

Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Boards' Threshold Guidance

Working to keep children and young people happy, healthy and safe.



Integrating Children and
Young People's Services
Building for a brighter future
**Derby Safeguarding
Children Board**

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Everybody's Business

Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Boards' Threshold Guidance

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

The majority of children and young people have **low level needs** that can be supported through a **range of services**, which might include:

- education
- early years
- health
- housing
- youth services
- leisure facilities
- services provided by community groups and organisations.

Other children might have **some additional needs** that professionals can help them with as soon as they come to light by co-ordinating the right support with an **early help assessment**.

Other youngsters may have **more complex needs** and may need to use **specialist services**, such as local authority social care.

This “threshold guidance” has been put together by the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Boards to meet requirements of the Government’s statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard

Children (2013)’ and replaces all previous threshold information.

It is designed to help identify when a “threshold” – or trigger – has been reached which means a child, young person or family might need support.

Who is this document for?

- **Professionals who are in contact with children and families** – who have a concern about a child or young person and want to know how they should help them.
- **All children’s services providers** – so they can be clear about different thresholds and be consistent in how they support children who are referred to them.

It might also be useful to anyone else who has concerns about a child – so people know what the thresholds are for early help services and local authority children’s social care.

Everyone working with children and young people has a shared responsibility to keep them safe and provide effective, efficient and co-ordinated services to support their health and happiness.

Referrals to services

If there is concern about a child and they need to be referred to receive services there are four different levels of support available:

- 1. Low level needs** where the needs of the child is relatively low and where individual services and services available to all Derby and Derbyshire residents (known as “universal services”) may be able to help the youngster without any other agency/organisation having to be involved.
- 2. Emerging needs** where a range of early help services may be needed, co-ordinated by an early help assessment (previously known as the Common Assessment Framework or CAF) to help a child, if there are concerns or if their needs are unclear, not known, or not being met.
- 3. Complex or serious needs** where a child could be at risk of serious harm, or their development damaged, if help and services are not given. The youngster would be considered a “child in need” under section 17 of The Children Act (1989) under a specialist, in-depth assessment and following this a social worker would organise an initial co-ordination of services, at the least.
- 4. Child protection concerns** where there is reason to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm because of abuse or neglect. Under section 47 of The Children Act (1989) local authority children’s social care must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken to protect the child.

The majority of children across the city and county will have low level needs, with fewer having emerging needs, and even less youngsters having complex or serious needs. Child protection concerns will affect the smallest number of children.

When a child has needs services should be provided at the lowest level appropriate to support the youngster properly.

Professionals working with children and families should always try to do this in partnership with the parents or carers by involving them and working with them – unless that would cause more risk to the child.

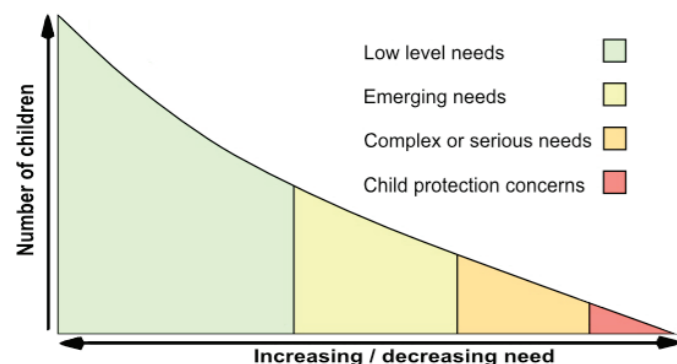
How to decide whether to request support or make a referral

When deciding to request support or make a referral it is useful to consider:

- What is life like for this child and their family? What are the child’s wishes and feelings?
- What are the parents/carers’ understanding of the situation and to what extent are they actively involved with services?
- What are the child’s – and family’s – strengths? Can these be used to help the situation?
- What support, or intervention, has been offered previously? Did these make a difference? If not, why not?
- What support, or intervention, can your organisation offer? Could this support the needs of the child and their family or is help needed from another agency? What support is needed to help them?

If you have non-urgent concerns it is useful to talk to other professionals connected to a child’s life and their family to help you make any decisions.

People working with Derby families where there is an unborn baby should also refer to the Derby City Multi Agency Protocol for Pre-Birth Assessment



and Interventions. This can be found on the local safeguarding procedures and guidance page at www.derbyscb.org.uk

Some helpful examples on page 8 and 9 should give you an idea of different thresholds, and the kind of support that should be offered. It is not a definitive list and you should always use your professional judgement when making a decision.

If you are a professional working with the child and their family and you are not sure about the level of need, or concern, you should speak to your manager, named professional leading work on behalf of the child, or the lead officer responsible for child protection.

Anyone with concerns about a child can speak to a social worker by ringing:

- **Derbyshire** – Call Derbyshire **01629 533190** or **08456 058 058**.
- **Derby** – First Contact Team **01332 641172**.

Professionals in all organisations have a responsibility to refer a child to local authority children’s social care if they believe or suspect a child has:

- Suffered significant harm.
- Is likely to suffer significant harm.

Local safeguarding children procedures should be followed, which can be found at www.derbyshirescb.org.uk and www.derbyscb.org.uk

All agencies who receive requests for support or referrals use thresholds to decide if, and what, help is needed. Consultation with partner organisations who are involved with the family are a key part of making a decision.

If a request is accepted, organisations will carry out an assessment to find out about a child’s level of need, their strengths, and risks. If appropriate, a plan will be made to match the findings of the assessment and services will be offered.

If a request does not meet an organisation’s threshold, they will provide information about suitable alternative resources that might help and, if appropriate, pass the request on to other services.

More information about types of needs

Low level needs

Where need is relatively low individual services, or “universal” services that are available to all taxpayers may be able to help, and will prevent needs from becoming more serious. The pre-assessment checklist helps professionals identify and record low level need or identify when an early help assessment may be needed and what action to take.

Emerging needs

Emerging needs are when there are concerns about a child’s wellbeing or when a child’s needs are not clear, not known or not being met and a range of early help services are required. An early help assessment should be started to identify the youngster’s needs, strengths and any appropriate services.

Professionals should consider the need for an early help assessment for a child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs.
- Has special educational needs.
- Is a young carer.
- Is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- Is living in a family where there are challenges for the child, such as substance misuse, adult mental health, domestic abuse and/or;
- Is showing early signs of neglect.

A completed early help assessment can also act as a standardised request for support to other services, and can support a referral to local authority children’s social care if required.

If a family does not agree to an early help assessment a judgement should be made whether it is likely that the child's needs will increase, or get more serious, if they do not get help. If so, a referral to local authority children's social care might be necessary.

More information about early help assessments in **Derbyshire** can be found at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/assessment. Information about Derbyshire Multi Agency Teams (MATs) is at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/MAT

Further information about the use of early help assessments and vulnerable children's meetings (VCM) for **Derby** can be found at www.derby.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-and-family-care/social-care-common-assessment-framework/. Information about Derby Children's Services

Multi Agency Teams (MATs) is at www.derby.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/safeguarding-children/safeguarding-for-professionals/

Complex or serious needs (child in need) that cannot be met through early help

Complex or serious needs, where without professional help a child would be at risk of significant harm, require a specialist in-depth assessment and co-ordination by a social worker. This can include issues which need to be resolved quite urgently, as well as children in private fostering arrangements and disabled children with complex needs. It might also include children who have special educational needs, or because they are a carer, or who have committed a crime. This assessment is known as a child in need assessment.

The Children Act (1989), section 17, states that a child shall be considered "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 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; and/or
- They are disabled.

Some children in need may require accommodation because there is nobody who has parental responsibility for them or because they are alone, abandoned, or because the person who has been caring for them cannot provide them with suitable accommodation or care. Under The Children Act (1989), section 20, the local authority has a duty to accommodate such children in need in their area.

Before serious or complex needs are identified, most children will have had an early help assessment and plan as part of work to address issues at an earlier stage, which by this stage have obviously been unsuccessful. The early help assessment, plan and review documents will support the local authority's social care assessment and analysis.

Child protection concerns, section 47

Where there is immediate need to protect a child because there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, professionals working with a child must contact local authority children's social care and/or the police directly and make a referral. Child protection concerns include worry that a child is being:

- Subjected to physical abuse.
- Subjected to emotional abuse.
- Subjected to sexual abuse.
- Neglected.

A single traumatic event might be enough to be significant harm but more often it is a build up

of significant events, both severe and long-term, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. It may also include serious events which have not yet happened but may be imminent, such as forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

In all of these circumstances an early help assessment would not be appropriate. Where there are child protection concerns a strategy discussion involving the local authority, police, health and, if needed, other agencies must take place to decide whether a section 47 enquiry is needed. The section 47 enquiry is done by the local authority, with the help of other organisations, to find out what is happening to the child and whether protective action is required, including legal action.

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 protection
- 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, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

When a local authority decides (taking into account the views of others) that a child cannot safely remain at home, consideration will be given to other arrangements including informal family options, section 20 accommodation or an application to the courts under section 31 of The Children Act (1989). In an emergency, an application may be made for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) to allow a child to be

temporarily removed from their parents' care.

Derbyshire and Derby Safeguarding Children procedures can be found at:

www.derbyshirescb.org.uk

www.derbyscb.or.uk

or via a direct link <http://derbyshirescbs.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

Below are examples of different thresholds.

These are not a definitive list and professional judgement must be applied when deciding the level of intervention and where to refer.

Level 1: Low Level Needs – universal services

Most unborn babies, children and young people will have their needs met through universal services however some may need extra support. For example children/young people who:

- Are beginning to fall behind in their developmental milestones or learning or where school attendance, punctuality or behaviour has started to deteriorate;
- Have parents/carers who need additional support and/or advice with parenting;
- Would benefit from contact with community support services i.e. a children’s centre;
- Have health issues which may require additional health services e.g. school nurse.
- Require support to access services i.e. re-school settings, dental care or to attend routine appointments.

Level 2: Emerging Needs – Multi-agency assessment and support via early help assessment process (formerly known as CAF)

For example children/young people where there appears to be/is:

- Poor nutrition or inadequate clothing, poor home conditions or risk of homelessness;
- Low level self harm or substance misuse;
- Family circumstances which present challenges for a child or unborn baby i.e. parental substance misuse, mental health problems or low level domestic abuse;
- Poor attendance, disengagement or at risk of exclusion from school or post 16 education, training or employment;
- Disabilities (low level needs) or health needs (chronic);
- Significant behavioural difficulties, or involvement in, or risk of, offending;
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood, including the risk of early parenthood;
- A young carer who appears to be coping;
- Low level risk of child sexual exploitation or are beginning to go “missing”;
- Parental conflict or lack of parental support/ boundaries.

Level 3: Complex or Serious Needs – Specialist assessment and co-ordination via a Social Worker – “Child in Need” Section 17, Children Act 1989

For example children or young people:

- With a disability (medium/high level needs) or significant mental health needs;
- Who are aged 16 plus and are homeless;
- At medium risk of child sexual exploitation or are persistently “missing”;
- Who are young carers and are not coping and/or with unmet needs;
- Whose parents are experiencing difficulty in providing a reasonable standard of parenting, including parents who have a physical or learning disability, have mental ill health issues, are seriously ill or misuse substances (this includes unborn babies);
- Living in a situation where there is repeated or serious domestic violence (this includes unborn babies) or are age 16/17 and are a victim/perpetrator of domestic abuse;
- Living in families where there is a likelihood of family breakdown;
- Whose behaviour has been sexually harmful;
- Who are living in a private fostering arrangement;
- Where early intervention attempts to improve the situation have been unsuccessful.

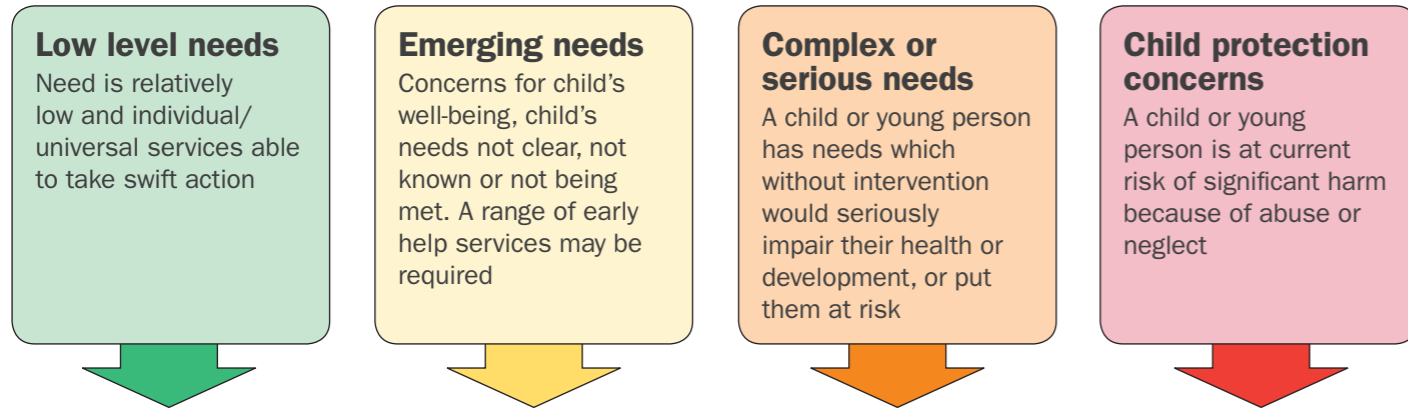
Level 4: Child Protection Concerns – specialist local authority enquiries and intervention – Section 47, Children Act 1989

For example children or young people:

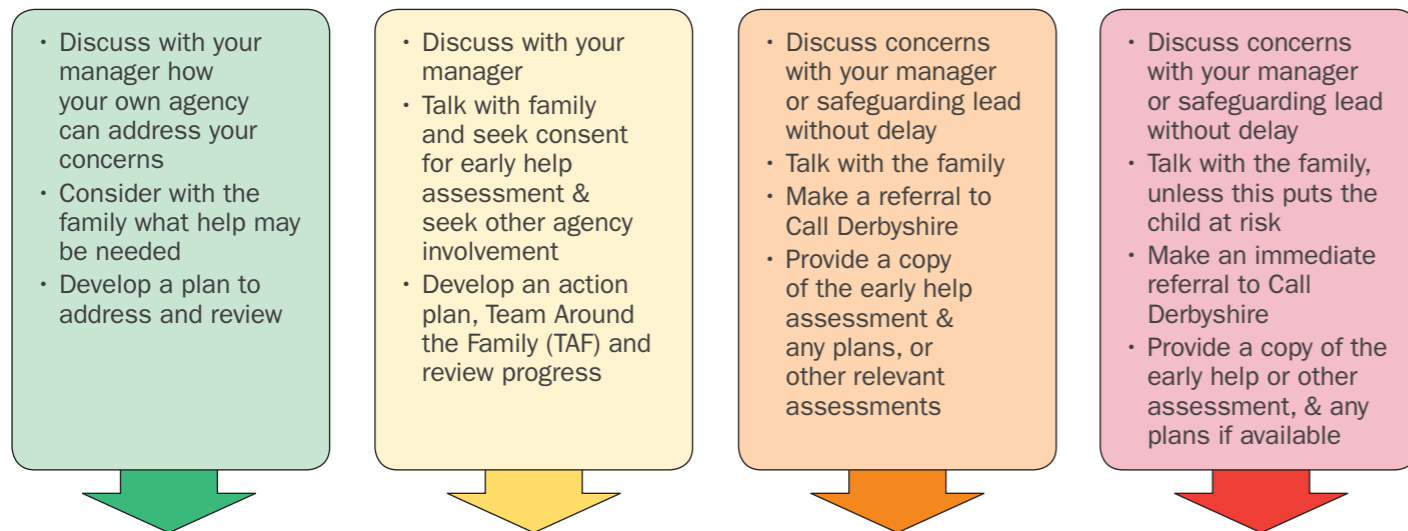
- With non-accidental, unexplained injuries or suspicious injuries;
- Who have alleged abuse;
- Who are in contact with an individual identified as a risk to children;
- Who have suffered, or are suffering neglect or emotional abuse that is significantly impairing their development;
- Whose care is significantly affected by parental difficulties such as serious substance misuse, serious high risk domestic abuse, significant mental health issues or leaning disability (this includes unborn babies);
- Who are imminent at risk of honour based violence, forced marriage or FGM;
- At high risk of child sexual exploitation or high risk “missing”.

Derbyshire: If you are concerned about a child, young person or family

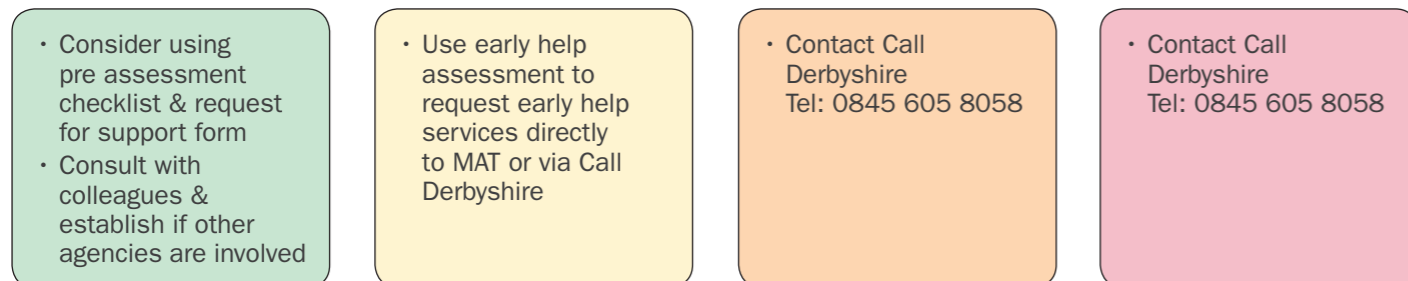
Step 1: What is the nature of your concern?



Step 2: What action should you take?

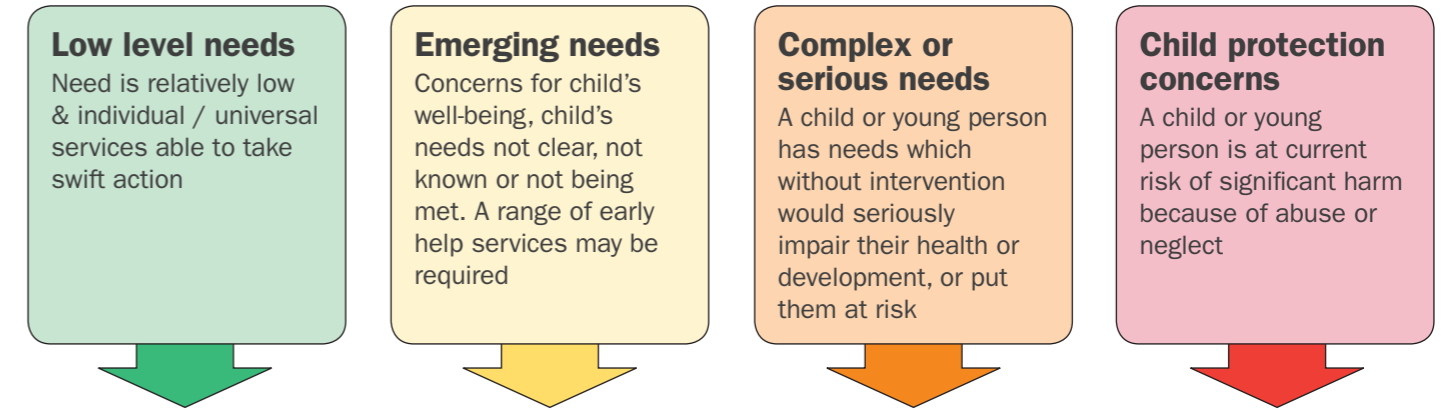


Step 3: Follow up if you need to make a request for support or a referral

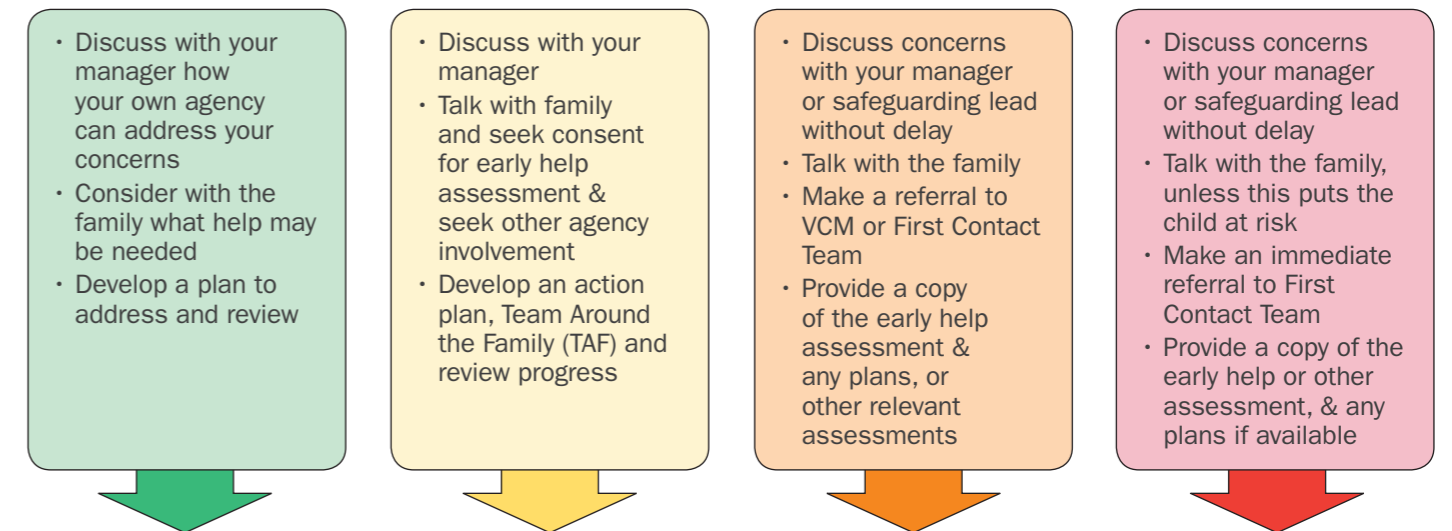


Derby City: If you are concerned about a child, young person or family

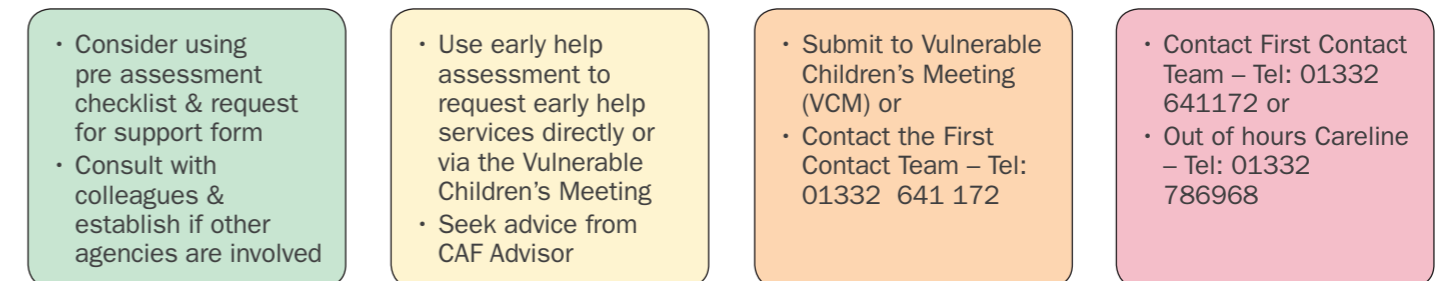
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