

# Indicators of Possible Need

The needs listed under each heading indicate the likely service level to meet the need. Only by talking to children and their family in more detail to explore context and the factors behind the need will the practitioner be able to form a judgement as to the correct level of support.

The indicators are a guide to enable professional decision making and are not a pre-determined level of response.

There are a range of evidence based tools available which may support you in your assessment of the likelihood of harm to the child which are specific to different types of harm.

**Bristol FGM Tool** – ([link here to KBSP guidance when new one uploaded](#))

**Child Sexual Abuse** –  
[Signs & Indicators Template - CSA Centre](#)

**Domestic Abuse** –  
[Barnardo's Domestic Abuse Risk Matrix](#)  
(please note that the Levels in this matrix do not directly correlate with levels in this threshold document)

**Graded Care Profile 2**  
(you must have attended the [KBSP training](#) to use this tool) –  
[Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\) | NSPCC Learning](#)

**Harmful Sexual Behaviour**  
[Harmful sexual behaviour framework](#): an evidence-informed operational framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours ([nspcc.org.uk](https://nspcc.org.uk))



## Child Developmental Needs

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
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 access voluntary sector services.	<p>Children and young people whose needs require some extra support. A number of these indicators are likely to be present.</p> <p>A Team around the Family meeting to share information and agree an Early Help Plan to support the child and family is helpful. Services around the family should work in partnership to offer support and prevent escalation of need.</p>	<p>Children and young people whose needs are multiple and complex. A number of these indicators would need to be present to indicate needs at level 3. Despite intervention at level 2, there is evidence of continuing and escalating need.</p> <p>A lead practitioner and Early Help Plan is required to coordinate multi-agency support. This could be delivered by Family Help or an identified specialist agency.</p>	Children and young people whose needs are complex, enduring, severe and cross many domains. More than one service is normally involved, requiring a lead practitioner in a statutory role.

## Child Developmental Needs: **Learning, Education and Employment**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good attendance at nursery / school / college / training</li> <li>• No barriers to learning</li> <li>• Access to books and toys</li> <li>• Meeting developmental and learning milestones</li> <li>• Demonstrates a range of skills / interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular unauthorised school absence or lateness, parents may condone absences</li> <li>• Some fixed term exclusions</li> <li>• Not in Education, Employment or Training post-16</li> <li>• Additional emotional, behavioural or attainment related targeted support required in school, and / or Special Educational Needs / Education, Health and Care Plan / out of school activities</li> <li>• Finds it hard to engage in play or learning</li> <li>• Not reaching educational potential</li> <li>• Limited access to books, toys or play</li> <li>• Language and communication difficulties</li> <li>• Child is not exposed to new experiences / limited access to leisure activities</li> <li>• Low parental aspirations</li> <li>• Electively home educated with emerging concerns about the standards of education being provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent absence from school</li> <li>• Social exclusion</li> <li>• Fixed term exclusion / no school place / NEET</li> <li>• Alienates self from school and peers through extremes of behaviour</li> <li>• Additional emotional, behavioural or attainment related targeted support required in school, and / or Special Educational Needs / Education, Health and Care Plan / out of school activities which require the support of the targeted short breaks or inclusion service in social care</li> <li>• Persistent disruptive / dysregulated behaviour at school, home or in the neighbourhood</li> <li>• No access to universal services – “hidden children”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic persistent absence, permanent exclusions or no school place that risks entrance to care</li> <li>• No education placement due to parental neglect</li> <li>• Persistent social exclusion</li> <li>• The child is being educated by adults who have links to proscribed terrorist groups or organisations or hold radical / extremist views</li> <li>• <u>Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations - GOV.UK</u> (<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>)</li> </ul>

## Child Developmental Needs: **Physical Health**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health needs are met, including antenatally</li> <li>Access to nutritious diet.</li> <li>Adequate hygiene and dress</li> <li>Is not misusing substances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate, limited or restricted diet eg. no lunch money, no breakfast, under or over-weight</li> <li>Concern about developmental progress eg. bedwetting / soiling, speech</li> <li>Missing routine and non-routine medical appointments, including dental and antenatal or over-reliance on emergency care settings</li> <li>Frequent accidents, may be due to lack of supervision</li> <li>Support is needed to manage long term conditions eg. asthma, diabetes</li> <li>Child has a disability and needs daily assistance or intensive therapy</li> <li>Experimenting with tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs</li> <li>Periods of inadequate care or self-care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self neglect significantly impacting on wellbeing and relationships</li> <li>Concerns about diet / hygiene / clothing / home environment indicate neglect requiring action</li> <li>Many visits to acute health settings with an accumulation of accidents which collectively may indicate an underlying supervision or parenting issue</li> <li>Problematic or hazardous substance use linked to risk taking behaviour</li> <li>Consistently failing to reach developmental milestones</li> <li>Regular missed appointments affecting developmental progress including for chronic / recurrent health needs</li> <li>Inadequate access to food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject to physical, emotional or sexual harm, abuse or neglect</li> <li>Allegation of abuse</li> <li>Complex / multiple disabilities requiring a specialist social work service</li> <li>Physical or learning disability that means the child is unlikely to achieve and maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services from the local authority</li> <li>Significant developmental delay due to neglect or poor parenting</li> <li>Severe / chronic health problems without access to healthcare</li> <li>Refusing medical care endangering life / development</li> <li>Serious dental decay requiring removal of multiple teeth through persistent lack of dental care</li> <li>Unexplained or suspicious significant injuries</li> <li>Non-accidental injury</li> <li>Persistent and significant drug or alcohol use severely impairing safety and development</li> <li>Sexualised behaviours or health symptoms which are highly indicative of sexual abuse</li> <li>Forced marriage, Honour based violence, Female Genital mutilation, harmful traditional practices, without parental protection</li> <li>Fabricated or Induced Illness suspected</li> <li><u>Fabricated or Induced Illness/Perplexing Presentations</u> (<a href="http://proceduresonline.com">proceduresonline.com</a>)</li> </ul>

## Child Developmental Needs: **Emotional, Mental health and confidence**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive sense of self and abilities</li> <li>• Able to express needs verbally or non-verbally</li> <li>• Good quality early attachments</li> <li>• Able to adapt to change</li> <li>• Able to demonstrate empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional needs relating to deteriorating mental or emotional health, including self-harm</li> <li>• Vulnerable to emotional problems, perhaps in response to life events; child may exhibit anxiety, anger or defiance</li> <li>• Support needs around identity eg. sexuality, gender</li> <li>• Unduly anxious, angry, defiant or withdrawn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant attachment difficulties</li> <li>• Emerging mental health needs eg. acute withdrawal, conduct disorder, anxiety, eating disorder, depression, self-harm</li> <li>• Difficulty coping with emotions / unable to display empathy</li> <li>• Unexplained behaviours having a significant impact on the child's development or wellbeing which may be indicative of trauma, distress or unmet medical need eg. acute withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, smearing of faeces, fainting, recurrent acute stomach pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to assessment under the Mental Health Act or acute and high risk mental health needs posing a risk of significant harm to self or others</li> <li>• Constant severe emotional problems / responses that are not improved by support eg. smearing of faeces, head banging, frozen watchfulness</li> <li>• Long term neglect of the child's emotional needs</li> </ul>



## Child Developmental Needs: **Behaviour and Relationships**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to protect self and be protected</li> <li>• Age appropriate self-care and independence skills</li> <li>• Resilient and able to adapt to change</li> <li>• Responds appropriately to boundaries and constructive guidance</li> <li>• Sexual knowledge, understanding and activity are age appropriate and consensual</li> <li>• Can age appropriately discriminate between safe and unsafe contacts.</li> <li>• Is able to make and maintain friendships.</li> <li>• Able to understand other's feelings</li> <li>• Safe relationships with siblings</li> <li>• Stable and affectionate relationships with care givers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging difficulties with relationships to key carers.</li> <li>• Sexual activity or experimentation that is not yet harmful or problematic but requires support to make healthy and safe choices</li> <li>• Lacks positive role models</li> <li>• Some difficulties sustaining peer relationships</li> <li>• Not always able to understand how own actions impact on others</li> <li>• Some difficulties with family relationships</li> <li>• May experience bullying or bully others</li> <li>• Responds inappropriately to boundaries or constructive guidance</li> <li>• Children providing some care for parents or siblings (young carers)</li> <li>• Use of social media risks exposing the child or young person to adult content or unsafe contacts, parents and child may require education</li> <li>• Early onset of sexual activity (13–14) / unsafe sexual activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problematic sexualised behaviours for age of child</li> <li>• Young or teenage parents in need of a multi-agency support response</li> <li>• Socially isolated and lacks appropriate role models / positive relationships</li> <li>• Increasing vulnerability to sexual or criminal exploitation eg. exposure to adult content online, associating with at risk peer groups, missing from home</li> <li>• Peripheral / emerging organised crime/ serious youth violence involvement which risks future exploitation</li> <li>• Young person's relationships cause concern eg. age inappropriate or patterns of coercive or controlling behaviour between peers</li> <li>• Use of social media / online platforms pose continued risk to the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe lack of age-appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in harm</li> <li>• Pregnancy or sexually active under the age of 13</li> <li>• Harmful sexual behaviours towards other children or adults</li> <li>• Abusing other children</li> <li>• Child to parent abuse or sibling violence places child at risk of significant harm</li> <li>• Continual exposure to violence and instability within the home</li> <li>• Privately fostered child</li> <li>• Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child</li> <li>• Abandoned child</li> <li>• Exploited child (including criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation)</li> <li>• Known to be in a sexually exploitative relationship</li> <li>• High risk domestic abuse or coercive control within young person's relationship</li> </ul>

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*(Child Developmental Needs: Behaviour and Relationships, continued)*

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child has experienced loss or bereavement of a significant person, including children affected by parental imprisonment</li> <li>• Children who have legal permanence or a stable family arrangement but who do not live with their birth parents (ie. adopted children, special guardianship orders, kinship care)</li> <li>• Children affected by parental or sibling imprisonment but with safe and stable care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular sibling to sibling violence or child to parent abuse</li> <li>• Regularly providing care for another family member and may be a "young carer"</li> <li>• Relationship with family is experienced as negative, critical or rejecting</li> <li>• Recurrent / increasing episodes of being missing from home or school</li> <li>• Young person whose choices in relation to peers and community may put self or others in danger.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact with an adult who is known to pose a sexual or physical risk to children</li> <li>• Persistent and regular missing incidents, or missing for long periods of time</li> <li>• Younger child is main carer for a family member</li> </ul>

## Child Developmental Needs: **Crime and anti-social behaviour**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can access local leisure, services and amenities</li> <li>• Feels part of a community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A victim of crime or discrimination</li> <li>• Involved in behaviour that is seen as anti-social such as petty crime</li> <li>• Social exclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offending / anti-social behaviour resulting in risk of entering or entry into the youth justice system</li> <li>• Exposure to violent or offending behaviours in the home or community</li> <li>• Emerging concerns regarding radical / extremist views (eg. PREVENT criteria)</li> <li>• Community harassment / discrimination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involved with serious organised crime or serious youth violence involving weapons</li> <li>• Victim of modern trafficking or slavery</li> <li>• Demonstrates embedded radical/ extremist views or threats which meet CHANNEL criteria</li> <li>• Regular and persistent offending and re-offending behaviour for serious offences resulting in custodial sentences or high risk public protection concerns</li> </ul>



## Parents and Carers: **Parenting Skills**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable and affectionate relationship with the child, showing warm regard, praise and encouragement</li> <li>• Appropriate boundaries maintained</li> <li>• Able to protect children from danger or harm</li> <li>• Provide for child's physical needs including food, drink, clothing, medical and dental care</li> <li>• Resources are used in the best interests of the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor engagement with services</li> <li>• In need of advice on parenting issues</li> <li>• Basic care not consistently provided</li> <li>• Inconsistent responses to the child</li> <li>• Inconsistent boundaries, lack of routine</li> <li>• Leaves child to their own devices for considerable time which is age inappropriate eg. television, gaming, social media; or for younger children, over-reliance on play pens, bouncing chairs</li> <li>• Child perceived to be a problem by parents or carers. Relationship lacks warmth with criticism of child.</li> <li>• Adversity experienced by parents / carers as children affecting parenting capacity</li> <li>• Resources are used in a way which does not consistently prioritise the child's needs</li> <li>• Young or inexperienced parents</li> <li>• Inappropriate or inconsistent childcare arrangements and / or too many carers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor supervision by parent / carer</li> <li>• Unresponsive to identified needs</li> <li>• Historic context of parent's own childhood affects parenting capacity</li> <li>• Parent/ carer are unable to consistently provide adequate basic care</li> <li>• Concern about prospective parenting ability requiring pre-birth intervention to build skills and capacity</li> <li>• Unable to consistently provide adequate supervision sufficient to protect the child</li> <li>• Breakdown in relationship with child / feeling unable to continue to care for child with risk of entry into care</li> <li>• Parents struggle / refuse to set effective boundaries eg. too loose/ tight, which may include reliance on physical chastisement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents do not recognise or accept danger or protect child from harm</li> <li>• Persistent use of inappropriate care givers or introduction of adults posing a risk to the child's network</li> <li>• Low warmth, high criticism family relationships</li> <li>• Long term neglect of the child's emotional needs</li> <li>• Significant concern about prospective parenting ability, requiring pre-birth assessment</li> <li>• Parents have been unable to care for a previous child, resulting in alternate permanency</li> <li>• Rejection or abandonment of child, refusal to continue care and requesting accommodation</li> <li>• Involved in serious or violent crime, or crimes against children</li> <li>• Disclosure from parent of abuse to child / young person</li> </ul>

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*(Parents and Carers: Parenting Skills, continued)*

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community</li> <li>• Adversity experienced by parents / carers as children affecting parenting capacity</li> <li>• Parent who would benefit from education, advice or support to build their understanding of harmful cultural practices</li> <li>• Reliance on physical chastisement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parent / carer physically chastises the child but does not cause significant physical injury. This may result from a loss of control. The parent is willing to access professional support to learn alternatives.</li> <li>• Child has multiple carers; may have no significant relationship to them</li> <li>• The child regularly does not have adequate food, warmth or essential clothing due to prioritisation of parental needs over the child</li> <li>• Family is struggling to meet the needs of an unborn's siblings and there is concern about the impact of another child on their ability to sustain appropriate care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviours that suggest grooming or sexual abuse of a child</li> <li>• Non-engagement with support offered at levels 1–3, without statutory intervention the child is likely to suffer physical, emotional or sexual harm or neglect.</li> <li>• The parent / carer significantly physically harms the child</li> <li>• Inconsistent, absent or unsafe parenting with significant impact on child's developmental progress or safety</li> <li>• The child consistently does not have access to adequate food, warmth or essential clothing due to prioritisation of parental needs over the child</li> </ul>

## Parents and Carers: **Adult Health – Physical and Emotional**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental and physical health is stable with needs of parents met through services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor bonding with child, emerging emotional neglect concern, including prospective parents eg. unwanted pregnancy</li> <li>• Post natal depression that is being supported, monitored and managed.</li> <li>• Physical or Mental health needs including post-natal depression affecting parenting capacity</li> <li>• Parents struggle to have their own emotional needs met</li> <li>• Parent / carer stress starting to affect ability to ensure child's safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant learning or physical disability or mental health difficulties affects parents' ability to meet the needs of the child</li> <li>• Multiple family members have disabilities or complex health needs which require support</li> <li>• Concealed pregnancy in a context which does not raise significant concerns for the safety of the baby postnatally but suggests wider parenting support may be required (eg. pregnancy is concealed due to lack of knowledge of UK health services, young parent fearful of disclosing pregnancy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent's learning disability or mental health significantly affects their ability to provide adequate and safe care. This may include periods of acute mental ill health where the child is the subject of parental delusions.</li> <li>• Family members have physical or mental health needs which place the child at risk of harm</li> <li>• New thoughts or acts of violent self harm or indicators of psychosis or delusions involving the unborn / child in expectant / new mothers.</li> <li>• Concealed pregnancy in a context which raises significant concerns for the safety of the baby postnatally (eg parents have previously had a child removed)</li> </ul>

## Parents and Carers: **Substance / Alcohol Misuse**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any use of alcohol or substances does not negatively impact on the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging professional concern regarding parent / carer substance use</li> <li>There is beginning to be an occasional impact on the supervision of the child or the consistency of the care they receive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substance use is affecting the parent's ability to meet the needs of the child and is beginning to impact on the child meeting their developmental milestones</li> <li>This may include drinking at harmful levels, drug paraphernalia in the home, the child feeling unable to invite friends into the home, the child worrying about their parent / carer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substance use significantly affects the parent's ability to provide adequate and safe care for the child. This may include blackouts, exposure to unsafe adults, unsafe storage of dangerous substances and paraphernalia and use of substances in the child's presence.</li> <li>Not motivated to engage in recovery services</li> <li>Parent requires residential treatment and there is no safe carer for the child</li> </ul>

## Parents and Carers: **Relationships including domestic abuse**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The family have good and appropriate social and friendship networks</li> <li>• Parental relationships prioritise and promote the child's emotional and physical welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental relationship(s) involve conflict or infrequent incidents of harm</li> <li>• Unresolved issues arising from parent's separation</li> <li>• Family known to experience occasional low-level domestic violence incidents and/or parental conflict (green or yellow on Barnardos tool)</li> <li>• No effective support from extended family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic abuse or coercive control in the home where there are already some effective protective strategies</li> <li>• Family characterised by conflict and serious chronic relationship problems</li> <li>• Acrimonious divorce or separation which child is not protected from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic and serious domestic abuse involving or significantly affecting child or young person and placing them at risk of significant harm</li> <li>• Parents are in prison and there are no family or friends to provide care for the child</li> </ul>

## Parents and Carers: **Housing and Living Conditions**

Level 1 Universal	Level 2 Additional Needs	Level 3 Intensive	Level 4 Specialist Services to address Acute and Chronic need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Securely housed in accommodation that meets the family's needs</li> <li>Appropriate levels of hygiene and cleanliness are maintained within a home free from hazards that could impact the safety or wellbeing of the child</li> <li>No issues or involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community</li> <li>Financial stress, debt, low income, unemployment</li> <li>A home environment that is not kept clean and tidy and is not always free of hazards which could impact on the safety and wellbeing of the child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeless family</li> <li>Housing in such poor condition or repair as to affect child's development</li> <li>Extreme poverty affecting child wellbeing</li> <li>Volatile and unstable home environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical accommodation places the child in danger</li> <li>Family home used for illegal activities such as sex work, drug taking, exploitation</li> <li>Mother receives a custodial sentence during the first eighteen months of the child's life / child born in prison</li> <li><u>Pregnancy, MBUs and maternal separation in women's prisons Policy Framework</u> (<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>)</li> </ul>