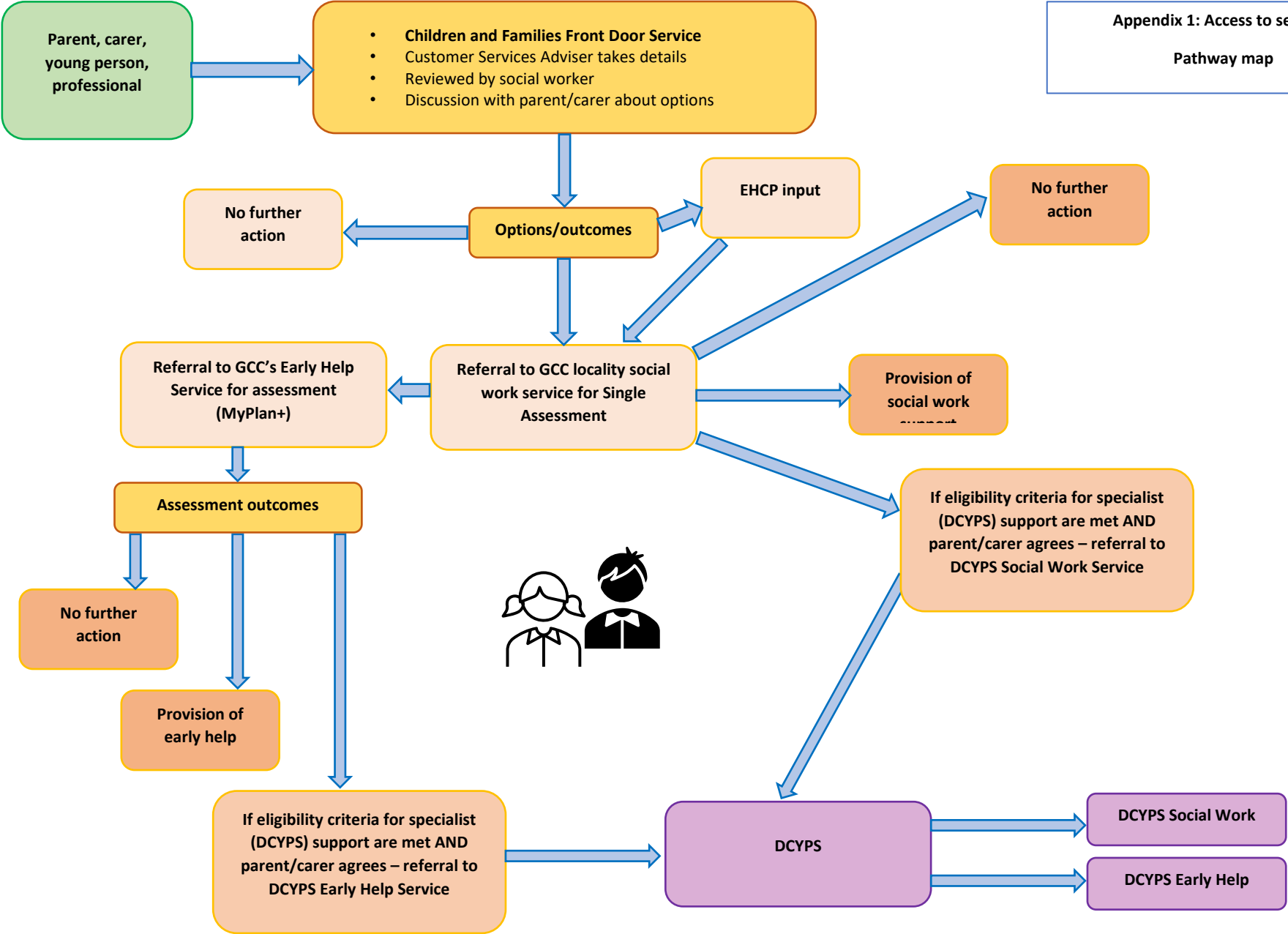
- **Asking for help is a sign of weakness.** MYTH. All families find it tough at some point. Bringing up a child with a disability or complex needs is extra tough. It's ok to ask for help, and it's better to ask for it earlier rather than later.
- **If I ask for help, my child will automatically be on a child protection plan/be taken off me.** MYTH. We are clear that other than in exceptional circumstances, children are better off brought up in their birth families. Our primary aim is always to help families thrive together.
- **Only DCYPS knows about disabled children.** MYTH. Early help practitioners and locality social workers are highly skilled in working with children, young people and families to understand and meet need.
- **Sensory-seeking behaviours will be interpreted as indicators of child abuse.** MYTH. Our practitioners know that such behaviours can arise for various reasons. They will be curious about the causes and try to understand them so that they can help families respond positively.
- **There is a child disability needs assessment.** MYTH. Children's social care services' operating procedures are drawn from government guidance which sets out a single assessment framework (often called the assessment triangle). See above, Section 3 and below, Appendix 1. This provides scope for social workers

to assess with families the social care needs arising from disability or complex needs.

- **Only CAMHS deals with behaviour challenges.** MYTH. While CAMHS practitioners undoubtedly have expertise in helping others understand and respond to very challenging behaviour, it is also a core part of the work of our early help practitioners and social workers.

Gloucestershire County Council's Disabled Children & Young People's Service (DCYPS) – eligibility criteria

Appendix 1: Access to services
Pathway map



Appendix 2: Assessment triangle

