

Family and Environmental Factors

Family History and Functioning

The following information is intended as a **guide** to support individuals to make professional judgements, using their knowledge and experience, to determine the needs of children and young people. It is not intended to be a “needs tick list”. All practitioners should consider consulting with line managers, well informed multi-agency colleagues and nominated specialists within agencies to support good assessments of need.

Each level of need builds on the previous levels. It is important therefore to consider what access to service responses children and young people have had at each level. Sometimes a requirement for specialist provision is assumed without considering how better access to universal and targeted services may help to address needs.

Universal Wider Family History and Functioning Needs

All children and young people need the following:

- A sense of a larger familial network and good friendships outside of the family unit
- a wider supportive network
- respect and consideration for their gender, culture, race, religion, sexuality, disability or age
- to be treated as an individual and have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected
- good relationships and attachments with parents, carers and siblings if applicable
- promotion of positive family life and be in receipt of needs being met by parents and carers
- a good awareness of who is within their family and of their own position within the family
- a sense of belonging and feel supported
- a stable family with positive family experiences and expectations
- opportunities for family activities.

Universal wider family history and functioning needs may be met through access to the following:

- Access to advice and information about family and social relationships with opportunities through family and universal settings such as Schools, Community centres, children’s centres, youth services, access to GP and Health Visiting services
- opportunity within universal settings in the home and community leisure settings to develop and promote interactive family life
- opportunity with family, friends and staff in universal settings to develop relationships within family and extended family
- access to appropriate targeted responses embedded within universal provision.

Additional wider family history and functioning needs which may create a barrier to meeting universal needs

When considering any child/young person's additional needs it is important to recognise and take account of the following:

- Additional needs may be as a result of individual, family or environmental factors
- additional needs may require **more** of universal services or **different** targeted services to help bring about change
- additional needs exist along a continuum and may require a stepped approach to increased support and intervention to ensure that such support is experienced as empowering and not disempowering
- additional needs experienced in one aspect of life may also impact on another aspect of life, for example a bereavement of a parent may cause additional needs to be displayed through aspects of wider family history and functioning, health, education, social presentation or personal development
- interventions in one aspect of life may positively or negatively affect other aspects of life, for example an intervention addressing bereavement may impact on wider family history and functioning, health, education, social presentation or personal development
- additional needs may be short term or long term in their impact
- causes of additional needs may be different for children/young people and therefore require different interventions. For example a child may be isolated from their wider family because they live in another area, or are separated from a carer who is in prison.
- some additional needs may be addressed by the child/young person or family themselves without requiring targeted services
- a common assessment may be required to clarify the causes, nature, extent of additional needs and identify activity to meet the need.

Additional needs may present in some of the following ways:

- Child / young person with limited support from friends and family is socially isolated
- family has poor relationship with extended family or little communication
- inability to ask for help and to know where to go for information advice and support
- there is poor attachment and inconsistencies in relationships within the family
- the family have difficulty in managing problems
- the child/young person has poor parental supervision and/or support
- parents and carers are unable or have difficulty in setting standards/boundaries
- there is a lack of positive role models
- there are unresolved issues arising from parents divorce, step-parenting or death of carer or significant other – family transitions
- the child/young person has some difficulties sustaining relationships
- low parent educational level/literacy
- negative influences from family/peers, lead to challenging and or anti-social behaviour
- they are involved in conflicts with peers and siblings

- they may have previously been looked after by the local authority
- parents experience post-natal depression, mental health difficulties, drug/alcohol misuse
- parental illness and/or disability
- uncoordinated information sharing, fragmented service delivery is compounding problems
- family unit and/or extended family are experiencing break up due to divorce or separation of parents
- death of an immediate family or extended family member, which may have an impact on the wider family support.

Additional needs, depending on their cause, may be addressed by access to the following activities if universal provision has been unable to bring about necessary change:

- Access to advice and information about further involvement from agencies in relation to, for example, bereavement/loss, behaviour, family and social relationships
- attendance at focussed clinical sessions and drop ins
- support groups
- young carers groups
- adult education classes
- anti-social behaviour services
- health services – specialist health visiting services
- 7 day response team services
- completion of a common assessment framework assessment to access new or different services via a multi-agency meeting
- formal access within extended services arena located within the school or children's centre setting to address isolation or dislocation in the family
- access to a clear pathway of support should needs escalate.

Multiple additional needs

Any child/young person may at times experience one or a number of these additional needs. When multiple additional needs occur, the services required by the child/young person should be delivered in a coordinated way. The common assessment is the mechanism promoted in Leeds for ensuring service delivery is well informed, planned, recorded and reviewed. This should ensure the minimum disruption to the child/young person and family's lives and that the services themselves are complimentary to each other and allow the most positive impact being accrued over time; for example managing a child's need for contact with their father in a way that recognises the impact of his domestic violence.

Undertaking a common assessment will help to identify the causes of additional needs e.g. mental health issues, drug dependency, domestic violence. This may in turn inform the delivery of services, including, where appropriate, escalation to specialist agencies for assessment which will build on the common assessment. For more information on common assessment click [here](#).

Specialist wider family history and functioning needs

Specialist needs can only be confirmed in collaboration with the relevant specialist agency. This collaboration is often initiated when a common assessment is undertaken and shared with the specialist agency. This **may** result in the agency undertaking a specialist assessment and appropriate planning, monitoring and reviewing processes being put in place. Alternatively it may result in a parallel but not duplicating process where relevant focussed specialist assessment information informs the CAF process but does not replace it. EG cognitive learning assessment is undertaken and informs interventions around behaviour at home and school which are the focus of a common assessment.

Individual/family/environmental factors may all contribute to the emergence of specialist needs. Any child/young person may at specific times, due to either unpredictable events or ongoing issues, require specialist services e.g. as a result of an accident or event, or a significant or chronic illness or condition.

There may be occasions where the need for specialist services is experienced as a consequence of other needs in other areas of a child/young person's life such as bereavement or being a carer of a disabled parent or sibling.

Specialist wider family history and functioning needs may present in some of the following ways:

- Pattern of high family conflict
- family violence
- family history of problem behaviour – parent criminality
- parent misuse of alcohol and drugs places child/young person at risk of significant harm
- parent's mental health difficulty places child/young person at risk of significant harm
- relationships with family are all experienced as critical and or negative –low warmth, high criticism
- experience of complete rejection from their primary care giver
- child/young person appears to have no expectations of parents/carers meeting their needs
- family breakdown threatened
- family no longer want to care for child
- they are suffering from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. Parent using beyond reasonable physical punishment and or erratic discipline methods
- family have abandoned child
- child/young person experiences mental health difficulty or illness
- no effective support from extended family
- destructive/unhelpful involvement from extended family – critical rather than supportive
- abusive emotionally, physically and/or sexually, extended family either currently or historically
- individual child/young person with significant attachment issues between themselves and their parent and no wider family support

- socially isolated within the community for a whole range of reasons, for example victims of or perpetrators of criminal and anti-social behaviour, an ethnic minority isolated in a wider majority community, parents or carers have significant long term mental health or physical disabilities and are therefore socially isolated within the immediate family
- death of a parent.

Specialist wider family history and functioning needs, depending on their cause, may be addressed by access to the following where universal and targeted provision has failed to bring about necessary change:

- Access to safeguarding services – specialist risk assessment - referral to social care/police
- access to a stable family placement i.e. foster/adoptive placement
- someone to talk to with a specialist understanding
- domestic violence services
- ongoing one to one support from a nominated specialist agency
- carefully planned individual programme routine or regime to be monitored
- specialist therapeutic support for parents/carers/children and young people from mental health and health services
- access to detailed and comprehensive assessments to determine issues, needs and support, for example core assessments as per 'framework for the assessment of children and their families....'(DoH 2000)
- alternative provision from a carer within the community (substitute carers) setting and formal ongoing support from agencies
- formal alternative care within the setting of social care provision, looked after arrangements, after all formal and informal alternative arrangements have been exhausted within the community
- continuation of services which have been accessed via the local community, extended services (in and around either the school or children's centre setting).

For a fuller list of available services consult the [family hub](#).