



# **Suffolk's Threshold of Need Guidance 2022**

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## Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership – Threshold of Need Guidance

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This threshold guidance has been compiled by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and partners. It meets the requirements of the Government's 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'.

It is designed to help identify when a threshold has been reached, indicating when a child, young person or family might need support and then to identify where best to get this support from.

Children, young people, and their families have different levels of need and these may change over time.

The Signs of Safety and Wellbeing (SOS) Model of intervention has been adopted by Suffolk County Council. It is an evidence based, solution focused model and provides a framework to capture and balance concerns and risks alongside strengths. The Threshold Guidance should be used to inform SOS practice and interventions.



## Who is this document for?

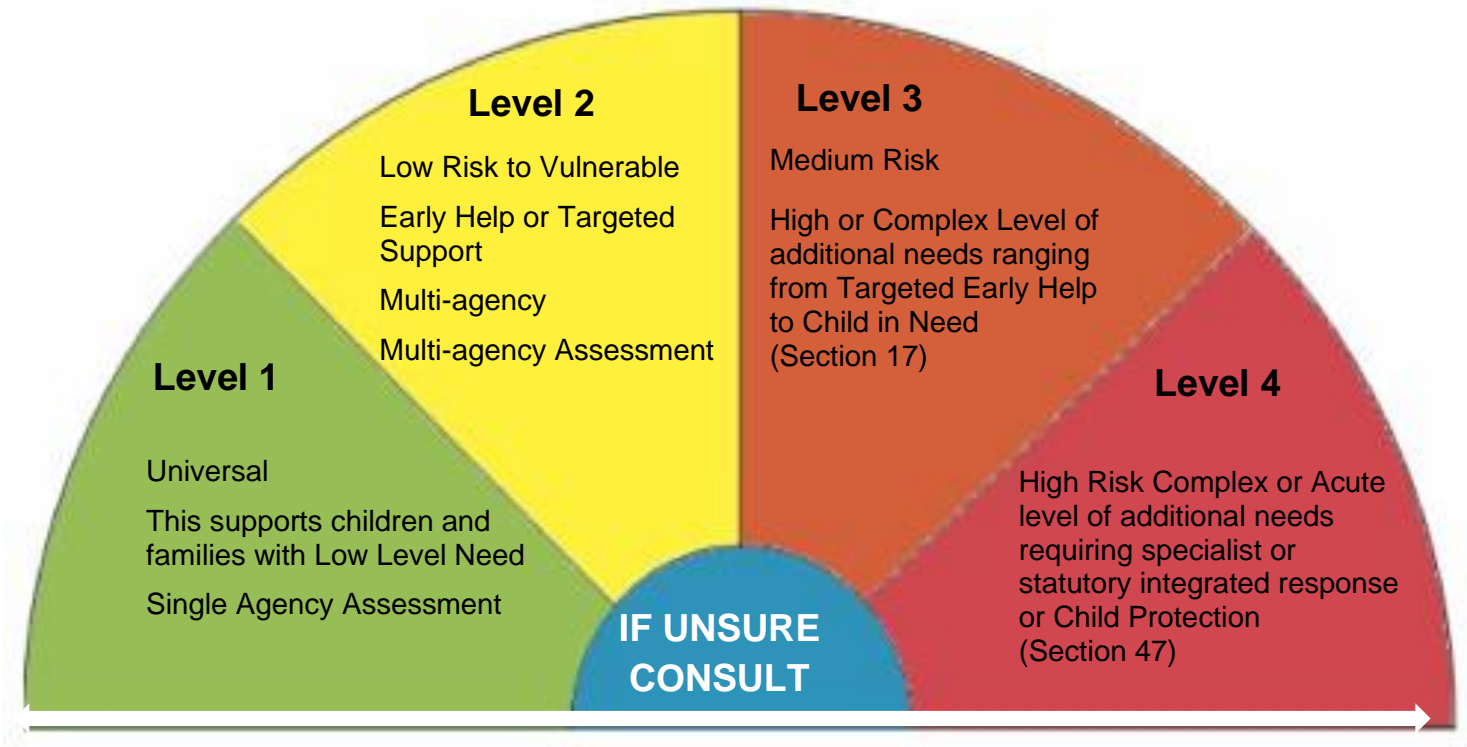
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- Anyone who is in contact with children and families and who has a concern about a child or young person and wants to know how they should help them.
- All children's service partners to ensure there is clarity on thresholds and to enable them to be consistent in how they support children who are referred to them.
- All professionals from all agencies working with children and young people have a shared responsibility to keep them safe and provide effective, efficient, and coordinated services to support their health and well-being.



## Threshold of Need

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Please refer to the Threshold Matrix on pages 23 and 24 of this document for more details on the needs and risks at each level.

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### Understanding Thresholds

- Level 1 - Universal** - All children and young people accessing mainstream services with low-level need can be met through a single agency assessment.
- Level 2 - Low Risk to Vulnerable – Early Help or Targeted Support** - Children with emerging needs or low level CCE (child criminal exploitation) / CE (child exploitation) concerns can be met with the support of a multi-agency assessment or for CCE a Diversion Referral to the Suffolk Youth Justice Service.
- Level 3 - Medium Risk** - Children with multiple or complex needs including medium risk of CCE/CE have to be met by targeted services or by a multi-agency CAF assessment, or for CCE a Diversion Referral to Suffolk Youth Justice Service or by a Child In Need social work assessment.
- Level 4 - High Risk-** Children and young people who present with complex needs/risk. Including high level CCE/CE concerns/risk. They will require specialist services and multi-agency statutory response.

Understanding thresholds and how they relate to the support of identified needs is vital to providing a multi-agency intervention that will help children and young people achieve their full potential. The needs of children and young people will change and the communities and environments they live in will also change. We therefore need to ensure that we

provide 'the right intervention and help at the right time'. A smooth transition through the continuum is essential to support their journey from needing, to receiving the help and support they require. It is vital that children, young people, and their families receive appropriate support and services regardless of where they live or how accessible services are.

Children and young people can move from one level to another, and as they do, their needs, as well as support from other services, will either increase or decrease. Movement between levels of services should happen fluidly by ensuring that information is shared appropriately, and that evidence of involvement and interventions are recorded systematically.

The Threshold Matrix can be found on the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership website at the following link.

[Suffolk Threshold Matrix](#)

## Early Help

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Working Together 2018 states that effective Early Help requires local agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help.
- Undertake an assessment of the need for Early Help.
- Provided targeted Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is the baseline assessment for any professional to use. The CAF is used by practitioners in a wide range of settings and circumstances. It helps to identify early intervention services which will focus on improving life outcomes for the child or young person.

It provides agencies with the same standard baseline assessment from which more specialist assessments can be developed and enables agencies and families to explore and understand the child/young person's development needs, the family and environmental factors and the care provided by their parents or carers. It can also be used when a child/young person has additional needs or where identified as being vulnerable.

Many children and young people's needs are met by universal services or by a single agency. The assessment part of the CAF identifies what help the child or young person and family require, at the earliest opportunity, preventing needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed in a social work assessment.

It is designed for use when:

- you are worried about how well a child or young person is progressing
- a child or young person or their parent/carer raises a concern with you
- the child or young person's needs are unclear
- the assessor is seeking to have a conversation that could lead to the identification of how to help the family by providing further information, advice, and guidance without the need for referral to Suffolk County Council's Early Help Service.

### Request for service from Early Help

Referrals to SCC CYP Early Help teams can be made via a CAF when the child, young persons or family's needs are deemed to be moderate to complex and require additional help via a multiagency approach.

For example:



- You/child/young person/family think that the child or young person has unmet needs that cannot be addressed by you and the family.
- You are worried about how well a child or young person is progressing or their needs are unclear.
- The existing support is not sufficient, and families are struggling and need additional help.
- It is likely that the child or young person's needs can only be met by two or more agencies working together.

If at any point during the CAF assessment, risk is increased and there is concern that the child/young person is suffering significant harm then a referral should be made to Customer First.

More information about CAF assessments and Early Help can be found on the

[Suffolk County Council website](#)



## **Suffolk Youth Justice Service**

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SYJS is a multi-agency team which includes Probation, Police and Health workers and works collaboratively with a range of partners including Social Care, Early Help and Education. The Suffolk Youth Justice Service (SYJS) works with children and young people who are in, or on the edge of the Youth Justice System together with their parents or carers, and the victims of those offences as well as the wider community. As well as supervising young people sentenced by the criminal courts, SYJS also delivers a Diversion programme offering early intervention and prevention services in partnership with Suffolk Constabulary.

### **Diversion Programme**

SYJS believes in working with young people at risk at the earliest opportunity and seeks to maximise opportunities to divert children and young people from the formal criminal justice system in every appropriate case. The Diversion Programme is a voluntary programme which works with those aged 10-17 who are at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour or are suitable for diversion from formal criminal justice processes. Young people who are at risk child criminal exploitation (CCE), through gangs or county lines and young people who commit harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) are a priority group for this intervention. An assessment is undertaken, and an individual plan put in place to help the young person desist offending. The Diversion Programme accept referrals, from schools, police and other partner agencies, as well as parents/carers and self-referrals.

## Children with a Disability

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### The Children Act 1989 Definition of a Child in Need and Disability

The Children Act 1989 sets out the duty of every local authority to undertake assessments of children in need, their families, and others to:

Safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need: and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those Children's needs.

A child is defined as a child in need if:

- They are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority.
- Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or
- They are disabled.

The Children Act definition of disability states that:

*A child is disabled if he is blind, deaf, or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed. (Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; and health means physical or mental health).*

There are 2 county wide **teams for disabled children and young people: 0-25** responsible for:

- children who have severe, substantial, and permanent disabilities, or life threatening or life limiting conditions.
- This includes work under s.17 and s.47 Children Act 1989, the management of cases through the Court process and Children In Care long term work.
- working within the Care Act 2014 for the 18 yrs+ cohort of cases, completing the relevant Adult Community Services Assessments including Mental Capacity Assessment.
- The service also provides a source of advice to other services working with children with additional needs that do not meet the service threshold criteria.
- Completion of Cares Assessment for parents and carers of disabled children and young people in line with the Care Act.

The **Sensory Social Workers** are an integrated part of the Disabled Children and Young Peoples Social Care Teams as a county wide 0-18 service responsible for:

- Children who have a severe to profound hearing loss or are registered sight impaired or severely sight impaired and those children with significant multi-sensory impairments.
- This includes work under s.17 and s.47 Children Act 1989, and the management of Looked After Children cases.

The team also provides a source of advice to other services working with children with additional needs that do not meet the service threshold criteria

### **Identifying Children and Young People**

Appropriate referrals to the team would include:

- Children will have a severe, substantial, and permanent disability or life threatening or life limiting illnesses.
- Children who have severe learning disabilities and attend either a special school for children with severe learning disabilities or are educated therapeutically at home.
- Children with physical disabilities that significantly impact on the child's ability to access the community, that require a high level of personal care support, without which their independence would be significantly restricted.
- Children and young people with severe learning disabilities.
- Children and young people who fall on the *severe* end of the Autistic spectrum with associated learning disability which has a significant impact on their communication needs, social and behavioural development.
- Children and young people with severe global development delay which seriously impedes daily functioning.

### **Support and Advice**

If you require further clarification or advice and information for a child/family you are working with please contact the DCYP duty Social Worker at Endeavour House (01473 265044), West Suffolk House (01284 758560) or Customer First (0808 800 4005).



## Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

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### What is SEN?

A 'Special Educational Need (or SEN)' means help that is in addition to, or different from the support generally given to all children of the same age. Teachers make adjustments so that they can meet the wide range of needs for all the children in any given class and this is known as 'differentiation'.

A school will only recognise a child has a Special Educational Need (or SEN) if they need further adjustments or support on top of 'differentiation'. A child does not need a medical diagnosis to be recognised as having SEN, but a disability which creates barriers to education may also be the trigger for additional support.

SEN is not always about a child's academic attainment. There are four broad areas of need and a full description of each can be found in the [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#):

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- sensory and/or physical needs

### How are children with SEN supported?

Schools should identify pupils who may be having difficulty and decide whether SEN support is appropriate. Deciding whether to put in place SEN support starts with the desired outcomes, the expected progress and the views and wishes of the child and their parents/carers.

**When a school puts in place support for SEN this is known as SEN Support.**

**Mainstream schools:**

- use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to identify and meet children and young people's SEN
- ensure that children with SEN engage in the activities of the school alongside pupils who do not have SEN
- designate a teacher to be responsible for co-ordinating SEN provision – the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO)
- inform parents when they are making special educational provision for a child
- prepare a [SEN information report](#)

### **What if a child still makes less than expected progress?**

If a child is not making expected progress despite the support in place, the setting might

consider involving a specialist educational service or a therapist/mental health specialist. The full range of services available to children and young people with SEND are on the [Suffolk Local Offer](#). A small number of children with SEN will have their needs and provision set out in an Education, Health and Care plan and Early Help practitioners will be required to provide advice for these.

The graduated SEN cycle of support and pathway is explained here: [Suffolk County Council 'The SEND Journey: Graduated Response](#)

## Children in Need

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**The Children Act (1989) Section 17, states that a child shall be considered In Need if:**

- They are unlikely to achieve, maintain or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority.
- Their health and development are likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provisions of such services and/or.
- They are disabled.

The social work assessment should be a quality effective assessment leading to sustainable purposeful plans and interventions, which are developed through meaningful relationships with children, their families and those involved with them. Social work assessments are undertaken in a timely manner reflecting the needs of the individual child. These may be needs that have to be resolved urgently or may include support for vulnerable children and young people who are in private fostering arrangements, children with a disability and children with complex needs. Children or young people, who have special educational needs, who are vulnerable young carers or who have committed a crime may also require an assessment. If the assessment determines the child or children are Children in Need, a multi-agency plan will be developed with the family indicating which agencies will provide services for the child and family. The plan will follow the Signs of Safety model to address the worries, identify the strengths and will have achievable and measurable goals which will be reviewed with the family.



## Children in Need of Protection

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**The Children Act (1989), Section 47 states that where a Local Authority:**

- a)** Is informed that a child who lives or is found in their area.
  - i. Is subject of an emergency protection order.
- or**
- ii. Is in police custody.
- b)** Has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

The authority shall make such enquiries, as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

Evidence shows that a single traumatic event can cause significant harm to a child or young person but more often it is a buildup of events, both severe and long-term such as neglect, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. It may also include serious events such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, serious self-harm, exploitation, grooming.

Where there is an immediate need to protect a child because there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child or young person is at risk then a contact must be made with Children's Social Care and the Police immediately.

Child protection concerns include where there is reason to believe that a child or young person is being:

- Subjected to physical abuse.
- Subjected to emotional abuse.
- Subjected to sexual abuse.
- Subjected to or witnessing domestic abuse.
- Subjected to neglect which has impacted on the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child or young person.

Where there are child protection concerns a strategy discussion meeting involving the Local Authority, Police, Health and if needed, other agencies, must take place to decide whether the threshold for a Section 47 enquiry is reached.

If the threshold is met for a Section 47 enquiry, the strategy threshold discussion will determine whether the enquiry is to be taken as a single agency (Police or Social Care) or jointly with other agencies. The enquiry is undertaken to find out what is happening to the child and to consider whether protective action is required, including the need for legal action.



## Children in Care

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“A child is looked after by a Local Authority if she/he is in their care by reason of a Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989) or is being provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the 1989 Act for more than 24 hours with the agreement of the parents or of the child if s/he is aged 16 or over.”

Section 20 requires the Local Authority to provide accommodation for a child who requires accommodation where:

- There is no person who has parental responsibility for the child.
- The child is lost or abandoned.
- The person who has been caring for him/her is prevented (whether or not permanently and for whatever reason) from providing him with suitable accommodation or care.
- He/she is over 16 and his/her Local Authority considers his/her welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced without accommodation.

### **How will the Local Authority decide whether to accommodate a child under Section 20?**

- Is the person a child?
- Is the child a Child in Need?
- Is the child within the Local Authority's area?
- Does it appear to the Local Authority that the child requires accommodation?
- Is the need the result of:
  - there being no person with parental responsibility for the child, for example, where parents are deceased,
  - the child having been lost or abandoned, or
  - the person who has been caring for him being prevented from providing him with suitable accommodation or care?
- What are the child's wishes and feelings regarding provision of accommodation for them?
- What considerations, in the light of the child's age and understanding, should be given to those wishes and feelings?
- Does anyone who has parental responsibility for the child who is willing to provide accommodation object to the local authority's intervention?
- If there is an objection by someone with parental responsibility, is there agreement from an individual who has a child arrangements order setting out where the child should live to the local authority's intervention?

### **Who can provide a Care Order?**

Under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 the Local Authority or any authorised person can apply to the Court for a child or young person to become the subject of a Care Order.

Authorised person means:

- The NSPCC and any of its Officers.
- Any person authorised by order of the Secretary of State to bring proceedings under this section and any Officer of a body which is so authorised; Care Orders can only be made by the Court.

### **What do the Courts consider before making a Care Order?**

The Court must be satisfied:

1. That the child concerned is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm  
AND
2. 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 is reasonable to expect a parent to give or the child being beyond parental control.

## Making a Referral

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### **Referral**

If the child is in immediate danger, please call 999 and contact the Police.

If you have an immediate safeguarding concern, you should contact Customer First on 0808 800 4005 (24 hours). If you want to make a safeguarding referral you will need to use the relevant Suffolk County Council Portal. The first time you complete a form you will be asked to create a Portal account. [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Make a Referral](#)

### **Cases open to Social Care or Early Help**

In Early Help cases a discussion with the Practice lead or Early Help Manager of the relevant Early Help Team, needs to take place. If a child and family have an allocated Social Worker, it is important to contact them in the first instance with any concerns.

### **Diversion Programme**

SYJS **accept** referrals from:

- Children and Young People's Services
- Educational establishments (schools, PRUs etc.)
- The police
- Parents / Carers

All referrals are then **assessed** to see if they meet the criteria for further intervention work with the youth justice service.

Please read the [referral form guidance](#) (Word, 85KB) **before** completing the referral form below.

- [Online Referral Form](#) (Word, 273KB)
- [Online Consent Form](#) (Word, 180KB)

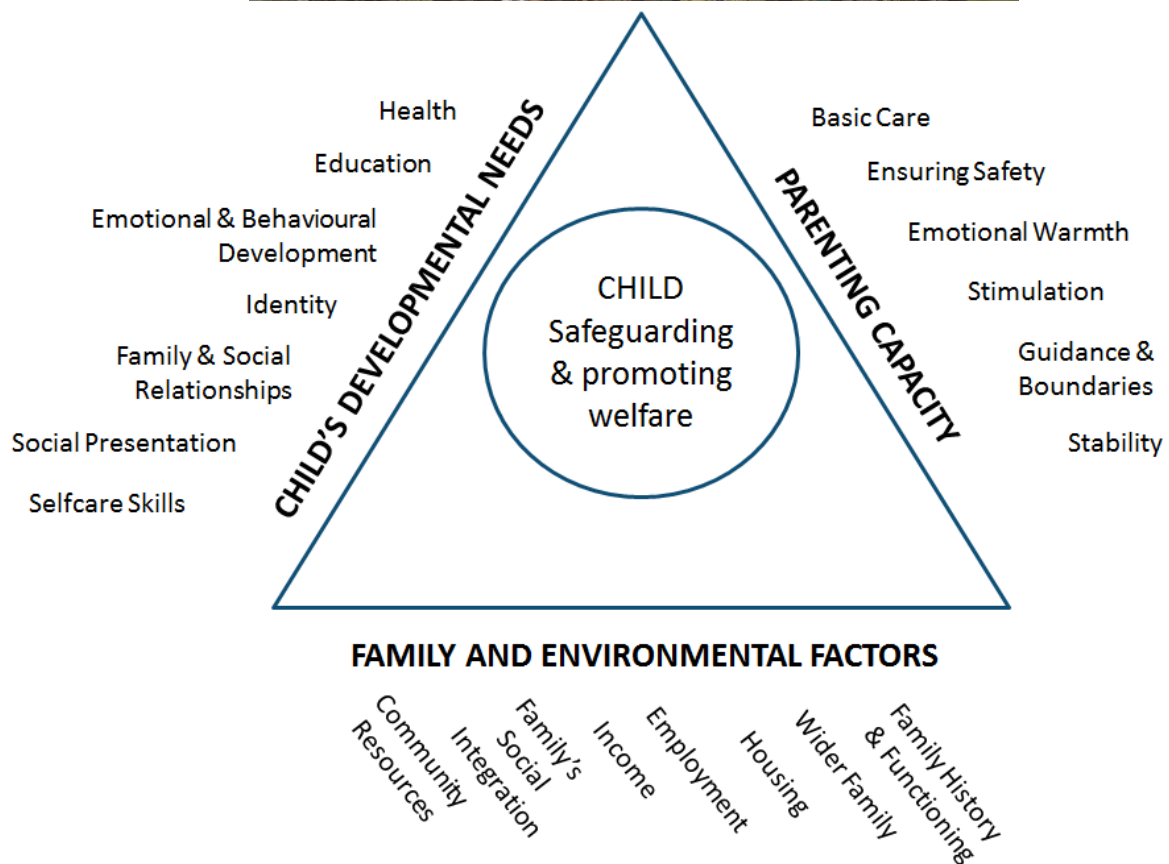
Email your **completed the form and consent** to your [local youth justice team](#).

Download a [Referral form](#) (Word, 282KB). You can print it out and complete by hand.

### **Seeking Advice**

If you are worried about a child, talk to your safeguarding lead within your organisation to discuss your concerns at the earliest opportunity.

You can seek advice from The MASH Professional Consultation line: 0345 6061499 or use the webchat facility on the Safeguarding Partnership website. The MASH Professional Consultation line and the webchat are there for you to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child (or adult) you feel is at risk of abuse. This will include advice and guidance about making a referral where necessary, including how to involve parents.



Use the Assessment of Need triangle to support the SOS framework and practice.

## Factors to Consider When Making a Referral

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- What support or interventions can your agency/organisation offer? Could this meet the needs of the child/young person and their family?
- What is life like for this child/young person and their family?
- What are the child or young person's wishes and feelings?
- What are the child/young person and family's strengths and protective factors? Can they help the situation?
- A child's/young person's behaviour, health or disability must be understood in the context of the parenting they are experiencing.
- What support or intervention has been offered previously? Did this make a difference?
- Consideration of historical information.
- What are the worries for this child or children?
- Are you clear about the signs and symptoms of neglect?
- Are you clear about the risk factors?
- Have you given consideration to the child's development?
- Have you considered family and environmental factors and community and contextual factors?
- Have you considered the capacity of parents?

## Community and Contextual Safeguarding

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Community and Contextual risk factors have been added to the Suffolk Threshold Matrix to reflect that risk has moved beyond home and families out to the communities that children and young people live in and therefore poses new and different risks and vulnerabilities. It is important that children's workers engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices.

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding that has been developed by the University of Bedfordshire to inform policy and practice approaches to safeguarding adolescents. Contextual Safeguarding 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 can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

## Useful Contact Numbers

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Customer First	0808 800 4005
MASH Professional Helpline	0345 606 1499
Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership	01473 265359
Suffolk Police	101 or 01473 613500
NSPCC National Helpline	0808 800 5000
Suffolk Youth Justice Service	01473 260110

Resources on neglect, abuse and risk can be found on the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership website at the link below.

[Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#)





# Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership

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## Policy Version History

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Version	Date	Review Date	Author	Endorsed by PP/LIG Group
1	October 2017	October 2020	Tracy Murphy, Professional Adviser LSCB	October 2020
2	Updated with Youth Justice addition May 2020	May 2023	Tracy Murphy, Professional Adviser LSCB	For Information.
3	August 2020. Three yearly update.	August 2023	Tracy Murphy and Maureen Roscoe- Goulson	October 2020.
4	January 2022 – minor changes updated to reflect the revised Threshold Matrix.	January 2025	Tracy Murphy and Maureen Roscoe- Goulson	February 2022

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