

Multi Agency Guidance

Southampton Continuum of Need



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Foreword

“Safeguarding is everybody’s business” is a principle that Southampton’s LSCB is working hard with its members to embed in local practice. Children, young people and their families need to be at the heart of our responses to ensure we are safeguarding them from harm and promoting their welfare. We also need to provide good quality and responsive prevention and early help services, to identify problems early, to ensure effective intervention can be provided when required with ease of access to information when needed.

Southampton’s Continuum of Need should be used by everyone who is working directly or indirectly with children, young people and their families in the City, from any agency: statutory, voluntary, private and independent. Its purpose is to help professionals identify the level of need of children and their families and to ensure that workers respond appropriately, using the continuum to complement and enhance professional judgement. The continuum emphasises the importance of working with the strengths within families, focusing as much on what they can do as much as areas of need.

Multi-agency communication is the key to developing a full picture of the child and their family circumstances. The Children’s Advice and Duty Service and MASH is an exciting mechanism for the city to ensure this happens, the LSCB has oversight of the MASH and the implementation of these documents. As part of our mission we closely monitor and evaluate MASH so that both we and the public can be assured that it does bring about continuous improvement in the outcomes for Southampton children, young people and families



Keith Makin



Hilary Brooks

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The Vision for Southampton Children and their Families:

“We want Southampton to be a city where parents, families, communities and services work together to make sure children and young people get a good start in life.”

2020 Vision for Southampton’s Children and Young People

Helping Children and Young People to get a good start in life – our priorities:

1. **Healthy and Happy;** Children in Southampton live happy, healthy lives, with good levels of physical and mental wellbeing.
2. **Safe and Secure;** Children in Southampton are safe at home, safe in the community and safe online.
3. **Resilient and Ready;** Children, families and communities are resilient, engaged, prepared for the future and able to help themselves and each other to succeed.
4. **Achieving and Aspire:** Children in Southampton have good levels of educational attainment. Fulfil their potential, and go on to successful opportunities in adulthood.

Principles

- Safeguarding children and young people is everyone’s responsibility; everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play;
- Services will intervene early to tackle any problems as soon as they emerge. For children who need additional help, every day matters;
- The child remains at the centre, where their needs are paramount, but must be understood in the context of their whole family. They must be listened to by professionals,

Introduction

The Southampton Continuum of Need provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people and their families; it aims to help you identify when a child, young person or their family may need additional support to achieve their full potential. It introduces a continuum of help and support, provides information on the levels of need and gives examples of some of the indicators that suggest a child or young person may need additional support.

By undertaking assessments and offering services on a continuum of help and support, professionals can be flexible and respond to different levels of need in different children and families. The document reflects how local services provide support for children along a continuum and illustrates the principle that services become increasingly targeted and specialist as the child’s level of need increases. Children’s needs are not static, and they may experience different needs – at different points on the continuum – throughout their childhood years. The Continuum emphasises a strength based approach focusing on the things families can do and do well, as much as needs.

The document provides the overarching framework to set out the process for early help assessment and the type and level of prevention and early help services to be provided. It also clarifies the threshold for making a referral to the Southampton MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) for assessment and statutory services under S.17, S.47, S.31 and S.20 of the Children Act 1989. For Southampton Child Protection Procedures follow the link: www.4lscb.org.uk.

have their voices heard and from each intervention we must be able to answer the questions *what is it like to be a child in this family?*

- Any services provided to safeguard children and young people must be clearly focused on the outcomes for the individual child.
- All children, irrespective of culture and ability, can potentially be subject to neglect or abuse.
- Cultural factors neither explain nor condone acts of omission or commission which place a child at risk of not achieving their potential.
- All children have a right to grow up safe from harm, with opportunities to achieve to the best of their potential, and to enjoy life
- Abuse to a child may be disguised by disability; professionals need to be aware of broader issues when undertaking assessments.

Early Identification of Need

From birth, all children will become involved with a variety of different agencies in the community, particularly in relation to their health, education, safety and their personal and social development. A strategic priority for Southampton is to support the principle that actions taken preconception and within the first 1000 days of life have the greatest impact on life chances. Most families are meeting their children's needs with the assistance of **Universal (Level 1)** service provision - midwives, health visitors, General Practitioners, early years and childcare practitioners, teachers, youth workers, school nurses, school support staff.

Some families can meet their children's needs, but with additional support usually for the short term. Sometimes advice or intervention may be required from **Universal Plus (Level 2)** services. Some families with multiple complex needs can meet their children's

needs with targeted and co-ordinated support from **Universal Partnership Plus (Level 3)** services.

These needs are likely to be identified initially by the universal service providers with families, who therefore have an important responsibility to be alert to emerging additional needs and to assessing what level of response is required for the child or young person, in a family context.

In order to provide a formal multi-agency framework for decisions on addressing needs, *Southampton's Continuum of Need* introduces concepts to facilitate practitioners/agencies in having the means available to consider;

- whether a child/young person has additional needs
- their level of vulnerability
- when to begin an *Early Help Assessment and/or Early Help Plan*
- which needs require targeted or co-ordinated intervention from **universal, universal partnership, or universal partnership plus** services

The Southampton Continuum of Need has been revised as a 4 Tiered Document.

Some identifiers for children with additional needs are outlined in the Continuum Level Indicators which focus on three areas namely:

- Developmental Needs
- Family and Environment
- Parents and Carers

The levels indicated are NOT absolute thresholds - rather a guide to assist in the assessment as to the level of vulnerability and appropriate intervention.

All professionals assessing the needs of children, young people and their families must consider strengths and risks in all three domains of the assessment framework.

Exposure to risk factors is associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes. The combination or accumulation of risk factors, especially when occurring across more than one domain, results in a much higher probability of a child experiencing poorer outcomes.

Exposure to *Sources of Strength and Protective Factors*, such as those outlined, may reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes.

Practitioners always need to take into account the context of the situation, as well as *Sources of Strength and Protective Factors*. Decisions relating to the type of intervention necessary must be evidence based, using professional judgement, supported by consultation and supervision.

An Integrated Response

Children and young people with additional needs are the concern and responsibility of all practitioners and professionals from all local authority departments, strategic health authorities and community services who work with children. Each agency delivers different elements of service to meet a wide variety of needs, so it is important that two tools exist:

1) A **Universal** Approach to assessing needs: the *Early Help Assessment* combined with the *Southampton Continuum of Need Level Indicators* provides a structure to assist professional judgment in identifying different degrees of vulnerability and guide towards appropriate intervention. It is important to not over assess or repeat assess families so Southampton supports the principle that 'any assessment will do'. This means that if a family have recently experienced a form of assessment such as a Single Assessment, a repeat assessment should not be necessary. What is important is

the completion of an Early Help Plan that should reflect the needs and wishes of the family and be written in such a way that the objectives set for a family are realistic and achievable.

2) A range of options to enable agencies to consult and agree plans to bring all different elements to bear in a coordinated way. The continuum of support for vulnerable children as defined for those at the higher end of need in *Southampton LSCB Child Protection Procedures* extends, through the four levels of *Southampton's Continuum of Need*:

- **Universal (Level 1)** *Children whose needs are fully met and thrive* – Essentially a child's needs are understood to be met.
- **Universal Partnership (Level 2)** *Children with additional needs* – Some concerns may be addressed within a single agency through its own internal consultation procedures. In some instances, concerns may be addressed through joint or multi-disciplinary consultation or referral – with or without the need for professionals from different disciplines or agencies physically coming together to meet. A family may seek the support of a service in accessing additional support with for example parenting, the local offer (SEND) or health related concerns.
- **Universal Partnership Plus (Level 3)** *Children with multiple complex needs* - Where a child or public safety is not an issue, but there are other concerns, a multi-agency meeting (Team Around the Child/Family TAC/TAF meeting, Education Health and Care Plan Review, etc.) provides the multi-agency planning forum: this may involve practitioners from any of the **universal, universal plus, universal partnership plus services** - whether statutory or private, voluntary, independent or community services

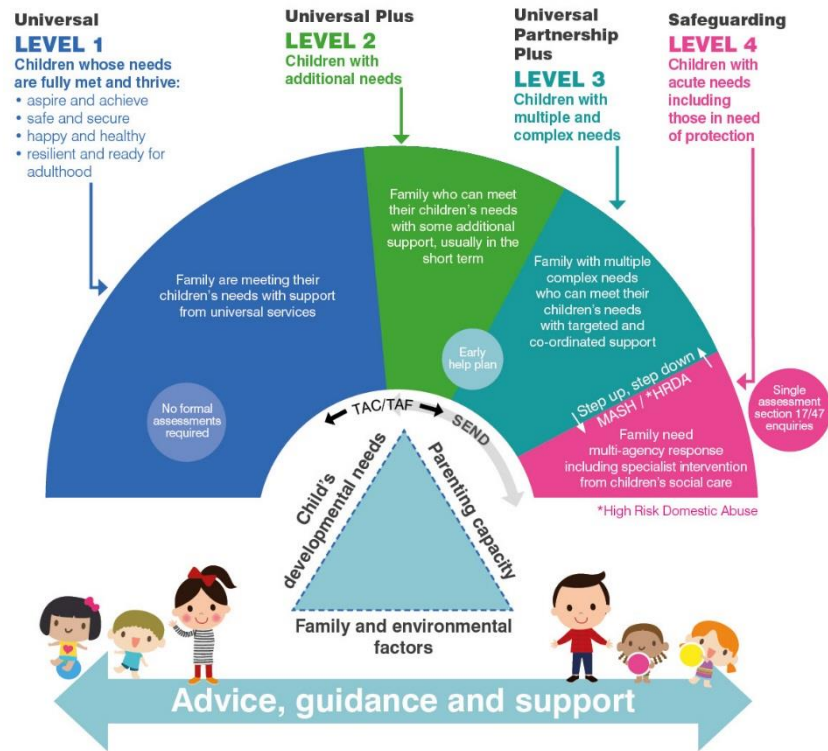
- **Safeguarding (Level 4) Children with acute needs including those in need of protection** - In cases where:
 - the protection of a child is an issue, a Strategy Discussion is held, and if followed by a Child Protection Enquiry a Child Protection Conference may be convened- as outlined in the *Southampton LSCB Child Protection Procedures*
 - where public protection is at risk, the Police will lead on co-ordinating a response: this is likely to involve *Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)* corresponding to three categories of offender (involving violent or sex offenders) and three levels of risk management (involving more intensive multi-agency engagement)
 - where a young person is subject to a statutory youth offending order, where the likelihood of re-offending or risk of serious harm is high, internal processes take place to assess interventions required and participation of other agencies
 - where an Education Health and Care Plan needs to be considered for *Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities* a multi-agency statutory assessment is undertaken.

Any agency can therefore take responsibility for coordinating a response to a concern about a child or young person at Level 1, 2 and 3 in the *Southampton Continuum of Need* – unless the concern is so serious as to warrant statutory or complex specialist intervention at Level 4.

- Services to young people with additional needs should be provided on the basis of assessment and analysis – and be reviewed to ensure that needs are being met.
- The full involvement of children, young people and parents is implicit in *Southampton Continuum of Need*. All activity involved in multi-agency meetings should be known to

parents, children and young people, and they should be fully involved as far as possible. All interaction with children and parents is on the basis of consent, even where concerns are so high a statutory intervention is required against the parent's wishes.

- All agencies must commit to participating in consultation, without necessarily receiving a referral.
- All agencies must respond seriously to requests to attend multi-agency meetings
- Where significant harm to a child is likely, then the responsibility for coordinating action rests with Children's Social Care under the *Southampton LSCB Child Protection Procedures*
- Statutory coordination for Public Safety, SEND Education, Health and Care Plans, CAMHS, Youth Re-Offending can rest with agencies at either Level 3 or 4.



Referrals or Service Requests

- Generally a service request or referral should be made if a child/young person appears to have additional needs and the need cannot be met solely within the referring agency.
- If the child appears to be at risk of significant harm then a referral should always be made directly and immediately to Childrens Advice and Duty Service (*Southampton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)*).
- Consultation is a key principle: if you are at all uncertain please contact the Children's Advice and Duty Service or the agency's designated Child Protection Adviser or Designated Safeguarding lead if in doubt.

- Confidential information must be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- Generally, a referral should only be made where consent of a parent has been given.
- Be clear that this consent can be overridden when the child's welfare is at risk.
- All referrals should be made in line with agencies procedures, using the *Southampton Safeguarding Children Form*.

Assessment

The *Early Help Assessment* is an important tool for prevention and help. It is designed for use when:

- A practitioner or agency has concerns about a child's well-being or that their development will not progress as appropriate without additional services; or the child or parent themselves have raised a concern about the health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of well-being of the child.
- The needs are unclear, or broader than the service (of the practitioner completing the assessment) can address
- An *Early Help Assessment* helps to identify the needs and/or get other services to help meet them

The information gathering domains of the *Early Help Assessment* are based on those of the *Assessment Framework 2000* which provides a universally accepted structure for collecting evidence and recording an assessment that can support a request for the child and/or family to receive additional support from another service, previously the *Common Assessment Framework*.

In addition the *Early Help Assessment* helps a family measure distance travelled modelling principles applied in other assessment frameworks such as the *Outcome Star*, *Strengthening Families* or *Signs of Safety* – ten being the best it can be.

Universal Services

The majority of *Early Help Assessment* will be carried out or arranged by universal services such as schools, health settings, early years and childcare centres. These services are best equipped to identify possible needs in their early stages. *The Universal Help Advisers* located with Southampton MASH can support in the completion of an *Early Help Assessment*.

Specialist, Targeted and Statutory Services

The *Early Help Assessment* is the main method for early help assessments, and is not intended to replace specialist assessments from the targeted (including voluntary) or statutory sectors. However, if a *Early Help Assessment* is used to identify the need for a specialist or statutory service, then practitioners within these services should use any relevant information from the *Early Help Assessment* to inform their own specialist or statutory assessment.

Multi Agency Assessments

Practitioners will use their professional relationships and networks to assist them in achieving good outcomes for children and their families.

Inter-agency, intra-disciplinary assessment requires an additional set of knowledge and skills to that required for working within a single agency or independently. All staff will need to understand and appreciate the roles and responsibilities of staff working in contexts different to their own.

Universal services, voluntary, private and independent sector agencies, adult services or any other agencies or organisations work to assist statutory agencies with assessments as required, of families that are either known to them or with whom they are working. This can include working in partnership with Social Care to produce in-depth *Social Work Single Assessments* for those smaller

numbers of children who need to be safeguarded. For further information and guidance on this refer to Agency Roles in *Southampton LSCB Procedures*.

Similarly, when specialist services are working in collaboration with other services (universal, universal partnership, universal partnership plus) as part of a multi-agency team at lower levels of concern, they may be asked to contribute to an existing *Early Help Assessment* in order to assess and review the progress of a child, young person or family and to identify if any additional support is required to meet the unmet needs.

The welfare of children is a corporate responsibility of the entire Local Authority working in partnership with other public agencies, the voluntary sector, and services users and carers. Joint working extends across the assessment, planning, management, provision and delivery of services. *Southampton's Continuum of Need 2016* recognizes that quality collaboration at an inter-professional level requires effective multi-agency and multi-disciplinary procedures and arrangements beyond informal processes to ensure that good inter-agency working is not reliant on the commitment of dedicated individuals. *Southampton LSCB Procedures* contributes towards providing such foundation.

Early Help Assessment Process

Guidance on the use of an *Early Help Assessment* is available at the *Southampton LSCB Procedures*. *The Early Help Assessment Process* involves three key stages:

Stage 1: Preparation

This involves recognising potential unmet needs and deciding whether to begin an *Early Help Assessment*

- Identification of the strengths within a family
- Identification, with the family, of need in terms of:
 - family background and relations,

- housing and finances,
- unemployment and progress to work,
- crime and anti-social behaviour,
- family health,
- domestic abuse
- School attendance.
- Obtain young person or family consent as appropriate
- Identification of existing support
- Identification of new support
- Consultation as appropriate with appropriate practitioners/agencies (where consent is given)

Stage 2: Assessment

Stage 2 involves completing the *Early Help Assessment* with the child/family, drawing conclusions, and agreeing actions within timescales with all involved reflected in the *Early Help Plan*:

- What do we want to change and for whom?
- What will be different?
- Actions to be taken
- Timescales
- By whom?

Stage 3: Support with an Early Help Plan

Stage 3 involves following through on agreed actions with the family; followed by Review usually at a Team Around the Family Meeting.

- Reviewing the Early Help Plan (as agreed at stage 2 above)
- Progress and Comments
- Date actions achieved
- Closure, when appropriate

Where a plan continues the process usually repeats albeit the Early Help Plan should reflect any additional goals set or adjusted to reflect goals achieved.

Children's Advice and Duty Service – Safeguarding Children

The Southampton Children's Advice and Duty Service is the front door for agency or public concerns with regard to a concern that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect. The service can assist the referrer and advises on appropriate strategies to support a child, but will also make a decision to refer on to the *Southampton MASH* (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) if a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm. The *Children's Advice and Duty Service* brings together expert professionals, called "*navigators*", from services that have contact with children, young people and families, and makes the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from harm. Referrals are usually passed to the MASH when a call received by the Children's Advice and Duty Service identifies a safeguarding concern that requires a statutory response.

1. Referral

All referrals come to *the Children's Advice and Duty Service* as the single point of contact for all safeguarding enquires. If there is an allocated social worker, they are considered the best person to support the child, so the child is referred directly to them.

If there is no allocated social worker, then the MASH assess the immediate level of risk and ensure that sufficient information is gathered for the Manager to apply **BRAG** rating.

The MASH Manager confirms the risk level with a **BRAG** rating:

BRAG rating	Assessment	Action	Time scale for MASH information
Red	There is a potential child protection issue (e.g. serious injury to the child)	Requires immediate action	2 hours
Amber	There are significant concerns	Immediate action is not required (e.g. ongoing domestic violence issues in the household)	6 hours
Green	There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing	These do not meet statutory requirements (eg attendance at school or health appointments)	24 hours
Blue	There is no safeguarding concern	The issue can be dealt with by a Universal service.	No MASH response required. Advice or referral to a Universal service may be provided

2. Following the BRAG rating

- **Blue:** If the rating is Blue then the contact is directed to a Universal service, or closed with no further action.
- **Green:** a Universal Help Advisor may be asked to assist identify prevention and early help support, or the referral is signposted to the appropriate services
- **Amber** If the rating is Amber or Green, the contact is passed to the *MASH navigators*.

- **Red:** If the rating is Red, the contact is passed to the Child Protection Team, so they can start an assessment immediately.

3. Outcomes from *Southampton Children's Advice and Duty Service & the MASH*

- The Child Protection Team for a Social Work Single Assessment s.47 CA1989.
- The Child In Need Team for a Single Assessment s.17 CA1989
- A Universal Help Advisor may be asked to look at the case and make the appropriate links with prevention and early help services, where a case was initially assessed as **amber** or **red**, but subsequently stepped down
- A case can be passed straight to a Universal Help Advisor if assessed as **green**, if a family has identified needs that could benefit from additional support.
- An appropriate universal service.

Statutory Responsibility - Local Authority Children's Social Care

Section 47 Children Act 1989

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect children are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (s.47 Children Act 1989) intensive support and protection under s.47 Children Act 1989 is provided. This is the threshold for multi-agency child protection enquiries led by a Local Authority Children's Social Worker following a Strategy Discussion.

For more detailed practice guidance, see the relevant chapter in *Southampton LSCB Child Protection Procedures*

Child provided with accommodation by the local authority under s.20 Children Act 1989

(This can be on the initiative of the local authority with the agreement of the parents, or at the request of the parents. Any person with parental responsibility can at any time remove the child from the accommodation. (s.20 (8)))

The child is a child in need who requires accommodation as a result of:

- Having no person with parental responsibility for him/her; or
- Being lost or abandoned; or
- The person who has been caring for him/her being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason) from providing him/her with suitable accommodation or care (s.20 (1)); or
- Having reached the age of 16, his/her welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if he/she is not provided with accommodation (s.20 (3)); or
- Accommodating the child would safeguard or promote his/her welfare (even though a person who has parental responsibility for him is able to provide him with accommodation), provided that that person does not object (s.20 (4)).

Before providing accommodation, the local authority shall, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare:

- Ascertain, and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings (having regard to his/her age and understanding) (s (6)); and
- Ascertain whether the parents/person(s) with parental responsibility have given a valid consent:

- Does the parent have the mental capacity to consent?
- Is the consent fully informed?
- Is it fair and proportionate for the child to be accommodated?

Note also that, in addition to the above legislation, case-law known as the 'Southwark judgment' (R (on the application of G) –v- London Borough of Southwark (2009) UKHL 26)

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldjudgmt/jd090520/appq-1.htm>) imposes an obligation upon local authorities to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.

Care Orders under s.31 Children Act 1989; initiation of care proceedings

- The child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and
- The harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to:
 - The care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or
 - The child's being beyond parental control (s.31 (2)).
- **'Harm'** means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;
- **'Development'** means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;
- **'Health'** means physical or mental health; and

• **'Ill-treatment'** includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical (s.31 (9)).
Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant focuses on a child's health or development,

his/her health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child (s.31 (10))

Pathways for Southampton Children and Young People:

Contact Details:

Southampton Children's Advice and Duty Service and MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub):
Civic Centre,
Southampton

Telephone: 023 8083 2300

Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board

Telephone: 023 8083 2995

Email: lscb@southampton.gov.uk

Web: www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

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We are happy for other Local Authorities to make use of the Southampton Continuum of Need, the Early Help Assessment and this Guidance.

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