

Derby City and Derbyshire Thresholds Document

1. Introduction

This document has been developed and published by Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Boards in response to the requirements of [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2015\)](#). It replaces all previously published threshold documents.

Children, young people and their families will have different levels of needs and these may change over time. The majority of children and young people have low level needs that can be supported through a range of universal services. These services include education, early years, health, housing, youth services, leisure facilities and services provided by community organisations.

Some children may have additional emerging needs that can be co-ordinated through an early help assessment. Other children have more complex needs and may require access to specialist services, such as local authority (LA) children's social care, to support them.

2. Who is this document for?

- Anyone who has a concern for a child to explain thresholds for early help services and LA children's social care.
- Practitioners who are in contact with children and families, and have a concern about a child or young person and want to know how they can get help.
- Service providers; in describing how thresholds should be applied to referrals they receive and therefore promote greater consistency between agencies.

All practitioners have shared responsibility in delivering timely, effective and seamless services to ensure that children's welfare is promoted and that they are protected from harm. It is important that children and their families receive the right help at the right time. When a child and their family require help from a range of services their experience should allow for smooth transitions in the child's journey through services.

3. What is abuse?

All practitioners should be alert to the signs of abuse or neglect, or changes in behaviour which may indicate a child may be being abused or neglected. They should be aware that warning signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect vary from child to child and that disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse. For more information about signs that may be indicators of abuse or neglect see [What to do if you're worried about a child is being abused; Advice for practitioners](#) (2015).

Abuse is 'a form of maltreatment of a child'. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.¹

Children may also be moved in or around the UK or even out of the country to be abused.

¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)

There are four main categories of abuse and neglect, which practitioners should be alert to. These categories however are rarely separate and may overlap with one another.

- **Physical Abuse**

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

- **Emotional Abuse**

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- **Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. It involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- **Child sexual exploitation** is a form of child **sexual** abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.²

- **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may

² Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) as amended 2017

occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

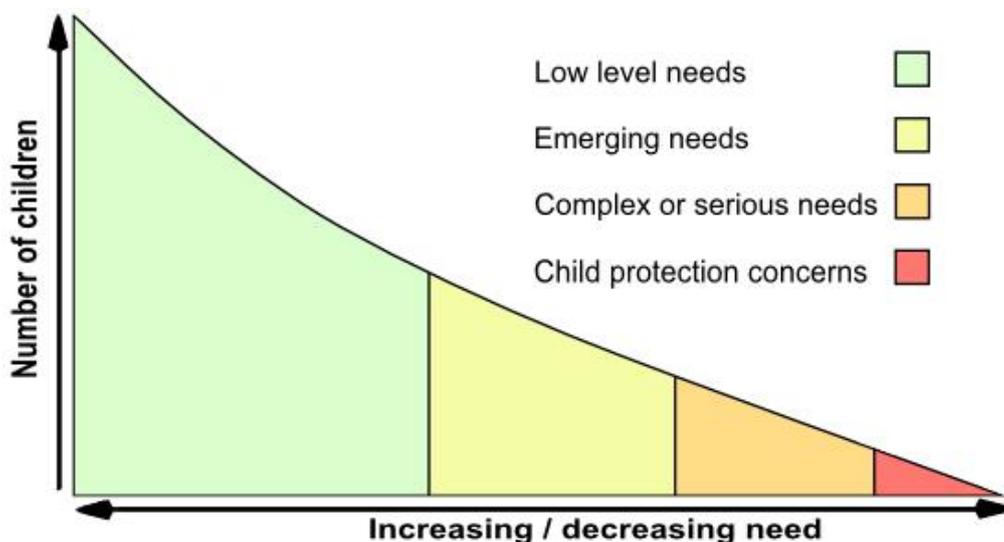
It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. More information about medical neglect, where carers minimise or ignore children's illness or health (including oral health) needs, and fail to seek medical attention, take children to medical appointments or administer medication and treatments is located in [Bite-size Briefing: Medical Neglect](#).

3. Referral pathways and services

Referrals to services regarding concerns about a child typically fall into four levels:

1. **Low level needs** where need is relatively low and where individual services and universal services may be able to address the child's needs without the involvement of other services. (section 5)
2. **Emerging needs** where a range of early help services may be required, co-ordinated through an early help assessment where there are concerns for a child's well-being or a child's needs are not clear, not known or not being met. (section 6)
3. **Complex or serious needs** where without intervention the child would become at risk of significant harm or the needs are such that without intervention the child's health or development would be seriously impaired. Help is provided as a "child in need" under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 via a specialist in-depth assessment and following this at least initial co-ordination of services via a social worker. (section 7)
4. **Child protection concerns** where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm because of abuse or neglect. Under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 local authority children's social care must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken to protect the child. (section 8)

Diagram representing the range of children and young people's needs across Derby and Derbyshire:



Work with families should always be underpinned by principles of working in partnership. Consent must be sought from parents / carers / young people to share information, unless there is a specific risk of harm to a child and / or sharing the information with the parents would place the child at further risk.

When a child has needs appropriate services should be provided to meet them. These should be at the lowest threshold level applicable to the child's presenting needs.

A child's needs may change during the course of early help involvement; the need may become more serious and complex, at these times it may be necessary to consider escalating the concerns to Children's Social Care.

4. How to decide whether to request support or make a referral

It is important to be clear about the purpose and intended outcome of the request or referral. It is helpful to consider:

- What is life like for this child and their family? What are the child's wishes and feelings?
- What are the parents/carers understanding of the situation and to what extent have they engaged with services?
- What are the child's and family's strengths? Could these be utilised?
- How serious are the needs and the concerns, are they new concerns or have they been present for some time, how urgent are they? What is the impact, or potential impact, on the child?
- What support and interventions have been offered previously? Did these make a difference? If not, why not?
- What support and interventions can your agency offer this child and family? Could this address the needs or is support required from another agency? What support is needed and how will this address the needs?

There are a number of key assessments and tools which can assist practitioners to work effectively with children and their families. They help identify strengths, needs, concerns and risks and form an important part of the decision making process. Assessment tools can help identify when other support is needed, whether a request for support or a referral to other agency is required or a case needs to be 'stepped up' / escalated due to emerging complex or serious needs or child protection concerns.

Local assessments and tools include:

- Early Help Assessment
- Single Assessment
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) risk assessment toolkit
- Chronologies
- Genograms (family tree)
- DASH risk assessment – an adult based assessment of risks related to domestic abuse
- Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix (DVRIM) – an assessment tool which helps to identify the risks to children
- Graded Care Profile (GCP) for the assessment of neglect
- Parenting Assessment, including Parenting Assessment Manual (PAM)
- Brook Sexual Behaviour's Traffic Light Tool

These tools are located on the DSCB websites www.derbyscb.org.uk and www.derbyshirescb.org.uk and in the [multi-agency safeguarding children procedures](#).

If you have non urgent concerns it can be very useful to consult with other practitioners in the child's network as this can support decision making.

Practitioners working with families where there is an unborn baby should also refer to the [Derby and Derbyshire Multi Agency Protocol for Pre Birth Assessment and Interventions](#), located in the Protocol Section in the multi-agency safeguarding procedures [Document Library](#). It can also be found on the DSCB websites www.derbyscb.org.uk and www.derbyshirescb.org.uk.

The thresholds indicators table in Appendix A gives an indication of thresholds through examples and has been developed to help practitioners in their decision making. It is not a definitive list; professional judgement should always be applied when deciding the level of intervention and where to refer.

When a practitioner is not sure about the level of needs and concern they should speak to their manager, named professional or agency lead for child protection. Alternatively, a practitioner can speak with a Social Worker by contacting:

- Derbyshire: Consultation and Advice Service at Starting Point
☎ 01629 535353
- Derby: Children's Services Professional Consultation Line
☎ 0781 2300329

Practitioners in all agencies have a responsibility to refer a child to LA Children's Social Care when it is believed or suspected that the child:

- has suffered significant harm; or
- is likely to suffer significant harm.

They should refer to their local safeguarding process and / or the DSCBs multi-agency safeguarding children procedures as necessary.

All agencies use thresholds to consider whether a request for support will be accepted, whether an assessment will be undertaken, and what services will be offered or provided. Consultation with partner agencies involved with the family are also a key part of this process.

Requests for support/referrals made by telephone should be followed up in writing / by secure email within 48 hours using any existing assessment such as the early help assessment, or if the referral is to LA Children's Social Care the child referral form. The outcome of a referral should always be followed up.

Once a request is accepted, agencies will carry out an assessment to identify the child's level of need, strengths and risks. Services to be offered and any plan will be dependent on this assessment.

When a request does not meet the agency threshold, the agency will provide the practitioner making the request with information on more suitable resources and, where appropriate, pass the request to other services.

5. Low level needs (level 1)

Where need is relatively low, individual services and universal services may be able to meet these needs, take swift action and prevent those needs escalating. The Pre-Assessment Checklist helps practitioners identify and document low level needs or identify when an early help assessment may be needed and the action to be taken.

6. Emerging needs (level 2)

Emerging needs are when there are concerns about a child's well-being or when a child's needs are not clear, not known or not being met and a range of early help services are required. An early help assessment should be commenced to identify a child's needs and strengths, and any appropriate services.

Practitioners should be alert to the potential need for an early help assessment for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance misuse, adult mental health, domestic abuse; and/or
- is showing early signs of neglect or CSE.

Completing an early help assessment can also serve as a standardised request for support to other services, and when required can support a referral to LA Children's Social Care, however this is not a prerequisite for making a referral.

If the family do not consent to an early help assessment, then a judgement should be made as to whether without help the needs of the child will escalate. If so, a referral to LA Children's Social Care may be necessary.

See the DSCBs Guidance for Completing an Early Help Assessment, located in the Assessment Tools section of the multi-agency safeguarding procedures [Document Library](#).

Information about Derby Children's Services [early help services](#) such as Multi Agency Teams (MAT's), Children's Centre's and Space@Connexions are located on the Derby City Council website www.derby.gov.uk.

Further information in Derbyshire about [support for families and early help](#) including MAT can be found on the Derbyshire County Council website www.derbyshire.gov.uk. Guidance for requesting support and the Starting Point Referral form can be found [here](#).

For guidance about making a referral to Children's Social Care, please refer to the [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children procedures](#) or access via the DSCB websites www.derbyscb.org.uk and www.derbyshirescb.org.uk.

- Derby: First Contact Team ☎ 01332 641 172
- Derbyshire: Starting Point ☎ 01629 533 190

The Derby Assessment Protocol and Derbyshire Assessment Protocol sets out arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred to Derby City

Council Children's Services or Derbyshire County Council Children's Services. See Protocol Section in the multi-agency safeguarding procedures [Document Library](#).

7. Complex or serious needs (Child in Need) that cannot be met through early help (level 3)

Complex or serious needs, where without intervention the child would become at risk of significant harm, will require a specialist in-depth assessment and co-ordination via a social worker. This can include issues which require a degree of urgency in their resolution, as well as children in private fostering arrangements and disabled children with complex needs. It may also include children who have special educational needs, or because they are a carer or because they have committed a crime. This assessment is known as a child in need assessment.

The Children Act 1989, Section 17 states that a child shall be considered "in need" if:

- S/he 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 of services by a local authority;
- Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; and/or
- S/he is disabled.

The Local Authority, in certain circumstances following social work assessment, may accommodate a child or young person under S20 of the Children Act 1989, with agreement from a parent or because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, because they are alone or abandoned or because the person who has been caring for them is not or cannot provide them with suitable accommodation or care.

Prior to the identification of serious or complex needs, most children will have had an early help assessment and plan as an attempt to address the issues at an earlier stage which has been unsuccessful in improving the situation. The early help assessment, plan and review documents will contribute to the LA social care assessment and analysis and may aid the 'step up' / escalation process if required.

8. Child Protection Concerns / Section 47 (level 4)

Where there is an immediate need to protect a child because there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, practitioners must contact LA children's social care and / or the police directly and make a referral. Child protection concerns include concerns that a child is being subject to physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse/exploitation or is being neglected. A single traumatic event may constitute significant harm but more often it is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long standing, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. It may also include serious events which have not yet occurred but may be imminent, such as forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

In all of these circumstances an early help assessment would not be appropriate. Where there are child protection concerns a strategy discussion involving the LA, police, health and if needed other agencies takes place to decide whether a Section 47 enquiry is required. The Section 47 enquiry is led by the local authority, with the help of other organisations, to find out what is happening to the child and whether protective action is required, including legal action.

The Children Act 1989, Section 47 states that where a local authority:

- a) are informed that a child who lives or is found in their area
 - i. is subject of an emergency protection order; or
 - ii. is in police protection
- b) have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found in their area is suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm

the authority shall make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Where the LA decide, taking into account the views of others, that a child cannot safely remain at home, consideration will be given to other arrangements including informal family options, Section 20 accommodation or an application to the courts under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989. In an emergency, an application may be made by a social worker for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) or the police for Police Protection within 72 hours. These applications allow a child to be temporarily removed from their parents care.

See the [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children procedures](http://www.derbyscb.org.uk) or access via the DSCB websites www.derbyscb.org.uk and www.derbyshirescb.org.uk.

9. Children in Care

The LA has a duty to provide accommodation to children in care. These children are entitled to safeguarding processes to ensure that any issues arising in care are addressed as outlined in the Children Act 1989 and Care Planning Regulations.

Where a child returns home there should be an assessment /plan subject to Care Planning Regulations 2010.

END

Version Control

Policy to be read in conjunction with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures (NB: this document replaces all other Derby City or Derbyshire threshold documents)					
Version	Author/s	Updated by	Signed off by	Date	Review Date
1.	Multi Agency Task & Finish Group	-	DSCB Policy and Procedures Group	Nov 2013	Nov 2014
2.	-	DSCB Policy Officer	DSCB Policy and Procedures Group	Nov 2015	Nov 2017
3.	-	Head of Service – Children's Quality Assurance Derby, Acting Head of Child Protection Derbyshire and DSCBs' Policy Officer's	DSCB Policy and Procedures Group	Nov 2017	Nov 2020, pending publication of new national guidance

This table is intended to give an indication of thresholds through examples. It is NOT a definitive list and a professional judgement should be applied when deciding the level of intervention and where to refer.

Level 1: Low Level Needs – universal services

Most unborn babies, children and young people will have their needs met through universal services however some may need extra support. For example children / young people who:

- Are beginning to fall behind in their developmental milestones or learning or where school attendance, punctuality or behaviour has started to deteriorate;
- Have parents/carers who need additional support and/or advice with parenting;
- Would benefit from contact with community support services i.e. a children's centre;
- Have health issues which may require additional health services e.g. school nurse;
- There are low level concerns about radicalisation/extremism and Channel processes identify support via universal services;
- Require support to access services i.e. re-school settings, dental care or to attend routine appointments.

Level 2: Emerging Needs - Multi-agency assessment and support via early help assessment process

For example children / young people where there appears to be / is:

- Poor nutrition or inadequate clothing, poor home conditions or risk of homelessness;
- Low level self-harm or substance misuse;
- Family circumstances which present challenges for a child or unborn baby i.e. parental substance misuse, mental health problems or low level domestic abuse;
- Poor attendance, disengagement or at risk of exclusion from school or post 16 education, training or employment;
- Disabilities (low level needs) or health needs (chronic);
- Significant behavioural difficulties, or involvement in, or risk of, offending;
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood, including the risk of early parenthood;
- A young carer who appears to be coping, or where a child or parent requests an assessment;
- Low level risk of child sexual exploitation or are beginning to go "missing";
- Concerns about extremism/radicalisation where Channel processes identify there are additional support needs;
- Parental conflict or lack of parental support/boundaries.

Level 3: Complex or Serious Needs - Specialist assessment and co-ordination via a Social Worker - "Child in Need" Section 17, Children Act 1989

For example children or young people:

- With a disability (medium/high level needs) or significant mental health needs;
- Who are misusing substances and there are concerning additional features and/or risk is increased as a result of age factors, impact or vulnerability issues;
- Enduring or a single serious incident of self-harm;
- Who are aged 16 plus and are homeless;
- At medium risk of child sexual exploitation or are persistently "missing";
- Who are young carers and are not coping and / or with unmet needs, or where a child or parent requests an assessment;

- Whose parents are experiencing difficulty in providing a reasonable standard of parenting, including parents who have a physical or learning disability, have mental ill health issues, are seriously ill or misuse substances (this includes unborn babies);
- Living in a situation where there is repeated or serious domestic violence (this includes unborn babies) or are age 16 / 17 and are a victim / perpetrator of domestic abuse;
- Young people who become pregnant whilst in LA care must automatically be subject to a pre-birth assessment in line with the Multi Agency Protocol for Pre Birth Assessment and Interventions;
- Living in families where there is a likelihood of family breakdown;
- Whose behaviour has been sexually harmful;
- Where there are concerns about extremism/radicalisation with concerning additional features and/or risk is increased as a result of vulnerability factors (alongside Channel processes);
- Who are living in a private fostering arrangement;
- Where early intervention attempts to improve the situation have been unsuccessful, including where concerns about neglect have not resulted in consistent improvement or have declined.

Level 4: Child Protection Concerns - specialist local authority enquiries and intervention - Section 47, Children Act 1989

- For example children or young people:
- With non-accidental, unexplained injuries or suspicious injuries;
 - Who have alleged/disclosed abuse;
 - Who are in contact with an individual identified as a risk to children or where a child is returning to carers in whose care significant harm originally occurred;
 - Who have suffered, or are suffering neglect or emotional abuse that is significantly impairing their development;
 - Whose care is significantly affected by parental difficulties such as serious substance misuse, high risk domestic abuse, significant mental health issues or learning disability (this includes unborn babies);
 - Who are imminent at risk of honour based violence, forced marriage or FGM;
 - At high risk of child sexual exploitation or high risk "missing";
 - Whose care is significantly affected by parental involvement in terrorist ideology or activities or where the child themselves are likely to suffer harm by their own involvement in extremism/terrorism (alongside Channel processes).

Step 1: What is the nature of your concern?

Low level needs

Need is relatively low & individual / universal services able to take swift action

Emerging needs

Concerns for child's well-being, child's needs not clear, not known or not being met. A range of early help services may be required

Complex or serious needs

A child or young person has needs which without intervention would seriously impair their health or development, or put them at risk

Child protection concerns

A child or young person is at current risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect

Step 2: What action should you take?

- Discuss with your manager how your own agency can address your concerns
- Consider with the family what help may be needed
- Develop a plan to address and review

- Discuss with your manager
- Talk with family and seek consent for early help assessment & seek other agency involvement
- Develop an action plan, Team Around the Family (TAF) and review progress

- Discuss concerns with your manager or safeguarding lead without delay
- Talk with the family
- Speak with a qualified Social Worker 01629 535353
- Complete an electronic referral form
- Make a referral to Starting Point

- Discuss concerns with your manager or safeguarding lead without delay
- Talk with the family, unless this puts the child at risk
- Make an immediate referral to Starting Point
- Provide a copy of the early help or other assessment, & any plans if available

Step 3: Follow up if you need to make a request for support or a referral

- Consider using pre assessment checklist & request for support form
- Consult with colleagues & establish if other agencies are involved

- If TAF plan fails to achieve identified outcomes consider a request for support by completing an electronic referral form. Go to: www.derbyshire.gov.uk/startinpoint

- Use electronic Referral form to contact Starting Point www.derbyshire.gov.uk/startinpoint

- Contact Starting Point immediately on ☎ 01629 533190

At all stages follow up referrals in writing within 48 hours using any existing assessments and/or for Children's Social Care, the child multi-agency referral form. Ensure the outcome of the referral is followed up.

Step 1: What is the nature of your concern?

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Need is relatively low & individual / universal services able to take swift action

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- Develop a plan to address and review

- Discuss with your manager
- Talk with family and seek consent for early help assessment & seek other agency involvement
- Develop an action plan, Team Around the Family (TAF) and review progress

- Discuss concerns with your manager or safeguarding lead without delay
- Talk with the family
- If unsure ring Consultation Line 07812 300329
- Make a referral to VCM or First Contact Team
- Provide a copy of early help assessment & any plans, or other relevant assessments

- Discuss concerns with your manager or safeguarding lead without delay
- Talk with the family, unless this puts the child at risk
- Make an immediate referral to First Contact Team
- Provide a copy of the early help or other assessment, & any plans if available

Step 3: Follow up if you need to make a request for support or a referral

- Consider using pre assessment checklist & request for support form
- Consult with colleagues & establish if other agencies are involved

- Use early help assessment to request early help services directly or via the Vulnerable Children's Meeting
- Seek advice from an Early Help Advisor

- Submit to Vulnerable Children's Meeting (VCM) or
- Contact the First Contact Team ☎ 01332 641 172

- Contact First Contact Team ☎ 01332 641172 or
- Out of hours Careline ☎ 01332 786 968

At all stages follow up referrals in writing within 48 hours using any existing assessments and/or for Children's Social Care, the child multi-agency referral form. Ensure the outcome of the referral is followed up.