

## JSNA Chapter – Safeguarding Children

Topic information	
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## Executive summary

### Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All partners have a duty to safeguard children and young people who are at risk of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. Abuse can be physical, sexual and/or emotional. Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. Exploitation includes child sexual exploitation (CSE), trafficking and/or modern slavery.

There are two key principles which underpin the safeguarding of children:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- A child-centred approach; for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs, experiences and views of children and young people.

National and local policy, guidance and reports are summarised in appendix 1.

No single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into

contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

In order that organisations and their staff collaborate effectively, it is vital that every individual working with children and families is aware of the role that they have to play and the role of other professionals. In addition, effective safeguarding requires clear local arrangements for this collaboration.

In Nottingham, any professional, member of the public or employee with concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority Children's and Families Direct. Professionals should take responsibility to escalate their concerns through their line manager where they remain concerned about a child's welfare.

Nottingham's Family Support Strategy (2016-2017) has three principles:

1. Ensure the right children get the right help at the right time
2. Talking and listening to children, families and professionals
3. Help families to help themselves

For more information see [Nottingham City Council's Family Support Strategy and Pathway](#)

Nottingham City offers a wide range of support services enabling the needs of most children and young people to be met within universal services which can be accessed by all children and young people (i.e. there is no threshold). Where it is evident that a child's needs cannot be met within universal provision an early help and/or family assessment can be completed to decide what support is needed and to ensure that additional support is co-ordinated to meet the needs of the child or young person. Early help services and advice and guidance are available to all professionals and citizens through Children's Centres and Children & Families Direct Hub.

The Children and Families Direct Hub encourages contact for all concerns/support requirements for children, young people and families with additional needs to ensure that early help can be provided in a timely manner.

There is a clearly defined process and set of responsibilities to support and guide practitioners when children's needs move between different levels of support and the Social Care threshold for support as a Child in Need or as a child in need of protection. This is referred to as the Integrated Working and Case Transfer Procedure, see appendix 1, which ensures that workers are confident to work together as the support needs of the child/young person and family as their needs change.

Figure 1 identifies levels of support in Nottingham City:

Universal	Self help	Children and families are doing well and there are no significant concerns about health, development or achievement that cannot be met within universal services.	Routine Health and Educational Assessments
Additional	Early Help	Children and families are experiencing problems requiring universal services to work together with other support services to prevent problems increasing.	Child or Family Early Help Assessment
Extensive	Targeted Help	Children and families are experiencing a range of increasing problems that require extensive multi-agency support to meet the needs of the whole family and crisis is likely to be prevented.	Child or Family Early Help Assessment or Statutory Assessment may be required
Child in Need	Specialist Help	Children are 'in need' if they are disabled or unlikely to achieve a reasonable standard of health or development unless services are provided (Children Act 1989).	Statutory Assessment
Protection		Children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.	

Figure 1: Levels of support in Nottingham City

Nottingham’s model for prevention, early intervention and specialist services, see figure 2, highlights the fact that children and young people may need differing levels of support at different times. We aim to work with families so that their needs can ultimately be met in local universal services wherever possible.

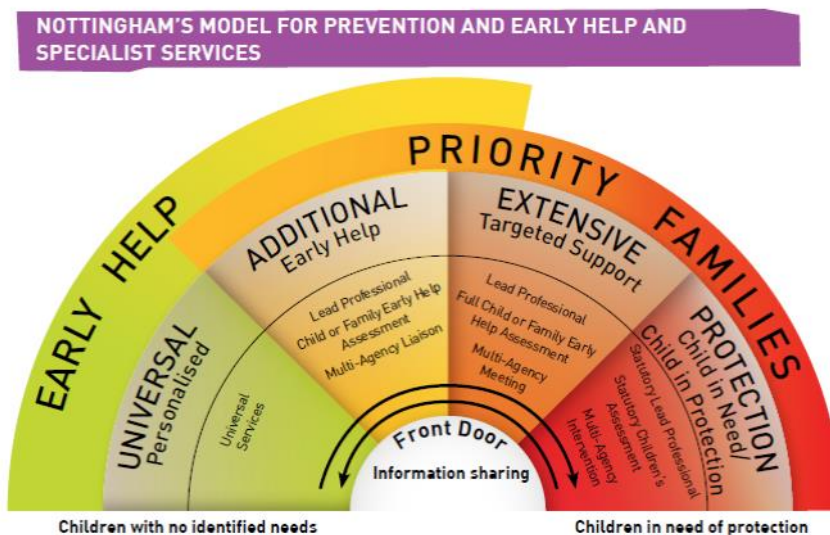


Figure 2: Nottingham’s Model for Prevention and Early Help and Specialist Services

The **Priority Families Approach** prioritises families with multiple problems through the appointment of a key worker/lead worker for each family who manages the family and their

problems and supports them to work towards agreed goals which are shared and jointly owned across local partners.

Nottingham City Council utilises **Signs of Safety** as its practice framework across all of its Children and Family Services. It is a strengths-based, safety-oriented approach designed to help all the key stakeholders involved with a child, the parents, extended family, community, and agencies to keep a clear focus on assessing and enhancing a child's needs and safety at all points in Family Support Pathway. The Signs of Safety framework is organised around a rigorous and balanced assessment and planning process that is developed in partnership with children, their families and their communities. This assessment process provides the focus for families, professionals and support networks to work together to develop and implement detailed plans that describe the day-to-day actions everyone will take to ensure and enhance children's safety, belonging and wellbeing.

### **Unmet needs and gaps**

- The number of public health nurses (5-19) (formally known as school nurses) have been steadily in decline which has decreased the extent to which they can be involved in packages of care around safeguarding. It is currently unclear whether the integrated commissioning model will enable public health nurses to provide additional support to safeguarding packages of care for children and young people aged 5-19 years.
- The Nottingham City Council Early Help Service is working with families and children who have additional needs as well as delivering open access provision. This presents a challenge in providing sufficient capacity for open access services across the city and creates a tension between moving resources towards early intervention whilst still needing to provide more targeted support to stop needs escalating.
- The cost of specialist placements for children and young people is high, including those out of the city. In addition, specialist care sometimes means that children/young people are placed some distance away from their family and social networks.
- The number of children in care in Nottingham places a significant financial pressure on the local authority. Reducing the number of children in care could release savings for investment in other areas such as 'edge of care' and/or early help services.

- Local intelligence suggests that worklessness and/or poverty is increasing family stress which decreases the capacity to parent effectively. It is currently unclear whether this will lead to more children/young people requiring safeguarding.
- The number of CAFs has decreased as more priority family assessments are undertaken; local intelligence suggests all partners are not clear which assessment is needed when.
- More assessments of children/young people in Nottingham identify risks related to parental mental health problems than the statistical neighbour average but Learning Disability and Mental Health staff are less likely to refer to social care than other professionals.
- New and emerging communities in Nottingham City, including refugee and asylum seeking families with children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, are less well understood than our settled communities. More insight is needed into their safeguarding needs.
- Whilst local intelligence suggests children and young people with SEND are over-represented in the population that need safeguarding, current data does not enable an accurate assessment of whether these children and young people are over represented in safeguarding in line with the national picture.
- The rate of children/young people who become subject to a child protection processes, e.g. becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan are higher than the statistical neighbour average. This is an issue which has been subject external scrutiny through inspection and peer review which found evidence of good practice locally. That said the mechanism underpinning these discrepancies merits further exploration

## Recommendations for commissioners

1. Commissioners should ensure through integrated commissioning of 0-19 services, that there are sufficient health visitors and public health nurses 5-19s (formally school nurses) to support universal provision for children and young people in Nottingham City in order to identify early safeguarding concerns and participate in packages of care.
2. The Nottingham City Council Early Help Service is working with families and children who have additional needs as well as delivering open access provision. This presents a challenge in providing sufficient capacity for open access services across the city. Integration of universal and early help services across the 0-5 pathway should be commissioned in a way that enables early support whilst also providing more targeted support to stop needs escalating.
3. The cost of specialist placements for children and young people is high and can mean that children/young people are placed some distance away from home. Work should be undertaken to explore whether more local, specialist placements can be developed to ensure children/young people receive they need closer to home and to release cost-savings.
4. The number of Children in Care in Nottingham is financially challenging for the local authority. Whilst the edge of care interventions appear to be stabilising the numbers of children/young people coming into care these interventions need to be embedded and sustained in order to release funding to continue to invest in early intervention activities.
5. Local intelligence suggests that worklessness and/or poverty is increasing family stress which decreases the capacity to parent effectively and may lead to more children/young people requiring safeguarding. Investment in early intervention and support services, alongside services to reduce financial vulnerability, may mitigate some of this stress.
6. The number of CAFs has decreased as more priority family assessments are undertaken. Local intelligence suggests all partners are not clear which assessment is needed when thus more training/communication may be needed specifically around clarity in the family support pathway.
7. More assessments of children/young people in Nottingham identify risks related to parental mental health problems than the statistical neighbour average but Learning Disability and Mental Health staff are less likely to refer to social care than other

professionals. The mechanism underpinning this is unclear thus further exploration is warranted.

8. New and emerging communities in Nottingham City including refugee and asylum seeking families with children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children are less well understood than our settled communities; further insight is required into their safeguarding needs.
9. Current data does not enable an accurate assessment of whether children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are over represented in safeguarding in line with the national picture. Further exploration of this group, e.g. through a case note review, will contribute to a better understanding of the safeguarding needs of children/young people with SEND.
10. The rate of children/young people who become subject to a child protection processes, e.g. becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan are higher than the statistical neighbour average. This is an issue which has been subject external scrutiny through inspection and peer review which found evidence of good practice locally. That said, the mechanism underpinning these discrepancies merits further exploration e.g. through a peer review and/or quality assurance audit process.