

CHILDREN'S SERVICES – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CHILDREN IN NEED SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

This section sets out four categories of need and eligibility criteria for each category. Some specific groups of children are not included e.g. private fostered children where there is a clearly defined statutory duty to provide specific services. The provision of services within each category of need is underpinned by the following:-

- Social Care staff will have conducted an assessment of the needs of individual children which takes account of the strengths and resources within the family and extended support networks to meet the needs of individual children.
- Social Care staff will work together with colleagues in Children's and Young Peoples Services and other partners to establish the needs of each child and agree which agency will be responsible or best placed to provide services to meet the identified needs.
- The development of a working partnership with parents is usually the most effective route to meeting children's needs and maximising participation will be encouraged whenever possible. This includes working openly and honestly with service users.
- Service provided will be focused on addressing the identified needs of individual children. Services provided will form the basis of a service plan specifying the outcome(s) sought to meet the assessed needs.
- Services provided will be monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure the identified needs remain and the child requires services to be provided. Reviews will also be conducted on a shared and integrated basis.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

a. Children in need of Looked After Services

Children will be eligible for looked after services if, after an assessment and full consideration of all available alternatives there is clear, evaluated evidence that they meet one of the following criteria and that the outcome for them of receiving these services will be better than other alternatives.

- i Children for whom it is not possible to manage the risk of significant harm within their families and for whom there is no other suitable placement within their wider family network.
- ii Children who present a risk of significant harm to other children in their households where that risk cannot be safely managed by their parents/carers and for whom there is no other suitable placement within their wider family network.

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- iii Children for whom there is no suitable person within their family networks who is able to look after them in the immediate or long term future.
- iv Children for whom overnight care away from home is assessed to be the most appropriate service for the child in order to maintain/sustain their long term care within their family.
- v Children remanded to Local Authority accommodation.

b. Children in need of Protection Services

Children will be eligible for child protection services if they meet the following criteria:-

- i Children for whom there is reasonable cause to suspect that they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm will have enquiries made regarding their welfare under the terms of Section 47 of the 1989 Children Act.
- ii Children for whom, following an assessment, there is evidence that they may meet the criteria for a child protection plan will be subject to a multi agency child protection conference.
- iii Children whom, following an assessment and consideration at a child protection conference, are judged to meet the criteria for a child protection plan will be eligible for any of the Department's services identified as necessary in the child protection plan.

c. Families and children in need of Supportive Services

Families with children will be eligible for support services if, following an assessment of need, there is clear and evaluated evidence that they meet the following criteria:-

“Families who require a service to enable their children to receive a basic level of care which meets their essential physical, emotional and social care needs.” Within this definition services are most likely to be provided in the following circumstances.

- i Families whose children's health, welfare and development is the subject of frequent and consistent reports of concern from other agencies and/or relatives and neighbours.
- ii Families with a background of chronic deprivation, ill health or disadvantage where standards of parenting and supervision in the home are assessed to require help and assistance.

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- iii Families with disabled children who have exceptional care needs which places substantial or sustained stress upon the family.
- iv Families whose children have been to Section 20 accommodation panels, but who have not been accommodated.

d Families and children in need of short term social care support

Children and families will be eligible for help and advice services if they meet the following criteria:-

- i Families where an assessment indicates there is a child in need as defined by Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, where short term assistance is likely to improve the presenting need and avoid the child's situation deteriorating to one of the above [c (i) – (v)] categories of need.

Social care services will also engage pro-actively with services and processes providing early intervention and support designed to prevent children needing more targeted social care support.