

Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex – October 2021

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board’s document, Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex, was first published in April 2013. This is the fourth revision, published in October 2021 and updated to reflect current practice and experience in Essex, as well as changes in legislation and national policy. The document now includes reference to Child Sexual Exploitation and missing children, as well as FGM (female genital mutilation) and the Prevent strategy.

This guidance is for everyone who works with children and young people and their families in Essex. All children and young people will receive Universal Services, such as maternity services at birth; health visiting, school nursing and family support delivered from Family Hubs; school and youth services for older children. Universal Services seek, together with parents and families, to meet all the needs of children and young people so that they are happy, healthy and able to learn and develop securely. Universal services are provided as of right to all children, including those with additional and intensive needs.

However, some children, either because of their own additional needs or because of less advantageous circumstances, will need extra help to be healthy, safe and to achieve their potential. In Essex, we want to offer help and support to these children and their families at an early point, in a voluntary way that does not leave them feeling singled out as different.

The Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex document

- Sets out operational models for identifying and assessing need, and supporting children and families; and
- Clarifies roles and responsibilities.

The content includes:

- Access to services at different levels of need
- What happens to a Children’s Social Care request
- Consulting with other services, schools and settings
- Effective Support Process diagram
- Indicators of possible need
- Appendices, including a model Early Help Plan

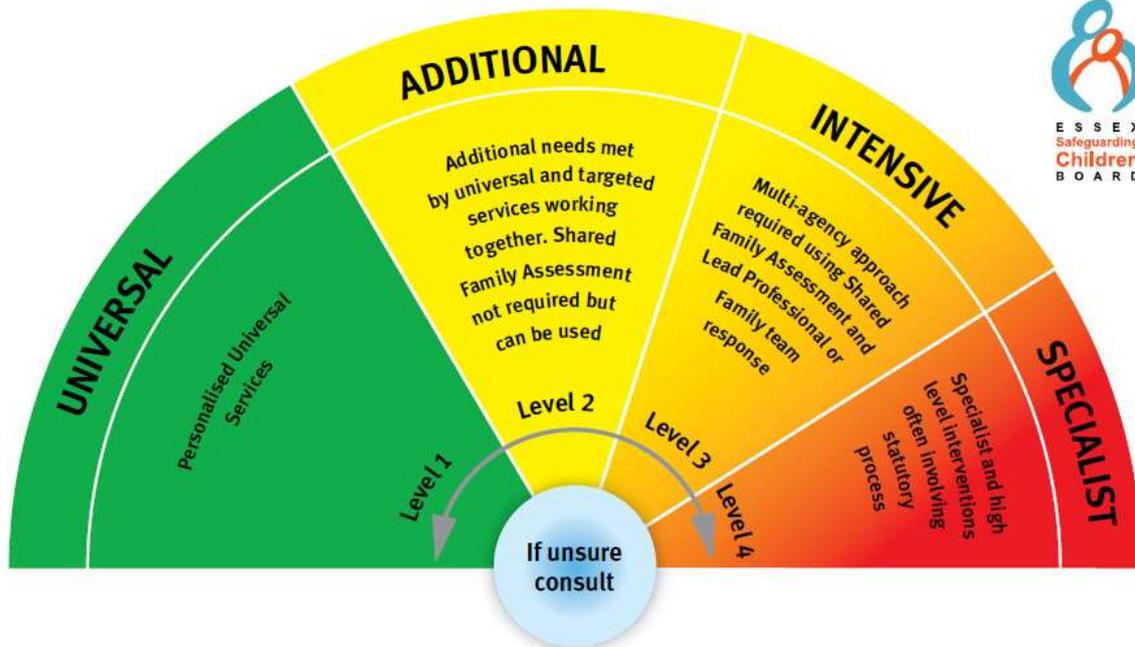
The guidance identifies **four levels of need: Universal, Additional, Intensive and Specialist**. Services for children with additional and intensive needs are sometimes known as targeted services, such as behaviour support, additional help with learning in school, extra support to parents in early years or targeted help to involve young people through youth services.

Indicators of possible need

Pages 23-29 of the document set out the indicators of possible need, to help staff determine the vulnerability and needs of individual children.

The Essex Effective Support Windscreen

Multi Agency Guidance: Working in partnership to help children and families improve their lives



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Level 1 – Universal

Children and young people who make good overall progress in most areas of development and receive appropriate universal services, such as health care and education. They may also use leisure and play facilities, housing or voluntary sector services.

Level 2 – Additional

Children and young people whose needs require some extra support. A single universal or targeted service, or two services, are likely to be involved; these services should work together. A Team Around the Family meeting to share information and agree an Early Help Plan to support the child and family is helpful.

At this level there is no need for specialist services.

Level 3 – Intensive

Children and young people whose needs are more complex. This refers to the range, depth or significance of the needs. A number of these indicators would need to be present to indicate need at Level 3. More than one service is involved, using a Team Around the Family approach, Early Help Plan and a Leader Practitioner to co-ordinate multi-agency support. Family Solutions can support at this level; access to this service is through the Children & Families Hub by completing a Request for Support form.

Level 4 – Specialist

These include children and young people whose needs are complex and enduring and cross many domains. More than one service is normally involved with a coordinated multi-agency approach and Lead Practitioner, commonly in a statutory role. At time, statutory intervention may be required. At this level children may be supported by Children’s Social Care, Child Protection, Care Proceedings Youth Treatment Orders/Custody Hospital in-patient.

Referral pathways include

- Children & Families Request for Services Form (RFS)
- Statutory notifications to Youth Offending Service
- Statutory health assessments

Sharing information

It is best practice to have an open, honest and transparent approach to supporting children and their families, unless by doing so it may put the child at immediate or greater risk of significant harm. **Consultation** is the act of sharing information to share the perspective of another practitioner. It is not referral to another service unless, during the consultation it is decided that a referral would be the best course of action. Whenever consultation takes place, it is important that practitioners follow the principles of information sharing, parental consent and confidentiality.

When and why are we legally required to gain consent from the parents and (where possible) the child?

- Non Statutory Services - *need consent*
- Section 17 – Child in need of additional support -*need consent*
- Section 47 – Child at risk of significant harm – *no consent required although best practice*

When may seeking consent place a child at risk of significant harm?

- Suspected sexual abuse
- Suspected fabricated/induced illness
- Forced marriage/honour based abuse
- Some cases of Domestic Abuse

Children & Families Hub (C&F Hub)

The Children & Families Hub will support practitioners and agencies to meet the needs of children, young people and families across all four levels of need. At levels 1, 2 & 3; information, advice and guidance is available to practitioners (and families) about services and support available as well as the opportunity to discuss the best course of action or signpost to available help.

If, after seeking advice from their agency’s safeguarding lead, practitioners require further advice and guidance from the Children & Families Hub, they can call 0345 603 7627 and ask for the Consultation Line.

If a child is considered to be at IMMEDIATE risk of significant harm, professionals – including the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school - should telephone the Children & Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 and ask for the Priority Line.

Additional information about systems in Essex

Effective Support Directory

The Children & Families Hub use the Effective Support Directory to signpost to services when the level of need in a request for support does not meet Children Social Care or Family Solutions. The Directory has a range of services broken down into quadrant and then categories to help identify services that are available.

Lead Professional

- The Lead Professional is not a job or a new role, but a set of functions to be carried out as part of the delivery of effective integrated support.
- At the Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting the Lead Professional should be agreed upon and that person will co-ordinate provision for the child or young person and their family.
- When a range of agencies/services are involved, the Lead Professional will help to make sure that all involved work together and share information to achieve the best outcomes for the child or young person as part of an early help plan
- All practitioners taking the role of Lead Professional should have full support from their senior and line managers, including time to undertake the role.
- Each agency is responsible for ensuring that services are provided as agreed in the early help plan and that the Lead Professional is supported and advised of any changes in need or provision.

Early Help Plan

- An Early Help Plan is a tool to use with the family to discuss and record the needs, strengths, goals and views that they identify, leading to a plan to support them.
- There are many different types of early help planning tools.
- Practitioners may choose to use or amend assessment and planning tools from within their own agency. For example, schools use often use One Plan.
- The Early Help Plan can be registered with the Hub.
- A completed Early Help Plan remains the responsibility of the support agency/service to retain, in accordance with their own record keeping procedures. A copy of the completed Early Help Plan should be given to all family members that were involved, including children and young people (age and understanding permitted).

Team Around the Family meeting

- Where there is more than one service working alongside a child and family, it is helpful for the family and involved services to hold a Team Around the Family meeting.
- The child and their family is at the centre, the aim of the TAF is to provide effective support and guidance to help them solve problems and find solutions at an early stage.
- The team shares information and co-ordinates the Early Help Plan together.

Family Solutions will work with families for up to a year, who have two or more of the following difficulties:

- Families with no member in work
- Families with significant non-school attendance (for whatever reason)
- Families with members involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- Families affected by domestic abuse
- Families living with drug and alcohol misuse
- Families where children are in need and open to social care
- Families where children exhibit significant behavioural difficulties
- Families facing eviction or with significant rent arrears or neighbour disputes
- Families with one or more member of the household with (level 2) mental health needs

Family Solutions teams include a range of professionals from different backgrounds who will provide the Key Worker/Lead Professional role and work with the family to help them find solutions to their needs.

Risk in the Community is an approach to understanding, and responding to young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online and feature violence and abuse. The SET Partnership Child Exploitation Pathway will guide you on how to respond to concerns about a child. It is also important to share information with policy about exploitation activities within places/spaces.

Young Carers

Young carers are children and young people under 18 years old who provide regular and on-going care to another person who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances. Young adult carers are aged between 16 and 24, and can also access support from this service. Many young people don’t see themselves as carers and may not realise there is practical and emotional support available in Essex.

Families or young carers themselves can self-refer or a referral can be made by professionals including GP’s, NHS staff, Social Workers and Teachers. This can be done via the online form or by emailing young.carers@essex.gov.uk

Additional guidance and further reading

- Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex
<https://www.escb.co.uk/media/2701/escb-effectivesupportbooklet2021v7.pdf>
- Essex Safeguarding Children Board <http://www.escb.co.uk/>
- Effective Support - Children & Families Hub 0345 6037627
<https://www.essex.gov.uk/what-happens-when-you-call-the-children-and-families-hub>
- Request for support form
<https://socialcareportal.essex.gov.uk/s4s/FormDetails/FillForm?formId=1>
- Effective Support Directory
<https://www.essex.gov.uk/directory-of-services>
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
- Young Carers in Essex <https://youth.essex.gov.uk/young-people/young-carers/>
- Whole Information Sharing Framework
[https://schools.essex.gov.uk/data/information-governance/Pages/Whole-Essex-Information-Sharing-Framework-\(WEISF\).aspx](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/data/information-governance/Pages/Whole-Essex-Information-Sharing-Framework-(WEISF).aspx)