

Continuum of Need



CONTINUUM OF NEEDS INCORPORATING THRESHOLD DOCUMENTS

| | EARLY HELP | | EARLY HELP TO TARGETED SERVICES | STATUTORY INTERVENTION |
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| Threshold | Universal Services Level 1 | Additional Support Level 2 | Complex Needs/Specialist/Child in Need Level 3 | Acute/Child Protection Level 4 |
| The child or young person (including unborn) | <p>No additional needs identified, or limited intervention needed to avoid needs arising.</p> <p>Children and young people whose needs are met by on-going services such as schools, GPs, Health Visitors and Dentist alongside the love, care and protection of parents and carers.</p> <p>Children and young people in this category are making good overall progress in all areas of their development</p> <p>Some limited intervention from a universal service may be needed to avoid needs arising or to meet a single identified need. The majority of children living in the UK will fall into this category.</p> | <p>Additional needs:</p> <p>Children and young people with additional needs (not just SEN), that can be met through a single agency response or through agencies working together to provide a coordinated partnership response.</p> | <p>Multiple and/or complex needs:</p> <p>Requiring a multi-agency Early Help response with a lead professional. Level 3 also includes the threshold for a Child In Need.</p> <p>Although a Child In Need requires a statutory response from Children's Social Care, a statutory intervention is not necessarily required. For this reason, the threshold for a Child In Need falls in Level 3, but where a statutory intervention is required from Children's Social Care this would fall into Level 4.</p> <p>Children and young people in this category have increasing levels of unmet needs that are more significant and complex. The range, depth or significance of the problems faced by children at level 3 may begin to prevent them from achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development if they don't receive appropriate services. They are likely to require targeted and/or longer-term intervention from specialist services.</p> | <p>High level of unmet, complex needs and lack of protective factors:</p> <p>Children and young people in this category are identified as having suffered or likely to be suffering significant harm or significant impairment to their health or development.</p> <p>Harm is defined under 4 possible categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. These children require intensive support under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (Child Protection Plan).</p> <p>Sometimes 'Significant Harm' will be a single, traumatic event, but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding over time, such as in situations of neglect.</p> |
| Practitioners should always use their professional judgement; the following circumstances and key features are for guidance only Children with disabilities will be represented across all 4 levels | | | | |
| Circumstances and Key features | <p>Development of the Baby or Child Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically well Developmental and health checks and immunisations up to date, health appointments kept including ante-natal appointments Developmental milestones and motor skills appropriate Good height/weight Sexual activity and awareness appropriate for age Good mental health and emotional wellbeing No use or exposure to substances. | <p>Development of the Baby or Child Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate diet e.g. no breakfast Missing immunisations/checks Child is susceptible to persistent minor health problems or accidents Multiple accidents or A&E attendance or admissions to hospital. Check context and rationale Slow in reaching developmental milestones Minor concerns re diet, hygiene, clothing which have some adverse effect on child's personal presentation Weight not increasing at rate expected, or obesity Dental care not sufficient Vulnerable to emotional problems, perhaps in response to life events such as parental separation e.g. child seems unduly anxious, angry or defiant Early sexual activity or awareness Experimenting with tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs Parent has undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) procedure, but risk assessment undertaken by health | <p>Development of the Baby or Child Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically unwell Concerns re diet, hygiene, clothing Child has some chronic/recurring health problems; with support parent/carer not meeting the need of child's health Any infant, child or young person, who spends 90 continuous days in a hospital setting MUST be referred to Children's Social Care, as per the Children Act (1989). Missing routine and non-routine health appointments Weight gain – drop in centiles Limited or restricted diet, e.g. no breakfast; no lunch money Concerns about developmental progress, e.g. overweight/underweight; bedwetting/soiling Developmental milestones are unlikely to be met Dental and optical concerns not being met The child's substance misuse dependency is affecting their mental and physical health and social wellbeing Learning significantly affected by health problems Significant speech language difficulties/delay or disordered development Parents/carers unable to fully meet the child's need due to disability needs requiring significant support under CIN plan Mental health issues emerging. Cross reference with level 2 Increasing risk of vulnerability from sexual activity and awareness (including STIs, consent, teenage pregnancy and intrafamilial sexual | <p>Development of the Baby or Child Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious physical and emotional health concerns that are consistently not addressed by the parent/carer e.g. failure to thrive, seriously obese/underweight, serious dental decay, persistent and high-risk substance misuse, acute mental health problems including self-harming behaviour, risk of suicide, child exploitation and specific physical or medical conditions which require specialist intervention The child has complex health problems which are attributable to lack of access to health services. Parent/carer denying professional staff access to the child putting them at risk of harm. Concerns of active sexual harm which is non-consensual or harmful sexual activity and/or early teenage pregnancy Suspected imminent risk of FGM (female genital mutilation) Sexual abuse Non-accidental injury Physical/learning disability requiring constant supervision Evidence of significant harm or neglect Recognised victim of modern slavery through NRM referral Use of Class A drugs |

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| | | professionals identifies there is not a perceived risk of the child being subject to the procedure | abuse. Intrafamilial abuse can manifest itself as child to child, child to adult and adult to child.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent has undergone FGM procedure but risk of child being subject to procedure is unknown and needs to be further assessed by professionals via National Risk Assessment Tool. FGM Professional Guidance FGM Professional Guidance Forms | |
| Circumstances and Key features | Emotional and Behavioural development | Emotional and Behavioural development | Emotional and Behavioural development | Emotional and Behavioural development |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good quality attachments with parents/caregivers Able to adapt to change Able to understand others' feelings (appropriate to age and stage of development) Takes responsibility for own behaviour Responds appropriately to boundaries and constructive guidance Interacts appropriately Demonstrate appropriate awareness of safety including internet, social media and mobile devices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some difficulties with family relationships Some difficulties with peer group relationships and with adults, e.g. 'clingy', anxious, overly friendly or withdrawn Some evidence of inappropriate responses and actions. Consider attachment to relevant caregivers Starting to show difficulties expressing empathy Limited engagement in play with others Not always able to understand how own actions impact on others Finds accepting responsibility for own actions difficult Responds inappropriately to boundaries and constructive guidance Finds positive interaction difficult with peers in unstructured contexts Online safety concerns e.g. accessing sites occasionally that may be age inappropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruptive or challenging behaviour by parent or child linked to poor attachment Challenging or disruptive behaviour impacting daily life, achievement, relationships etc Inability to understand responsibility for own action Starting to commit offences/re-offend, or becoming a victim of crime Experiences difficulty with interacting positively amongst peers Child/young person is withdrawn, isolated/unwilling to engage Some missing from home episodes, parents not aware of child's whereabouts/associated risks Sudden display of unexplained gifts/clothing combined with concerns around exploitation Concern about child being radicalised or exposed to extremism Evidence of harm inside or outside of the home which includes physical and or sexual exploitation or violence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently go missing from home which seriously compromises the child's safety and wellbeing Child's behaviour reflects impulsivity which impacts on serious harm to self or others. Complex mental health issues requiring specialist interventions which are consistently not being adequately managed Severe emotional/behavioural challenges Cannot maintain peer relationships e.g. is aggressive, bully, bullied Serious/persistent offending behaviour resulting in court orders, custodial sentences, remand Privately fostered Peer on peer harm Displaying sexually harmful behaviour Child emotional health and physical safety is compromised by exposure to radicalisation and extremist ideology Child is experiencing online or in person significant harm from others and actively being exploited. |
| | Identity and self esteem | Identity and self-esteem | Identify and self-esteem | Identity and self-esteem |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive sense of self and abilities Sense of belonging and acceptance by others Confident in social situations Can discriminate between safe and unsafe contacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some insecurities around identity expressed e.g. low self-esteem May experience bullying around difference May be perpetrating bullying behaviour Child can be over friendly or withdrawn with strangers Child/young person provocative in behaviour/appearance e.g. inappropriately dressed for school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child subject to persistent discrimination, e.g. racial, sexual or due to disabilities Demonstrates significantly low self-esteem/confidence in a range of situations/alienates self from others Victim of crime or bullying Presentation (including hygiene/clothing) significantly impacts on all relationships Child is hypervigilant/watchful or wary of carers/people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child/young person experiences persistent discrimination impacting daily life e.g. reduced/school non-attendance and social isolation Lack of confidence is incapacitating adversely impacting their daily life Child has experienced significant harm from crime or remains at risk of persecution by others | |
| Family and social relationships | Family and social relationships | Family and social relationships | Family and social relationships, Child is experiencing online ore | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable and affectionate relationships with carers Good relationships with siblings and peers Developing independent and self-care skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of positive role models Child has some difficulties sustaining relationships Unresolved issues arising from parents' separation, step parenting or bereavement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with parent/carers characterised by inconsistencies Child has lack of positive role models adversely affecting their overall development Some level of risk to or from siblings Isolated from peers. Peers are also involved in concerning behaviour Child appears to have undifferentiated attachments May not discriminate effectively with strangers Lack of friends/social network Young carer responsibilities that are impacting adversely on the child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with family experienced as negative ('low warmth, high criticism') Rejection by a parent/carer; family no longer want to care for or have abandoned child/young person Periods of being Looked After by Local Authority Family breakdown related to child's behavioural difficulties Subject to physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect Risk of extra familial harm and child exploitation. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. Child who lives in a household into which a registered sex offender or convicted violent offender subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) moves. | |

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| | Self-care skills and independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age-appropriate self-care skills and able to display age-appropriate independence. | Self-care skills and independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of age-appropriate self-care skills and independent living skills that increase vulnerability | Self-care skills and independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of age-appropriate behaviour and independent living skills, likely to impair development or compromise safety. | Self-care skills and independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe lack of age-appropriate behaviour and independent living skills likely to result in significant harm. |
| | Learning & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General development is age appropriate. Regular access to books and toys, play. Working at the expected educational standard. Child fully attending school and achieving. Good attendance at nursery/college/training. Planned progression beyond statutory school age. Child home schooled and no concerns. | Learning & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to books, toys, the internet or educational materials. Poor stimulation. Identified language and communication difficulties. SEN support at school level. Some learning or disability needs that require support. Concerning attendance patterns leading to risk of Persistent Absence/has had some Fixed term exclusions from school. Occasional truanting or non-attendance and poor punctuality. Persistent late arrival/absent/truanting from school. Pattern of school absences Not always engaged in learning – poor concentration, low motivation and interest. Caring responsibilities are impacting on the ability to concentrate and learn – Young Carer. Not making educational progress despite support. Some fixed term exclusions or reduced timetable. Some emerging concerns for a child/young person’s access to suitable education (including EHE.) | Learning & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent. suspensions or at risk of permanent exclusion Primary aged children at risk of exclusion from school due to persistent and escalating behaviours. Persistent poor school attendance and punctuality leading to educational neglect. Children who are home schooled where there are concerns that their educational needs are not being consistently met. Parent does not engage with school and actively resists support. Missing school due to caring responsibilities - Young Carers. Special Education Needs (SEN) not being appropriately met. No access to books, toys, internet or educational materials and inadequate stimulation leading to developmental concerns. NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Suitable education not being accessed. (Including EHE.) | Learning & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic non-attendance, truanting, permanent exclusions, consistently poor educational attainment/progress, which are attributable to the parenting that the child is receiving. The parent has consistently failed to cooperate with services at the Early Help level to address learning/education and there is evidence to show this impacting on a child’s lived experience. Children who are home schooled where there are significant concerns that the child’s educational needs are not being met. |
| Circumstances and Key features | Parents and Carers Basic care, safety and protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for child’s physical needs, e.g. food, drink, appropriate clothing, medical and dental care Protection from danger or significant harm, in the home and elsewhere Demonstrates appropriate awareness of safety Parents/caregivers meeting own health needs Developing independent and self-care skills. | Parents and Carers Basic care, safety and protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic care is not provided consistently Haphazard use of safety equipment e.g. fireguards Early indications of domestic abuse Parent/carer engagement with services is poor Parent/carer requires advice on parenting issues Some concerns around child’s physical/emotional needs being met Young, inexperienced parents giving rise to professional worries Teenage pregnancy Inappropriate childcare arrangements and/or too many carers Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community. Include consideration of how domestic pets are cared for. Unnecessary or frequent visits to doctor/casualty | Parents and Carers Basic care, safety and protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/carer is struggling to provide adequate care Parents have found it difficult to care for previous child/young person Inappropriate care arrangements Instability and domestic abuse in the home Parent’s mental health difficulties or substance misuse significantly affect care of child/young person Non-compliance of parents/carers with services Practitioners have serious concerns Experiencing unsafe situations Child/young person perceived to be a problem by parents Child/young person may be subject to neglect Child/young person previously looked after by Local Authority Patterns are emerging that the child is left at home alone, but this does not seriously place them at significant risk (consider age and vulnerability). | Parents and Carers Basic care, safety and protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/carer is unable to assess and manage serious risk to the child from others within their family and social network. Parent/carer’s mental health or substance misuse significantly affect care of child Parents/carers unable to care for previous children Parents/carers involved in crime where they are considered a risk to children Parents/carers own needs mean they are unable to keep child/young person safe Chronic/escalating and serious domestic abuse involving child/young person Parents not engaging with professionals or following safety measures Allegation or reasonable suspicion of serious injury (including non-accidental injuries), abuse or neglect. Unable to manage severe challenging behaviour without support –high risk of family breakdown Suspected/evidence of fabricated or induced illness Unable to meet child/young person’s physical or emotional needs Disclosure from parent of abuse to child/young person |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/carer stresses starting to affect ability to ensure child's safety. Child is left at home alone for a short period and this has not compromised their safety (consider age and vulnerability) | | |
| | Emotional warmth and stability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stable and affectionate relationships with carers Good relationships with siblings and peers Consistent parenting leading to secure attachment. | Emotional warmth and stability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent responses to child/young person by parent/carer Parents struggling to have their own emotional needs met Child/young person not able to develop other positive relationships Child/young person's key relationships with family members not kept up Starting to show difficulties with attachment | Emotional warmth and stability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child receives erratic or inconsistent care Child has episodes of poor-quality care Parental/carer instability/emotional needs affects capacity to nurture Some relationship difficulties Child has no other positive relationships Child has multiple carers; may have no significant relationship to any of them Child has been 'Looked After' by the Local Authority Child/young person subjected to parental pressure to achieve/aspire which adversely impacts on the child. | Emotional warmth and stability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/carers inconsistent, highly critical, rejecting or apathetic towards child Child/young person beyond parental/carers' control Parent's own emotional experiences impacting on their ability to meet child/young person's needs High risk of child becoming 'Looked After' due to family breakdown |
| | Guidance, boundaries and stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages learning and development through interaction and play Enables child/young person to experience success Ensure the child can develop a sense of right and wrong Child/young person accesses leisure facilities as appropriate to age and interests | Guidance, boundaries and stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/carer offers inconsistent boundaries Lack of routine in the home Child/young person spends considerable time alone, e.g. watching television Lack of exposure to new experiences; has limited access to leisure activities Child/young person can behave in an anti-social way in the neighbourhood, e.g. petty crime Possible risk of online harm due to lack of boundaries/supervision | Guidance, boundaries and stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erratic or inadequate guidance provided Parents struggle/refuse to set effective boundaries Child/young person engages in anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood Parent/carer does not offer a good role model, e.g. by behaving in an anti-social way Child not receiving positive stimulation, with lack of new experiences or activities Child engaged and/or exposed to negative and harmful behaviour associated with internet and social media despite previous support offered. | Guidance, boundaries and stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent lack of effective boundaries set by the parent leading to risk of serious harm to the child. Child regularly engaged in an anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood Continued exposure to online content resulting in significant harm including risk outside the home. |
| | Family and Environment Elements Family functioning and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good relationships within family, including when parents are separated Sense of wider family, friends and community, networks Parents/carers provide consistent positive role modelling | Family and Environment Elements Family functioning and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/carers have some conflicts or difficulties that can involve the child/young person A child or young person has experienced loss of significant adult, e.g. through bereavement or separation Parent/carer has physical/mental health difficulties A child/young person is taking on a caring role in relation to their parent/carer, or is looking after younger siblings Limited friends and family support Child looked after by many different adults Parent/carer has learning needs | Family and Environment Elements Family functioning and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incidents of domestic abuse between parents/carers Acrimonious divorce/separation Family has serious physical and mental health difficulties Family has poor relationship with extended family or little communication Family is socially isolated Physical, mental health or learning needs which impact on parenting capacity Young carer | Family and Environment Elements Family functioning and well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant parental/carer discord and persistent domestic abuse Family characterised by conflict and serious chronic relationship difficulties Family actively involved in criminal activity which places the child at risk Individual posing a risk to children in, or known to household |
| Circumstances and Key features | Housing, employment and finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child fully supported financially. | Housing, employment and finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcrowding in poor housing conditions. Housing arrangements are temporary or unsecure which is impacting on stability within the family home. | Housing, employment and finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsuitable accommodation. Family's financial resources impact on child's basic physical needs being met. | Housing, employment and finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear evidence that a family is destitute and homeless Relationship between the child and carer have broken down to the extent that the child is at risk of significant harm/exposed to dangerous situations and development impaired. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate and stable housing/amenities. • Parents/carers able to manage working/unemployment. • Reasonable income over time and resources used appropriately to meet the child's needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsecure or unknown immigration status that is impacting on the child's lived experience. • Low income and financial pressures that are impacting on the family's environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents experience stress due to unemployment or over-working that are impacting on their capacity to care for their children appropriately. • Parent(s) find it difficult to obtain employment due to poor/basic skills and this is impacting on the child's lived experience. • Serious debt/poverty impacts on ability to meet the child's basic needs. • No recourse to public funds (immigration) that will need support from other agencies in order to meet a child's needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear evidence that a 16/17-year-old is destitute and homeless. • Inappropriate accommodation that are impacting severely on the wellbeing of the child. • Extreme poverty/debt/gambling impacting on parent's ability to care for the child. • Deliberate avoidance of authority and intervention by professionals resulting in multiple moves impacting on the child. |
| | <p>Social and community including education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family feels integrated into the community • Good support networks exist • Child's positive sense of self and abilities reduces the risk of exploitation, radicalisation, extremism or of online harm • No concerns of discrimination | <p>Social and community including education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family new to the area or with limited contact with community members • Some social exclusion or conflict experiences; low tolerance • Community characterised by negativity towards children/young people • Difficulty accessing community facilities • Child has a negative sense of self and abilities and suffers with low self-esteem making them vulnerable to peers and adults who pay them attention and/or show them affection but do so to criminally or sexually exploit them • Some concerns of possible discrimination • Lack of a support network | <p>Social and community including education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acrimonious relationships within community • Concerns expressed by others • Child's negative sense of self/low self-esteem contributes to their involvement with peers and/or adults thought to be treating them badly and/or encouraging their involvement in self-harm and/or criminal behaviour. • Incidents and or increase of discrimination • Behaviours and engagement (child/parent/carer) with education are poor leading to period of suspension or risk of permanent exclusion • The parent/carer does not engage with the school and actively resists suggestions or supportive interventions | <p>Social and community including education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family member is known to be a significant risk to children • Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children • Concerns about inter-sibling violence and aggression which does result in significant emotional or physical harm and is not managed by the parent. • Child is privately fostered - Child under 16 years (or 18 if the child has a disability) (S.66 Children Act 1989) is placed for 28 days or more in the care of someone who is not the child's parent(s) or a 'connected person'. • Child trafficked for Child Exploitation • There is nobody with parental responsibility to ensure the child's wellbeing and stability of care and this is impacting on the welfare of the child. • There are indicators that a child is at risk of honour-based violence/abuse or forced marriage. • Evidence the child may be subject to harmful traditional practices. • There are indicators of active interest in terrorist activity. |
| Response: | <p>Professionals should identify what they can do first to support the child and their family through their own service.</p> | <p>Professionals should refer to a single agency to meet identified need. Agencies can be identified through the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service website which provides details of local support services and access to family support and information. Towards the top end of level 2, agencies may need to work together to provide a coordinated service to support a child and their family who need support from more than one agency. This coordination could be provided by a school or another professional who knows the family.</p> <p>As part of the Buckinghamshire early help offer, the Family Hub Network provides a number of trusted early help partnership venues, where people wanting a little additional help can drop in for advice and signposting to suitable, early help providers in community settings. Family Hub Network sites can be identified on the Buckinghamshire Family Information website or by signage and branding at Network premises.</p> | <p>Professionals should contact First Response (aka MASH) using the Multi-Agency Form (MARF). Once contact is made, the case is then screened by Children's Social Care in the MASH and a decision is made within 72 hours as to what services level is needed in relation in the Continuum of Need. If contact needs to be made out of hours, you can call the Emergency Duty Team on 0800 999 7677.</p> | <p>Agencies should contact First Response using the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) or by calling 01296 383962 (or 0800 999 7677 for the out of hours Emergency Duty Team). If there is a concern that a child is immediately at risk, call the police on 999.</p> |
| Assessment: | <p>Agencies may use their own assessment processes to tailor the service they provide</p> | <p>Agencies who have carried out their own specific assessment (for example the Outcome Star or Children's Neglect Tool Kit), should consider sharing those outcomes as this will be particularly helpful when more than one agency may be involved.</p> | <p>The Key tools for assessing need are the Outcome Star, Children's Neglect Tool and a Child In Need assessment (a statutory assessment led by Children's Social Care under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989). However, other agencies may use their own assessment tools in the first instance.</p> | <p>Statutory assessment will take place under the provisions of the Children Act 1989. This will be led by Children's Social Care. Where a child is assessed to have met the threshold for statutory intervention there are various options available to ensure a child is protected from harm. This included making the child subject to a Child Protection Plan or taking the child into care.</p> |

