

Children's Services

Children in Need



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References:

- Children Act 2004
- Children Act 1989
- Family Support, Day Care and Educational Provision for Young Children (Volume 2, The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families - 2000
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children - 2006
- Inter-Agency Guidance for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children - WSCB 2007
- Every child matters - DfES 2003.

[Children Act 2004](#)
[Children Act, 1989](#)

[Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need & their Families, 2000](#)

[Working Together](#)

[Interagency Guidance](#)

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

Introduction

This guidance has been developed to help practitioners who have contact with children to work together effectively to meet the needs of children.

From time to time, particularly at points of transition or family difficulty, any child may present with additional needs. Most of the time such difficulties can be addressed by a practitioner, who knows the child and their family, talking with them, identifying the child's additional needs and what actions are needed to meet them.

Practitioners, with the child and family, will identify who will undertake actions needed and monitor the progress of the planned actions.

There is a range of support available within the family and community and within the practitioner's own agency. Most children and families, with a little support, can and do overcome difficulties.

At times a child or family may face a more challenging set of difficulties that they cannot easily address. These difficulties may be acute and in need of urgent action from one or more agency. They may be more enduring and not responding to the actions already in place.

In these circumstances, the child and their family, or practitioners on their behalf, may want to engage help from other professionals in universal or statutory services to provide advice or support for the child.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people is a shared assessment tool used across agencies in England. It can help practitioners develop a shared understanding of a child or young person's needs so they can be met more effectively.

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-edu-iwp.htm>

It will avoid children, young people and families having to tell and re-tell their story.

The Common Assessment Framework is an important tool for early

intervention. It has been designed specifically to help practitioners assess needs at an earlier stage and then work with families, alongside other practitioners and agencies, to meet those needs.

The Early Support Programme (ESP) for children with a disability is linked to the Common Assessment Framework. Both the Common Assessment Framework and the Early Support Programme are based on a partnership with the family and require the consent of the parents/child. An assessment under the Common Assessment Framework may lead to a Co-ordinated Support Plan. This will be co-ordinated by a "lead professional" agreed with the family.

For further information and guidance about the Common Assessment Framework and the Early Support Programme, go to the IWP website or contact your local CAF Co-Ordinator directly:

NW Worcs - 01562 757867

NE Worcs - 01527 556168

South Worcs - 01905 765787

Children "in need" including children who may be suffering from significant harm

There are children who have complex needs who may need to be referred directly to statutory services, if they are not already known to them.

A multi-agency plan is still usually required to support children with such complex needs, although the lead professional responsible for co-ordinating support is more likely to be from one of the statutory agencies.

The following groups of children will have a statutory agency lead professional and will need a high level of interagency support to achieve good outcomes, particularly in terms of safeguarding, health and educational outcomes:

- Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Children who are looked after
- Young people leaving care
- Children for whom adoption is the plan
- Children with severe and complex special educational needs
- Children with complex disabilities or health needs
- Children diagnosed with significant mental health needs
- Young offenders involved with Youth Justice Services

It is critical that relevant practitioners from universal or other targeted services remain involved and engaged once statutory services are involved. The child and family will need the continuity of support from the person with whom they have a long-term relationship, particularly if the statutory intervention may be short-term.

Achieving good outcomes for children requires all those with responsibility for assessment and the provision of services to work together according to an agreed plan.

Effective collaboration requires professionals to be clear about:

- Their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places duties on **all** those working with children to discharge their duties with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- The purpose of their activity, what decisions are required at each stage of the plan and what are the intended outcomes for the child and their family. Professionals should work with the child and their family to ensure they are also clear about this
- Where each task or action fits in the multi-agency plan
- The legislative framework within which the plan must work
- The protocols and procedures to be followed, including any interagency and internal agency guidance on sharing information and on effective recording
- Which agency, Team or professional has lead responsibility, and the precise roles of all others involved, including the child and family members
- Any timescales set down for completion of assessments and reviews of plans

Every Child Matters - delivering the outcomes

Every Child Matters sets out the five outcomes that should be achieved by all children. This framework informs the assessment of a child's needs by all agencies and will be used to judge the impact of the work with the child:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying & Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well-being

To be effective, practitioners must focus on the outcomes to be achieved for the child, rather than the output and activities offered.

Children and families need to participate in identifying the activities and support that will make a difference. Professionals and other helping agencies need to co-ordinate their activity and support in a way that provides access for the family to a lead professional who can co-ordinate assessment and services around a child.

When is it appropriate to refer a child to Children's Social Care Services?

Children's Services within Worcestershire provide a wide range of support services to all children across the spectrum of need - including universal, targeted and specialist services to schools, communities and individual children and their families.

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

Children in Need

May 2008

Within Children's Integrated Services are specialised services to children with acute or complex needs where universal or targeted school and community-based services are not sufficient.

In particular, Social Care services have a statutory duty to investigate where there is reasonable cause to believe a child is, or is likely to suffer significant harm under Section 47 of the Children Act, 1989.

There is also a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children "in need" as identified by Section 17 of the Children Act, 1989.

If there is concern that a child or young person may have suffered significant harm, or may be at risk of significant harm, the Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures for Safeguarding Children must be followed.

[Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board](#)

All referrals for children "in need" including those in need of safeguarding are made by contacting Children's Social Care via the Access Centre Children's Team. This can be done:

- By Telephone: 0845 607 2000
- By Fax - 01905 768056
- By e-mail - SocialCare@worcestershire.gov.uk
- By post - Social Care ACCT, PO BOX 585, Worcester, WR4 9AD
- By Minicom - 01905 768052

There is a separate telephone number for professionals to refer directly.

Social Care practitioners must also follow the procedures and guidance in Leaflets B/1 and C/1 of the Children's Services e-Handbook.

[B/1](#)
[C/1](#)

Eligibility criteria for assessment of a Child in Need

The definition of a "child in need" has the potential to include large numbers of children. Not all of these children will need an assessment or direct social care services. It may better meet the child's needs to access other services. There is a wide range of universal and community-based services, as well as specialised services provided by other agencies in Worcestershire.

Many of these services are easily accessible to children and families and can prevent the majority of children in Worcestershire from becoming children "in need". They can also enable children to cease to be "in need" through accessing such services. We will try to signpost you to these services when we can. Worcestershire Family Services Directory is also very helpful.

[Worcestershire's Family Services Directory](#)

To assist children, families and practitioners to decide whether a child might be a child "in need", Worcestershire Children's Services has a

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/home/wcc-edu-iwp.htm>

Children in Need

May 2008

guide to “thresholds”. This can be found on the IWP website.

The definition of a child “in need” is taken from the Children Act, 1989. This says a child is “in need” if:-

a) 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 under this section of the Act;

and

b) his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services;

or

c) s/he is disabled - defined as a substantial and permanent disability .

[Supporting Children who have Disabilities](#)

Working in Partnership

Unless the child is at likely risk of, or is suffering actual, significant harm, practitioners must have the consent of the family before sharing their personal details to make a referral.

The lack of consent should not prevent a professional making an enquiry to see if a child is already known or to request advice.

There is a document for this purpose to make a referral and share with families to gain consent.

[Making a Referral](#)

There is also a leaflet for families about assessment.

[A Guide to Assessment in Children's Services](#)

The child and family will be involved in the assessment, and practitioners who the family or the referrer identify as working with the family will also be contacted, if possible. The family, and the practitioner who referred, will be informed of the outcome of the assessment.

When making a referral, it is helpful to tell us as much as possible about your family/the family you are referring.

What happens to a referral?

All referrals that indicate the child may be “in need” will be passed to one of our Family Assessment & Support Teams for an “Initial Assessment”, unless we are able to signpost you to a more available and suitable community or statutory resource.

The relevant Team will inform the referring practitioner once the assessment is allocated to a worker.

The assessment is made using the “Framework for Assessment” This looks at all aspects of the child’s needs, family and environment. An Initial Assessment is completed within 7 days.

[Framework for Assessment](#)

Services that can be accessed without an Initial Assessment:

- Contact from professionals or parents/carers or children and young people requesting advice or information
- Request for access to Children's Services records
- Access to information about adoption records (Adoption Regulations 2004)
- Application to be assessed as a foster carer or adoptive parent
- Adoption Support Services
- Request for Court Report under Section 7 or 37 of the Children Act 1989
- Child for whom there is already a Child Protection Plan with another Local Authority, who moves into Worcestershire
- Child or young person remanded into the care of the Local Authority
- Special Guardianship applications
- Logging of Police incident reports of domestic abuse
- Requests for information
- Signposting parents and carers, children and young people, and other professionals to other parts of Children's Services or to other statutory or voluntary services.
- Advice about the Common Assessment Framework

Framework for Assessment Triangle

