



Devon
Safeguarding Children
Board

Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility

Threshold Tool

Practice guidance for improving outcomes for children and young people through the early identification of need and vulnerability

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Contents

Continuum of need model	4
Levels of vulnerability and need	5
Threshold matrix	6
Threshold of need and intervention criteria	7

Continuum of need model

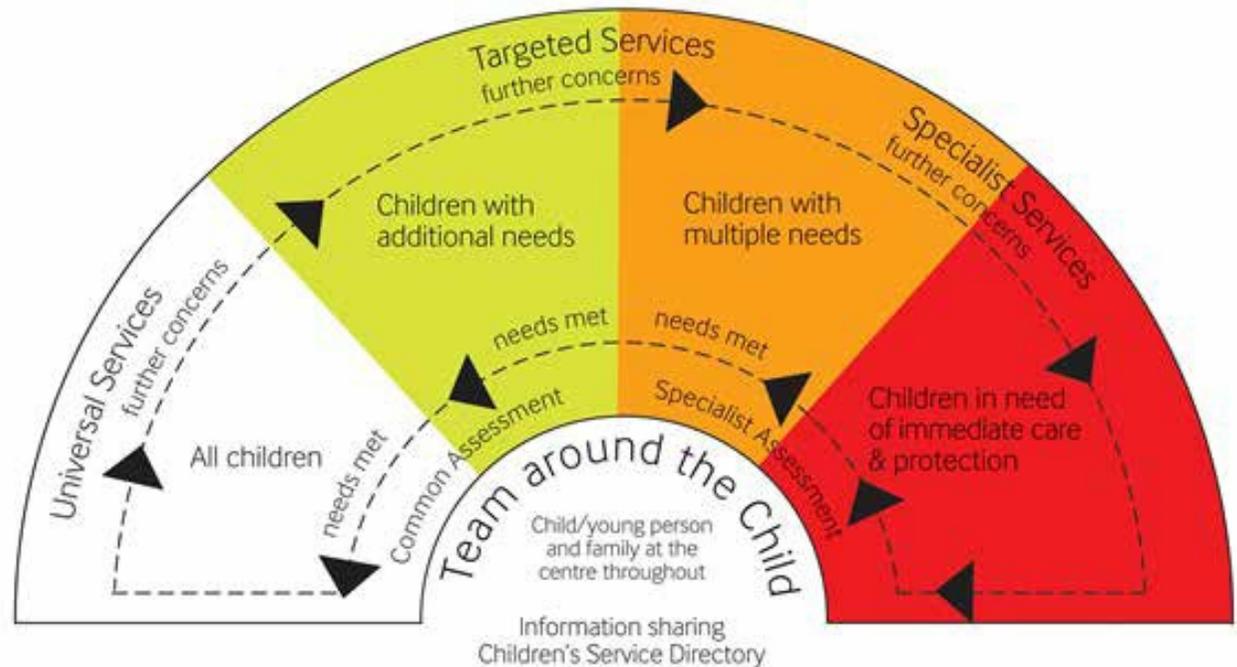
Devon's Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) has adopted the continuum of need model (developed by Torbay Safeguarding Children Board) to provide a multi-agency, whole system approach to assessment, prevention and intervention for children, young people and their families and directly support the full implementation of the Devon Assessment Framework (DAF). The adoption of the model provides consistency for professionals working across geographical areas. This dynamic model provides a needs led, outcome driven matrix of need and vulnerability which, when used effectively, can match the child/young person's needs with the appropriate assessment and provision.

The diagram describes the spectrum of support and the relationship between the different levels of need. It illustrates how a child's level of need can move forward and backwards across the continuum, highlighting the importance of integrated service delivery. It also reinforces the need for an effective seamless process to ensure continuity of care when a child or young person moves between different levels of support. The whole system approach highlights the importance of there always being a practitioner in place to co-ordinate service activity and to act as single point of contact whenever a child or young person requires integrated support.

If you have serious safeguarding concerns about a child or young person, contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 155 1071 or email mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk.

Out of hours please call 0845 6000 388.

Continuum of needs (commonly known as The Windscreen)



Levels of vulnerability and need

The DSCB’s Threshold Tool identifies four levels of vulnerability and need to assist practitioners to identify the most appropriate service response for children, young people and their families.

This tool can also be used to prioritise and develop a range of support and intervention strategies matched to the needs and strengths of the child, young person, and family.

Levels of vulnerability and need	
Level 1 Universal services	Children with no additional needs. Children who make good overall progress in all areas of universal development and receive appropriate universal services.
Level 2 Children with additional needs	Children with additional needs. Children whose health and development may be adversely affected and who would benefit from extra help in order to make the best of their life chances.
Level 3 Children with multiple needs	Children with multiple needs. Children whose health and/or development is being impaired or there is a high risk of significant impairment.
Level 4 Children in need of protection	Children who are experiencing significant harm or where there is a high likelihood of significant harm.

The descriptors and indicators set out in this document will enable partner agencies to use shared terminology and develop a shared understanding of levels of needs and vulnerability.

They provide a detailed breakdown of the three domains and dimensions of the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families:

- The child’s developmental needs
- Parenting capacity
- Family and environmental factors

The descriptors and indicators are indicative rather than definitive, but will help to provide an evidence base for professional judgement and decision making.

The descriptors and indicators cannot reflect or predict sudden changes in the child’s world and any sudden change in a child’s presentation should be

explored to establish if there is a cause for concern.

In addition, the age of the child and any protective factors that may enhance resilience need to be taken into account.

The lack of impact as a result of previous or on-going service involvement should also be noted as a concern.

The Threshold Matrix on page 6 of this document can be used to create a profile of individual needs and vulnerability. It is not necessary to complete all areas of the matrix if you do not have the evidence to do so and it is not an area of concern.

The needs of children and young people rarely fit into neat categories, and often change over time. The threshold matrix has been designed to inform the early identification of vulnerability and need and can be used to start the process to clarify concerns and/or monitor progress.

Devon Threshold Matrix

Threshold Matrix	Name of child:	Date									
		Level 1	Level 2			Level 3			Level 4		
Development (1: Health)	General Health										
	Physical & Sensory Development										
	Speech, Language and Communication										
Development (2: Wellbeing)	Emotional and Social										
	Behaviour										
	Identity, Self-esteem, Image										
	Family and Social Relationships										
Development (Learning)	Self Care Skills and Independence										
	Understanding, Reasoning & Problem Solving										
	Participation in Education or Work										
	Progress and Achievement in Learning										
Parents and Carers	Aspirations										
	Basic Care / Ensuring Safety and Protection										
	Emotional Warmth and Stability										
Family & Environmental Factors	Guidance, Boundaries and Stimulation										
	Family History, Functioning and Well-being										
	Wider family										
	Housing, Employment and Finances										
Vulnerability Assessment	Social and Community Elements										
	Universal	Universal	Low	Med	High	L	M	H	L	M	H
	Level 1: Universal Services	Plot these descriptors on this matrix with a check mark or an x to give a visual representation of the child or young person's level of need. The matrix reflects your professional judgement and informs decision making. You should then follow your agency's procedures for escalating your concerns, for example for Levels 2 and 3 you might refer this to your line manager for further action, whilst Level 4 will go to MASH, either via your line manager or directly.									
	Level 2: Children with additional needs										
Level 3: Children with complex additional needs											
Level 4: Children in need of protection											
Any other comments/remarks/issues, for example cultural or language considerations or additional observations:											

Threshold of need and intervention criteria

Development of child or young person 1 - Health		Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators		
Level 1 Requires universal services only		Children & young people who need additional help		
		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
General health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physically well Adequate diet/hygiene/clothing Developmental checks/immunisations up-to-date Health appointments are kept Regular dental/optical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overweight/underweight Concerns re diet/hygiene/clothing Starting to miss on health appointments Defaulting on immunisation/checks Susceptible to minor health problems Not registered with GP/dentist Soiling/wetting self Low level substance misuse A & E attendance giving cause for concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic health problems with a severe impact on every-day functioning Failure to access appropriate health care Persistent excessive alcohol consumption, smoking or other substance misuse Serious mental health issues Pregnancy and STIs (see glossary for explanation of STIs) in young person under 16 Multiple A & E attendances causing concern Frequent unexplained minor injuries and/or delay in seeking medical attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to thrive Suspected non-accidental injury/abuse /neglect Class A /serious drug misuse Acute and serious mental or physical health needs or behavioural difficulties, including life-threatening self harm, suicide Children who are accessing acute health services including sexual health clinics which indicates significant harm
Physical & sensory development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and sensory development milestones are met Age appropriate involvement in physical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow in reaching developmental milestones Sensory developmental delay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant physical disability Serious developmental delay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profound/severe and/or multiple disabilities with significant unmet need
Speech, language & communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age appropriate development re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluency of speech and confidence Willingness to communicate Verbal and non-verbal comprehension Language structure and vocabulary and articulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reluctant communicator Not understanding age-appropriate instructions Confused by non-verbal communication Difficulty listening for an appropriate length of time Immature structure of expressive language Speech sounds immature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe disorder and impairment in understanding spoken language Communication difficulties have a severe impact on every-day life Requires alternative or augmented means of communication 'frozen watchfulness' (see glossary for explanation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexually inappropriate language/vocabulary for age

Development of child or young person 2 - Wellbeing

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

		Children & young people who need additional help			
Level 1 Requires universal services only		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
Emotional & social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Good quality early attachments ■ Feelings and actions demonstrate appropriate responses ■ Able to adapt to change ■ Able to demonstrate empathy ■ Involved in leisure and other social activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Difficulties in relationships with peer group and/or with adults ■ Over-friendly or withdrawn with strangers ■ Finds coping with change difficult even with support ■ Difficulties expressing empathy ■ Impulsive/lacks self-control ■ Child causing concerns over use of internet and/or social media ■ Concerns about possible bullying/cyberbullying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disordered attachments that have a severe impact ■ Relates to strangers indiscriminately without regard for safety or social norms, parents' awareness of risk appears limited ■ Reaction to change triggers prolonged inability to cope ■ Phobias and other psychological difficulties at a clinically significant level ■ Association with delinquent/ substance misusing/ serious risk taking peers ■ Suffers from periods of serious depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Endangers own life through self harm/substance misuse/eating disorder ■ Child has suffered or may have suffered physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect/has been subject to Looked After Children (LAC) proceedings ■ Involved in child sexual exploitation or trafficking 	
	Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disruptive/challenging behaviour, including in school or early years setting ■ Concerns about sexual development and behaviour ■ Child suspected of having inappropriate relationship with adult or peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Disruptive/challenging behaviour at school and in neighbourhood and at home ■ At risk of permanent exclusion ■ Regularly missing from education, employment or training (NEET) ■ Young person regularly involved in anti-social criminal activities/violent/ risk taking behaviour ■ Young person subject to anti social behaviour order (ASBO) or acceptable behaviour contract (ABC) ■ Child suspected to be involved in child sexual exploitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Significant evidence child is involved in child sexual exploitation ■ Puts self or others in danger through reckless activity ■ Disappears or is missing from home for long periods ■ Multiple criminal incidents/ involvement in activities that would constitute arrestable offences/ behaviour that would constitute criminal activity ■ Sexual development and behaviour which may be indicative of abuse 	

Development of child or young person 2 - Wellbeing

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

	Level 1	Children & young people who need additional help		
	Requires universal services only	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Identify, self-esteem image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive sense of self and abilities Demonstrates feelings of belonging and acceptance An ability to express needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows lack of self-esteem Vulnerable to bullying, discrimination or harassment Limited insight into how appearance and behaviour are perceived Inclined to bully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seriously affected by persistent discrimination, e.g. on the basis of ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability Subject to severe bullying Severe bullying of others Family environment (substance misuse/poverty impacting on identity/worklessness/crime) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of drug, substance and alcohol abuse Self harming and eating disorders
Family & social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of personal and family history Stable and affectionate relationships with caregivers Good relationships with siblings Positive relationships with peers Age-appropriate friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited support from family and friends Lacks positive role models Serious conflicts with peers/siblings Difficulties sustaining relationships Children returning home following looked after episode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Looked after' children and young people Siblings of looked after children and young people with mental health or well-being issues Children and young people who have a high level of responsibility for others (e.g. parents, siblings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child subject to a Child Protection Plan Child has suffered or may have suffered serious physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect including possible child sexual exploitation Child presents as severely neglected
Self care skills and independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing level of competencies in practical and emotional skills Good level of personal hygiene Gaining confidence and skills to undertake activities away from the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendships and relationships inappropriate for age Not always adequate self-care, e.g. poor hygiene Slow to develop age-appropriate self-care skills Failing to develop confidence and skills for independence Young people living independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor self-care for age, including hygiene Young person living independently and not coping to a significant degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglect of self-care because of alternative priorities, e.g. substance misuse Neglect of young person's own child Acute and serious mental or physical health needs or behavioural difficulties impacting significantly on ability to care for self Profound/severe and/or multiple disabilities impacting on ability to care for self

Development of child or young person 3 - Learning

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

	Level 1 Requires universal services only	Children & young people who need additional help		
		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Understanding, reasoning & problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Milestones for cognitive development are met ■ Demonstrates a range of skills and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Milestones for cognitive development are not met ■ Mild to moderate learning difficulties ■ Identified learning needs from School Action of SEN Code of Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Complex learning and/or disability needs ■ Serious developmental delay ■ Additional special educational needs support including Education, Health and Care Plan. 	
Participation in education or work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to educational provision appropriate to age and ability ■ Access to employment (including work based learning) appropriate to age and ability ■ Regularly attends education or training, or in full-time work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor school/early years attendance/ punctuality ■ Gaps in school/learning ■ Behaviour likely to lead to risk of exclusion ■ Multiple changes of school/early years setting ■ No access to early developmental experiences ■ Often appears tired in school which appears to impact on participation and achievement ■ Not accessing work-appropriate skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parent/child subject of statutory intervention for poor attendance; persistent poor attendance with parental acceptance ■ Multiple fixed-term exclusions ■ At risk of or permanently excluded ■ Multiple changes of school without notification ■ Has no school place and meets hard to place criteria ■ Emotionally-based school refuser ■ Not in education, employment or training and experiencing barriers to progress 	
Progress and achievement in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acquiring a range of skills and interests ■ No concerns about achievement or cognitive development ■ Access to books/toys, play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Requires a modified curriculum and timetable ■ Learning expectations are not met ■ Not making progress in line with national expectations or children with similar needs across the ability range ■ Cannot access age appropriate resources for learning and play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Requires alternative curriculum/ timetable ■ Unable to access mainstream curriculum ■ Not making progress in spite of intervention ■ Educational (or social or mental health needs) may result in educational placement out of school or away from home 	
Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well motivated and self-confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seeing little or no value in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Total disengagement from learning 	

Parents and carers

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

		Children & young people who need additional help		
Level 1 Requires universal services only		Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Basic care and ensuring safety and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides for child's physical needs, e.g. appropriate nutrition, clothing and medical care ■ Protects from danger and harm in home and elsewhere ■ Parents able to meet child's needs and know how and where to access support ■ Works effectively with services in best interests of the child or young person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parent unable or unwilling to provide appropriate supervision ■ Parents struggling to meet child or young person's needs without support ■ Child's disability makes parenting challenging ■ Poor social skills of parents and/or child ■ Child or young person exposed to hazards/risks ■ Parent struggling or unwilling to prioritise child's needs over their own ■ Parents over-controlling ■ Evidence of domestic abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food, warmth and basic care erratic and inconsistent ■ Parent struggling to provide 'good enough' care with significant impact on child ■ Parents involved in criminal activity significant impact on child welfare ■ Parents' mental health or substance misuse significantly affect care of children ■ Ongoing serious domestic abuse ■ Parents unable to safely care for their other children ■ Inability to recognise child's needs such that child's development may be significantly impaired ■ Parents not offering adequate supervision to child based on age, maturity and development ■ Previous history of parents unable to care for children ■ Parent overly controlling or inappropriate use of sanctions/punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parents unable to provide 'good enough' care that is adequate and safe which places the child at risk of significant harm ■ Persistent instability and violence in the home ■ Parents do not take appropriate action if child goes missing ■ Child not protected from sexual exploitation ■ Child left alone or unsupervised based on age, development and/or maturity ■ Allegation of serious injury/abuse ■ Pre-birth assessment identifies unborn child at risk of significant harm ■ Mental or physical health problem, learning disability or chaotic substance/alcohol misuse that severely impacts on ability to provide basic care for child ■ Unable to protect from significant harm including contact with unsafe adults ■ Allegation or reasonable suspicion of serious injury/abuse ■ Extreme / continuous domestic abuse
	Emotional warmth and stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parents provide secure and consistent care ■ Parents show appropriate warmth, praise and encouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inconsistent responses to child/young person ■ Erratic or inconsistent care from multiple carers ■ Family disputes impacting on child/young person ■ Poor home routines ■ Over-protective care which inhibits child's social and emotional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child has experienced multiple main carers ■ Parents highly critical of child and provide little warmth, praise or encouragement ■ Chaotic parenting of child/young person ■ Parents unable to exercise control of child/young person

Parents and carers		Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators		
Basic care and ensuring safety and protection	Level 1	Children & young people who need additional help		
	Requires universal services only	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sets consistent and appropriate boundaries taking account of age/ development of child/ young person ■ Enables child to access appropriate activities and to experience success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Parent provides inconsistent boundaries ■ Parent provides limited interaction/ stimulation for child ■ Child or young person spends considerable time alone ■ Lack of response to concerns raised about child or young person ■ Parent does not support access to positive new experiences or social interaction ■ Child accessing social media sites without age appropriate parental supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No effective boundaries set ■ Parents unable to provide appropriate role model ■ Development of child impaired through lack of appropriate stimulation and play ■ Persistent condoned absence from school ■ Exposure to inappropriate or harmful material and people (e.g. via internet) ■ Parents in conflict with statutory services ■ No access/no interest in accessing constructive leisure activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No effective boundaries set – child out of control/offending and developmental delay ■ Parents do not know child's whereabouts and concerns child may be associating with adults

Family and environmental factors

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

		Children & young people who need additional help			
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
		Requires universal services only			
Family history, functioning and well-being		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Good family relationships, including where parents are separated or bereavement OR parental disputes not impacting on the child and is well managed, and child is supported ■ May be mild physical or mental health difficulties in immediate family, but not impacting on child/well managed and supported ■ No concerns regarding parental engagement ■ Family stresses but coping well ■ Few significant changes in family composition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family conflicts or parental disputes that may involve children ■ History of involvement with statutory services ■ Moderate physical or mental health difficulties in immediate family ■ Difficulty with parental engagement ■ Loss of significant adult through bereavement or separation impacting significantly ■ Suspected/occasional domestic abuse ■ Multiple births/high number of young children ■ Family seeking asylum or refugees ■ Sibling/parent involved in criminal activity ■ Family not coping ■ Young carer (parent/siblings) ■ Privately fostered – unapproved or not notified ■ Living with other family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incidents of domestic abuse or substance misuse ■ Moderate mental or physical health difficulties within the immediate family ■ Family with history of CP registration/previous removal of child ■ Family involved in criminal activity/received custodial sentence ■ Family breakdown related in some way to child's behavioural difficulties ■ Evidence of female genital mutilation within the family, or significant others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Past or current incidence of abuse, neglect, serious domestic abuse or substance misuse ■ Significant mental or physical health difficulties within the immediate family ■ A person who has a conviction(s) for offences against children (sexual, physical or neglect) or paedophile poses actual or potential risk ■ Suspicion of child being taken/prepared for female genital mutilation
	Wider family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sense of larger familial network and/or good friendships outside of the family unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family is socially isolated ■ Family has poor relationships or no contact with extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Destructive relationships with wider family including historical and inter-generational issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Household members / Adult in contact with children who is subject to multi agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) or multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) meetings

Family and environmental factors

Note: this is an illustrative rather than comprehensive list of indicators

		Children & young people who need additional help			
		Level 1 Requires universal services only	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Housing, employment and finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accommodation has basic amenities and appropriate facilities ■ Parents able to manage working or unemployment arrangements adequately and do not perceive them as unduly stressful ■ Reasonable income over time with resources used appropriately to meet individual needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Barely adequate/poor/temporary accommodation ■ Housing causing family stress ■ Difficult to obtain employment due to poor basic skills ■ Parents experience continuing stress due to unemployment or 'overworking' ■ Difficulties managing household finances ■ Low level debt/in need of financial advice ■ Low income/financial hardship ■ Lack of affordability for basic amenities including household fuel and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chronic and long-term unemployment due to significant lack of basic skills or long standing issues such as substance misuse/offending, etc. ■ Serious debts/poverty impacting on ability to meet family's basic needs ■ Extreme poverty/debt, impacting on ability to care for child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accommodation places child in serious physical danger 	
	Social and community elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Generally good universal services in the neighbourhood ■ Family feels integrated into the community ■ Adequate social and friendship networks ■ Community are generally supportive of family and/or child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family not accessing universal or targeted services ■ Chronic unemployment affecting parents/ family significantly ■ Unexplained wealth ■ Family is socially excluded ■ Frequent housing moves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor quality or lack of universal and targeted services with long term difficulties accessing target populations ■ Chronic social exclusion 	



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Devon Safeguarding Children Board would like to thank the Torbay partnership for their work in developing this threshold tool document. The consistent application of thresholds will improve opportunities to safeguard children and help staff working across our borders.

Approved by the Devon Safeguarding Children Board September 2013. Reviewed March 2014.