



## Eligibility Criteria for Social Care Support Policy Children and Families

**April 2025**

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<b>Policy Approved By:</b>	HSCP Board
<b>Date Approved:</b>	
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## **1 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 The statutory definition of a “child in need” contained within the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is wide. For the purposes of planning and providing services within East Dunbartonshire, the following working interpretation of groups in need defines the basis for determining eligibility to relevant services:
- Children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development;
  - Children whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired;
  - Children with a disability;
  - Children adversely affected by the disability of any other person in their family.
- 1.2 East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) is responsible for determining where there is a need for the provision of social care support and how such need should be met. Assessment of need is a two-stage process: first the assessment of needs and then, having regard to the results of that assessment, whether the needs of that person call for the provision of support.
- 1.3 The use of eligibility criteria applies to this second stage of the assessment process. They are used to determine whether a person assessed as needing social care support requires statutory support to be put in place in order to meet those needs. Eligibility criteria are also used as a means of managing overall demand for formal services within the finite resources available.
- 1.4 The purpose of this policy is to set out the context and provide clarity about the eligibility criteria for funded social care support, for children and families, operates in East Dunbartonshire. The policy also aims to serve as a guide for staff and as a reference document for elected members, customers and members of the public.
- 1.5 This policy should be viewed within the overall context of the Fair Access to Social Care Support (Children and Families) Policy.

## **2 POLICY APPLICATION**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all service users under the age of 16. The policy also includes young people over the age of 16, up to the age of 25, where a designated children’s service continues to be provided.

- 2.2 This policy does not apply to carers or young carers, as defined by the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, for whom a separate Carers Eligibility Criteria Policy applies.

### **3 RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROCEDURAL MECHANISMS**

- 3.1 East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership's responsibilities to children and families are set out in the following legislation, policies and operational mechanisms, which are subject to change:

- The Social Work Scotland Act 1968
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Child Protection Guidance 2021
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- The NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- The Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Legislation
- The Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015
- The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

Child Protection Guidance (2021)

- 3.2 Other related policies and mechanisms:

- Child's Plan

- Duty Referral (via Advice and Response Team)
- Initial Assessment
- Integrated Comprehensive Assessment
- Fair Access to Community Care (Children and Families) Policy (2025)
- Eligibility Criteria for Adults and Young Carers Support (2021)
- Self Directed Support Policy

#### **4 CONTEXT, GENERAL APPROACH AND UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1 Eligibility criteria are a method for deploying limited resources in a way that ensures that resources are targeted to those in greatest need, while also recognising circumstances where lower-level intervention, for example, universal services, can sometimes halt the deterioration of people or exacerbation of circumstances where there is a less urgent need of support.
- 4.2 These eligibility criteria recognise 'risk' as the key factor in the determination of eligibility for social care support services. Where a child or young person is eligible, the urgency of that risk should be kept in focus in determining how and when to respond to their support needs.
- 4.3 The principles guiding practice in this policy are that supports provided or funded by East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership are intended to:
- Respond to referrals in an appropriate, proportionate and timeous manner.
  - Signposting children and their families to the most appropriate service to meet their needs.
  - The most vulnerable children and their families will get the help they need when they need it.
  - East Dunbartonshire HSCP and its partners embrace the principles and practice associated with Getting It Right for Every Child agenda (GIRFEC), The Promise and the SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators
  - Retain, support and promote maximum independence.
  - Intervene no more than absolutely necessary;
  - Compensate for the absence of alternative support or complement existing support;

- Take full account of the risk to the child, young person and/or their family if the support is not provided;
- Support and promote partnership working across all stakeholders, for example, Education, Health etc.
- Take account of the child, young person and their family's personal, community and family assets – personal: financial, skills, experience; community: clubs, libraries, church; family: friends, informal carers, circles of support.

4.4 Consideration should only be given to providing support when:

- The child or young person's family are unable to meet the need themselves, for example due to physical or mental illness, and they do not have access to adequate support from the assets described above;
- No other statutory agency has a duty to meet that need;
- Failure to respond to that need would place the child, young person and/or their family in a situation of unmanageable or unreasonable risk.

4.5 The eligibility criteria address both the severity of risks and the urgency of intervention to respond to risks. Some levels of risk will call for services or other resources as a high priority whilst others may call for some services/resources, not as a high priority but managed and prioritised either as a short term intervention or on an ongoing basis. Some may not call for any social care intervention as engagement in local community activities or services provided by the third sector may be the most appropriate way of addressing the need. In other circumstances the assessment may indicate a potential requirement for service provision in the longer term which requires to be kept under review. As part of the assessment and support planning process, it is for relevant practitioners undertaking assessment to consider how each individual's needs match against eligibility criteria in terms of severity of risk and urgency for intervention. The eligibility framework prioritises risks into three categories: *High, medium and low*

4.6 It is not appropriate simply to place children, young people or their families who require support in a date order queue. Response to need will be informed by the continuing systematic review of each party's needs, including consideration of how urgently service provision is called for and what interim measures may be appropriate pending a more permanent response.

4.7 In managing access to finite resources, the Health and Social Care Partnership will focus first on those people assessed as having the most

significant risks to their living situation or personal wellbeing. Where people are assessed as being in the *high*-risk category their needs will generally call for the immediate or imminent provision of support. Those customers will receive that support as soon as reasonably practicable.

- 4.8 Where eligibility is determined to fall into the *medium* category, the response of Social Work Services will be to provide the individual and/or their family with advice/information and/or to signpost towards direct access to community resources. Exceptions can be made where the absence of statutory social work involvement will lead to an aggravation of the child, young person or family's needs resulting in greater expense to the local authority on a later occasion. In these circumstances a short-term intervention focussed on enablement and independence can be offered. Interventions of this nature will not normally continue beyond a six-week period, but this may be extended if the benefits for so doing are demonstrable, explicitly time-limited and authorised by senior management.
- 4.9 Where eligibility is determined to fall into the *low* category, the response of Social Work Services will be to provide the child or young person's family/guardians with advice/information and/or to signpost towards direct access to community resources.
- 4.10 The effect of the HSCP's eligibility criteria is that only services that reduce an individual's risk to a medium level will normally be subject to statutory funding.
- 4.11 The arrangement of any services will continue to depend on the availability of budget and resources. Therefore, if an individual is to be given priority within the eligibility criteria, and the cost of the support package is below the cost limitations, those authorising the provision of supports will still be required to have assurance that resources are available to meet the eligible need.

## 5 PRIORITY RISK MATRIX

- 5.1 This policy adopts three categories of risk:

<b>High risk:</b>	<p>Local authorities have a duty to provide services for children;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified at risk of significant harm</li> <li>• Children who require (or are at risk) to be looked after and accommodated from home in substitute care e.g., foster care or residential care</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children who require compulsory measures of care and are made subject to supervision in the community</li> <li>The Children's Hearing can impose a legal order whereby a child or young person will be considered 'Looked After' at home or away from home.</li> </ul> <p>These children are automatically considered to have high priority needs. There will also be other children where there are serious concerns about their care. For these children, there will be serious concern about their care, health and/or development; they will have suffered or be likely to suffer significant harm. There might also be a serious risk of family breakdown.</p>
<b>Medium risk:</b>	<p>For children in this category, a reasonable standard of health and development is unlikely to be maintained without support in the family. The child may move into the high priority category without the provision of services.</p> <p>There are identifiable factors which indicate that considerable deterioration is likely without support. This may include children who have been assessed as high priority in the recent past. All children referred to the Children's Reporter will be viewed as medium priority unless their assessed needs place them in the high priority need category.</p>
<b>Low risk:</b>	<p>This would cover all other children including those whose needs may not be consistently met, for whom improvements in their circumstances may be desirable but there are no assessed or identified acute risks present. Input from social work staff is not essential to the child's wellbeing and such concerns as there may be can be addressed through universal services e.g., health visitor or school.</p>
<b>RESPONSE TIMESCALES</b>	
High	required now or within approximately 1 to 2 weeks
Medium	required within 6 weeks
Low	required within next 6 to 12 months

## 6 DEFINITION OF RISK FACTORS

6.1 The following table provides definitions of risk factors for each of the bands adopted by the Partnership. These examples are not exhaustive



but are meant to be indicative of factors giving rise to the different risk and priority needs.

**Risks relating to health:**

High	Medium	Low
Children with a high level of needs or disability requiring constant supervision, where there is a high risk of family breakdown.	Children living in an environment which could pose to their safety or wellbeing	Children with particular health needs who require referral to other services e.g., Health Visitor, Speech Therapist etc.
Situations where children are placed at physical risk within their families.	Children with a significant level of additional support/complex needs, whose parents are unable to meet their essential needs without the provision of support	
Situations where the physical care or supervision of a child is severely neglected	The physical care or supervision of the child is inadequate	
Children involved in serious substance misuse	Children who occasionally self harm	
Children who seriously self harm or manifest significant mental health concerns	Children who are not adequately protected or looked after	

**Risks relating to social, emotional and behavioural:**

High	Medium	Low
Children with behaviour which is severely challenging, including offending, which results in serious risk to the child or others, which parents are unable to manage and which	Children with behaviour which is challenging and whose parents are unable to cope without the provision of support	Children who have little opportunity to meet and play with other children due to parent's isolation or their own needs.  May require referral to a Family Centre, advice on play groups, after school



results in a high risk of family breakdown		club or other opportunities for socialisation.
Children who are experiencing acute emotional rejection by parents or carers including unrealistic expectations and are displaying behavioural manifestations of trauma indicative or reflective of damaging parenting care	Non school attendance and other associated family difficulties	
Children who have moved from another authority where they are/were subject to child protection procedures	Children involved in offending behaviour leading to the involvement of the courts or Children's Hearing	
	Children with caring responsibilities for others which are affecting their own development	

### Risks relating to family and social relationships

High	Medium	Low
Children needing to be looked after out with their own family	Children who may have to be looked after out with their family	Children experiencing inconsistent standards of parenting but whose development is not significantly impaired
Children where there has been a breakdown of the relationship with parent/carer	Children who have previously been Looked After and who now require throughcare/aftercare services	Children whose parents request advice and guidance to manage their behaviour
Child with a disability where the parent/carer is unable to cope and where there are no alternative carers and there is a risk of family breakdown.	Children who are adversely affected by familial conflict	May require referral to parenting group e.g. Triple P.
	Children experiencing several carers within their family network, creating inconsistency and insecurity for the child	

### Risks relating to the child's environment

High	Medium	Low
The child is living in an environment where there is the presence or risk of significant domestic violence	The child is living in an environment where there is a history of incidents of domestic violence	Parent/carers have chronic relationship difficulties which may affect the child. Refer to Relate, Mediation etc.
Home environment or hygiene places the child at immediate risk of significant harm	Home environment or hygiene could place the child at risk of harm	The family require advice and support regarding practical household tasks

<b>Risks relating to parental factors</b>
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High	Medium	Low
Parents/carer are suffering from severe physical or mental health problems or learning disability and lack capacity to adequately care for the child	Parent/carer has physical disability or history of mental health problems or learning disability which significantly affects their ability to care for the child	Parent/carer require information or advice to aid their continuing care of the child
Parents/carer are involved in severe alcohol or substance misuse which is immediately affecting the child's care	Parents/carer are involved in severe alcohol or substance misuse which affects their ability to care for the child	Parents/carers have chronic debts due to their inability to manage their finances
	Parents whose criminal and/or anti-social behaviour threatens the welfare of the child	

## 7. REFERRALS, ASSESSMENT AND ALLOCATION:

### 7.1 Referrals:

Referrals to children's social work services originate from a wide variety of sources, including the Children's Reporter, health, education, housing, police and members of the public. Currently, the first point of contact for all new referrals is the service's Advice and Response team.

When a child is referred to the Advice and Response Team, the referral will be passed to the advice and response worker who is responsible for the initial gathering of information including any previous referrals. The advice and response worker will then record all relevant information on Carefirst and provide an initial screening to determine eligibility for assessment.

The worker will identify key issues/concerns and make recommendation on the future action required. Child protection referrals are given the highest priority and when a child protection referral is received, the advice and response worker must discuss it immediately with the appropriate manager.

All child protection referrals must be progressed under the Child Protection procedures.

#### 7.2 Advice and Response Manager:

The manager will prioritise referrals in accordance with the eligibility criteria. Any cases not allocated must be kept under review. Any further referrals must be considered and reprioritised as required.

#### 7.3 Response Timescales (High Risk):

The HSCP aims to respond within the following timescales for those children and young people considered to meet high risk eligibility:

<b>Within 24 hrs of the time of referral</b>	Initial screening will take place to determine priority.
<b>Within a period of 10 working days</b>	In cases of high priority risk level, an initial assessment and accompanying child's plan will commence. The appropriate manager will decide on the most appropriate action.
<b>Within a further 10 working days</b>	In cases of high priority risk level, identification of the requirement for an integrated comprehensive assessment will be undertaken and referred to the appropriate Children and Families Team to await allocation.
<b>Within a period of 12 weeks from the date of referral</b>	An integrated comprehensive assessment in relation to high risk need cases will be completed. A child's plan will detail the interventions and range of services required to support the family.
<b>Longer term allocations</b>	Longer term allocations will be maintained by the allocated social work team. Cases will be reviewed as per statutory and good practice requirements involving children, their parents and relevant agencies in this process.

**N.B: Timescales will be subject to demand**

#### 7.4 High Priority Need:

Child protection referrals will always be given the highest priority. Children deemed as requiring immediate assessment or intensive support are likely to be referred through the advice and response system, although in some cases the referral may be made to an

already allocated social worker. When referred through the Advice and Response, the initial assessment is likely to indicate the need for an Integrated Assessment at an early stage.

When allocating social worker time and other resources the focus will be on providing a service to those whose needs have been defined as the greatest. Work in relation to medium or low priority need will only be allocated when the team manager responsible decides that this would not jeopardise the interest of children and families defined as in high priority need.

Inevitably this will mean that, on occasion, work which may be a priority for others (external agencies or within our own service) cannot be attended to immediately. There will be support from Senior Management for the team manager and social worker who have referred to the Eligibility Criteria and taken a professional and balanced decision about the allocation of resources. Work with children and families in high priority need will be undertaken by qualified social workers. Other staff may be involved in specific pieces of work as agreed in the child's plan but will be supervised by the qualified worker or team manager as appropriate.

#### 7.5 Medium Priority Need:

The most likely first point of contact will be the Advice and Response team. The minimum level of intervention will be the completion of an initial assessment or an integrated assessment alongside the development of a child's plan. In the majority of cases the work arising from the child's plan is likely to be time limited, and the intervention is likely to be within a wider, multi-agency context. Work with children and families in medium priority need could include allocation to a qualified social worker or social work practitioner.

#### 7.6 Low Priority Need:

In virtually all situations, a service is likely to be directly provided by the team receiving the referral. The extent of the service's involvement is likely to vary from merely logging the information from the referral to the provision of short-term social work input by the Advice and Response team. Referral on to other agencies or services, for example to early years services, health or voluntary sector organisations, is likely to be an important component of the work. Case allocation away from the Advice and Response team would not normally be anticipated. Work with children and families in low priority need will not involve allocation to a qualified social worker.

### **8. Further Information**

8.1 The Eligibility Criteria for Social Care Services – Children and Families is available on the East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership website pages at [www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk](http://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk).

16.2 If you would like additional information or clarification on the content of this Policy please contact:

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16.3 Other Formats & Translations

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