# Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership – Levels of Need and Support

## Our graduated response to family help and safeguarding

### Introduction

The Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) Levels of Need and Support (previously referred to as the Threshold Guidance) outline how we identify needs and provide the right support at the right time for children, young people, and families. It reflects our approach across the Family Help spectrum and should be read in conjunction with our Parental Engagement and Consent Guidance which supports professionals to work effectively and collaboratively with parents and carers when assessing need and identifying/providing support.

### Working with Families – a Family Led Approach

The document sets out possible presenting needs to support assessment, decision-making and the determination of the appropriate level of safeguarding support. However, it is vital that this is not used as a tick list and instead should be used as a guide to decide your next step and what support will make an impact on outcomes for children. These descriptors should be considered alongside considerations such as 'what is working well for this family?', 'who is already supporting them?'. The way we work with children and families is changing. We recognise that some children with descriptors from the Safeguarding Need (Child Protection) list who would have historically triggered a social work response under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, may be better supported under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 following a proportionate and considered multi-agency review of the family's needs and views.

Crucial to this is the engagement of parents in the process, be curious and work alongside families to understand and build on their strengths and protective factors; listen to the family and child to understand their lived experience. In Solihull we will endeavour to bring together a child's wider family and support network to make decisions about their safety, wellbeing, and future, whenever it is safe and appropriate to do so. This is based on the belief that families have valuable strengths and knowledge, and that involving them leads to better outcomes for children. For more information see the dedicated page on the SSCP website: Family-Led Decision Making

### Further Information

- The SSCP is part of the West Midlands Regional Procedures Group. Further information on procedures and processes relating to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children inside and outside the home, including online can be accessed here: westmids-solihull.trixonline.co.uk
- Procedures and processes specific to Solihull Children's Services, including Children We Care For and Children With Disabilities, can be found here: Solihull Children's Services Procedures Manual - solihullcs.trixonline.co.uk
- Escalation or challenge: Challenge is a good thing and good practice includes the expectation that constructive challenge amongst colleagues, within agencies and between agencies, will happen and is in the best interests of children. All those working with children need to be prepared to re-consider their view of the child's situation in the light of new information, and to continually re-frame their assessment when new information or challenges arise. This is a skill and ability that can help to safeguard children and differences of opinion are welcome as these healthy discussions can lead to a more robust solution. More information can be found here: SSCP Escalation Procedure
- Further information about the SSCP including a range of information and guides for practitioners, parents and children can be found here: safeguardingsolihull.org.uk

### Levels of Need and Support:

Remember - the level of need and support for a child and family is fluid and their position within these descriptors is not static. They can move up and down the levels as circumstances, support and needs change.

**Universal Services**: All Children will access a range of universal services which **underpin** all support to families, no matter what other level of support need they have. Services include G.P.'s, Health Visitors, Early Years and Schools, and a range of voluntary and community services. These organisations may offer some extra support themselves and/ or signpost to community resources such as Community Centres, Family Hubs, SEND support groups etc. For further information on what support and resources are available across Solihull, please see My Solihull Map | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Here2Help (solihull.gov.uk) or Solihull Family Hubs. **Most children and families will only require support at this level.**

| Description of Level of Support | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Earliest Support** ← | **FAMILY HELP** → | |
| **Community Led Support** | **Targeted Family Help** | **Safeguarding Need (Child Protection)** |
| Community led support is offered to a child and their family as soon as an identified need is recognised/identified. This is a collaborative approach, not just a provision. It relies upon local organisations and families working together to address the varied needs of a child and the family (including recognition of their peer groups, the communities, and spaces in which they live and spend time), to make and create mutual plans to help improve the situation.<br><br>Community Led Support should also be offered if a child/family has previously received support at any level, to help prevent needs re-emerging. | Multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams working with and alongside children and families (with parental consent) who have needs that require additional support or interventions (including Targeted Early Help or interventions under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (Child in Need)). Family Help Plans will be created with the family.<br><br>Children or Young People with a disability may require support at varying levels, potentially by Children's Services under Section 17 (Child in Need) of the Children Act 1989. A child with a disability may sit in varying areas of the service dependent upon their need and level of required support or intervention. The indicators below relate to safeguarding need and not the disability. | Children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of social work intervention, including children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and may require statutory intervention and protection coordinated under Section 47 (Child protection) of the Children Act 1989 |

## Descriptors of Need

The following sets out possible presenting needs to support assessment, decision-making and the determination of the appropriate level of safeguarding support. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide to decide your next step and what support will make an impact on outcome for children. Engage parents in the process, be curious and use the information gathered as part of your intervention to evidence your professional judgement.

**Earliest Support** ← **FAMILY HELP** →

### Community Led Support

- Child is not reaching developmental milestones or concerns about developmental progress. Parental support needs may be/are a contributing factor
- Child has chronic/recurring health or social needs
- Mental health issues emerging e.g. anxiety; depression; eating disorder; self- harming in parent or child
- Child has physical, learning and/or neurodevelopmental needs requiring coordinated support/waiting for Education Health Care Plan
- Child not brought to planned medical appointments where there is a known health need, or for routine health care such as immunisations, ante-natal appointments
- Appropriate medical advice is not sought when in the child's best interest
- Regular underachievement or not reaching education potential
- Concerns about poor nursery/school attendance and punctuality are not recognised or addressed despite support from school/ nursery (including consideration to move the child out of the school system to Elective Home Education)
- Some fixed term exclusions or behaviour issues in school
- Child/young person experiences frequent bullying/ discrimination; internalised and reflected in their self-image
- Parent/ carer with own care & support needs who also requires support to meet the child's needs
- Parent/carer requests advice on parenting issues
- The experimenting or occasional use of alcohol or illegal substances in the household, which may have a negative impact on capacity
- There is difficulty in establishing consistent boundaries and routine in the home
- Parents/ cares finding it difficult to demonstrate affection and the emotional warmth & care their child needs
- Parents/ cares/ family members experiencing difficulties in how to respond towards child's identity- sexuality, gender, beliefs, disability etc.
- Child has few positive supportive relationships and receives inconsistent care
- Unresolved conflict/ difficulties with family relationships
- Parent/ carer has been incarcerated; child remains within their home environment with another resident parent/ carer
- Child has unresolved issues arising from parents' separation, step parenting or bereavement

### Targeted Family Help

- Child's chronic/recurring health, developmental, social or mental health needs remain inadequately met despite early intervention and support
- Child has significant behavioural or neurodevelopmental needs (e.g., ADHD, autism) which are not being effectively managed despite earlier intervention and support
- Parents/carers are unable and/or unwilling to recognise and respond appropriately to the child's physical disability, learning disability, or life-limiting illness needs
- Child has significant or escalating patterns of mental health difficulties e.g., chronic depression, repeated suicidal ideation, self-harm, alcohol and / or substance misuse
- Early perplexing presentation in relation to child's health, including mental health
- Child is significantly absent from education, and this has not improved, despite early intervention and support
- Child is in unsuitable home education
- Basic care is not provided consistently
- Effective boundaries are not established or maintained e.g. ineffective/ restrictive/ neglectful or involving physical chastisement
- Parents require support to understand how their own experiences (historic or current trauma) may impact on their decision making and ability to meet child/young person's needs
- There are difficulties consistently prioritising the child's physical, emotional, developmental, or safety needs because of parental substance use or mental health difficulties
- There have been reasons for parents/carers to be unable to care for previous children
- Child is scapegoated, may rarely receive comfort when distressed, and is not shown empathy, love or care and this has not improved despite early intervention and support
- There are continual inconsistent responses to child/young person's needs
- There are multiple and inconsistent carers, who may have no significant relationship with the child
- Children are left unsupervised in a way which is inappropriate to their levels of development
- A Young Carer is failing to have their own development needs met.
- The Child has multiple carers who are in continual disagreement/conflict
- Child is living in a household where there is day to day unresolved conflicts, with no consistent pattern of 'victim' or 'abuser', and children are being adversely affected i.e. showing signs of distress and their mental/health behaviour may be affected
- Possibility of family breakdown related to child's behavioural difficulties
- There are concerns about the possibility of abuse, coercion, control within child's own intimate partner relationship
- The child is identified as being at risk of harm outside the home i.e. demonstrating a change of behaviour linked to exploitation, serious violence, bullying & social isolation, discrimination (in person or online), or radicalised thoughts, these will often feature grooming, coercion or occur within a climate of threats and fear

### Safeguarding Need (Child Protection)

- Non-accidental injury and/or unexplained injuries
- There is repeated failure to ensure that the baby is not exposed to unnecessary risk in utero (womb)
- There is a risk of significant harm to child's health and development
- There are repeated failures to facilitate appropriate medical care placing the unborn baby/child at risk of significant harm or compromising their health development/ treatment
- Evidence or concerns of Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII), including significant discrepancies between reported and observed symptoms or clinical findings.
- The child or young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm because of persistent peer victimisation, whether online or in person.
- Persistent high-risk substance misuse is having or likely to have a significantly harmful impact on the child
- Parent's/carers own needs mean that they are unable to keep the child/young person safe or provide adequate care
- Child is being physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected, this may occur in or outside of the home or online.
- Child is suffering significant harm by the exposure to, or impact of, domestic abuse including coercion and control, control of time and movement, deprivation of resources and isolation from others
- Parents are hostile/ emotionally and or physically abusive towards child's identity, sexuality, gender, beliefs etc.
- Individual posing a risk to children in, or known to, household
- So called 'Honour' based abuse/violence/forced marriage/ female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Child is being significantly harmed due to abuse in an intimate partner relationship
- Child is likely to experiencing significant harm outside of the home, through exploitation, violence, radicalisation etc. this may occur online or in person

## Descriptors of Need (continued)

**Earliest Support** ← **FAMILY HELP** →

### Community Led Support

- A child/young person is taking on reasonable caring responsibilities in relation to their parent/carer/ younger siblings
- Child's peer group relationships and/or online activity indicate they may be associated with anti-social, harmful, or offending behaviours
- Child, young person, or family members display anti-social, offensive, or offending behaviours that are impacting on others or the wider community
- New entrants to the area that require help and support to settle (e.g. asylum seekers)
- The family are experiencing low level hostility within the community
- Family requires support due to poor housing conditions.
- Financial issues are impacting on the health and wellbeing of the family and child/ren and support is required

### Targeted Family Help

- Child, young person is frequently missing from home
- Serious or persistent offending behaviour
- Peer group relations/ online activity that actively threatens or intimidates others, or target of threats and intimidation.
- Allegations that the child/young person has harmed others
- Problematic harmful sexual behaviour, for example, child does not mean to harm others, but the behaviour is not appropriate to the situation, age, development, ability, is happening more often than expected etc.
- Child is being privately fostered (requires private fostering assessment)
- Children (including 16-17 year olds and care leavers) at risk of homelessness
- Families with no recourse to public funds
- Extreme poverty/debt impacting on ability to care for unborn baby/child/young person
- Housing conditions present a significant risk to the health, safety, or wellbeing of the unborn baby, child, or young person

### Safeguarding Need (Child Protection)

- Parents/carers are involved in criminal activity that places a child at significant risk of harm, either directly or because the child is present during, exposed to, or affected by the consequences of the offence.
- Family home used for illegal activities e.g. drug dealing, sex working
- The child has no suitable carer available, including where a parent/carer has been incarcerated, the child has been abandoned, or the parent/carer is unable to provide care and accommodation. The child is a Victim of Modern Slavery/Trafficking
- Unaccompanied asylum seeker / separated young person

## Organisations and Agencies Involved / Contact Route

**Earliest Support** ← **FAMILY HELP** →

**Community Led Support -** delivered by single or joint agency approach, underpinned by an Early Help Assessment. The Lead Professional should be the person the child/family knows best and may include a Team Around the Family.

- Family Information Service
- Family Hubs website: Family Hubs
- Family Hubs email: familyhubsupport@solihull.gov.uk
- Family Helpline: **0121 788 4327**
- Community Led Early Help Assessment (Link)
- Early Help Coordinators: earlyhelpcoordinators@solihull.gov.uk
- Health Services (including GPs, Dentists, Health Visitors, Mental Health Services and other specialist health teams)
- Education and Early Years provision (Nurseries, Schools, Colleges) including specialist school staff
- Community and voluntary sector support organisations
- Citizens Advice
- Early Help / Neighbourhood police
- Targeted youth provision
- Solihull Youth Justice Service
- Counselling Services
- Parent/Carer Voice
- Domestic Abuse: Directory of domestic abuse victim support
- Housing

**Targeted Family Help -** provides a multi-agency response coordinated by a Family Help Lead Practitioner, from the multi-disciplinary Family Help Teams. More information on the Family Help Service can be found here: Children and families | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

- Family Helpline: **0121 788 4327**
- Family Helpline: familyhelpline@solihull.gov.uk
- Referral to Family Help Front Door**:** Family Help Referral Form (select Early Help)
- Family Help Assessment when referred via Family Help Front Door
- Specialist health services including mental health and addiction services
- Solihull Youth Justice Service

**Safeguarding Need (Child Protection) –** Multi-agency safeguarding intervention, managed on a statutory basis either under Section 47 of the Children Act (led by a Social Worker following a multi-agency strategy discussion), or under Section 17 of the Children Act (with intensive multi-agency support following a reflective multi-agency discussion).

- Referral to Family Help Front Door: Family Help Referral Form
- Telephone: **0121 788 4300**.
- Police (999 for immediate emergency safeguarding concerns)