

Right Help, Right Service, Right Time

Working together to promote children's welfare; providing help and support when needed (Adopted Jan 2026)



Threshold Guidance for all Practitioners Working with Children

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This guidance is interactive and designed to help you identify current issue and their impact on the child and family.

Lookout for this icon  as it indicates an interactive feature.



Introduction

Right Help, Right Service, Right Time, is Torbay's Multi Agency Continuum of Needs document and is essential guidance for everyone who works with children and their families. It outlines how local practitioners work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children across Torbay.

This document replaces Torbay's previous threshold document, adopted in September 2020. It has been updated and revised to clarify differing needs of children and families and assist practitioners when applying professional judgement in addressing need.

It aims to strengthen a shared understanding of how we can make sure that children and families receive the right help at the earliest opportunity, often from the service or professional who knows them the best.

The document has been developed with partner agency professionals, who are committed to strong multi-agency working to ensure we are achieving the best for all Torbay's children.

It sets out a clear understanding and provides guidance for all practitioners to apply when working with children and their families with a shared goal of putting children and their families at the centre of everything we do.

This revised guidance builds on the strengths and learning from previous documents. It assists and guides practitioners to appropriate interventions and services available to assist in addressing the needs of the children and their families.

It also provides links to relevant policies and legislation that underpins the guidance document; 'Right Help, Right Service, Right Time'.

What role do I play?

All practitioners in Torbay who work with children and families, have a vital role to play in building positive and trusting relationships. This enables them to better recognise children's needs and act quickly and proportionately to prevent risks escalating further.

The Torbay Safeguarding Children's Partnership (TSCP) expects practitioners to work restoratively, i.e. 'doing with families' as opposed to 'doing to families' and ultimately work in an open and transparent manner.



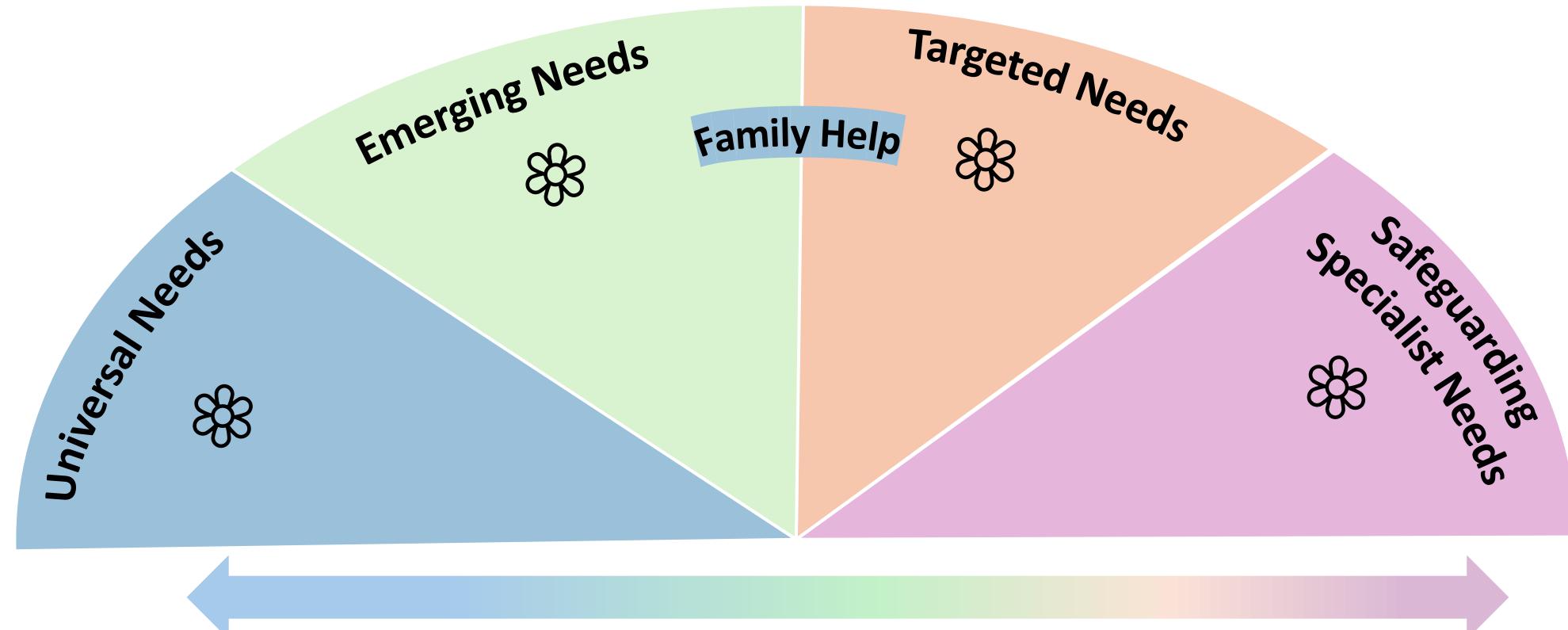
Understanding the Guidance

This guidance sets out the different needs experienced by children, young people and their families within Torbay. The guidance can be used by all agencies including voluntary services.

The guidance aims to assist practitioners and their managers to effectively identify current needs and assist them in responding appropriately to such need; this will ensure children, and their families receive the right support at the right time.

While many children's needs can be met through universal services such as health and education, some children and families may have additional emerging needs, that require timely support to prevent increased vulnerability and the potential need for further or specialist services.

It is acknowledged that some children will require a more urgent response, where there is reason to believe a child has suffered or likely to suffer significant harm, and as such safeguarding processes and procedures need to be followed.



The 7 Golden Rules for Safe Information Sharing

Rule 1

Data protection laws are not a barrier

Data regulations are not meant to stop us from sharing important information for safety reasons. When there are serious worries about a child's safety we must prioritise child protection.

Rule 2

Be open and transparent

Inform individuals what data you hold, why it may be shared, and who needs to access it, unless doing so increases risks. Obtain consent when possible

Rule 3

Seek advice when unsure

If you are unsure about sharing, talk with your manager, safeguarding lead, or other advisors without mentioning specific people/names. They can guide you.

Rule 4

Seek consent where possible

Respect someone's choice if they can decide for themselves not to share information. But remember the rules still allow sharing without asking if there is a real risk of serious harm.

Rule 5

Balance safety and privacy

When you are deciding what information to share for safety, think about the consequences of sharing and not sharing. Consider how it affects the situation.

Rule 6

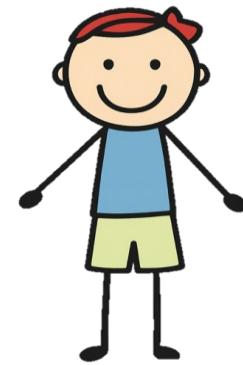
Share information when needed and necessary

Share information when needed, just enough, and at the right time securely.

Rule 7

Document the sharing process and rationale

Record what was shared, with whom, how and when, to evidence that the appropriate information handling protocols were followed.



Consent

Consent from the family is required for any consideration of intervention where there are 'emerging' needs and/or 'targeted' needs. If there are specialist / safeguarding needs, there is an expectation of notifying the family of the concerns, but not if it may place the child at imminent or further risk of harm.

Universal Needs

Emerging Needs

Targeted Needs

Safeguarding /
Specialist I Needs

If practitioners remain unsure, please
consult with your line manager or
safeguarding lead within your organisation

Consent needed at each level of need

No identified unmet needs

Consent from the Family required for any referral for family help support.

Consent from the Family required for any referral for family help support.



If there is reason to believe that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm, consent is not required when making a formal referral to Torbay Children's Services, albeit good practice suggests that the family should be informed, but not if it places the child at further risk of harm. Consult with your line manager or safeguarding lead if you are unsure. Please call 999 if there is a suggestion of imminent risk of harm to a child.

Resources

We have compiled a list of resources to help meet each level of need. This includes:

- Local partner support agencies
- Family Help Assessment and Referrals
- Resources and Help



Universal Needs



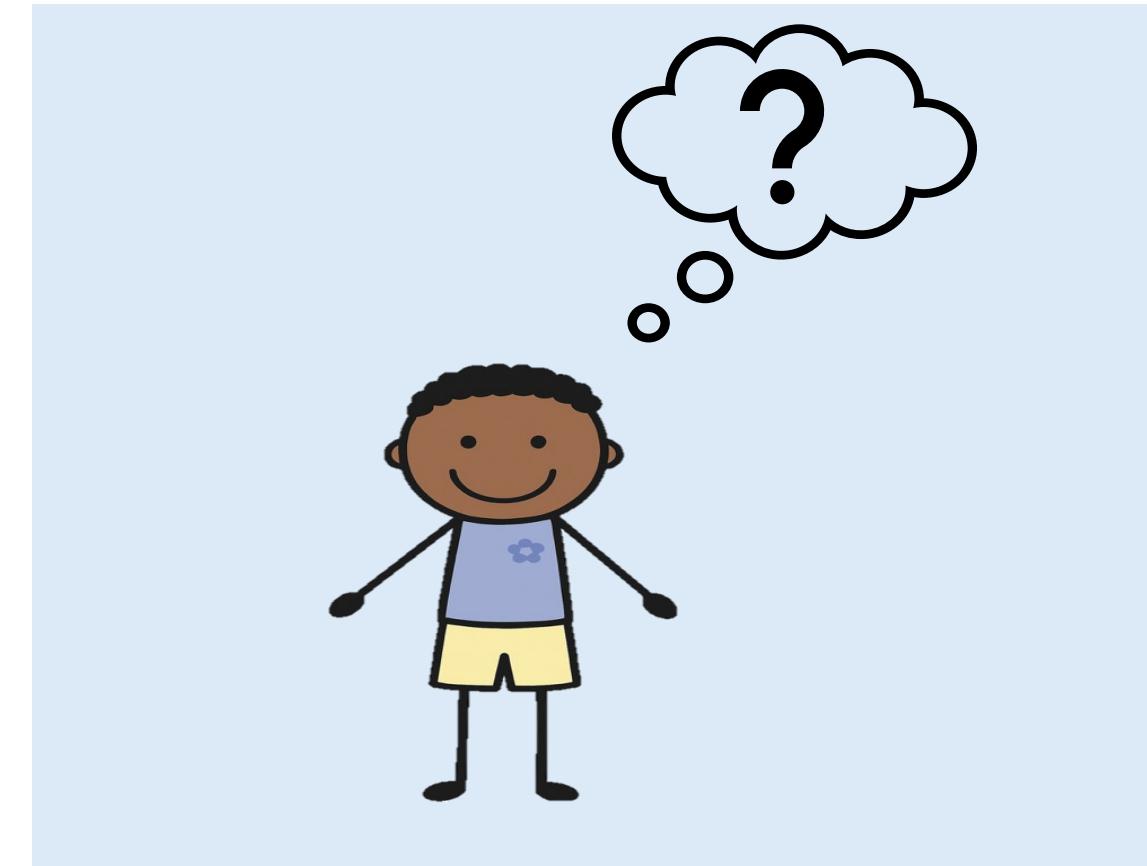
Emerging Needs



Targeted Needs



Safeguarding / Specialist Needs



Professional Differences

What if there are disagreements about decisions and you are still worried about a Child?

There may be situations where consensus about the best way to meet a child's needs cannot be reached between practitioners, in such circumstances you should discuss the case with your line manager or the designated lead for safeguarding within your own organisation.

If following this discussion consensus cannot be reached, the issue should be progressed in line with the TSCP Professional Differences Policy.

Whilst ongoing discussions are taking place between practitioners, should a child be in a situation where they are considered to be at immediate risk of harm, you should contact the Police on 999.



For more information please view the **TSCP Professional Differences Policy**



Supporting documents

Essential Links to documents that support this guidance

- ❖ Children Act 1989 & 2004
- ❖ Working Together 2023
- ❖ Data protection act 2018 and UK GDPR
- ❖ Human Rights Act 1998 (particularly) Article 8 - Right to Family Life.
- ❖ Restorative practice guidance
- ❖ Government new guidance - Helping Families to Thrive.
Contextual Safeguarding Policy (awaiting document)
- ❖ Exploitation Guidance and Tool-Kit
- ❖ Torbay Family Hubs
- ❖ Role of the LADO
- ❖ Family First Partnerships Programme Guide



Universal Needs

'My needs are met, and I am achieving my expected outcomes'.

Health and wellbeing

- I am meeting my developmental milestones.
- I have good hygiene.
- My clothes are well fitting and appropriate for the weather.
- All my nutritional needs are being met.
- I am appropriately cared for when unwell.
- My developmental checks and immunisations are up to date.
- I am taken to all my health appointments; including dental and optician checks.
- I have age-appropriate social and communication skills.
- My parents/carers are attuned to my emotional needs and wellbeing.

Most children's needs can be met by their family and universal services / ordinarily available services, such as education, health, community or voluntary agencies and leisure services. Children at Universal level, make good progress in most areas of their development.

Education and training

- I have good attendance at school /nursery.
- I receive appropriate stimulation, activities, boundaries and guidance.
- I have good relationships with my friends.
- I am achieving my educational milestones.
- I have a good level of self-esteem.
- I have plans and aspirations for my future.



Family and environment

- I have secure relationships and positive attachments with my parents/carers.
- I live in a suitable home environment and have consistent care arrangements.
- Those caring for me, are active and engaged in protecting me at home and in the community.

Social relationships/engagement

- My parents / carers provide me with stability.
- I am provided with support from my immediate / wider family members and have protective and supportive networks.
- My parents / carers can financially provide for me.

Emerging needs

"I may need some extra help alongside Universal Services to meet my needs".

Health and wellbeing

- I am not being taken to/ have poor attendance at medical appointments.
- I am starting to fall behind with meeting my developmental milestones.
- I have a disability/health need that requires additional support; e.g. diabetes, asthma, soiling.
- My diet / hygiene /sleep routine is impacting on my health and wellbeing.
- I am experiencing difficulties with my emotional wellbeing and self esteem.
- I have frequent illnesses / infections / minor injuries.
- I have begun to experiment with drugs and /or alcohol.
- I have started to experiment / present with sexualised behaviour that is not appropriate for my age.

Education and training

- I have some identified learning needs that requires support.
- I am starting to miss some school / nursery.
- I do not have opportunities for new experiences and learning with my parents / carers.
- I sometimes don't want to go to school.
- I struggle with concentration / motivation to learn.
- I have received suspensions from school.
- I am over 16 but currently I am not in any education, employment or training (NEET).



Children and their families have additional or emerging needs that are starting to impact on their daily life. The needs cannot be met through Universal Services alone and these children and their families require additional support.

Family and environment

- My parents / carers are not managing to meet my basic care needs and emotional needs consistently.
- My parents / carers are struggling with their own emotional needs.
- I experience inconsistent attachments with my parents/carers.
- My parents / carers need support, but they miss appointments or do not answer the phone to services.
- I am sometimes left on my own at home, when this is inappropriate for my level of maturity.
- We may lose our home as our rent has not been paid and there are financial concerns.
- I have inconsistent care arrangements.
- I live in a house which is overcrowded and where there is limited heating and cooking facilities.
- I am living with family where there are concerns about the use of drugs / alcohol.
- I live with my parents / carers who are often falling out to the point of shouting and fighting.

Social relationships/ engagement

- I am a young carer for my parent / parents.
- I struggle to make friends and to build sustaining relationships with children and adults.
- I am a child who is presenting with increasing problem behaviours, which my parents and school are finding difficult to manage.
- I have started to go missing from home.
- We have arguments and issues with our neighbours & wider community.

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Targeted needs

"My needs are more extensive. I need services to work together to improve my wellbeing."

Health and wellbeing

- I am not being provided with adequate food/nutrition, and I have no routine, which is impacting on my sleep.
- I am experiencing re-occurring health problems.
- My hygiene needs are not being met, and I am not being supported to care for myself.
- I am not registered with a GP - my parents have not registered me.
- I have fallen behind in my developmental milestones and there is evidence of delay.
- My primary care needs are not being consistently met.
- I am not being taken to essential health appointments & health advice is not consistently sought in a timely manner.
- I have complex and/or multiple health issues being met by a variety of health professionals.
- I have mental health needs that require additional support.
- I regularly use drugs and /or alcohol.
- I present with sexualised behaviour that is not appropriate for my age.

Education and training

- I am missing school frequently.
- I have received several fixed-term exclusions and have experienced at least one permanent exclusion.
- I am reluctant to leave school at the end of the day to return home.
- I have experienced several school changes.
- I have limited access to toys and stimulation through play.
- I am a child / young person who is struggling to cope with everyday life.
- I am experiencing a serious lack of appropriate stimulation and opportunities to meet my full potential.



Family and environment

- I experience poor routines and appropriate boundaries and am exposed to unsafe situations.
- I experience poor supervision and care arrangements.
- I am exposed to repeated incidents of domestic abuse and many incidents of my parents fighting.
- My family have financial difficulties that prevent them meeting my basic care needs.
- My parents have mental health needs which is impacting on their parenting capacity to meet my needs.
- My parents have been offered support to help improve things for me, they do not want services to be involved with our family
- My parents are frequently misusing substances, which is impacting on their ability to meet my needs.
- My parents have a learning disability that impacts on their care of me.
- Our family is imminently at risk of homelessness.

Social relationships/engagement

- I present with challenging and disruptive behaviour that puts my-self or others or in danger.
- My challenging and disruptive behaviour impacts on my daily life, my achievements and on my relationships with both my immediate and extended family.
- I am going missing from home regularly and often for long periods.
- My friends are involved with the police, I am getting involved with risky and unsafe situations .
- Our family is at risk of serious harassment from members of our community.
- My family frequently move home and this impacts on my stability and wellbeing.

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Safeguarding / specialist needs

'I am a child at risk of abuse or neglect. I could also be a child with a disability'.

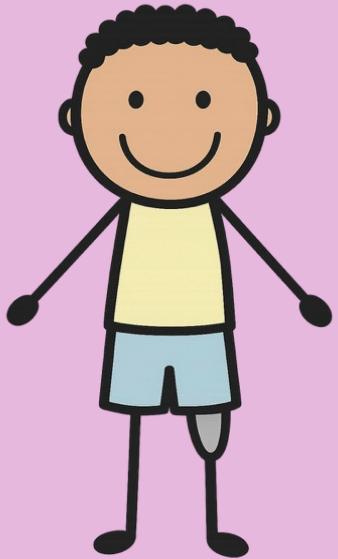
Health and wellbeing

- I have complex/multiple health needs and/or disabilities and there are concerns my needs are not being met consistently.
- I am significantly under/overweight.
- I am often hungry, tired and my hygiene needs are not being met.
- I am suffering with developmental delay because my needs are not being met by my parents/carers.
- I am a child who is at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM).
- I use alcohol or drugs to help me cope, this impacts on my health and safety.
- I am being subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse and /or neglect.
- I'm a baby and can't move on my own but I have unexplained bruises or marks.
- My parents/carers make me ill on purpose or pretend I'm ill.
- I am an unborn child whose parents are not engaging with midwifery services.
- I'm under 16 and pregnant, and my family is unaware.
- I am an unborn child my parents are using alcohol/illicit substances which will likely impact on my wellbeing.
- I am ignored as a child and my voice is not heard, meaning I lack confidence and have poor self-esteem.
- I have serious and complex mental health needs/behaviours where there is risk to self or others.

Children and families have needs which cannot be met through early help or targeted services and require specialist support from a statutory agency. This applies where there is 'reasonable cause' to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm as defined by the Children Act 1989. This also includes concerns relating to 'harmful practices' such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation or risk external to the family home.

Education and training

- I don't go to school because my parents don't send me.
- My parents keep me home to take care of my siblings.
- I do not go to school due to being called names because I smell, and my clothes aren't clean.
- My non-attendance at school is seriously impairing my educational development and ability to meet my full potential.
- I have restricted opportunities to be mobile and learn; e.g. I am strapped in a pram or car seat for long periods of time.



Family and environment

- My parents / carers have been prosecuted by Court for violent / sexual offences.
- I am an unborn child whose parents have previously had children removed from their care.
- I am living in a home where a person also lives, or visits, who is identified as a person who poses a risk to children.
- I am a child who is being exposed to frequent and serious domestic abuse and or violence between my care givers.
- My family has no recourse to public funding.
- I am an unaccompanied asylum seeker child.
- I'm under 16 and live with someone who isn't my close family as part of a private arrangement.
- My parents have a learning disability that significantly impacts on their care of me.
- I am a child who is at risk of forced marriage or 'honour' based abuse by my family members.
- My parents are persistent substance misusers, and they cannot meet my needs, which is impacting on my health, development and safety.
- My parents have significant mental health difficulties, and they cannot meet my needs, which is impacting on my health, development and safety.
- My parents are not attending their appointments to get help with their problems, which significantly impacts on their care of me.

Social relationships/engagement

- My behaviour is getting worse, and it's making things more dangerous for me.
- I'm being abused by other children.
- I'm abusing other children.
- People around me, whether at school, online, or in my neighbourhood, are putting me at risk.
- I am spending time with people who are forcing me to do things that are harmful to me.
- I am a child who is at risk of harm from sexual / criminal exploitation / radicalisation.
- There are problems in my community, and people have made threats against me and my family.
- I'm away from home for long periods, and my family often doesn't know where I am or report me missing.
- The police are getting to know me more because of my behaviour.

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Universal Needs Resources

Partner support agencies

- Midwifery
- Schools, early years settings,
- Housing and finance advice and support,
- family hubs,
- Children's centres and youth centres,
- GP surgeries,
- libraries,
- Maternity services, Specialist public health or community nurses
- Community connectors.
- Primary Health Care Services
- Community Health Care
- Voluntary and Community Service
- Youth Services
- Social Prescribing Teams
- Neurodiversity Navigators

Assessments and referrals

- Tommy Wellbeing plan - Plan written by pregnant mothers prior to birth
- The Mother's Object Relations Scales
- NBO - Newborn Observations
- Torbay's Multi Agency Continuum of Needs document
- The Big Brush Club - Oral Health support
- The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)
- Family Group Decision Making



Resources and help

- Universal Support Service - Torbay Family Hub
- Support for children and families
- Space Youth Services | Unlocking Potential with Young People | Youth Centres Devon | Youth Clubs Devon | Youth Help Devon | Online Youth Work | Digital Youth Work
- Quids4Kids - Citizens Advice Devon
- The Mental Health Support Team in Schools (MHST) - Children and Family Health Devon
- Youth and Family Work - YMCA
- Young Devon | Young Devon
- Home | Esteem team Autism enabling Esteem team | Devon
- No Limits Cafe
- Alternative Education Provision
- Neurodiversity Parent Support Program - Sensory Differences - Family Hub
- Speech, Language & Communication Needs

Emerging Needs Resources

Partner support agencies

- Midwifery
- Schools, early years settings,
- Housing and finance advice and support,
- family hubs,
- Children's centres and youth centres,
- GP surgeries,
- libraries,
- Maternity services, Specialist public health or community nurses
- Community connectors.
- Primary Health Care Services
- Community Health Care Voluntary and Community Service
- Youth Services
- Social Prescribing Teams

Assessments and referrals

-  Torbay Family Help
- GCP2 - Practitioners
- Whooley questions Recognizing Depression
- General Anxiety Disorder Assessment - GAD 7



Resources and help

-  Torbay Family Hub
-  Independent Living Online Course
-  Home to School Transport
-  Apps for Mental Health & Wellbeing
-  Monthly Housing - Cost of Living Survey
-  Parent and Carer Support Advice Line
-  Parenting and Play Coffee Mornings
-  PEGS - Child to Parent Abuse support Leaflet
-  WHO's in charge - Child to parent abuse
-  Play Torbay - Outdoor activities
-  Relate Leaflet
-  Support for Military Parents Leaflet
-  Reducing Relationship Conflict Info
-  Check Point - Young People drop in advice
-  Youth Homeless Prevention Team
-  Parenting Programmes

Targeted Needs Resources

Partner support agencies

- Family Help Panel,
- Family support,
- health professionals, mental health services, special education needs support services,
- Jobcentre plus,
- school attendance and exclusion support,
- domestic abuse services,
- alternative provision,
- housing services,
- police, substance misuse services
- targeted youth services.
- Prevention Service
- Torbay Youth Justice Service
- CAMHS



Assessments and referrals

- ✿ Family Help Assessment
- ✿ Family Intervention Team (FIT)
 - GCP2 - Practitioners
- ✿ Prevention referral
 - Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)
 - Asset Plus
 - Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT).
 - Child Exploitation Toolkit
 - Respond - Neglect Toolkit for Adults and Children
 - Family Needs Health Assessment
 - Family Group Decision Making

Resources and help

- ✿ Torbay Family Hub
- ✿ Family Help Assessment
- ✿ Family Help Multi Agency Panel
- ✿ Family Intervention Team (FIT)
- ✿ Supporting Families - SEND local Offer
- ✿ TAF - Team around the Family
- ✿ Home Learning Outreach Worker Referral
- ✿ Are you Ok? - Domestic Abuse advice
- ✿ TDAS - Torbay Domestic Abuse Services
- ✿ Refuge
- ✿ Torbay Youth Justice Service - Torbay Council
- ✿ CAMHS
- **PLUS - Services listed under Universal and Emerging Needs**

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Safeguarding / Specialist Needs Resources

Partner support agencies

- Local Authority Safeguarding Teams
- CAMHS
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Services
- Care Experienced Teams
- Torbay Youth Justice Service

PLUS - Services listed under Universal Emerging and Targeted Needs

Assessments and referrals

- ❖ MASH Referral
 - GCP2 - Practitioners
 - ASSET Plus
 - Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT)
- ❖ Family Group Decision Making
 - Child Exploitation Toolkit
 - Child and Family Assessment
 - Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) - Refer only via multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Resources and help

- ❖ Torbay Family Hub
- ❖ CAMHS
- ❖ Family Intervention Team (FIT)
- ❖ Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway



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