

November 2009

Prevention and Safeguarding Services Social Care Thresholds



PREVENTION & SAFEGUARDING SERVICES SOCIAL CARE THRESHOLDS

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1. Introduction

This document is primarily aimed at professionals who may have a concern about a child or young person. It also supports local authority social care teams, particularly first contact teams, in describing how thresholds are applied to referrals they receive.

Most children and young people in any local authority have a number of basic needs that can be supported through a range of universal services. These services may include education, early years services, health, housing, youth services, leisure facilities and services provided by voluntary organisations. In Kingston, these services, in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policy are available to all children, young people and their families living in the Borough. Some children have more complex needs, and may need more specialised services to support them.

Under the *Every Child Matters* agenda, more agencies have a role in supporting children, young people and their families. An increased range of services has meant an increase in the number of referral pathways for services. This document provides guidance about how thresholds affect the type of referrals accepted by Kingston LA children's social care, and the main categories that referrals fall into.

The term *thresholds* is used commonly in social care and other services, however, in this document the term "thresholds" refers to the level at which referrals to children's social care to access a service or complete an assessment will be actioned. Put simply, it is the threshold at which point children's social care are likely to accept a referral for a child, young person and their family.

This guidance includes illustrative criteria for referral and assessment service in Appendix A and B. For Information about indicators for child protection responses please also refer to Section 6 of the London Child Protection Procedures 2007 (these can be accessed at <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures>).

2. Referral Pathways Prevention and Statutory Intervention

You may be reading or making reference to this document as a professional who has concern(s) about the welfare of a child or young person. The aim of this document is to help you gauge the type and level of the concern(s) and to guide you to making the most effective referral for services to more fully assess and address the concern(s) identified.

In certain situations the concern may be limited or minor and these will usually be identified for support perhaps through targeted prevention services. Other cases may be more complex requiring more coordinated multi-agency support from Prevention Services. In some circumstances the concern may be significant enough to require referral for a service / assessment from the LA's statutory children's social care teams. You will find illustrative examples to help you judge which service to refer to in **Appendix A and B**. You may also refer to the linked document 'Prevention and Safeguarding Services Directory' for details of teams and their contact arrangements for further advice and guidance.

Referrals regarding concerns about a child typically fall into three categories:

Service Area	Service Process
Early Intervention and Prevention	Common Assessment Framework / Lead Professional
Child In Need Referral and Assessment	Section 17 referrals
Child Protection Referral and Assessment	Section 47 referrals

Safeguarding and child protection work should always be underpinned by principles of working in partnership with families. In all cases, consent must be sought from parents / carers to share information as appropriate.

Only in circumstances where you can reasonably judge it necessary should you dispense with parental consent. Circumstances where you can dispense with consent include any situation where you judged it to be in the public interest to share information and you duly informed the parent / carer of your action and reason for it despite their refusal. Another circumstance would be any situation where you judged a child or young person to be at risk of significant harm.

The local authority has no mandate to compel parents to undertake assessments or accept services, however, if the local authority has evidence of the likelihood or actual incidence of significant harm to a child or young person it may be necessary to legally intervene to ensure that child or young person's safety and welfare.

It is important to ensure that this process of assessment is open and that all concerned understand what is being taken into account, and what level of service can be offered. The intention is that the level of service is clearly related to the whole picture that the assessment provides.

2.1 Early Intervention and Prevention

It should be recognised that there are some children who, while experiencing difficulties, will not warrant a social work or specialist service intervention.

For these 'children with additional needs', gaps can exist in service provision leading to a risk that, because emerging signs of difficulty are not acted on early enough, they may fail to achieve their full potential. As a result Kingston in partnership with other local service providers has developed ASKK.

ASKK is Kingston's Information Sharing Hub and coordinates information and support for children and young people from a range of sources and signposts and provides brokerage to preventive services, to ensure that children and young people get the help they need, when they need it. This early identification and response gives these children extra support (e.g. Family Support Service) before a crisis point is reached and the involvement of statutory services is required.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people is one of the elements in the delivery of integrated frontline prevention services and provides a common method of assessment across agencies and services, facilitating early identification of need and gathering evidence to support coordinated service provision. The common assessment has been specifically designed to reduce duplicate assessments and provide a common holistic framework for assessing need.

The common assessment is designed for when:

- There are concerns about how well a child is progressing in terms of their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their well-being;
- The child's needs are unclear or broader than a single universal service can address.

A common assessment should be completed, in partnership and with the consent of a parent / carer, when a professional in any agency has concerns that a child will not progress towards the five *Every Child Matters* priority outcomes (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being), without additional services.

Completing a common assessment should:

- Enable the professional to identify the child's needs;
- Provide a structure for systematic gathering and recording of information;
- Record evidence of concerns and a base-line for measuring progress in addressing them;
- Develop a co-ordinated multi agency action plan;
- Provide a framework for a discussion with LA children's social care regarding an initial or core assessment or to another service for a specialist assessment.
- Provide an interface with other key assessment tools and intervention to avoid repeat assessment.
- Always involve the young person or parent/carers and be a consensual process.

For more information with regard to the Information Sharing Agenda, CAF and Lead professional arrangements then visit www.kingston.gov.uk/caf

Where there is an immediate need to protect a child, professionals must contact LA children's social care and/or police directly and make a referral, rather than completing a common assessment.

2.2 Child In Need Referral and Assessment

These fall under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (CA 1989) which places a general duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area. LA children's social care, so far as is consistent with this duty, must promote the upbringing of children in need by their families, through provision of a range and level of services appropriate to the child's needs.

The definition of a 'child in need' under the CA 1989 states that a child shall be 'in need' if:

1. 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.
2. His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services.
3. S/he is disabled.

(Sec 17, para 10, CA 1989)

All children are different and have different needs. Similarly a family's capacity to respond to and meet their children's needs may also differ. The thresholds aim to ensure that all children in need referred to Prevention and Safeguarding Services receive appropriate support and that resources are used effectively and efficiently.

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames aims to provide services on a basis that takes proper account of all the circumstances of each child or young person referred. This requires a holistic assessment of the child or young person's needs. In Kingston, social workers will use the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' to gather and analyse all appropriate information about a child/young person and their family. The framework takes in to account the child's various needs for health, care etc. alongside the parent's capacity to meet these needs and the community / environmental circumstances of the family. For more detail please refer to the Department of Health website www.dh.gov.uk.

The professional judgement of social workers and partner agencies will be used to evaluate the information gathered in the referral and assessment and decide whether the child / young person requires services. Consideration will always be given to the role of other agencies, and the assistance available from family, friends, neighbours and carers.

2.3 Child Protection Referral and Assessment

Often referred to as a Section 47 investigation these fall under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 which requires the local authority to make enquiries to enable it to decide whether action is needed to safeguard and promote the well-being of the child. Children's social care will lead on a core assessment as a means of conducting the Section 47 enquiries.

The purpose of the core assessment is to determine whether the child is suffering from, or likely to suffer from, significant harm and to assess whether action is required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Police, Health, Education and other services have a statutory duty to help LA children's social care to carry out the Section 47 enquiry.

Under Section 47 where the local authority is informed that a child who lives or is found in their area and:

- Is subject to an emergency protection order; or
- Is in Police protection; or
- Have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm,

'Then the Authority shall make, or cause to be made, enquiries, as they consider necessary to enable them to decide what action they should take to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.'

It is important to note that many children and their families are vulnerable at different stages of their lives. Families may move along the continuum between needing support and needing protection at various stages over time.

At the conclusion of the Section 47 assessment social workers must provide a care plan that sets out the services to be offered, the timescales for the objectives in the care plan to be met and a date when the progress of the plan will be reviewed. In **Appendix A** of this guidance, a list of levels of need and their characteristics has been provided. It is important to note that this list is an example only, and not exhaustive, but included for illustration only. Additionally **Appendix B** describes the types of services available to children/young people and their families depending on their level of need.

The Prevention and Safeguarding Services Directory also describes the range of services provided by social care teams to targeted groups of children and young people in more detail.

Statutory Basis for Action	Type	Description	Response / Timescales
Section 47 [CA 1989]	Safeguarding & Protection	Children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Meeting / Immediate to within 7 working days • Core assessment 35 working days
Section 17 [CA 1989]	Safeguarding & Promotional	Children and young people who require services to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessment / Within 7 working days
Section 11 [CA 2004]	Safeguarding & Preventative	Children and young people requiring a universal service, advice or additional support to promote their welfare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child / Young person notified to ASKK service • CAF/Lead Professional

3. Making an effective Referral

It is important to be clear about the purpose of the referral, and its intended outcome. Using the information in sections 2, 3, 4 and **Appendix A**, it is helpful to consider the three main categories of referrals, and related levels of need, to determine the significance of your concerns about a child or young person.

It can be very useful to consult with other professionals in the child's network (such as health visitor, youth worker, teacher) if you have concerns. When the concern is around risk of harm to a child, you may want to speak to your own agency lead for child protection and safeguarding. Alternatively, you can speak with the LA children's social care teams.

In order to ensure that children's services in Kingston are easy to find, contact and access they are organised into four service areas:

1. Early Intervention and Prevention Services [ASKK] (aged 0 to 18)
2. Safeguarding Services (aged 0 to 12)
3. Integrated Disabled Children's Services (aged 0 to 19)
4. Integrated Youth Support Services (aged 13+)

This structure allows specific services to collaborate and to provide one single access point for service users around a clearly identified theme. Services within each thematic group are responsible for the implementation, operation and review of a single access point via a Referral Coordinator.

The local authority is required to respond to a referral, or new information on an open case, within 1 working day of its receipt. The decision about the level of response needed will be fed back to the referrer.

All new referrals to these service groups will be received and responded to through a Practice Supervisor who will carefully evaluate any information received to decide on the most appropriate response, supported by a Referral Co-ordinator. Based on the information received the response may be either to:

- Provide Advice and Guidance;
- Re-direct, and if necessary introduce, the caller to another service group; or
- Pass the matter to the relevant social work team for an **Initial Assessment**.

Professionals 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
- Is likely to suffer significant harm

4. LA children's social care – duties and responsibilities

LA children's social care operates under a strict legal framework, and it is this that dictates which cases are accepted from referral, and what services can be offered or provided to children, young people and families.

To determine what matters should be treated as a referral, children's social care uses thresholds to consider whether a referral will be accepted, whether an assessment will be undertaken, and what services will be offered or provided. This way, they can ensure that help is targeted at those children

who are most vulnerable, and that any decisions that are made about services are consistent.

Once a referral is accepted, LA children's social care may carry out an assessment to identify the child's level of need and the appropriate course of action and services to be offered in response.

LA children's social care determines the level of need for children by a process of assessment based on the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (2000). The assessment looks at the child's developmental needs, parenting capacity of their carers, and family and environmental factors.

When a referral is below the threshold for either Section 17 or Section 47 assessments, LA children's social care will direct referrers to more appropriate sources of support through the ASKK service.

There are a number of statutory obligations that do not fall within the thresholds. These will be prioritised on a case by case basis by the relevant social care teams and includes:

- Step parent adoptions
- Section 7 reports requested by a court
- Requests for client access to files
- Section 37 reports requested by a court

Please refer to the Prevention and Safeguarding Service Directory for contact details of the teams in Prevention and Safeguarding Services.

APPENDIX A

PRIORITY CHARTS – EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUAL’S CIRCUMSTANCES

When deciding which level of priority need a child or young person falls within, local authority children’s social care will take into account the age of the child and the impact of the concern on the child’s welfare and development.

It is important to note that these examples are to illustrate levels of need only, and it is not an exhaustive list. Similarly, no single example will automatically trigger a specific response, and some factors may need to be considered within the family or environmental context, or in relation to other concerns.

ADDITIONAL NEED – LIKELY TO REQUIRE A CAF/LEAD PROFESSIONAL

Characteristics:

All children, including those where the child’s needs may not be consistently met. Improvement may be desirable, but there are no acute risks present. Children’s social care help is not essential to the monitoring or maintenance of the children. Parents have financial resources to purchase community family support services. The child and carer are coping. Children in this category require a universal service, advice or information to promote their welfare. An assessment may not be required to access these services.

Areas of Need?	Additional Need <i>These are examples, other situations may fit this criteria</i>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with some special needs who require referral for other services e.g. Health Visitor, Speech Therapists
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who are not reaching their educational potential and/or missing school. May require referral to the Education Welfare Service
Social, Emotional and Behavioural, including identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who have little opportunity to meet and play with other children given their parents’ isolation. Advice will be given on playgroups/after school clubs etc Children who are involved in petty crime and have received a final warning/reprimand
Family and Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children experiencing inconsistent standards of parenting but whose development is not significantly impaired Children whose parents request advice and guidance to manage their behaviour May require referral to Parenting group
Child’s Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/Carer has chronic relationship difficulties which may affect the child The family requires advice regarding racial harassment Severe overcrowding
Parental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/Carer requires information or advice to aid their continued care of the child Parent/Carer who has few effective family or community supports Children whose life chances are limited by parental poverty

CHILD IN NEED – LIKELY TO REQUIRE A SECTION 17 ASSESSMENT**Characteristics:**

A reasonable standard of health and development is unlikely to be maintained without support. The child may move into high priority category without the provision of services. There are identifiable factors, which indicate that considerable deterioration is likely without support. This may include children who have been assessed as “high priority” in the recent past, or children who have been adopted and now need additional support. Where appropriate, Children’s social care may complete an Initial Assessment, and if required, a Core Assessment.

Areas of Need	Child in Need <i>These are examples, other situations may fit this criteria</i>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children living in an environment that poses a risk to their safety or well being • Children with a significant level of special needs, whose parents are unable to meet their needs without the provision of support • The physical care or supervision of the child is inadequate • Children who self harm.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child underachieving severely at school and is not supported or encouraged by parents • Child has been excluded for a limited period and is at risk of permanent exclusion • The child has been permanently excluded resulting in a risk of family breakdown.
Social, Emotional and Behavioural, including identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with challenging behaviour whose parents are unable to cope without the provision of services • Children whose behaviour alienates or provokes rejection • Children involved in offending behaviour leading to the involvement of the courts.
Family and Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who may have to be looked after outside their own family • Children where there is a risk of breakdown of relationship with parent/carer • Children experiencing several carers within their family network creating inconsistency and insecurity for the child • Children exhibiting attachment disorders i.e. severe separation anxiety
Child’s Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is living in an environment where there is a history of incidences of domestic violence • Home environment or hygiene places the child at risk of significant harm • Family requires support services as a result of racial harassment.
Parental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Carer has physical disability or history of mental health problems or learning disability which affects their ability to care for the child • Parent/Carer has no effective family or community supports, which adversely impacts on the child • Parents whose criminal and/or anti-social behaviour threatens the welfare of the child • Parent/Carer has chronic debts due to their inability to manage their finances.

CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION – LIKELY TO REQUIRE A SECTION 47 ASSESSMENT

Characteristics:

There is an urgent need if there is a serious concern about the care, health or development of a child, or the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. This may include circumstances where there is a serious family dysfunction, a child is beyond control, no person has (or is able to exercise) parental responsibility, or the child is abandoned or rejected.

On receiving a referral, in urgent cases Children's social care will start an assessment within 24 hours. They will complete an Initial Assessment, and if required a Core Assessment.

Areas of Need	Child in Need of Protection/Safeguarding <i>These are examples, other situations may fit this criteria</i>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with a high level of special needs or a disability requiring constant supervision, which results in a high risk of family breakdown • Situations where the physical care or supervision of a child is severely neglected • Children involved in a serious substance misuse • Children who seriously self harm including eating disorders
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic non-attendance at school or other educational provision attributable to lack of parental support, or in the context of environment or other risk factors.
Social, Emotional and Behavioural, including identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with severely challenging behaviour, which results in serious risk to the child or others, which parents are unable to manage resulting in a high risk of family breakdown • Children who are experiencing acute emotional rejection by parents/carers including unrealistic expectations, "scapegoating" and inconsistent parenting • Children at risk of suffering significant harm, including physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.
Family and Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children needing to be looked after outside their own family • Children where there has been a breakdown of relationship with parent/carer • Children where the parent/carer is unable to cope and where there are no alternative carers.
Child's Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is living in an environment where there is the presence of risk of extreme domestic violence • The child/family requires immediate support and protection because of racial harassment • Home environment or hygiene places a child at immediate risk of harm.
Parental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both or only parent/carer is suffering from several physical or mental health problems or learning disability and are failing to adequately care for a child • Both or only parent/carer is involved in severe alcohol or substance misuse which is affecting the child's wellbeing • Parent/carer has a predisposition to violence and/or extreme anti-social behaviour.

APPENDIX B

Provision of Services to Children, Young People and their Families

There are a range of services available to a child if their needs cannot be met by their family or by universal services provided by other agencies.

An indicative list of services is given below. In most cases a lower level of service will support a child with a lower level of need. **However it is important to recognise that a child who has unmet needs in several areas may require more support than a child with a higher level of unmet need in only one area.**

In all cases the support provided will be dependent upon the professional judgement of Prevention and Safeguarding Services staff, based on their assessment of the child's needs, the parents' capacity to respond to the child's needs and of the family circumstances and other environmental factors.

* Because of the particular needs of Disabled Children there are additional arrangements to support their special needs. Information about these arrangements can be obtained from the Disabled Children's Team.

INDICATIVE LIST OF SERVICES *

<p>Early Intervention and Prevention Services at this level are provided following the completion of a CAF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Advice and / or information <input type="checkbox"/> Signposting <input type="checkbox"/> Family Support Services <input type="checkbox"/> Co-ordinate a package of support across a range of agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention and Prevention Services
<p>Section 17 Services at this level are provided following an Initial or Core Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allocated Social Work Service <input type="checkbox"/> Family Care Worker support <input type="checkbox"/> Housing and associated benefit advice <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-agency support plans
<p>Section 47 Services at this level are provided following a Core Assessment</p>	<p>Child Protection Services including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy Meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Child Protection Conferences <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive multi agency family support packages <input type="checkbox"/> Permanency Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Public Law Proceedings