

# Children with Disabilities Threshold Criteria

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# 1 Eligibility for Assessment

1.1 Children with disabilities are defined as those children and young people aged 0 - 18 years whose daily lives are substantially impaired by one or more of the following:

- A hearing impairment
- A visual impairment
- A learning disability
- A physical disability
- A chronic/life threatening physical illness
- A communication disorder (including autism)
- A consciousness disorder (e.g. epilepsy)

## Practice Guidance

The needs of children and families will vary along many dimensions:

- For some children, their impairments will be apparent from birth or before; for others the impairments will develop or become apparent only gradually.
- An increasing proportion of children will have complex and multiple disabilities requiring coordinated interventions with the child and family from several professionals.
- Some children can have high expectations of future development if appropriate support is available. For other children the prognosis may be one of increasing difficulty and reduced life expectancy.
- For some families, their need for support will focus on the provision of practical services and ideas to assist their child. For other families, their greatest need may be for emotional support.

Together from the Start: Practical Guidance for Professionals Working with Disabled Children and their Families. DfES May 2003.

1.2 Substantial impairment is defined as lasting more than 6 months.

1.3 Children with disabilities who are substantially affected as described in 1.1 are entitled to an assessment of their needs.

- 1.4 Children and young people may be additionally disabled because of other factors such as their environment, other people's attitudes, financial limitations and social exclusion but these factors alone do not confer any entitlement to assessment.

## 2 Eligibility for Services

- 2.1 Services for children with disabilities with less complex needs at Levels 1-3 of the Threshold Criteria may be accessed from universal services or from community-based organisations either directly or through Early Help.

- 2.2 The Children with Disabilities Team provides services at Level 4 of Stoke-on-Trent Children's Social Care Threshold Criteria for children with more complex needs related to disability and substantial impairment:

'Child has highly complex needs related to disability and requires a multi-agency response including social care services'.

- 2.3 The Children with Disabilities Team therefore provides services for:

- Children/young people with severe learning difficulties
- Children/young people with multiple or severe disability
- Children/young people with a life limiting illness
- Children/young people with complex physical disability

- 2.4 Rigid eligibility criteria for assessment and provision of services through the Children with Disabilities Team are not set because the unique combination of the child's disability, the circumstances of their home life and the wider context of their social environment means that each referral must be assessed on its merits.

- 2.5 However, there are some factors that are recognised as placing additional stresses on families and it is expected that, for provision to be appropriate some, or all of the following factors would be present in the family requesting a service:

- Family breakdown, either imminent or likely in the future, which is due to the additional stresses caused by bringing up a child with a disability, which would be eased by the provision of a service.
- Challenging behaviour from a child with a disability beyond that which it would be reasonable to expect from a young person of that age.
- Complex medical needs requiring a significant level of care beyond that which it would be reasonable to expect when looking after a young person of that age.

- Single carer, particularly if there are other children in the household.
- Poverty, poor or inadequate housing and/or neighbourhood difficulties.
- No or a limited extended family network.
- Social exclusion because young person's ability to have a new experience and/or to have acquaintances outside the professional arena is limited.
- Opportunities for a young person to gain skills and experience to support independence appropriate to their ability are not available.
- Discrimination due to disability.

2.6 Access to services is determined by an assessment which considers the above factors by looking at the needs of the child, the strengths and needs of the parents/carers and how looking after the child impacts on their lives, the environment within which the child is living and how safe and suitable that is, and the support networks for the child and the family. Ref: Referral, Assessment and Planning.