



Kent Safeguarding Children
multi-agency partnership

Support Level Guidance

Guidance for practitioners supporting children,
young people and families

Right Help, Right Time, Right Professional



Your quick links

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Introduction

All families face challenges that can make parenting difficult at times. Most families are able to overcome these challenges with the help of relatives, friends, and universal services. Everyone who works with children and families has a vital role in building trusting relationships and offering help and support so that concerns are identified and addressed early, preventing them from escalating.

Sometimes families will have additional or emerging needs that require more support from professionals in the community and should build on relationships already in place.

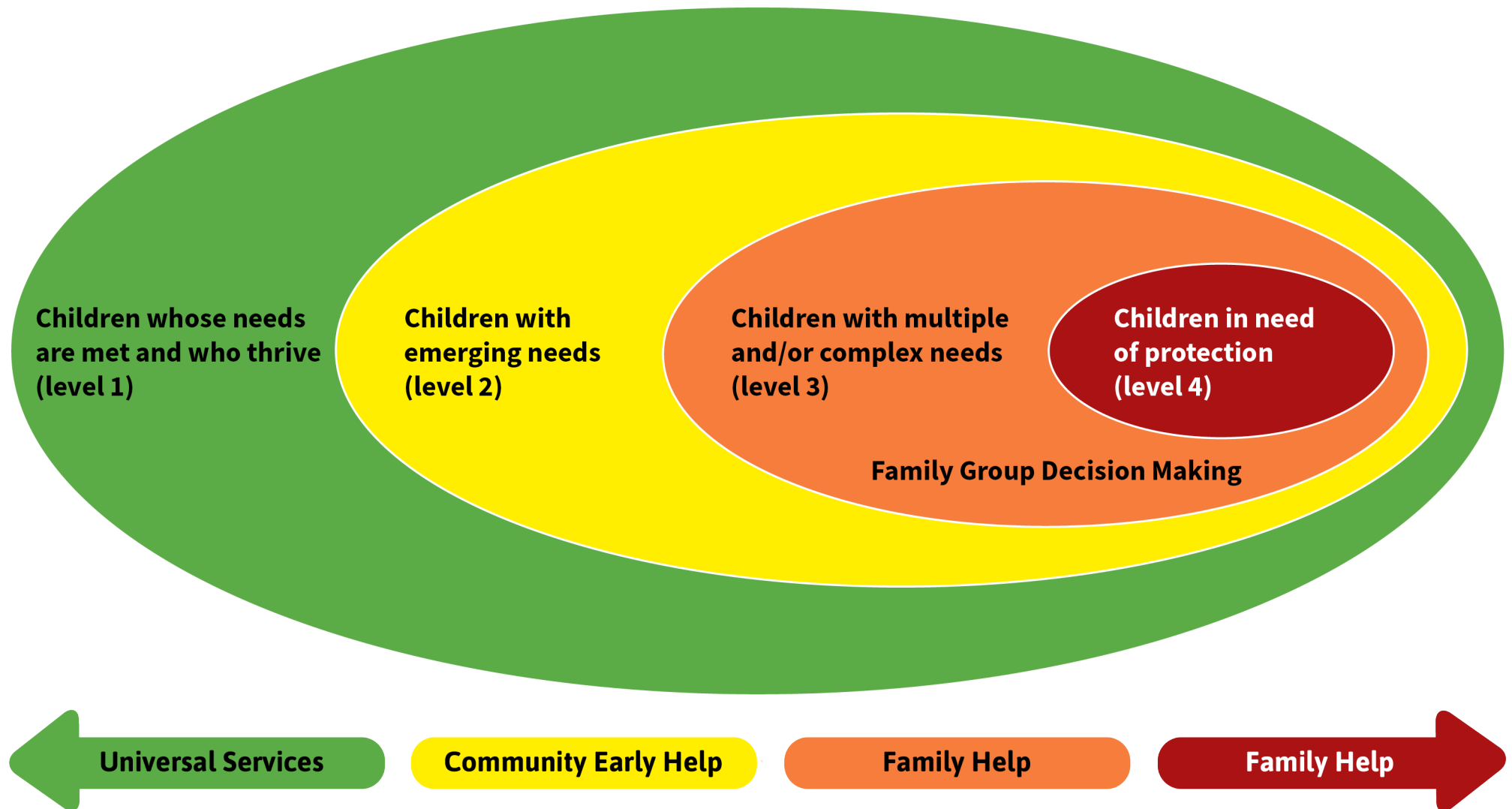
For some families, needs may become more complex or persistent and require a more intensive, multi-agency approach. This support is provided through **Family Help** and is accessed via **Children's Front Door**.

For a smaller number of children, there will be concerns that they are experiencing, or are likely to experience, significant harm. In these circumstances, a statutory multi-agency response is required to ensure children are protected and kept safe.

Children and families may experience different levels of need at different times. Practitioners should respond to any changes in circumstances by ensuring the right level of support is provided, working in partnership with families and other professionals to maintain a coordinated and consistent approach.

Our ambition is to ensure that services and professionals work together to wrap support around children and families, providing a seamless experience and ensuring that children receive the right help, at the right time.

Understanding the levels





Understanding the levels

Children whose needs are met and who thrive (level 1)

These are children whose needs are met by the everyday services and support available to all children, young people, and families to promote their health, learning, safety, and well-being. They **do not require a referral** or statutory assessment and are usually delivered by a single agency through everyday contact with children and families.

Services will be:

- promoting wellbeing
- identifying emerging needs early
- supporting access to community based early help services for **children with emerging needs**

Services stay involved and continue to support children and families if their needs increase.

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4



Understanding the levels

Children with emerging needs (level 2)

These are children with emerging needs or children whose needs are unclear or unmet. Professionals should intervene early, identify and respond to concerns as soon as they begin to appear, rather than wait for them to escalate and become more complex. Children with emerging needs are **best supported by those who already work with them** and have a relationship with them, for example health professionals, early years settings, schools and college settings or by organising **additional** support from within community resources, for example Family Hubs or community and voluntary services.

Services for children with emerging needs can be met by a single agency or more than one agency within the community. Professionals supporting a family may bring together the family and their professional and wider family networks to consider how their needs can best be met. Where needs and risks escalate and require the involvement of Family Help, professionals and services providing help and support in the community will remain involved.

A Request for Support is not required for support at this level

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4



Understanding the levels

Family Help – Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

For children and families with multiple and/or complex needs or persistent needs which cannot be met by universal or community early help support alone and who require coordinated, multi-disciplinary support to prevent escalation. Families receiving support at this level may be experiencing difficulties, or a significant event or change which has added to or escalated existing emerging needs, and which if not addressed could impact on a child's development, wellbeing or safety

Children may be experiencing a cumulative impact where repeated or ongoing experiences, which may appear of less concern combine over time to have a substantial effect on their development, wellbeing or safety.

The overarching purpose is to wrap skilled, intensive support around the family, build safety, strengthen networks, and prevent escalation into crisis or child protection intervention.

Support at this level includes targeted early help and statutory support under Section 17 (Child in Need) where required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and will be led by a Family Help Lead Practitioner.

Support will routinely consider Family Group Decision Making to mobilise the family network.

A Request for Support is required and should be made through the [Kent Children's Portal](#)

Front Door Service Consultations

Integrated Children's Services offer consultations for professionals who believe a child (who's not named during the consultation) may be in need of support, but are unclear whether a **Request for Support** should be submitted.

Telephone: 03000 41 11 11

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4



Understanding the levels

Family Help – Children in need of protection (level 4)

These are children and young people where there is reasonable cause to suspect they are **suffering**, or are **likely to suffer, significant harm**. At this level, needs and risks cannot be safely managed through targeted or Child in Need Family Help support alone. This includes complex, immediate or escalating risks, and/or chronic or cumulative concerns that result in significant harm (including outside of the home).

Family Help continues at this level as part of a seamless system of support, however intervention is statutory in nature and safeguarding activity is led under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989

Statutory child protection is led and overseen through Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs), providing a single, integrated response involving social care, police, health and education. A qualified social worker will always hold the Lead Practitioner role and will coordinate assessment, planning and intervention.

Support at this level will routinely consider Family Group Decision Making to mobilise the family network where safe and appropriate.

A Request for Support is required and should be made through the [Kent Children's Portal](#)

Front Door Consultation line: 03000 41 11 11

A consultation should not be made if a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, instead an urgent **Request for Support must be submitted without delay** via the [Kent Children's Portal](#)

If the child is in immediate danger ring 999

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Information Sharing

No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. Effective sharing of information between practitioners, local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment service provision and safeguarding. **Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews consistently identify lack of effective information sharing and misconceptions about how and what information can be shared.** Practitioners should be open and transparent with families wherever possible explain what information will be shared and why. A key way this is done is through our [Privacy Notice](#). This details what we collect, why, our legal bases, and who we may share information with.

Important:

Professionals should not rely on '**consent**' to share information in order:

- to **safeguard a child**
- to **promote a child's welfare**
- where seeking consent would increase risk or cause delay

Examples:

If a teacher in a secondary school had some emerging worries about a child, they could contact the primary school of the child's sibling to share and triangulate these concerns in order to **promote their welfare**.

OR

If a child made an allegation of abuse to a professional, consent is not required to share information with statutory agencies in order to **safeguard the child**.

Consent vs. Agreement to engage

Why terminology matters...

Consent

Consent – we use this terminology in the context of UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018

Consent is one of seven legal bases for processing and sharing information and in public services should only be used where no other legal bases are in place.

[A guide to lawful basis | ICO](#)

Working Together and the Information Commissioner are clear that consent is rarely the appropriate basis for sharing information and that local authorities should use either “legal obligation” or “public task” as their legal bases wherever possible.

Agreement to engage

Agreement to engage – we use this terminology in the context of a family’s willingness to work with us

It is important to differentiate this from consent to share information. For family help that takes place below the child protection threshold we need to secure agreement to engage even though we don’t need to seek consent for processing or sharing information.

Do I need

Consent

or

Agreement to engage

to make a Request for Support?

Family Help – Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

Parents of **Children with multiple and/or complex needs** who would benefit from a Family Help intervention at this level should provide their 'agreement to engage' within the Request for Support. Where this is not given, professionals should explore the reasons why and should continue to offer **community early help** or consider whether concerns meet threshold for a statutory child protection response (level 4).

- Sometimes if it has not been possible to talk to parents and carers, a Request for Support can still be made. A Family Help assessment may not be progressed if agreement to engage cannot be gained and where further enquires do not identify that **children may be in need of protection**. Professionals should continue to seek 'agreement to engage' from families.

Family Help – Children in need of protection (level 4)

- Requests for Support for **children in need of protection** do not need parent/carer agreement to engage as this is a statutory intervention. Practitioners must act where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm. Information must be shared and a Request for Support made. It is good practice to work openly and transparently with parents and carers and inform them of the Request for Support where it is safe to do so.

Level 1

Children whose needs are met and who thrive (level 1)

Information sharing:

Consent **required** to share information unless there is another legal basis in relation to the service being offered.

Support/ Intervention:

Agreement to engage **required** for support.

Level 2

Children with emerging needs (level 2)

Information sharing:

Consent not relied upon.

Public Task is the appropriate legal basis.

Support/ Intervention:

Agreement to engage **required** for support.

Level 3

Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

Information sharing:

Consent not relied upon.

Public Task is the appropriate legal basis.

Support/ Intervention:

Agreement to engage **required** for support.

Level 4

Children in need of protection (level 4)

Information sharing:

Consent not relied upon.

Legal Obligation is the appropriate legal basis.

Support/ Intervention:

Agreement to engage **not required**

Children whose needs are met and who thrive (level 1)

These are children whose needs are met by the everyday services and support available to all children, young people, and families to promote their health, learning, safety, and well-being. They do not require a referral or statutory assessment and are usually delivered by a single agency through everyday contact with children and families.

Quick links

**Child or Young Person
Indicators**

**Parent/Guardian/Carer
Indicators**

**Risks to me outside
my home/family**

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Children whose needs are met and who thrive (level 1)

Child or Young Person Indicators

- My attendance at school/ college/training is above 95%
- There are no concerns about my life at home, in school or in my neighbourhood
- There are no barriers to my learning and no concerns about my learning and development
- I am a disabled child and my needs are fully understood and met
- There are no concerns about my behaviour
- I am able to understand right from wrong
- I have a positive sense of my abilities
- My relationships and interactions with others are in line with my age and stage development
- I live in a home where relationships are safe, respectful, and free from harm
- I am physically healthy and my development checks are up to date
- I have an adequate and nutritious diet, regular dental and optical checks
- There are no concerns about my mental health
- There are no concerns about my attitude to drugs or alcohol
- There are no concerns about my use of technology
- I live in adequate housing and in a safe and secure environment
- I mostly have positive relationships with my peers
- I will become a parent soon and have supportive and safe relationships
- I live in an environment free from violence and aggression

Parent/Guardian/Carer Indicators

- My parents/carers provide me with guidance and boundaries to support my development
- My parents/carers provide me with safe, secure and caring parenting
- My parents/carers are able to promote and respond appropriately to all of my needs

Risks to me outside my home/family

- I am safe in my community

Children with emerging needs (level 2)

These are children with emerging needs or children whose needs are unclear or unmet. Professionals should intervene early, identify and tackle concerns as soon as they begin to appear, rather than wait for them to escalate to something more complex. Children with needs at this level are best supported by those who already work with them such as health professionals, early years, school and college settings or by organising additional support from within community resources, such as Family Hubs or voluntary services.

Quick links

**Child or Young Person
Indicators**

**Parent/Guardian/Carer
Indicators**

**Risks to me outside
my home/family**

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Children with emerging needs (level 2)

Child or Young Person Indicators

- My attendance at school is below 95%
- I have been repeatedly suspended from school
- I have started to go missing and my whereabouts is sometimes unknown
- I am not meeting my educational milestones
- I have not been able to be seen at home, despite professionals repeat attempts to see me/visit
- I sometimes find it difficult to develop positive or close relationships with friends or with my parents/carers/family members
- I am a young carer with some responsibilities at home
- I am a teenage parent, and require some low-level support
- I have speech/language/communication needs
- I need some low-level support due to a diagnosed disability or sensory impairment
- I am a disabled child and need some information/advice and/or support
- I have some neurodiverse needs and need some information/ advice and/or support
- I am showing signs of associating with peers who are involved in crime and/or anti-social behaviour
- I am showing signs of problematic sexual behaviour and/or language
- I have emerging mental health/self-harm/emotional/needs
- I am saying I want to 'run away'
- Not all of my basic physical and/or emotional needs are being fully met
- I am negatively affected by parental conflict/difficult family relationships
- I am experiencing low level physical aggression between others at home or in the community (Police DARA low risk)
- I will become a parent soon and would benefit from some support

Children with emerging needs (level 2)

Parent/Guardian/Carer Indicators

- My parents/carers require support to understand my disability or sensory impairment, and lack strategies to manage these
- My family is impacted by poverty affecting their access to services, this negatively affects my development
- My family home is in a poor state of repair, impacting on my health/development. Or there is serious overcrowding
- My family is facing eviction/statutory homelessness
- My parents/carers struggle to meet my needs, or lose sight of my needs due to their own needs/experiences
- My parents/carers struggle to provide me with good supervision or behaviour management
- My parents/carers often do not take me to my appointments which impacts negatively on my health and/or development
- Difficulties in my parents/carers' relationship is starting to negatively impact upon me
- My parents/carers health and emotional wellbeing including physical/mental/learning difficulty or substance misuse is starting to impact negatively on my health and/or development
- My parents/carers are committing low level/anti social behaviours which impacts negatively on my health and/or development

Risks to me outside my home/family

- I am being encouraged to use substances
- I am being encouraged to miss school/be late home
- I am being encouraged to commit crimes and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour
- I am vulnerable to being groomed in relation to sexual and criminal exploitation
- I am vulnerable to radicalisation
- I am vulnerable to unsafe and/or harmful content, conduct or contact online

Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

For children and families with multiple and/or complex needs or persistent needs which cannot be met by universal or community early help support alone and who require coordinated, multi-disciplinary support to prevent escalation. Families receiving support at this level may be experiencing difficulties, or a significant event or change which has added to or escalated existing emerging needs, and which if not addressed could impact on a child's development, wellbeing or safety. Children may be experiencing a cumulative impact where repeated or ongoing experiences, which may appear of less concern, combine over time to have a substantial effect on their development, wellbeing or safety.

Support at this level includes targeted early help and statutory support under Section 17 (Child in Need) where required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Quick links

**Child or Young Person
Indicators**

**Parent/Guardian/Carer
Indicators**

**Risks to me outside
my home/family**

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

Child or Young Person Indicators

- I am persistently absent (10% or more) and there are increasing concerns about my wellbeing
- I am not on any school roll/I am a Child Missing from Education and there are concerns about my welfare
- I am at risk of/or I have been permanently excluded from school and there are concerns about my welfare
- I am home educated/unseen and there are concerns for my welfare
- There is significant delay in me achieving my developmental milestones which is attributable to the care I am receiving
- I have significant dental decay/or other medical needs that are not being treated
- I am experiencing persistent or complex difficulties, or a decline in my emotional health and wellbeing over time, and/or a significant change which has a substantial impact on my wellbeing and my family need help to support me
- I am at risk of harming myself and my family need help to support me
- I am increasingly committing crime and/or am involved in anti-social behaviour and early, community-based support has not enabled this to reduce
- I am a pregnant teenager and there are significant concerns about the welfare of me/my unborn baby
- I am vulnerable to being sexually abused and exploited and my family need help to support me
- I am in a relationship and am vulnerable to, or exhibiting, intimate partner abuse/violence and my family need help to support me
- I am displaying violent/abusive behaviours towards family members, and my family need help to support me
- I am vulnerable due to my drug and/or alcohol use and my family need help to support me
- I have significant disabilities and my family require some help to support me I have complex neuro-diverse needs and my family need help to support me
- I am a homeless child in need, including 16-17 years old
- I am a young carer whose caring duties are having a significant impact on my health, wellbeing and/or education outcomes
- I am an unborn baby, and my parents need support to ensure I am safe, healthy and developing well
- The conflict in my parent/carer's relationship is having a significant impact on my emotional and psychological wellbeing and early support has not reduced this
- I am a child subject of a Court Ordered Report under Section 7 or Section 37 being completed by children's social care
- I am a victim in my own right of one or more incidents of domestic abuse that have/are likely to impact on my physical, emotional, psychological wellbeing (Police DARA medium risk)
- I am privately fostered

Children with multiple and/or complex needs (level 3)

Parent/Guardian/Carer Indicators

- My family needs support to meet my disability needs
- My family are being evicted despite professional/agency support
- Relationships in my family are breaking down and there is serious risk I may become homeless and have to be looked after outside my family
- My parents/carers are unable to ensure food, warmth, clean clothes, clean, safe housing, medical care and supervision are consistently available to me and this is impacting on my development and wellbeing
- My parents/carers are unable to consistently notice, understand or respond well to my emotional needs causing them to react harshly, respond unpredictably or lack warmth, comfort or reassurance. This is impacting on my development and wellbeing, and early community support has not improved things for me
- My parents/carers are consistently making inappropriate/unsafe childcare arrangements for me
- My parents/carers health or learning difficulties are having a significant impact on my development and wellbeing and early support has not improved this
- My parent/carers substance misuse is having a significant impact on my development and wellbeing, and early support has not improved this
- My parent/carers offending behaviours are having a direct negative impact on me and early support has not improve this
- My parents/carers emotional and/or mental health difficulties are having a significant impact on my development and wellbeing and early support has not improved this
- My parent/carers is experiencing domestic abuse which is impacting significantly on their safety and well-being. (Police DARA Medium risk)
- My parents have no recourse to public funds and have no other means of providing food and accommodation for me

Risks to me outside my home/family

- I regularly go missing from home and there are concerns about my welfare due to where I am and who I'm with
- I am being actively encouraged to become involved in a gang
- I am being encouraged to carry drugs and/or weapons
- I am in contact with people in the community who pose a risk of sexual exploitation
- I am in contact with people in the community who pose a risk of radicalisation
- I am exposed to harmful content, conduct, or contact online

Children in need of protection (level 4)

These are children/young people where there is actual or likely significant harm, including complex, immediate, escalating and cumulative risk factors which require a statutory, multi-agency response under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. This is the highest level of need within the system and sits at the top of the continuum of support.

Quick links

**Child or Young Person
Indicators**

**Parent/Guardian/Carer
Indicators**

**Risks to me outside
my home/family**

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Children in need of protection (level 4)

Child or Young Person Indicators

- I am severely absent from school (50% or more) and there are safeguarding concerns about me
- I am a home educated and unseen by professionals and there are concerns for my safety
- I am not growing or developing properly with no medical reasons for this
- I am at risk due to repeated concerns about safer sleeping
- I am a non-mobile baby or non-mobile child with a bruise or an injury
- I am a mobile child with an unexplained bruise or injury
- I am under 13 yrs of age and sexually active/I have an STI/I am pregnant
- I have committed serious crime(s)/ have repeatedly come to the attention of the Police
- I am assessed as posing a possible risk of harm to others in the community
- I have been physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused
- I have been abandoned by my parents/carers
- I have experienced chronic/serious neglect of my basic needs
- I have been kicked out of home/have left home/I don't feel safe at home
- I have retreated socially/I struggle with my emotional and/or mental health, and this is having a significant detrimental impact on me
- I have plans to take my own life or I have attempted suicide
- I am at risk of seriously harming myself
- I am a victim in my own right of serious/repeated domestic abuse which is affecting my physical, emotional and/or psychological safety (Police DARA high risk/repeated incidents of Police DARA medium risk)
- There are significant concerns about my reliance on drugs or alcohol
- I am at risk from individuals who pose a high risk of harm in my family or community group
- I am at risk of being forced to marry someone I don't want to
- I am at risk due to my family being trafficked/subject to modern day slavery
- I am displaying abusive/violent/harmful sexual behaviours towards someone else

Children in need of protection (level 4)

Parent/Guardian/Carer Indicators

- My parents/carers being unable to safely meet my needs as a severely disabled child
- My parents/carers are not supporting my medical or development needs causing me to experience/be at risk of significant harm
- My parents/carers are not able to protect me from known abusers in, or coming into, our family home
- My parents/carers are leaving me home alone causing me to experience/be at risk of experiencing significant harm
- My parents/carers mental health/substance abuse is causing me to experience/be at risk of experiencing significant harm
- I am an unborn and the pregnancy is being concealed causing me to be at risk of significant harm
- My parent/carers has abused/neglected another child
- My parent(s)/carer(s) have had a previous child removed from their care
- My parent/carers is exaggerating or causing symptoms/illness in me meaning I am experiencing or at risk of significant harm
- My parents/carers have significant learning or physical difficulties which are causing me to experience or be at risk of significant harm
- Practices within my family and community mean I am at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- My parent/carers is experiencing serious domestic abuse and is at risk of serious harm or death, (Police DARA high risk). I am a victim in my own right experiencing significant harm as a result
- My parent/carers has experienced repeated domestic abuse over time. I am a victim in my own right experiencing significant harm as a result (repeated incidents of Police DARA medium risk)

Risks to me outside my home/family

- I am at experiencing or at risk of significant harm when I go missing from home
- I am being trafficked
- I am experiencing peer on peer abuse
- I am being forced to carry weapons and/or drugs
- I am being criminally/sexually exploited
- I am experiencing significant harm as a result of illegal, unsafe or harmful online content, conduct, commerce, or contact
- I am experiencing/at risk of significant harm from radicalisation through technology and/or relationships, in person, or online
- I am instigating or experiencing intimate partner abuse or violence

Risk or harm to me outside of my home

This is when I may be harmed in places beyond my family, such as my school, community, peer group or online.

These environments and relationships may expose me to abuse, exploitation or violence or harmful influence including from other children or adults.

I may be experiencing coercion, control or pressure that I do not recognise as harm or may feel unable to share it, which makes me more vulnerable. Understanding my safety means looking at the people, places and spaces around me, not just what is happening at home.

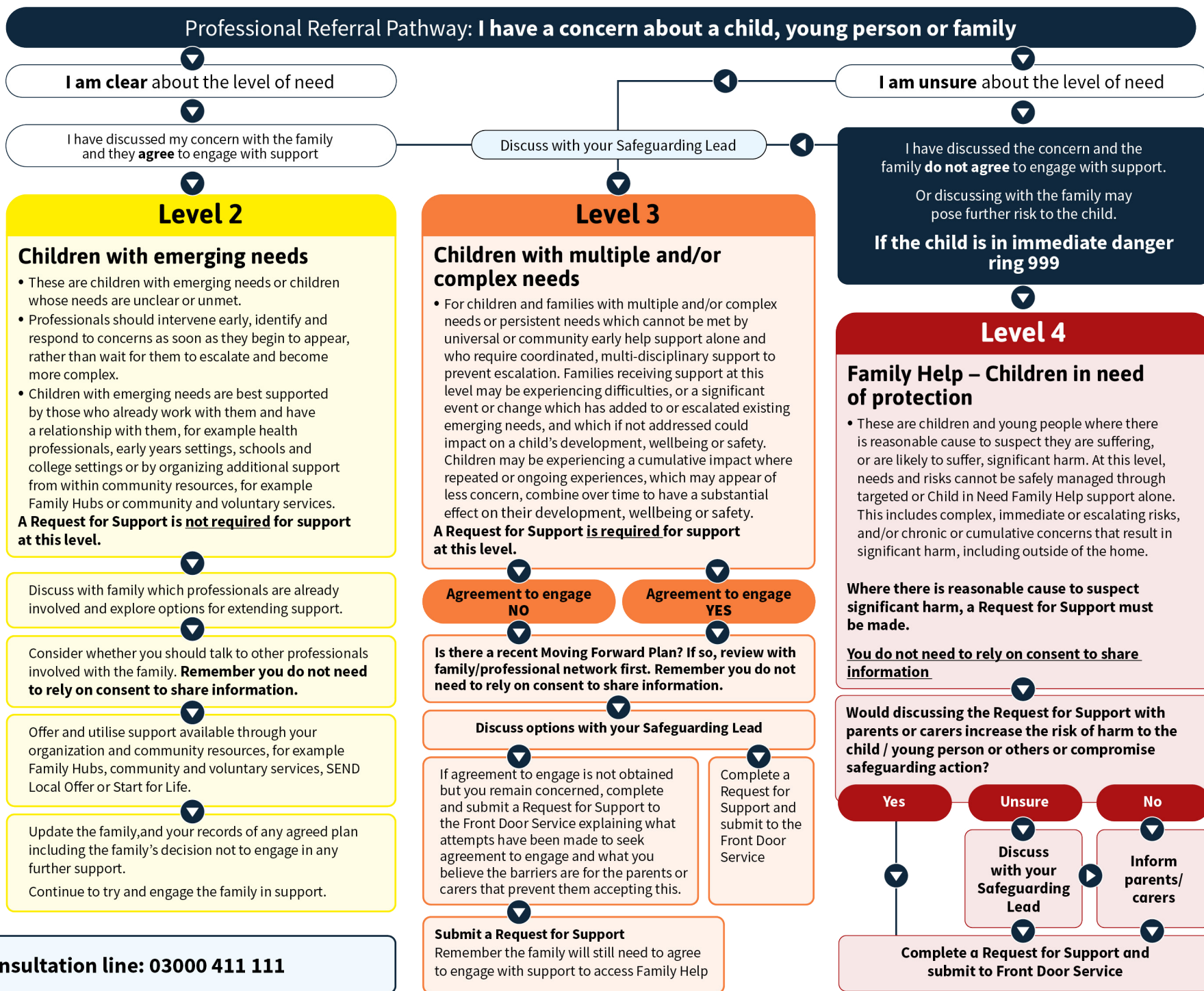
REMEMBER

A Request for Support is required for support at Level 3 (Family Help – children with multiple and complex needs) and Level 4 (Family Help – Children in need of protection).

Please answer all questions when completing the online Request for Support because the information you provide will be used to assess which is the most appropriate level of support required. You will be advised of the outcome of the Request for Support, including if it is recommended that Level 2 services be offered to the child/ young person & family.



Kent Support Level Guidance – Right Help, Right Time, Right Professional



Front Door Consultation line: 03000 411 111

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 own 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 KSCMP

[Kent Safeguarding Children Escalation Procedure – Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership](#)

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.



Kent Safeguarding Children
multi-agency partnership

www.kscmp.org.uk