

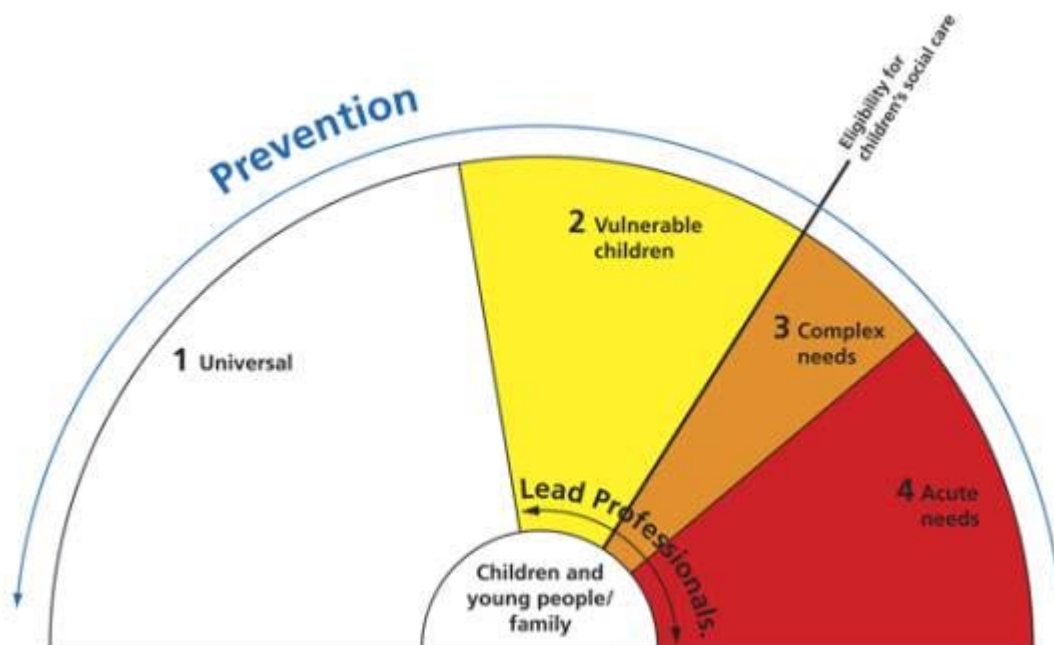
Medway Council's eligibility criteria for social care services

Medway's eligibility criteria for social care intervention is well established, having been updated with multi-agency support in May 2005. These criteria set out the range of children who may be in need of the specialist assessment, support or intervention offered by the children's social care team.

The Children Act 2004 (Every Child Matters agenda) now places responsibility on professionals in different settings to support children in need and to intervene early to help stop children's needs becoming more severe. In most cases this will mean providing or helping to gain access to a targeted service to the child on a short-term basis e.g. school counsellor, connexions adviser etc. However, if you think that a child is at risk of immediate significant harm then you must follow your own agency's child protection procedures or contact one of the emergency services if the matter cannot wait.

If a child or young person's needs are complex or acute it is likely that they will meet the eligibility criteria for assessment by a practitioner from the children's care division.

These different levels of need expressed by children and their families are captured in the following diagram, which depicts the range of vulnerability and clearly identifies the point at which Medway's social care service will be the main source of support (the eligibility criteria). Children and families in need below level 3 will receive support from elsewhere, in the health service, voluntary sector, youth service or at school.



Medway's model of prevention: Levels of need and intervention

- *Child protection enquiries- where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm;- this includes enquiries in relation to Looked After Children placed by other local authorities; children where the alleged incident and the child normally reside in Medway; enquiries where there is an allegation made against a professional abusing a child or young person*
- *Children made subject to police protection orders (Police powers to remove a child to suitable accommodation in an emergency).*
- *Enquiries to assist the court in the execution of their duties pertaining to s37 Children Act 1989 (These are situations where in any family proceedings a question arises in relation to the welfare of any child and it appears to the court that it may be appropriate for a care or supervision order to be made. The enquiries usually take the form of a comprehensive assessment and written report)*

Examples of acute situations likely to require a child protection investigation (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 specifies the Local Authorities duty to investigate):

- *Severe neglect*
- *Children or young people in immediate danger*
- *Children and young people living with a person considered to pose a risk*
- *Referrals against carers and professionals, or those in position of trust and responsibility*
- *Cases requiring joint investigation by police and children's social care e.g. actual physical abuse, sexual abuse*
- *Cases requiring forensic investigation*
- *Child protection investigations pertaining to looked After Children placed by other authorities*

Examples of Level 3 needs

- *Children needing to be immediately Looked After by someone other than their normal care giver and those on the threshold of reception into local authority accommodation*
- *Pre-birth/post natal assessments where there are concerns for the safety or well being of the unborn / new born child*
- *Children subject to court orders – Section 7 enquiries (Welfare reports) and Family Assistance Orders, Supervision Orders*
- *Children whose names have been removed from the child protection register but remain in need of ongoing targeted social care child in need services.*
- *Children who self-harm, run away or whose behaviour places them at immediate risk*
- *Young carers –where there is a need for a joint assessment with adult services to identify significant unmet need for either the child or parent.*
- *Private Fostering placements - where a private individual is looking after a child for another family*
- *Children who are looked after in residential placement subject to local authority funding*
- *Unaccompanied children*
- *'Abandoned ' teenagers who are vulnerable as a result*

Examples of Level 2 needs

There are a significant number of children and young people who at any given time may be considered vulnerable and in need of support services and this is the group referred to as level 2 'vulnerable children' in the model of prevention. There are a wide range of services that can be used to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families at this level.

Children and young people at this level frequently require time limited targeted intervention or lower level ongoing support services.

Examples of children at this level include:

- *Children whose health / development is unlikely to be maintained without the provision of family support from a variety of service providers*

- *Children where there are parenting difficulties and families experiencing short term crisis, which impacts on the children's health / development*
- *Children experiencing serious family instability and changes of primary carer.*
- *Children where concerns about parental substance misuse have an impact on the child's health or development*
- *Situations of domestic violence which might have a detrimental effect on the child*
- *Children where there are concerns about the environment or the level of parental supervision being adequate.*
- *Children and young people who present challenging behaviour*

In addition there were specific groups of children and young people or presenting concerns that could be met by identified alternative service providers from within the local authority, the voluntary sector and local community. Examples include:

Homeless young people

- • *Housing;*
- • *Moving Forward*

Privately fostered children

- • *Fostering Team (private fostering post)*

Behaviour problems in children and young people

- *Behavioural Support Services; Learning Support Services, Education Welfare Service; Educational psychologist*
- *Integrated area teams*
- *Sure Start*
- *Connexions*
- *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*
- *Child and Adolescent Support Team - CAMHS Tier 2 Service.*
- *School nurses*

- *Extended school provision*
- *Health visitors*
- *GP*
- *Schools*

In 2006 the government published 'Working Together to Safeguard and promote the welfare of children'. The document sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Reproduced below are the DOH definitions of abuse and neglect. Further more detailed information can be found on the every child matters website. Click on the hyperlinks below:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060/>

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/>

Definitions of abuse and neglect

Working Together to Safeguard Children. 2006. (DOH)

What is Abuse and Neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms 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 a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning suffocating, or otherwise causes 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

Emotional abuse is 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they

meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the 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 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

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is 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 and development. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.