WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LANCASHIRE

Including, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Local Authorities

This document contains Part One and Two of Three parts of the guidance.

2025



NHS

Lancashire Constabulary
police and communities together

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Blackpool Council

Lancashire County Council

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BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN, BLACKPOOL AND LANCASHIRE CHILDRENS SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, the three previous Pan-Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) was replaced with local place-based safeguarding partnerships under which the safeguarding partners work together to identify and respond to the needs of children. In Blackburn with Darwen it is the Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP), in Blackpool it is the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and in Lancashire it is the Childrens Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP).

The three local safeguarding partners jointly leading the CSAP are:

- The local authorities of the three place-based areas, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council
- Lancashire Constabulary
- Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

The safeguarding partners operate in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023),** which states that safeguarding partners should agree and publish a threshold document, which sets out the local criteria for different levels of assessment and action to be taken to ensure the right help is given at the right time to children and their families. The Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire guidance fulfils this requirement.

Purpose

This multi-agency guide is for everyone who works with children, young people and their families in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire local authority areas. It is particularly key for organisations including:

- Health service providers in community and hospital settings
- Police, probation and criminal justice service providers
- Local authorities and their commissioned services
- Schools, nurseries, colleges and education providers
- Adult service providers across social care and health
- Housing providers
- Leisure and youth service providers
- Voluntary and peer group organisations working with children, young people and families
- Providers of support for children, young people and families.

The Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire guide is made up of three parts:

Part One The summary document gives an overview of the levels of need that children, young people and families might experience through their lives in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire, and broadly who should respond to these needs and how.

Part Two Provides some more detailed information about levels of need and some examples to provide context.

Part Three This is different for each local authority area (Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire) and outlines how services are organised and delivered in each area including contact details.

This guide talks about how we can work with families to build on their strengths and come together across agencies to put the child at the Centre of our work. It is designed to ensure that we give families who are experiencing challenges the advice, information and support they need that helps them make a positive difference to their lives.

This guide does not sit in isolation. Each area has strategies which support areas of work that are relevant to all professionals and that are locally developed with partners, including early help, exploitation and neglect strategies. Within organisations, and across the partnerships there will be guidance and training about how to identify, assess and support children, young people and families who are experiencing challenges and contact details for safeguarding leads or champions.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and the Children's Social Care National Framework (2023) outline the principles all partners need to work towards supporting children, young people and families. The principles are summarised as follows:

- A child's welfare is paramount and should be applied consciously and intuitively by practitioners working in the safeguarding arena.
- A child's views should hold high importance and be captured, documented and responded to no matter how young.
- Services work in partnership with children and families, including other significant adults, to identify issues, provide services and bring about change.
- In identifying issues, partners will consider the economic and social circumstances of the family.
- Wherever possible children are raised by their families or family networks in family environments.
- A multi-disciplinary approach with key partners such as health and education should be used to effect positive changes.

Introduction

Across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire the way we respond to family needs and the way help is offered is changing in response to reforms at a national level. Reform seeks to bring services together offering a wider range of support and help at an earlier stage for children and families in a multi-agency way, recognising the importance that family partnerships can play to increase resilience for families. Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire are at different stages of their reform journey, which impacts upon how services are currently arranged in the three areas during this transitional period. The levels of need that children, young people and families might experience through their lives are consistent across the partnership.

This guide should help practitioners working with families to make sure they are using their resources to best effect, as early as possible when problems emerge and to help them get access to more help for families if it is needed.

Different local authorities across the area might use different words to describe how they work with children, young people and families, but all the ways of working have the common belief that for the majority of children, the best place for them to be is with their own families. With the right support at the right time, most families are able to stay together safely.

By working together in our communities, we will ensure that there is a range of flexible, localised services which are responsive to children, young people and families' needs and provide the right level of intervention, at the right time, by the right person. This approach will help to build purposeful relationships which help develop effective interventions and support for children, young people and their families at an earlier stage.

Professionals working across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire are committed to the following values which inform the way we work with children, young people and families:

- Being respectful and building relationships by working alongside children, young people and families and seeking their informed consent and agreement.
- Being understanding, kind and empathic. Recognising and working to families' strengths – especially those of parents and carers and taking the time to understand their needs fully.
- Being purposeful. Focusing on preventing problems before they occur and offering flexible, responsive and constructive support when and where it is required.
- Being constructive. Helping to build the resilience of, children, young people, families and communities to support each other.
- Being open and transparent with each other as well as with families. Working together across the whole system engaging well with communities and aligning our resources to best support families and do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done.
- Being fair. Basing all that we do on evidence and analysis of both what is needed and of what works and being brave enough to stop things that are wrong.
- Being honest. Being clear and consistent about the outcomes we expect.



How Families, Children and Young People are Supported in their Communities

Universal Services seek to work with families to meet all the needs of children and young people so that they are happy, healthy and able to learn and develop securely. Universal services are provided to all children and young people, including those with additional and intensive needs. However, some children and young people, either because of health needs, disabilities or because of less advantageous circumstances, will need extra help from universal services to be healthy, safe and to achieve their potential.

All families can access Universal Services such as:

- maternity services at birth
- GPs
- primary care
- health visiting
- funded childcare hours
- primary education
- school nursing
- family support
- secondary school
- further education and youth services for older children

Across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire, we want to offer help and support to our families who experience challenge at the earliest opportunity in a voluntary way that does not leave them feeling singled out as different. This is because we want to prevent, wherever possible, situations escalating to the point that the family no longer feel, or indeed are, fully in control. When families do not feel in control, it is more likely that a child's health, wellbeing and development will be affected. We want to ensure that children, young people and families know about and are able to access their community assets and that they support them well. We call this "early help".

A large amount of public money is invested in a wide range of services for children, young people and families across the area in universal services and early help. It is important that when families experience challenges, practitioners work together to use public money and staff resources effectively to bring about positive changes which are led by families and their communities.

The voluntary community services sector is crucial in recognising early indicators of contextual harm by leveraging their community presence, providing training and awareness, building trusting relationships, establishing referral pathways, and advocating for children and families.

Early help may occur at any point in a child or young person's life and includes interventions early in life as well as early in the development of a problem to prevent it getting worse. It includes help for adults in a family to help them support their children well and understand their need.

Levels of Need

In this guide we have identified four broad levels of need. Levels 1 and 2 are not led by the Local Authority, levels 3 and 4 will be led by a Social Worker or Lead Practitioner:

Level 1 needs – Universal & Level 2 needs – Early Help

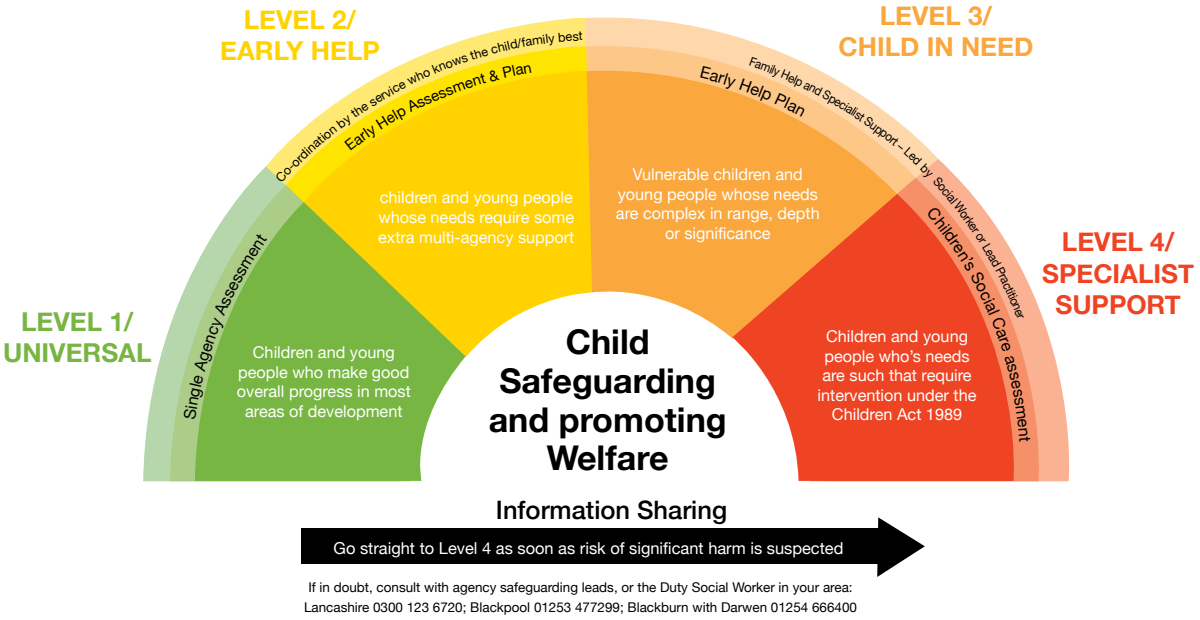
- Most children, young people and families will experience challenges in their lives that impact on their wellbeing. Most families will be able to weather these challenges (are resilient to them and have strengths that can be utilised) either without help from services, or with advice, guidance and support from universal services, including empathy and understanding.
- Some children, young people and families will need support from people who know them well and have established relationships with them to meet some challenges where advice and guidance has not been enough to help the family achieve change or where a child or young person needs additional support to help them to thrive.

Level 3 needs – Family Help & Level 4 needs –Family Help & Specialist Support

- A small number of children, young people and families will experience significant difficulties and will need co-ordinated support from experts working with them to find sustainable solutions that reduce the impact of challenge on the well-being and development of children and young people.
- In exceptional situations, families need specialist, statutory support that is designed to maintain or repair relationships and keep families together wherever possible. These children may need targeted support to remain safely at home or within their wider families. In some very specific circumstances, the needs are so great that children need to be away from their family to ensure that they are protected from harm and in these circumstances the local authority may share parental responsibility or becomes their “corporate parent”.



Levels of Need – At a Glance



See page 23 of Part 2 for a larger version

Services for children and young people with early help requirements are sometimes known as targeted services.

Targeted services bring expertise to universal services and include services such as behaviour and/or learning support in schools, prevention and diversion community offers for young people, extra support to parents and carers in early years or focused help to involve young people experiencing particular challenges through youth services. They are delivered by a range of people in different organisations across health, schools, local authority, police, voluntary agencies, community groups, community youth justice service (CYJS), family hubs and many others.

Across Lancashire, all partners share the belief that children, young people and families with early help needs are best helped to find the right solution by those who already work with them, such as their health visitor, nursery or school. They are able to support the family by coordinating additional support with local partners as needed. Support for children and families at this level does not involve Social Worker or Lead Practitioners.

When someone is supporting children, young people and their family in this way, an Early Help Assessment/CAF co-ordinated by a named lead person who knows the child and family best, will help to gather and analyse relevant information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family.

Services working with adults in the family should be included in this plan as it helps coordinate how everyone is working to a common aim. For harms outside of the home, wider disruption activities can be key during these earlier stages.

For children and young people whose needs are at Family Help, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach where people from different organisations with different skills, knowledge and experience work together with a family will be best. These approaches need careful co-ordination to make sure the children; young people and the family are always at the Centre of the work and will need assessments and a plan which identifies a named Lead Professional. At this level, the Lead Family Help Practitioner will be a Local Authority Social Worker or be supported by the same (children's social worker or other local arrangement) to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require.

Specialist services are where the needs of the child or young person are so great that statutory assessment and specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to address the harm they suffered.

By working together effectively with children, young people and families with emerging needs at the earliest opportunity we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

PART TWO – DETAILED GUIDE TO WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LANCASHIRE

OUR PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

In each local authority area, the way services are delivered and commissioned for children, young people and families are slightly different and sometimes use different language – this is because it is based on the differing needs and priorities in these communities. However, these ways of working are underpinned by a common set of principles which are embedded within all organisations working with children, young people and families. These principles are underpinned by the values set out in part one of Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire.

These principles are:

- That children and young people are at the heart of what we do, and we should never lose sight of their lived experiences and their voice.
- That children and young people feel safe in the knowledge that adults in their home, school and community are working together to keep them safe but will intervene if necessary, to protect them from harm.
- That we should work WITH families, not do things to them. Working with families to build on their strengths and protective factors
- That we consider the impact of trauma upon children, young people and the adults in their lives and how such experiences may alter their life course.
- That we should seek to support children and young people with family-led decisions within their family network wherever possible.
- That children and young people with additional or special educational needs and disabilities, and children and young people who are vulnerable because of their family circumstance, should be supported to have equity of aspiration and outcomes with their peers.
- That the networks in a family's life, the school their child attends, the community that they live in and the people around them can help to build assets, capacity and resilience for families when problems are identified early and addressed with honesty and collaborative working.
- That families should not have to tell their stories to a range of different professionals throughout their lives to get help. People involved in supporting families should share information and plans, with the knowledge, and when appropriate, consent of the family, to help them work effectively together.

Across the local authority areas, we have agreed the levels of need and the broad description of how services can and should respond. As far as we are able, we have common guidance, policies and procedures so that our partner agencies, particularly schools, health and the police who work across Lancashire do not need to access three different sources of information to help guide their work with families. Whilst there are variations in service delivery and ways of accessing services (outlined in part three) the overall principles and values outlined in parts one and two apply across the county.

This guidance illustrates how agencies should respond to children, young people and families across four levels of need (Universal, Early Help, Family Help and Specialist Support). In this model, all services seek to work openly with the family, or with children and young people on their own where it is appropriate, in order to support them to identify, talk honestly about and address their needs at the lowest possible level. We agree to actively work with children, young people and families to prevent their needs escalating to a higher level. We will only request services at a higher level after we have exhausted the resources and expertise at the earliest level of intervention (other than when there is immediate risk of significant harm), including diversion and disruption work, community-based support, based on localised need and in partnership with colleagues in CFW, TYS, education, community, voluntary, faith, third sector and police.

We recognise that each child, young person, and family member is an individual, and every family is unique in its composition. Making decisions about levels of need and the best interventions requires thoughtful discussion, reflection, and professional judgment, all within the context of the lived experiences of the child, young person, and their family. Additionally, we acknowledge the importance of identifying harms outside the family and are committed to working in partnership to recognise and address these needs early.

WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

There are several factors that are essential to achieving good outcomes when working with children, young people and families.

An open, honest and transparent approach to supporting children, young people and their families

Parents/carers are usually the best people to understand their child's needs; however, parenting can be challenging. Families deserve support when they request it. Asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than failure. Families tell us that support works well when they are respected and listened to by the people who work with them or they approach for help. In the majority of cases, it should be the decision of the parents/carers when to ask for help or advice but there are occasions when practitioners may need to engage parents/carers and families actively to help them to prevent problems from becoming more serious. This is more likely to be successful when practitioners show empathy and work with families to explore how problems have come about and how to make change. All practitioners need to work honestly and openly with families, acknowledge strengths, discuss any concerns with them and ensure that they are involved in decision making. It is important they acknowledge and respect the contribution of family members in the work that they do.

Early, solution-focused and evidence-based interventions

It is important that any needs are identified early, so that the child/young person and their family receive appropriate support in a timely way to prevent the problem from escalating. Prevention and diversion work along with preventative place based work within the community is essential in our offer.

Everyone who works with families will work with them as soon as any needs emerge, to help them to identify the things they want to change and the support they need. The most effective support is tailored to the family's needs and provided at the minimum level necessary to ensure the desirable outcomes are achieved, with as little intrusion into and disruption to family life as possible.

A joint working approach to assessment, support and intervention

Protecting and promoting the welfare of children and young people is the responsibility of everyone in Lancashire who works or has contact with children, young people and their families no matter what organisation they work for.

The joint working approach ensures that children, young people and families are understood and responded to, so that they receive the right support and practical help in a co-ordinated way, when they need it. Partners and professionals who work with children, young people and their families should, usually with informed parental consent, consult one another, share information and work together to ensure that the child/young person and their family get the most appropriate and effective support.

Appropriate, effective and timely support for children, young people and families cannot be achieved without the professional judgement and expertise that all practitioners working with children and young people bring to their role. Across Lancashire agencies will engage in training and development to support confident practitioners who can work in an open, non-judgemental way with families to enable them to make choices and changes. A confident workforce with a common core of knowledge and understanding about children and young people's needs and the skills to work with families will be essential.

Open and transparent ways of working with Families: Consent

Throughout this document, and in others that you will read, you will see reference to consent. Consent is needed from children, young people and families at key points in their journey – and can only be overridden when there is an immediate risk for the safety of a child. Even when this is the case, only in exceptional circumstances should family's details be discussed and shared with other agencies without their knowledge.

Meaningful consent is crucial in helping families feel empowered to make informed decisions and have autonomy, understanding the consequences of the decisions made. This is crucial in ensuring that services are working with families and not doing things to them. It supports them to know that they can and should be in the driving seat of the support available to them. It should be informed consent – if you are planning to or need to share their information with more than one organisation, you should be specific about this. Tell them what information you are going to share, who with and why you think it is the right thing to do.

You need consent to:

- Make a referral or request for a service to another agency or discuss personal details at a multi-agency meeting.
- Consult with other agencies about a family to help you to determine what support they might need where you are sharing their personal details.

You do not need consent to:

- Have a conversation with the Child and Family Advice and Support Hub / Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) / Designated Safeguarding Lead within your organisation where you do not share identifiable details of the family.

You do not need consent, nor should you delay, but should, wherever possible, inform the family when:

- You are concerned that a child/young person, family member or other person has come to, or is likely to come to significant harm and you need to share this with other agencies so that they can take steps to ensure their safety.

If a family or individual refuses to give consent but you are sufficiently concerned about a child/young person or vulnerable person and feel you need to share information anyway, you should explain this to the family unless you are concerned that in doing so, you are placing the child/young person, yourself or anyone else at immediate risk. Where seeking consent is overridden, the lawful basis (the legal provision that allows you to share information without consent) and any other rationale must always be recorded in agency records and any referral that is completed.



Levels of Need

Level of identified Need and way of accessing the service	Who it is for	Examples of the services and support available	Why is support provided?
Level 1 - Universal			
Open access to Provision for all families. Consent is required	All children and families who live in Lancashire.	Early years, education, primary health care, maternity services, housing, community health care, youth centres, leisure services, graded care profile, offer of return home services when a child goes missing. Children are supported by their family and in universal services to meet all of their needs.	To ensure that our Children and young people make good progress in most areas of development.
Level 2 - Early Help			
One or more services provide voluntary additional support to meet the child and family needs. This is informed by an Early Help Assessment/CAF and the plan is co-ordinated by a Lead Professional Service that knows the child/ family best. An Early Help Plan and coordination meeting is helpful to bring the family and involved services together to share information and agree what would be helpful. Individual agency internal routes to access additional supports or to request external services.	Children and families with additional needs who would benefit from or who require extra help with: • Education • Parenting and/or behaviour • Meeting specific health or emotional needs of the child and/or parent • Addressing the impact of poverty • A crisis such as parental separation or bereavement • Addressing parental conflict • Emerging risks outside of the home with peers, gangs and children who go missing.	Parenting support; commissioned early help services including Graded Care Profile. School holiday and short breaks provision for disabled children. Extra health support for family members; behavioural support. Housing support. Additional learning support; Special Education Needs (SEN). Support plan; help to find education and employment. Emotional Wellbeing. Mental Health Service support to schools. Speech and Language Therapy; family hubs. Targeted youth work, prevention and diversion and work with voluntary sectors. Drug, alcohol, domestic abuse services. Return home services when a child goes missing. MASPs (Multi agency safeguarding Panels) for emerging risks outside of the home.	So that the life chances of children and families are improved by offering early life and early help additional support. Connecting children back to their communities and supporting them to stay with their families.

Level of identified Need and way of accessing the service	Who it is for	Examples of the services and support available	Why is support provided?
Level 3 - Family Help			
A multi-disciplinary team to support the family led by a Lead Professional (social worker or other local arrangement) shares information and co-ordinates intensive services and support to meet the child and family needs. A Family Help Plan / Family Assessment is necessary to set out how the family and involved services will work together to meet the child's needs. Referral to targeted support services available in the area.	Vulnerable children and their families who need help to promote their development and wellbeing: • Complex needs resulting from disability • Challenging behaviours that increases risk for themselves and others • Experience of neglect • Emotional behavioural difficulties • Parental conflict, and poor family relationships • Domestic abuse • Poor parental mental health • Poor engagement with key services like education and health • Family poverty • Families involved in crime/misuse of drugs S.17 Duties - Children who are unlikely to achieve a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of services.	Youth Offending Service/Child Youth Justice Service. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, In Patient and Continuing Health Care. Targeted Intervention Services including services to support families in their home and community to prevent escalation of concerns. Family group conferences. Graded Care Profile. Health care for children with life limiting illness. Services for children with profound and enduring disability. Adult health services. Substance misuse services. Domestic abuse services. Return home services when a child goes missing. Prevention and diversion and disruption CFW offer for children at risk of harm outside of the home & HSB pathways.	Vulnerable children and families likely to face impairment to their development and life chances will be supported by services to enable them to achieve good outcomes. Issues will be prevented from escalating into safeguarding concerns requiring statutory intervention.

Level of identified Need and way of accessing the service	Who it is for	Examples of the services and support available	Why is support provided?
Level 4 - Specialist			
Children`s Social Care – Child in Need Child Protection enquiries. Children subject to CP Plans. Public Outline Law. Care proceedings. Children who are looked after. Children subject to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. Statutory notifications to Youth Justice Service. Access via each Local Authority's referral/ request for support form (see part 3).	S.17 Duties - Children and young people who have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Children with significant impairment of function/learning and/or life limiting illness. Children whose parents and wider family are unable to care for them. Families involved in crime/misuse of drugs at a significant level that is impacting on the child's welfare. Families with significant mental or physical health needs that impact in a way which may be significantly harmful to their children. Young people exposed to or experiencing exploitation or at risk outside their homes.	Children's Social Care, Youth Justice Service Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, In Patient and Continuing Health Care. Fostering and residential care. Health care for children with life limiting illness. Services for children with profound and enduring disability. Adult health services. Substance misuse services. Domestic abuse services. Return home services when a child goes missing. Multi agency response to risk outside of the home.	Because without the intervention of specialist services, sometimes in a statutory role, children and /or family members are likely to suffer significant harm/removal from home/ serious and lasting impairment.

WHEN FAMILIES NEED ADDITIONAL HELP

Level 2 – Early Help

If a family has needs which are assessed as Level 2, multi-agency practitioners are expected to work together at Early Help to meet the family, child or young person's additional needs. Practitioners should work alongside the family and secure their informed consent to share information with other agencies. Work at Level 2 should seek to help families build on the assets they have, to do work with them so that they can help themselves to improve a situation or make change, rather than do things around or to them.

Practitioners can access services using their own agency internal guidelines or by using specific request for service forms/letters when requesting involvement of other additional need services. Parent/carers should always sign to give consent to the request for service and to information sharing. We should also ask young people who demonstrate Gillick competence, to give their consent.

Where the problems or needs are more complex, practitioners should complete an Early Help Assessment/CAF with the family. This is a tool to use with the family to discuss and record the needs, strengths, goals and views that they identify, leading to an Early Help Plan to support them.

Level 3 –Family Help

If, after a period of working with the family, practitioners identify that a child/young person and their family would benefit from a more intensive multi-disciplinary response than they can provide or coordinate; they should discuss this with the child/young person and family, update the Early Help Assessment/CAF and complete a referral/request for support form.

Prior to requesting services at Level 3, practitioners are expected to have worked together with the child/young person and family to meet their needs using an Early Help Assessment/ CAF and multi-agency meetings.

Intensive support should again be focused on working with families, children and young people. Support at a family help level should be provided by practitioners who know the family best. Support at this level aims to empower families to improve outcomes drawing on support from the wider family network to increase resilience and helping to restore family life with evidence-based interventions that help people make long term, lasting change that they are in control of.

Family help is supported via a Social Worker or Lead Practitioner.

Sometimes, despite the best efforts of professionals to work purposefully with and alongside children, young people and families to support them to make change, concerns about outcomes for children and young people do not improve. Children's Social Care has a responsibility to children in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. That is, children and young people whose development would be significantly impaired if services are not provided. This includes children and young people who have a long lasting and substantial disability, which limits their ability to carry out the tasks of daily living.

For a child in need, a referral/request for support to Children's Social Care is appropriate when more substantial interventions are needed: where a child or young person's development is being significantly impaired because of the impact of complex parental mental ill health, learning disability or substance misuse, or very challenging behaviour in the home.

A social care referral/request for support is also appropriate where parent/carers need practical support and respite at home because of a disabled child or young person's complex care needs. In these situations, Children's Social Care will work with families on a voluntary basis, often in partnership with other professionals, to improve the welfare of the children/ young people and to prevent problems escalating to a point that statutory child protection intervention is needed.

Level 4 –Specialist.

Children's Social Care has a responsibility to children in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. That is, children and young people whose development would be significantly impaired if services are not provided. This includes children and young people who have a long lasting and substantial disability, which limits their ability to carry out the tasks of daily living.

For a child in need, a referral/request for support to Children's Social Care is appropriate when more substantial interventions are needed: where a child or young person's development is being significantly impaired because of the impact of complex parental mental ill health, learning disability or substance misuse, or very challenging behaviour in the home.

A social care referral/request for support is also appropriate where parent/carers need practical support and respite at home because of a disabled child or young person's complex care needs. In these situations, Children's Social Care will work with families on a voluntary basis, often in partnership with other professionals, to improve the welfare of the children/ young people and to prevent problems escalating to a point that statutory child protection intervention is needed.

The second area of Children's Social Care responsibility is child protection; that is where Children's Social Care must make enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, to determine whether a child or young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children and young people.

There is no absolute criteria on which to rely upon when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, and the severity of the emotional and physical impact on the child/young person. It is important to consider age and context – babies and young children are particularly vulnerable – and parental factors such as history of significant domestic abuse, substance misuse or mental illness.

Significant harm could occur where there is a single event, such as a violent assault or sexual abuse. More often, significant harm is identified when there have been a number of events which have compromised the child or young person's physical and psychological wellbeing; for example, when health and development is significantly impaired through neglect.

Contextual Safeguarding is applicable to a wide range of risks which can potentially cause significant harm to children and young people outside of the family. This can include: peer on peer and relationship abuse, criminal/ sexual exploitation/ online abuse , missing episodes, risks associated with gangs, risks associated with radicalisation, safeguarding risks in public spaces trafficking and modern slavery that is placing the child at significant risk of harm.

The difference between Child in Need and Child Protection

Professionals in all agencies have a responsibility to make a request to Children's Social Care when it is believed or suspected that the child or young person:

- Is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority Section 17 Child in Need
- Health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services Section 17 Child in Need
- Has significant developmental or disability needs, which are likely only to be met through provision of Children's Social Care family support services (with agreement of the parent or carer) – Section 17 child in need.
- Is likely to suffer significant harm – Section 47 Child Protection
- Has suffered significant harm – Section 47 Child Protection

When Children's Social Care undertakes a Section 47 child protection enquiry, the **Pan Lancashire Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures** are followed.

Children's Social Care engagement with children in need Section 17 is on a voluntary basis. Parent/carers, or young people who are able to make decisions under Gillick Competence, can refuse some or all such offers of assistance. Often, families prefer a lower level of support such as that offered through their school or health centre because this is less stigmatising or intrusive.

Specific guidance regarding services and processes within each local authority area is detailed in part three.

With the needs of the child in mind, bespoke services are available for those young people supported through each local authority. Such services provide increased layers of targeted support in delivering greater outcomes for the children and young people who receive support through social care. This is with the aim of ensuring the right level of support and intervention is in place at the right juncture.

Expectation	Leaders	Senior/Middle Managers	Frontline
Collaborate	Develop a shared vision for how their services work together to deliver shared goals	Decisions are based on a shared practice approach and constructive debate and analysis of information from all services	Share information to get a complete picture of what life is like for the child. Collectively, they ensure the child's voice is at the centre and the right support is provided
Learn	Use evidence from direct practice in their area so that they know and can evaluate what is and isn't working well for children and families	Their teams have time to engage in peer learning and knowledge exchange, peer audit, group supervision and observation	By drawing on the best available evidence from their individual fields and sharing their diverse perspectives during regular shared reflection on a child's development, experiences, and outcomes
Resource	Are ambitious about helping, supporting, and protecting children in their area and jointly prioritise and share resources accordingly	Ensure children receive the holistic support they need, drawing in expertise from a wide range of agencies	Build strong relationships across agencies and disciplines to ensure they support and protect the children with whom they work
Include	Create an inclusive culture where diversity is understood, and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is celebrated	Support staff to identify and challenge discrimination, disparity, and negative stereotypes	Recognise the differences between, and are confident to respond to, circumstances where children experience adversity due to economic and social circumstances and acute family stress, and situations where children face harm due to parental abuse and neglect
Mutual Challenge	Hold each other and their teams to account and are held to account by their teams for the quality of the partnership working	Constructive challenge within and across agencies and disciplines is actively encouraged, independent judgements are valued and given space alongside collective decision-making to avoid group think	Challenge themselves and each other, question each other's assumptions, and seek to resolve differences of opinion in a restorative and respectful way

INDICATORS OF POSSIBLE NEED

The indicators of possible need listed under each heading are an indication of the likely level of need. Only by talking to children, young people and their families in more detail to explore the context, familial assets and the factors behind the need, will the practitioner be able to form a judgement as to the level of support needed. Holding a multi-agency meeting and completing an Early Help Assessment or CAF is a helpful way to share information and gain an understanding of the needs of the child, young person and family.

The indicators are a guide and not a pre-determined level of response. Practitioners should use evidence based professional judgement when carrying out assessments and should take account of age appropriate development needs of the unborn child, child or young person.

Level 1

Level 1 - UNIVERSAL: Children and young people who make good overall progress in most areas of development and receive appropriate universal services, such as health care and education. They may also use leisure and play facilities, housing or voluntary sector services.

Health

- Physically well
- Nutritious diet
- Adequate hygiene & dress
- Developmental & health checks/ immunisations up to date
- Developmental milestones & motor skills appropriate
- Sexual health and activity is age-appropriate
- Good emotional and mental health

Emotional Development

- Good quality early attachments
- Able to adapt to change
- Able to understand others' feelings

Behavioural Development

- Takes responsibility for behaviour
- Responds appropriately to boundaries and constructive guidance

Identity and Self-Esteem

- Can discriminate between safe and unsafe contacts and relationships

Family and Social Relationships

- Stable and affectionate relationships with family
- Is able to make and maintain friendships
- Family is part of the community

Learning

- Age appropriate stimulation
- Enjoys and participates in learning activities
- Is able to navigate online space safely
- Has experiences of success and achievement
- Effective links between home and school
- Has aspirations for the future

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Provide for child/young person's physical needs, e.g. food, drink, appropriate clothing, medical and dental care
- Protection from danger and significant harm.

Emotional warmth and stability

- Experiences love and affection
- Has stable and positive relationships

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Understands a sense of right and wrong
- Child/young person accesses social activities and safe spaces in the community

Family functioning and well-being

- Healthy relationships within family, including when parents are separated

Housing, work and income

- Accommodation has required amenities and appropriate facilities, and can meet family needs
- Managing budget to meet individual needs and has access to additional resources when needed

Level 2

Level 2 – EARLY HELP: Children and young people whose needs require some extra support. Support at this level could be through a single agency assessment or early help plan, coordinated by the service who knows the child/young person and family best. A multi-agency meeting to share information and agree a plan to support the child/young person and family is helpful.

Health

- Limited or restricted diet; e.g. no breakfast, no lunch money; being under or overweight
- Health needs, universal or additional (physical, emotional, sexual) are not consistently prioritised
- Child/young person is continually not reaching expected developmental milestones
- Minor needs re: personal hygiene and presentations
- Dental problems resulting from lack of seeking treatment
- Child's experience from their environment, parenting, family and/or parenting impacting child's development and requiring extra help and support
- Risks from exposure to tobacco, alcohol, vapes or illegal drugs
- Frequent accidents as a result of inadequate supervision

Emotional Development

- Difficulties with family relationships
- Relationships and contacts that expose the child to risk of harm
- Difficulties with peer group relationships and with adults, e.g. anxious or withdrawn
- Some evidence of inappropriate responses and actions
- Support required from emotional well being and mental health services

Behavioural Development

- A natural vulnerability which impacts on the child's world view like neurodiversity, additional needs and learning needs
- Finds accepting responsibility for own actions difficult
- Responds inappropriately to boundaries / constructive guidance
- Emerging patterns of child being missing from home

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Basic care is not provided consistently
- Parent/carer requires advice and support on parenting issues
- Impact of pregnancy in adolescence
- Exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community
- Unnecessary or frequent visits to GP or unplanned care settings, Accident & Emergency
- Unmet parental needs impacting ability to ensure child/young person's safety

Emotional warmth and stability

- Inconsistent responses to child/young person by parent/carer
- Emerging attachment issues
- Parent/carers struggling to have their own emotional needs addressed/met

Level 2 – continued

Family functioning and well-being

- A child/young person is taking on a caring role in relation to their parent/carer, or is looking after siblings
- Limited support from extended family

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Parent/carer offers inconsistent boundaries
- Limited routine in the home
- Child/young person spends considerable time alone at home or in the community
- Child/young person has limited access to social activities in their community
- Child/young person behaving in an anti-social way in the neighbourhood
- Child/young person is exposed to early risks in the community/outside the home (including on online communities)

Identity and Self Esteem

- Vulnerability around identity (disability, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, race, religion) – confusion or curiosity around identity where they do not have safe support
- Experience of bullying or crime
- Lack of confidence is impacting relationships
- Child/young person experiences discrimination due to protected characteristics

Family and Social Relationships

- Limited positive role models
- Low levels of parental conflict / domestic violence
- Needs arising from parents' separation, step-parenting or bereavement
- Children and young people affected by parental imprisonment

Self-care skills and independence

- Disability limits amount of self-care possible
- Limited development towards age appropriate self-care skills

Learning

- Have some identified specific learning needs with targeted support and / or Special Education Needs and disabilities - Education, Health and Care Plan
- Language and communication needs that are not addressed
- Regular barriers and issues in reaching education potential
- Punctuality concerns and/or pattern of regular school absences
- Children missing from school-based education provision or not registered with education services
- Behaviours in school leading to regular sanctions or some fixed term exclusion

Housing, work and income

- Family seeking asylum or refugees
- Financial management/debt/poverty problems impacting on any aspect of a child's welfare and safety
- Unsuitable temporary or overcrowded, or unsafe housing
- Homelessness
- Not in education, employment or training post-16

Social and community including education

- Experiences social exclusion and/or social conflict
- Community characterised by negativity towards children/young people
- Difficulty accessing community facilities

Level 3

Level 3 – FAMILY HELP: Children and young people whose needs are more complex, in range, depth or significance. A number of these indicators would need to be present to indicate need at Level 3. More than one service is normally involved, with a coordinated multi-agency approach and a social worker or delegated Family Help Lead Practitioner.

Health

- Child/young person has severe/chronic health problems (physical, emotional, sexual) requiring a coordinated multi-agency approach
- Absence/avoidance of registration with health care services; persistent non-attendance at medical appointments resulting in suffering or the child's or parent's needs escalating
- Child/young person is impacted by a significant disability
- Developmental milestones impacted by parental care
- Risks from problematic substance/alcohol misuse
- Poverty arising from inappropriate parental choices
- Exploitation (sexual and/or criminal) vulnerability leading to health impacts (physical, emotional or sexual)
- Mental health issues emerging such as neurodivergent needs, anxiety, depression, eating disorder, self-harming, suicidal ideation

Emotional Development

- Displaying sexual behaviours or accessing sexual material that is beyond expected age/stage development that places child at risk or others at risk
- Complex emotional regulation needs impacting child/young person
- Caring responsibilities having direct impact on development of self

Behavioural Development

- Impact of a child/young person's vulnerability in the home, at school or community frequently exposes them to risks and not promoting their welfare
- Child exposed, groomed, coerced into criminality

Identity and Self-Esteem

- Child/young person experiences persistent discrimination

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- The care at home is not considered good enough for the young persons needs
- Parents have children no longer in their care
- Domestic abuse in the home risk assessed as medium risk
- Difficulties with mental health, substance/alcohol misuse impacting on the care of child/young person
- Other services are failing to sucessfully work with parents/carers with relevant children, young people – resulting in unmet need
- Child/young person experiencing neglect (physical, medical, emotional, educational, nutritional, lack of supervision)
- Repeated incidents of missing from home (fewer than 3 incidents in 90 days)
- A child who is in a private fostering arrangement

Level 3 - continued

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Parent/carers struggle to set effective boundaries
- Child/young person behaves in anti-social way in the neighbourhood

Housing, work and income

- Homeless - or imminent if not accepted by housing department
- Housing unsafe (physically and medically) for children
- Poverty that has severely affects parents' ability to provide basic care

Family functioning and well-being

- Family has significant physical and mental health difficulties impacting on their child/ young person
- Community are hostile to family
- Emerging concerns with harm outside of the home including online influences increasing the risk of radicalisation, exploitation, grooming or involvement with gangs/criminal networks
- Family violence towards parent/carers/ siblings
- Parent/Carers are emotionally unavailable or unpredictable due to parental conflict; medium risk domestic abuse incidents

Learning

- Regularly poor education/training attendance and punctuality
- Not in education, training or employment
- Relationships with carers characterised by unpredictability
- Frequent school/education moves resulting from managed moves or parental confrontation with education providers
- Children previously known to Children's Social Care (CiN & CP) missing from school-based education provision or not registered with education services

Self-care skills and independence

- Disability prevents self-care in a significant range of tasks
- Child/young person lacks a sense of safety, ability to risk assess or evidence consequential thinking resulting in potential increased exposure to risk



Level 4

Level 4 – SPECIALIST: Children and young people who under the statutory framework of Child in Need (Children Act 1989 S.17) or who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm or whose needs are complex and enduring and cross many domains. More than one service is normally involved, with a co-ordinated multi-agency approach and a social worker as Lead Professional under the statutory framework of Child Protection (Children Act 1989 S.47).

Health

- Child/young person has some/chronic/ recurring health problems; not treated, or poorly managed
- Failure to thrive/faltering growth with no identified medical cause
- Persistent adult health appointments and/or child health appointments with no identified medical cause (suspected/ evidence of fabricated or induced illness)
- Child, young person or parent/carer not accessing or refusing medical care compromising or endangering child/ young person's welfare and development
- Serious dental decay requiring removal of multiple teeth through persistent lack of dental care
- Persistent problematic substance/alcohol misuse that is denied and/or not seeking/ engaging with treatment
- Child that has been sexually abused
- Child who is suspected to have suffered female genital mutilation or other harmful cultural practices
- Evidence of significant harm or neglect
- Non-accidental injury including head trauma in under one year olds
- Unexplained significant injuries including suspected injuries/bruising in non-mobile babies
- Acute mental health problems in adult or child e.g. severe depression; suicide attempts; psychotic episodes
- Physical / learning disability requiring constant supervision and additional complex support that parents are nit accessing
- Disclosure of any abuse from child / young person in and away from home
- Concealed or denied pregnancies

Emotional Development

- Concerning behaviour that which leaves young person vulnerable to harm outside of the home including regular missing, acts of violence, grooming and exploitation

Behavioural Development

- Family or settings (education or placements) are not able to meet needs of the child/young person resulting in frequent placement breakdowns
- Regular and persistent offending and re-offending behaviour for serious offences resulting in custodial sentences or high-risk public protection concerns
- Mental health needs resulting in high-risk self-harming behaviours, suicidal attempts and in-patient admissions
- Concerning behaviour that increases the risk of significant harm for themselves or others
- Serious sexual and/or criminal exploitation risks or persistent exposure to radicalisation risks

Learning

- No school placement or not in school due to parental neglect

Family and Social Relationships

- Rejection by a parent/carer; family no longer want to care for – or have abandoned –child/young person
- Previous periods accommodated by local authority
- Family breakdown related to child/young person's behavioural difficulties
- Child/young person main carer for family member which significantly impacts on the child's welfare, development and safety
- Child/young person exposed to high-risk domestic abuse incidents and/or in harms way during domestic abuse incidents
- Victim of modern-day slavery, human trafficking, child exploitation or forced labour

Level 4 - continued

Emotional warmth and stability

- Parent's own emotional experiences significantly impacting on their ability to meet child/young person's needs
- Child/young person has no-one to care for him/her
- Parent/care requesting child/young person be accommodated by local authority Section 20

Guidance, boundaries, and stimulation

- No effective boundaries set by parents / carers
- Parents are unable to keep their child/ young person safe without specialist support
- Persistent and regular incidents of missing from home (three or more incidents in 90 days) or missing for long periods
- Individual posing a risk to children/young people in, or known to, household
- Family home used for drug taking, exploitation, illegal activities
- A child or young person who has abused another child or young person/s; child exposed to serious youth violence
- Serious or persistent offending behaviour likely to lead to custody / remand in secure unit/ prison

Housing, work and income

- Housing dangerous or seriously threatening to health
- Physical accommodation places child/ young person in danger
- Extreme poverty / debt impacting on ability to care for child/young person

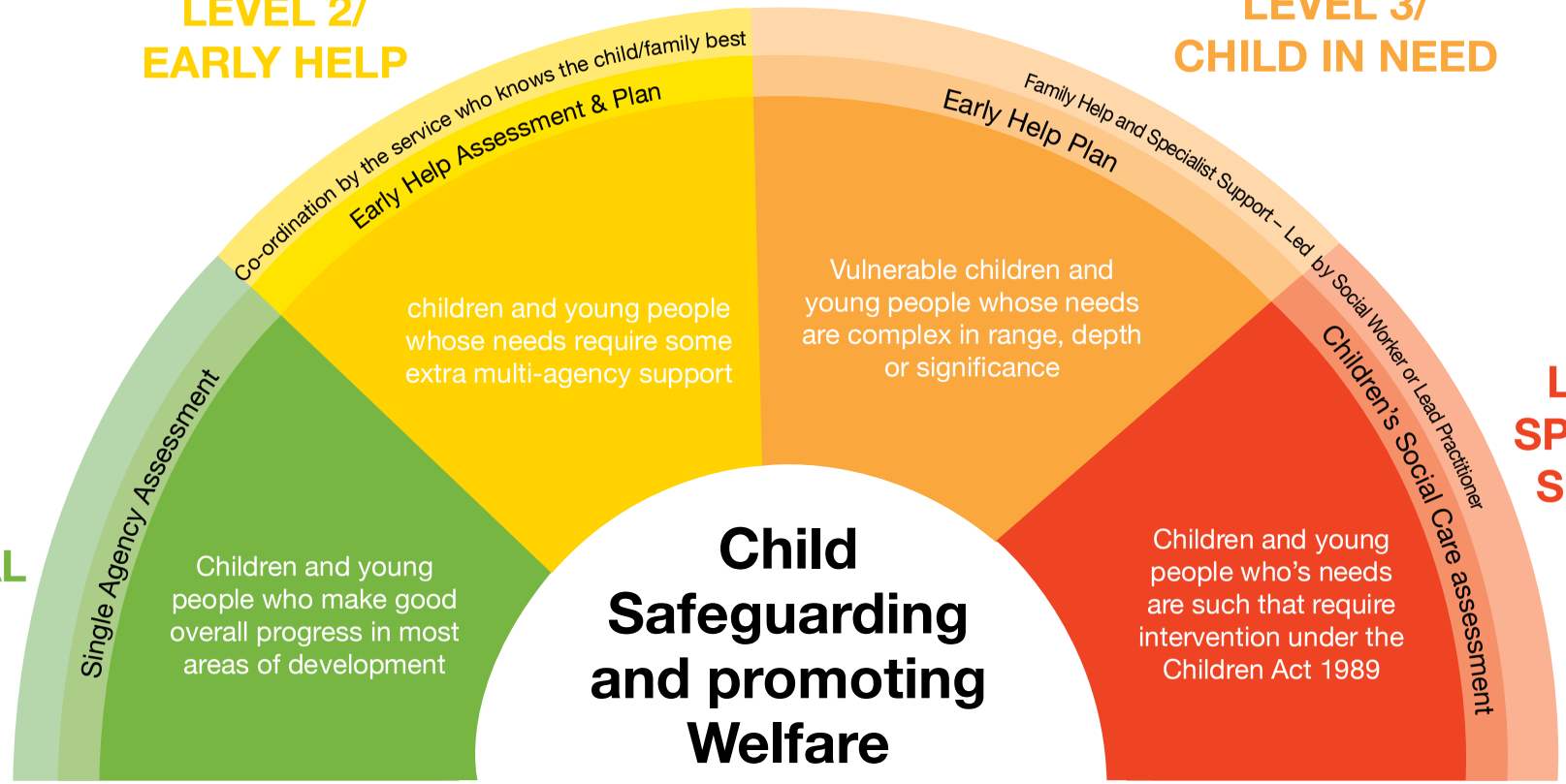
Identity and Self-Esteem

- Evident mental health needs
- Child/young person coerced into exhibiting extremist views, threats, suggestions or behaviour
- Child/young person exposed to and/or a victim of, exploitation and organised crime
- Impact of discrimination is persistent and severe

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Parent / carers mental health or substance misuse significantly affects care of child/ young person
- Parents / carers were unable to care for previous children
- Parents / carers involved in violent or serious crime, or crime against children
- Parents/carers own needs mean they are unable to keep child / young person safe
- Severe disability – child / young person relies totally on other people to meet care needs that are not being met
- Chronic and serious domestic abuse graded as high-risk
- Disclosure from parent/carer of abuse to child / young person
- Forced Marriage or Honour Based Abuse with family
- Risk of exploitation and/or radicalisation where parents/carers lack willingness or ability, to protect
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child
- Professional concerns – but difficulty accessing child / young person

Levels of Need – At a Glance



If in doubt, consult with agency safeguarding leads, or the Duty Social Worker in your area:
Lancashire 0300 123 6720; Blackpool 01253 477299; Blackburn with Darwen 01254 666400



WORKING WELL WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN LANCASHIRE

Including, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Local Authorities

This document contains Part One and Two of Three parts of the guidance.