



# Right Help, Right Time

## Delivering effective support for children and families in Cheshire East

Multi Agency Threshold of Need Guidance



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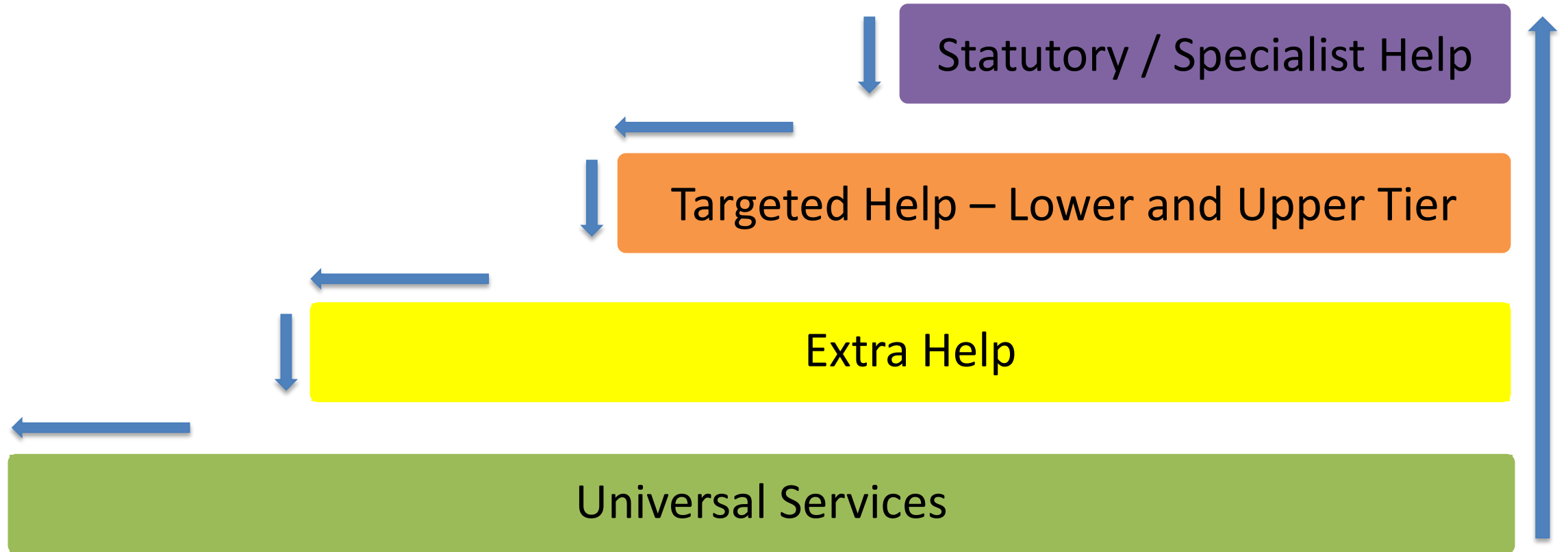
# Welcome

This guidance provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people and families, and aims to help identify circumstances when children may need additional support to achieve their potential. The stepped approach provides information on the levels of children's needs and gives examples of some of the factors that may indicate when a child or young person needs additional support or protection.

There are four different levels of need from **universal services**, which are available to all children and include education and health; **extra and targeted help** for those children who need some additional support to reach their potential; and **statutory and specialist help** where the issues are more complex.

This multi-agency threshold framework is a guidance tool that all agencies, professionals and volunteers can use to consider how best to meet the needs of individual children and young people. This support can be provided on a single agency basis or a multi-agency basis. The stepped approach aims to reduce risk and vulnerability and meet needs at the appropriate level of support and/or intervention. Access to effective early intervention and prevention services is essential to achieving this. It is only a guide and should be used in conjunction with other assessment tools and in consultation with children, families and other professionals.

# Stepped Approach



# Stepped Approach

## Universal Services

- Children and young people have needs that are met within universal provision (such as through their GP or school).
- All children and young people have a right to universal services, such as maternity services at birth, health visiting, early years settings, schools, colleges, and health providers.
- In addition, information, advice and guidance is available through the web pages of the Cheshire East Live Well site, the Family Information Service web pages and helpline, and the Family Hubs.
- Universal services seek to meet all the needs of children and young people so that they are happy, healthy, and able to learn and develop securely.

## Extra Help

- Children and young people with extra needs that can be met through a single agency response and/or partnership working.
- Many children and young people require some additional support. Parents, carers, and sometimes young people themselves, may access these services by applying directly to them or by asking the relevant universal service to help them. Children with 'extra' needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as educational settings, health partners, police community support officers (PCSO's), family hubs, commissioned services, voluntary and faith sector organisations; organising additional support with local partners as needed.
- Where the needs are such that there are a number of services involved it will be advisable to assess the child or young person's needs using appropriate screening tools and record this on the **extra help plan**. The agreed actions and interventions should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are effective and that the agreed outcomes are achieved. A copy of the extra help plan should be shared with the family help front door so they are aware who is providing this valuable support.

## Targeted Help

### Lower Tier:

- As the complexity of a child or young person's needs increase then a **family help assessment** must be completed. Where needs are identified, a targeted, coordinated response plan must be implemented with a lead professional. A **graded care profile 2 (GCP2)** is often required at this level too.
- The existing lead professional of the extra help plan, where relevant, should either progress to the **family help plan** or contact the family help front door to request the services of Cheshire East Council's Family Help team. The extra help plan will need to be shared at this stage.

### Upper Tier:

- This level includes those children and young people whose needs cannot be met without the involvement of **children's social care (Children Act 1989)**. This includes concerns that will be assessed through a **children and families assessment** and may go on to be supported at a **Child in Need level**.
- In addition, this includes children and young people requiring intensive health, education and social care support, due to complex and additional needs whose needs will be met by the **Children with Disabilities** or **Short Breaks Team**.

## Specialist/Statutory Help

- Children and young people with acute or severe needs, or who are children in need of protection, or who are cared for by Cheshire East Council.
- Specialist services are required where the needs of the child are so great that statutory and/or specialist help is needed to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. This will usually include children's social care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Tier 3 and 4, Youth Justice Service, or specialist educational provision.
- There are some children and young people whose needs are so complex that they will not reach their potential without specialist/statutory provision, or where they would be at risk from harm if such services were not available to them. These children need to be referred to the appropriate specialist/statutory service so that they can be appropriately assessed and provided with intervention to improve their life chances and to ensure they are safe. Where there is an allocated social worker, they will assume the role of lead professional ensuring that there is a multi-agency plan of intervention. This can be through a child in need plan, a child protection plan or pathway plan. The intervention of specialist/statutory provision is in addition to universal services and often in collaboration with those services already working with the family.
- Children who are cared for by the Local Authority.

Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Services	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
<b>Children and Young People are getting a good education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has episodes of lateness/incidents of absence from school.</li> <li>Child/young person is at risk of fixed term exclusion.</li> <li>Child/young person's behaviour in school is leading to risk of exclusion.</li> <li>The child/young person has observed emerging and/or fluctuating difficulties or deterioration in 1 or more areas of learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has over 10% average absence from school.</li> <li>Child/young person has episodes of truancy.</li> <li>Child/young person has 1-2 fixed term exclusions from school during the last two terms/6 months.</li> <li>Child/young person is in alternative provision for behaviour problems.</li> <li>Child/young person is persistently late.</li> <li>The child/young person has observed persistent and moderate difficulties in 1 or more areas of learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has 3+ exclusions, is at risk of permanent exclusion, or has been permanently excluded in last two terms/6 months.</li> <li>Child/young person is not registered with school or is missing from education.</li> <li>Child/young person is persistently absent from school.</li> <li>Concerns around child/young person's home education.</li> <li>Educational setting cannot meet child's needs.</li> <li>Family not engaging with education professionals.</li> <li>The child/young person has observed persistent and significant difficulties. Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is in place for mainstream provision or needs assessment being considered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person is continuously receiving fixed-term exclusions.</li> <li>Child/young person has been permanently excluded and has no school place.</li> <li>Child/young person is on a part-time timetable for 3 months, with no clear reintegration plan.</li> <li>Significant concerns regarding a home educated child/young person that has not been seen within 12 months.</li> <li>The child/young person has observed persistent and significant difficulties EHCP in place with named specialist provision.</li> </ul>
<b>Good Early Years Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectant parents who need support in accessing universal service &amp; health appointments – proactive signposting engagement.</li> <li>Parents/carers who need advice to provide a safe home learning environment.</li> <li>Evidence of some delay in meeting expected milestones (1 development band below chronological age within 1 or more aspects of the prime areas).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectant parents who have not attended a routine appointment (immunisation, dental, health check etc).</li> <li>Child under 5 has presented at A&amp;E for the first time due to an accidental injury.</li> <li>Child has poor attachments.</li> <li>Child/family members are missing health appointments.</li> <li>Significant delay in reaching milestones (2 development bands below chronological age in 2 or more aspects within the prime areas (secure).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectant parents who have missed several health appointments.</li> <li>Child under 5 has presented at A&amp;E more than once for a concerning accidental injury.</li> <li>Persistent and significant difficulties in reaching milestones.</li> <li>2 or more development bands below chronological age in 2 or more aspects within the prime areas (emerging).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectant parents persistently miss health appointments child at risk of significant harm.</li> <li>Child under 5 with persistent presentations to A&amp;E due to accidental injury.</li> <li>Parent/carer does not seek medical help for an injury that requires medical attention.</li> <li>Child with an EHCP who has a named specialist education establishment or is highly likely to have after assessment.</li> <li>Children with probable/confirmed pre-natal substance exposure.</li> </ul>
<b>Improved Mental and Physical Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person has minor physical health issues.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has low level mental health issues and dips in emotional well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person has some physical or mental health needs.</li> <li>Family is engaging with and benefitting from appropriate support, plan in place to manage ongoing health.</li> <li>Necessary adaptations have been made.</li> <li>Medication regime in place and adhered to.</li> <li>Assessment of Need has taken place and treatment plan is now in place.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has poor presentation/personal hygiene.</li> <li>At risk of social isolation.</li> <li>At risk of not having needs met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person has chronic or recurring health problems.</li> <li>Family is not engaging with health professionals.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has disabilities which impact access to services/needs not being met.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person's mental health needs are not being met.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person's physical health needs are not being met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person diagnosed with mental health condition.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has significant unmet mental health needs. Self-harm with significant risk factors and suicidal attempts etc.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has a life-threatening eating disorder.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person has a significant physical health need.</li> </ul>

Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Services	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
<b>Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance misuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person at risk of/occasional incident of substance/alcohol misuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person is impacted by historical substance/alcohol misuse.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person is at early risk stage of substance use.</li> <li>Adult understands risk impact of substance use on the family and children and can implement actions to reduce harm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person is at harmful substance use/misuse stage.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person needs help to understand and accept the risks of substance misuse and find alternative coping strategies to manage the risk of harm to the family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substance dependency is severely impairing development.</li> <li>Child or Adult dependency is placing the child at risk of significant harm.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family at risk of social exclusion due to finances.</li> <li>Change in family finances due to divorce, new baby, separation, sickness, reduction in working hours, etc.</li> <li>Family has debts that are not well managed.</li> <li>Credits and support allowances are not being claimed.</li> <li>Adult is claiming out of work benefits or Universal Credit and is subject to work-related conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major change in family's finances due to divorce, death, separation, disability, loss of employment.</li> <li>Family is benefit dependent or has unmanageable debt.</li> <li>Young person is at risk of becoming NEET or is NEET - (NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training).</li> <li>Adult has accrued County Court Judgement (CCJ)/Bankruptcy notice impacting on credit and housing options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family is significantly impacted by poverty or worklessness.</li> <li>Family has no recourse to public funds/dependent on charity.</li> <li>Family is reliant on emergency service such as food banks Family has 4+ months rent arrears/served eviction notice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family is in extreme poverty which is significantly affecting child/young person well-being.</li> <li>Risk of homelessness.</li> </ul>
<b>Secure Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult is claiming out of work benefits or Universal Credit and is subject to work-related conditions.</li> <li>Family has 1-2 months' rent arrears (no repossession action).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor home environment impacting on family's health.</li> <li>Family is overcrowded or in temporary accommodation.</li> <li>Family has poor access to core services.</li> <li>Family has 2-3 months' rent arrears/ repossession action has started.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family is at risk of becoming homeless.</li> <li>Transient family is not accessing services.</li> <li>Home conditions are poor, overcrowded and/or putting child/young person at increased risk of harm.</li> <li>Young person over 16 at risk of homelessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family have been evicted.</li> <li>Young person over 16 is presenting as homeless.</li> <li>Family is intentionally homeless.</li> <li>Home conditions are putting child at significant risk of harm.</li> </ul>

Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Help	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
<b>Improved Family Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult requiring parenting advice.</li> <li>• Some adult conflict not adversely affecting family life or functioning.</li> <li>• One or both parents report lack of open and honest communication, with difficulties minimised, not recognised, or addressed.</li> <li>• Some unwanted child/young person behaviours not adversely affecting family life or functioning.</li> <li>• Family require access to universal community services to improve positive parenting and interactions through the parenting journey, family information service, schools etc.</li> <li>• Child/young person and/or non-abusive adult are experiencing impact of historic abuse and are accessing support to recover.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult requires targeted parent support.</li> <li>• Adult conflict is increasing in frequency, adult is starting to recognise the need for extra parenting support. There is no imbalance of power and no evidence of coercive control.</li> <li>• Parent relationship is at risk of breakdown.</li> <li>• Inter-parental conflict is persistent and unresolved.</li> <li>• Child/young person is impacted by persistent unresolved conflict between adults.</li> <li>• Identified young carer requiring low level additional support.</li> <li>• Child/young person's behaviour has deteriorated, parents seeking additional support and strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent parenting having a negative impact on a child/young person.</li> <li>• Parental conflict is frequent, parents need help to recognise the impact of the conflict on the child/young person. There is no imbalance of power and no evidence of coercive control.</li> <li>• Unsupported young carer requiring assessment and relevant support to be put into place to prevent neglect.</li> <li>• Child/young person's behaviour is having a detrimental impact on family life and functioning.</li> <li>• Child/young person is demonstrating violent and abusive behaviour to adults or siblings in the home.</li> <li>• Parents are not engaging with professionals around healthy relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting is not responsive to childrens needs, signs of abuse identified, child/young person at risk of significant harm.</li> <li>• Harmful levels of parental conflict, frequent intense and poorly resolved, child/young person at risk of significant harm.</li> <li>• Unsupported young carer, needs not met, not meeting developmental milestones, at risk of significant harm.</li> <li>• Child/young person is demonstrating violent and abusive behaviour to adults or siblings in the home. Adults unable to protect and keep family members safe.</li> </ul>
<b>Children safe from abuse and exploitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting some vulnerability factors in the contextual safeguarding screening tool but appear to relate to 'normal teenage' behaviour.</li> <li>• Child/young person and family require low level monitoring, targeted personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) work that supports children to keep themselves safe and awareness raising of local contextual safeguarding issues with children and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional vulnerability factors present (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE'S), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) etc) suggest the child/young person is at increased risk of being groomed or exploited additional help required to support the CYP and family to recognise the dangers, keep themselves safe and identify safety networks to seek help and support within and outside of school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting numerous vulnerability factors from the contextual safeguarding screening tool but not at immediate risk. Child/young person may have disclosed exploitation but can be supported via an early help assessment plan and reviewed within the contextual safeguarding meetings.</li> <li>• Some protective factors present. Requires professional intervention, assessment, awareness, and prevention work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child/young person is presenting high number of vulnerability factors, is known to have been exploited and/or groomed. Regularly goes missing and concerns in relation to drugs/alcohol and inappropriate adult associates. Child/young person has disclosed exploitation. Requires statutory intervention to protect. A strategy meeting should take place.</li> <li>• Child/young person is victim or at risk of trafficking.</li> <li>• Child/young person is pregnant/teenage parent under the age of 13.</li> </ul>



Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Help	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
<b>Safe from Domestic Abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent relationships are mostly equal and co-operative but there are some unresolved or recurring difficulties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult/child/young person in the household is suffering from the impact of previous domestic abuse or violence and requires support.</li> <li>Parent reports experiencing controlling or abusive behaviour and risk assessment indicates they are at standard risk of harm.</li> <li>Non-abusive parent can protect and care for the children with support.</li> <li>Child/young person’s violent behaviour is beginning to appear atypical and/or is presenting challenges.</li> <li>Domestic abuse is a risk factor but the person causing harm is currently engaging in a behaviour change intervention .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent reports experiencing controlling or abusive behaviour. DASH risk assessment indicates they are at medium risk of harm.</li> <li>Mental health of family members is impacted due to domestic abuse or violence. Children are showing significant signs of distress.</li> <li>Specialist services have been unable to engage family members in support.</li> <li>Child/young person is demonstrating violent or abusive behaviour which has become more persistent and is escalating.</li> <li>Unborn child or baby under the age of one exposed to domestic abuse.</li> <li>Child/young person with a special educational need and/or other vulnerabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person is at direct risk of significant harm from domestic abuse.</li> <li>Adult is victim of coercive control and physical harm, or fear of violence/death. Child/young person is significantly adversely affected or traumatised by domestic abuse.</li> <li>Parent reports experiencing controlling or abusive behaviour and risk assessment indicates they are at high risk of harm (including controlling behaviour, threats to kill and/or fear of violence/death, post separation stalking).</li> <li>One or both parents have been heard at MARAC.</li> <li>Child/young person using violence towards a parent, partner or family member which is severe and there may be significant risk to welfare and/or life.</li> </ul>
<b>Crime prevention and tackling crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person displaying early signs of low level anti-social or offending behaviour.</li> <li>Family is exposed to low levels of community criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.</li> <li>Concerns around a child/young person's safety online.</li> <li>Child/young person is displaying signs of developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has had a missing episode.</li> <li>Child/young person is displaying potential offending behaviour.</li> <li>Child/young person of prisoner/parent with community orders.</li> <li>Family is experiencing harassment or discrimination.</li> <li>Child/young person is displaying potentially unhealthy/unsafe sexual behaviour.</li> <li>Household member is being discussed in ASB forums or has an active Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has had multiple missing episodes.</li> <li>Child/young person is at risk of arrest.</li> <li>Family impacted by prison sentence/release of significant person.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person is displaying extremist views.</li> <li>Family at risk of harm due to harassment or discrimination.</li> <li>Child/young person’s sexual behaviour is unsafe and/or unhealthy.</li> <li>Household member is being considered for injunction /Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO).</li> <li>Persistent police callouts to family address.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/young person has offended.</li> <li>Child/young person has repeated missing episodes of longer duration.</li> <li>Child/young person is displaying harmful behaviour towards other children including harmful sexual behaviour.</li> <li>Adult/child/young person is engaging others in extremist views.</li> <li>Family is repeated victim of harassment or discrimination.</li> <li>Child/young person’s sexual behaviour has led to police enquiry/strategy meeting family member is at risk/victim of faith-based abuse, forced marriage, honour-based violence or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).</li> </ul>

# Using the Triage Tool to help determine Threshold level

The triage tool is designed to be used by professionals to consider the issues or concerns for all members of the family and identify the right level of support for the family.

Please consider using the examples provided on the triage tool as a prompt to help you talk to the family and other professionals about the types of issues the family is facing, how serious the issue is, and how the family should be supported to make progress. The examples are not exhaustive and shouldn't be used as a tick box exercise but will help to determine the threshold and therefore subsequent intervention required. There will be strengths as well as concerns to factor into your decision-making regarding threshold.

The blank triage tool templates are there for you to use if you wish to, to note down/map the concerns in the relevant boxes using the examples provided as a guide. You can then consider whether needs meet threshold for what we consider to be 'Early Help' and either an Extra Help plan can be drawn up with the family or a 'Targeted Family Help plan' at the lower targeted level. The extra help or targeted family help plan will identify and build on the strengths and resilience factors within the family as well as address the areas of concern you have recorded/mapped out.

# Using the Triage Tool to determine Threshold level

A 'child in need' is a child or young person who is thought to need help from a social worker within children's services if they are to achieve or maintain 'a reasonable standard of health or development'. This is defined in law Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and includes all disabled children.

Every attempt should be made at a lower tier Targeted Help level to positively engage the family, manage risk and achieve the desired outcomes before escalating to child in need (upper tier Targeted Help).

The extra help or targeted family help assessment and plan will identify and build on the strengths and resilience factors within the family as well as address the areas of concern. Alternatively, you may decide that the needs have already reached the threshold for children's social care level in which case you should contact the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) by phone, sharing the completed triage tool you have mapped out.

# Screening Tools

We have a [suite of screening tools](#) which may also help you to identify the level of need, the best pathway of support, and the interventions you can provide for children, young people and families.

- Practitioners' decision making needs to be led by evidenced-based screening and assessment of what the child or young person is experiencing, their lived experience, and the impact of their carers' behaviour on them. This approach is supported by **Working Together 2023**. [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK](#)
- For this to happen, all professionals who have contact with children, young people and families have a responsibility to recognise issues as early as possible and assess whether intervention is required.
- Assessment should be a dynamic process that identifies, analyses, and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by a child or young person.
- Continuous assessment is crucial in ensuring that the help and support being delivered is having the intended impact. Using the assessments early will hopefully support positive outcomes for children and young people, meaning onward referral may not be required. However, should a child or young person need referral, professionals will be expected to evidence why a threshold has been met despite appropriate intervention. The assessments included in the toolkit will provide a record of evidence for this purpose.

**As per current guidance, any child exploitation screening tools must be sent through to ChECS for review.**

Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Services	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
Children and Young People are getting a good education				
Good Early Years Development				
Improved Mental and Physical Health				
Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance misuse				
Financial Stability				

Children and Families Triage Tool	Universal Services	Extra Help	Targeted Help	Statutory/Specialist Help
Secure Housing				
Improved Family Relationships				
Children safe from abuse and exploitation				
Safe from Domestic Abuse				
Crime prevention and tackling crime				

# Pyramid of Support

The pyramid of support is not an exhaustive diagram of support but shows some of the steps you should take to seek advice and guidance or contact at each different level on the continuum of need.

The Family Hub model that is being implemented across Cheshire East will strengthen existing partnerships in each locality making it easier for practitioners to get support for families. These are called collaboratives and more information can be found here [Locality working](#)

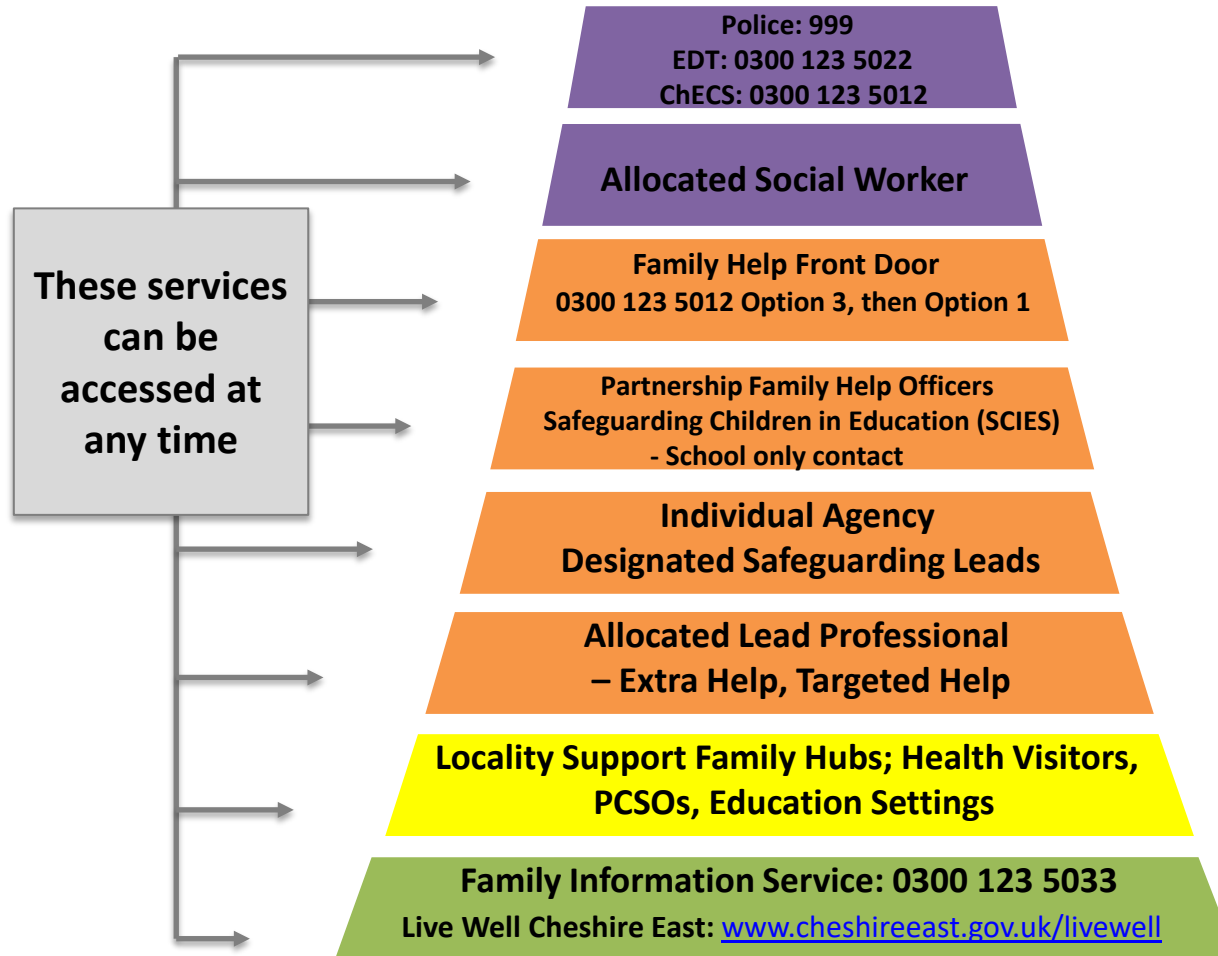
Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; early identification of additional needs and delivery of appropriate intervention is also everyone's responsibility.

Cheshire East Council will lead on assessments and plans that are meeting the following thresholds:

- **Lower tier Targeted Help (Family Help Teams)**
- **Upper tier Targeted Help (Child in Need, Children with Disabilities)**
- **Statutory Help (Child Protection, Cared for Children)**

The wider partnership will lead on assessments and plans that are meeting the threshold for **Extra Help** where Universal services are not quite enough to meet needs and some extra bespoke support is required. Everyone will provide the relevant support at **Universal Services level**.

# Pyramid of Support





# Children and Families Integrated Front Door

Each agency will have its own safeguarding procedures which will detail how to identify and assess safeguarding concerns alongside this threshold document, and who you can speak to (often it's the designated safeguarding lead). As you have seen in the pyramid of support, there are several layers in place to seek advice and guidance without the need to contact the Integrated Front Door (Family Help Front Door and Cheshire East Consultation Service) for cases assessed as being at Universal Services or Extra Help level.

This means the Integrated Front Door can prioritise the requests that do need their support and have more time to make safe risk-assessed decisions in a timely way. If you do require advice at this stage though and the locality partnership hasn't been able to support you, you can contact the Family Help Front Door team, formally known as the Early Help Brokerage team, who can offer advice and guidance. You can also contact them to check there isn't already a co-ordinated assessment and plan in place at any level.

## Who to contact:

- ✓ Concerns assessed as being at **lower tier Targeted Help** level of early help concerns will be triaged and managed by the **Family Help Front Door (non-social care practitioners)**
- ✓ **Upper tier Targeted Help** as well as **immediate and significant risk of harm** will be triaged and managed by the **Cheshire East Consultation Service –ChECS (qualified social care practitioners)**

# Children and Families Integrated Front Door

- Professionals contacting the front door cannot remain anonymous when seeking advice or requesting a service and children/young people discussed should be identified to ensure effective advice is provided.
- If you have concerns that a child or young person may be in need of urgent protection or experiencing significant harm requiring a social worker assessment, then you **must ring** ChECS and/or the Police (in an emergency on 999) and/or the Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Duty team immediately.
- For non urgent contact for a referral/request for Early Help support, the **Family Help Referral Form** needs to be completed.
- Anything you submit to ChECS that is deemed as meeting threshold for social care will be processed within either two hours or 24 hours as per statutory guidelines dependant on risk.
- Anything you submit to the Family Help Front Door team will be processed within 5 working days.

# Family Help Referral form

Once the family help referral form (portal form) is received, this will be loaded as a contact on the case management system and initial triage checks completed by the Family Help Front Door. They will look at the information you have provided, the concerns, the risk factors and the protective factors in place. They will review any assessments, plans or screening tools you have submitted. They will speak to the family where possible and will also check the history for that child/young person on the system. Risk assessed, threshold decisions will then be made and where necessary additional checks including health and education to determine who is best placed to offer any necessary early help provision as it is a whole partnership responsibility at this level.

All professionals must get parental consent before completing the form and be clear with parents and carers or those with parental responsibility about the nature of the referral. Their consent must be sought verbally or in writing and recorded. Consent should not be sought if doing so places a person at risk of significant harm or serious harm or would cause unjustified delay in making enquiries into significant harm or would prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime.

If you cannot use the family help referral form, contact can be made by phone. The same information will be taken and a contact loaded for review. The benefit of using the portal form for the professional is that you can do this at your convenience. This reduces the risk of delay where professionals are not available for a return phone call. For the front door team, it also means they have more time to review and process the presenting information within timescale.

# Children and Families Front Door - Contact Details

✓ **Family Help Referral form (Portal Form)**

Early Help via the Family Help Front Door; [Family Help Support Referral Information](#)

✓ **Email**

- ChECS; [checs@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:checs@cheshireeast.gov.uk) – *this is not a referral pathway but allows additional information requested to be received*
- Family Help Front Door; [familyhelpfrontdoor@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:familyhelpfrontdoor@cheshireeast.gov.uk) - *this is not a referral pathway but allows additional information requested to be received*

✓ **Phone** – please listen to these carefully as the options have changed and we are seeing a number of professionals choosing the wrong option;

0300 123 5012

Option 3 – Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)

Option 4 - Family Help Front Door

✓ **Cheshire East Council Webpage; [ChECS - Cheshire East Children's Consultation Service](#)**

# Early Help Pathway to Support Families

**How to check if a family is already open to support (Extra Help, Targeted Help – Upper and Lower, Statutory Help)**

[familyhelpfrontdoor@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:familyhelpfrontdoor@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

We will aim to respond to requests within 3 working days. This should only be used to establish if there is already a lead professional in place to share your concerns with before you take on the lead role yourself at an early help level.

# Consent and Information Sharing

Knowing when and how to share information isn't always easy. Usually parents say they are happy for you to talk to other professionals who can help them and their children.

*'Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision' (Working Together 2018).*

*The Cheshire East Safeguarding Information Sharing Protocol can be found on the CЕСSCP site \**

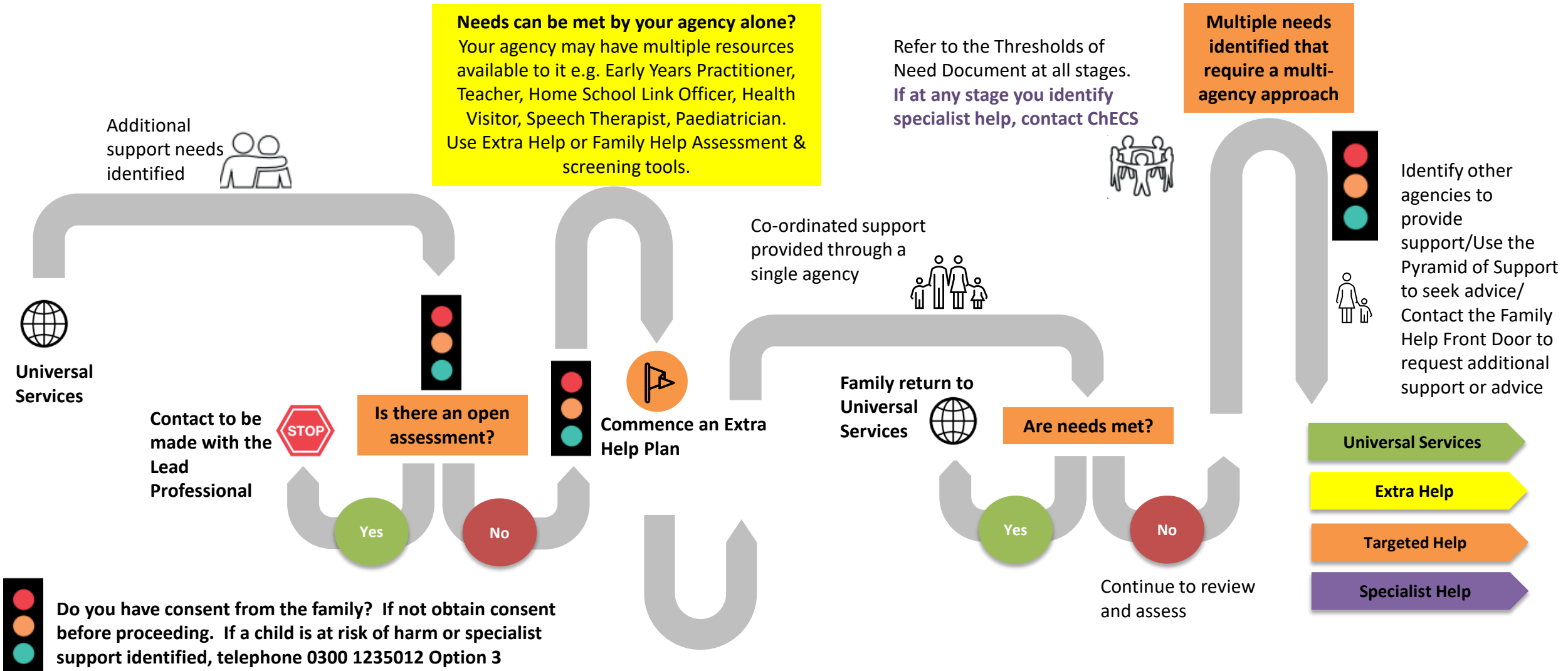
The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

All practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare and considers that they may be a child in need or that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, then they should share the information with children's social care and/or the police. All practitioners should be particularly alert to the importance of sharing information when a child moves from one local authority into another, due to the risk that knowledge pertinent to keeping a child safe could be lost.

# Consent and Information Sharing Golden Rules

1. The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are not a barrier to sharing information but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could, be shared and seek their agreement.
3. Seek advice from your manager or designated safeguarding lead if you are not sure.
4. If someone requests that some information is kept confidential, their wishes should be respected unless the sharing of the information is overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case.
5. Consider safety and wellbeing: base your information-sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children or young people.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary and proportionate, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion and is shared securely. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

# Early Help Pathway to Support Families





## Section 20 and Section 31 Care Order of the Children Act (1989)

- Under [Section 20](#) of the Children Act (1989), Local Authorities have a duty to provide a child with somewhere to live if they either don't have a person who has PR or person caring for the child is prevented from providing suitable accommodation or their living conditions are deemed unsafe.
- Under Section 31 Care Order, a Child becomes Looked After (Section 31 Care Order) due to; Child is suffering or likely to suffer (if a court order is not made) significant harm or likelihood of, attributable to the care given to the child (the care not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent/carer to provide).

# Appendix & Other Useful Links

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership – Multi-Agency Toolkit	<a href="https://www.cescp.org.uk/ce-scp-multi-agency-toolkit/ce-scp-multi-agency-toolkit.aspx">https://www.cescp.org.uk/ce-scp-multi-agency-toolkit/ce-scp-multi-agency-toolkit.aspx</a>
Children and Families Integrated Front Door	<a href="#">ChECS - Cheshire East Children's Consultation Service</a>
Extra Help Assessment and Plan	<a href="#">ChECS - Cheshire East Children's Consultation Service</a>
Family Help Assessment and Plan	<a href="#">Early Help Assessment (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a>
SEND Toolkit	<a href="#">CE Toolkit for SEND - FINAL v2.0 (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a>
Thresholds of Need Guidance – Triage Tool (with descriptors) A3 Printable PDF Version	Appendix 1
Thresholds of Need Guidance – Triage Tool (Blank Version) A3 Printable PDF Version	Appendix 2
Professional Challenge	Appendix 3
Portal form link	<a href="https://childrenandfamiliesportal.cheshireeast.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home">https://childrenandfamiliesportal.cheshireeast.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home</a>