

Merton Effective Support Model

The Merton Wellbeing Model has been a longstanding tool used by professionals to support the assessment of needs of children, young people and families. Having been slightly revised over the years, we are now seeking to refresh this model in order to better reflect our vision and approach to working alongside families. This document is a summary of a new practitioner guidance document 'Effective Support for Children and Families' which will be published shortly.



The continuum of need intends to provide professionals with a shared understanding and common language, promoting a consistent approach to the assessment of child, young person and family needs

The conceptual model illustrates Merton's approach to providing Effective Support to Families across the continuum of need.

The model and associated tools aim to support and guide all professionals working with children, young people and families, to inform assessment of need and to identify appropriate support and interventions. However, it is recognised that each child and family member is an individual, and each family is unique in its make-up, so reaching decisions about levels of needs and the best intervention requires mutually respectful relationships, open and honest discussions with family members, reflection and professional judgement.

We will always seek to meet needs with the lowest possible level of intervention.

Description of Levels

The following table is a guide to the 4 levels of need, and the types of services/response that may meet the needs.

Levels and Referral Routes	Needs	Services (examples)	Outcome
Level 1 Community/Universal Open access	<p>All children and families who live in the area have core needs such as parenting, health and education.</p>	<p>Early years, childcare, education, primary health care, maternity services, housing, community health care, youth centres, leisure services, local offer short breaks provision for disabled children; local community and voluntary sector</p> <p>Children are supported by their family and in community/universal services to meet all of their needs.</p>	<p>Children and young people make good progress in most areas of development.</p>
Level 2 Early Help <p>One or more services provide voluntary Early Help support to meet the needs of the child or young person and their family. This can be co-ordinated by one of the services that knows the child/family best.</p> <p>An Early Help Plan and Team Around the Family meeting is helpful to bring the family and involved services together to share information and agree what would be helpful.</p> <p>Individual agency internal routes to access additional supports or to request external services</p>	<p>Children and families with additional needs who would benefit from or who require extra help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve educational progress and attainment • Improve parenting and/or behaviour • Meet specific health or emotional needs of the child and/or parent • Improve their material situation • Respond to a short-term crisis such as bereavement, parental separation 	<p>Children's Centres, Parenting support; local community and voluntary sector</p> <p>Early Help short breaks provision for disabled children;</p> <p>Extra health support for family members i.e. through a health visitor or school nurse, extra education support through an education support worker or targeted programme, Housing support, help to find education and employment;</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health Service support to schools; Speech and Language Therapy Family Support Services Targeted youth work</p> <p>Services provided on a voluntary basis</p>	<p>The life chances of children and families are improved by offering early life and early help additional support.</p>

Levels and Referral Routes	Needs	Services (examples)	Outcome
<p>Level 3</p> <p>Targeted More than one service is involved, using a Team Around the Family approach, Early Help Plan or Targeted Early Help Assessment and a Lead Professional to co-ordinate multi-agency support.</p> <p>A multi-disciplinary / agency Team Around the Family (TAF), led by a Lead Professional, shares information and co-ordinates intensive services and support to meet the child and family needs.</p> <p>An Early Help Plan / Targeted Early Help Assessment is necessary to set out how the family and involved services will work together to meet the child's needs.</p> <p>Individual agency internal routes to access intensive supports or Children & Families Request for Services form (RFS) to access the Merton Family Wellbeing Service</p>	<p>Vulnerable children and their families with multiple needs or whose needs are more complex and can't be fully met by services at levels 1 and 2 alone, such as children and families who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a disability resulting in complex needs but not meeting the criteria of CWD • Exhibit anti-social or challenging behaviour that is likely to result in poor outcomes for the child or young person. • Suffer neglect or poor family relationships • Have poor engagement with key services such as school and health. • Are not in education or work long-term. 	<p>Because of the complexity of needs, especially around behaviour and parenting, a multi- disciplinary/agency co-ordinated plan developed with the family is needed, co- ordinated by a lead professional or family (key) worker.</p> <p>A range of services providing targeted intervention might be involved in meeting the family's needs.</p> <p>Families needing substantial support to care for a disabled child,</p> <p>Services provided on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>Services can include settings and schools based services including targeted or specialist provision, commissioned services, Getting More Help Mental Health Services, targeted short breaks for children with disabilities; and a range of parenting support and case work services within Merton's Family Wellbeing Service, and other prevention services ie Liaison and Diversion.</p>	<p>Vulnerable children and families likely to face impairment to their development and life chances will be supported by services to enable them to achieve.</p> <p>Issues will be prevented from escalating into safeguarding concerns requiring statutory intervention.</p>

Levels and Referral Routes	Needs	Services (examples)	Outcome
<p>Level 4</p> <p>Specialist</p> <p>Children and young people whose needs are complex and enduring and cross many domains. More than one service is normally involved, with a co-ordinated multi-agency approach and a Lead Professional, commonly in a non-statutory role. At times statutory intervention may be required.</p> <p>Children`s Social Care, Youth Offending Service, Youth Treatment Orders/ Custody Hospital in-patient</p> <p>Children & Families Request for Support form (RFS)</p> <p>Statutory notifications to Youth Offending Service</p> <p>Statutory health assessments</p> <p>Statutory Education, Health and Care assessments</p> <p>Request for EHCP process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people who have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect • Children with significant impairment of function/learning and/or life limiting illness • Children whose parents and wider family are unable to care for them • Families involved in crime/misuse of drugs at a significant level • Families with significant mental or physical health needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children`s Social Care • Youth Offending Service • Criminal Justice system • Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services/ Managing Risk Mental Health Services • In patient and continuing health care • Fostering and residential care • Health care for children with life - limiting illness • Education, Health and Care Services for children with profound and enduring SEN and /or disability 	<p>Children and /or family members are likely to suffer significant harm/ removal from home/ serious and lasting impairment without the intervention of specialist services, sometimes in a statutory capacity.</p>

Indicators of Possible Need

The indicators of need tables seek to give advice around thresholds to aid response. They do not provide an exhaustive list, but provide examples that can be used as a tool to assist assessment and planning.

Level 1 - UNIVERSAL	
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically well • Nutritious diet • Adequate hygiene & dress • Developmental & health checks/ immunisations up to date • Developmental milestones & motor skills appropriate • Sexual activity age-appropriate • Good mental health <p>Emotional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality early attachments • Able to adapt to change • Able to understand others' feelings <p>Behavioural Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes responsibility for behaviour • Responds appropriately to boundaries and constructive guidance <p>Identity and Self-Esteem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can discriminate between safe and unsafe contacts <p>Family and Social Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable and affectionate relationships with family • Is able to make and maintain friendships <p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to books and toys • Enjoys and participates in learning activities • Has experiences of success and achievement • Sound links between home and school 	<p>Basic care, ensuring safety and protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for child's physical needs, e.g. food, drink, appropriate clothing, medical and dental care • Protection from danger or significant harm <p>Emotional warmth and stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows warm regard, praise and encouragement • Ensures stable relationships <p>Guidance, boundaries and stimulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the child can develop a sense of right and wrong • Child/young person accesses leisure facilities as appropriate to age and interests <p>Family functioning and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships within family, including when parents are separated <p>Housing, work and income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation has basic amenities and appropriate facilities, and can meet family needs • Managing budget to meet individual needs <p>Social and community including education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have friendships and are able to access local services and amenities • Family feels part of the community • Planning for career and adult life

Level 2 – Early Help

Health

- Inadequate, limited or restricted diet; e.g. no breakfast, no lunch money; being under or overweight
- Missing immunisations/checks
- Child is delayed in reaching developmental milestones
- Minor concerns re: diet, hygiene, clothing
- Dental problems untreated / decay
- Missing routine and non-routine health appointments
- Concerns about developmental progress:
 - e.g. bedwetting/soiling; speech impediment
- Child's response to life events as parental separation, for example child seems unduly anxious, angry or defiant for their age or introverted
- Experimenting with tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs
- Frequent presentation to health professionals in relation to accidents at home
- Standard risk of child sexual exploitation identified using the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) risk and vulnerabilities assessment

Emotional Development

- Some difficulties with family relationships
- Some difficulties with peer group relationships and with adults, e.g. 'clingy', anxious or withdrawn
- Some evidence of inappropriate responses and actions.
- Limited engagement in play with others / Has few or no friends.
- Emerging contextual safeguarding issues such as regularly coming home late/absent from school/missing episodes/glamorises violence.

Behavioural Development

- Not always able to understand how own actions impact on others
- Finds accepting responsibility for own actions difficult
- Responds inappropriately to boundaries / constructive guidance
- Finds positive interaction difficult with peers in unstructured contexts
- Additional needs from Emotional Well Being and Mental Health Services
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Identity and Self-Esteem

- Some insecurities around identity expressed e.g. low self-esteem, sexuality, gender identity
- Experience in bullying
- May be perpetrating bullying behaviour
- Lack of confidence is incapacitating
- Child/young person provocative in behaviour/ appearance e.g. in appropriately dressed for school
- Child subject to persistent discrimination, e.g. racial, sexual or due to disabilities
- Victim of crime or bullying

Family and Social Relationships

- Lack of positive role models
- Child has some difficulties sustaining relationships
- Low levels of parental conflict / infrequent incidents of domestic dispute
- Unresolved issues arising from parents' separation, step-parenting or bereavement
- Occasional low level domestic abuse
- Children affected by parental imprisonment

Self-care skills and independence

- Disability limits amount of self-care possible
- Periods of inadequate self-care, e.g. poor hygiene
- Child is continually delayed to develop age appropriate self-care skills.

Learning

- Have some identified specific learning needs with targeted support and / or Special Education Needs and disabilities - Education, Health and Care Plan
- Language and communication difficulties
- Regular underachievement or not reaching education potential
- Poor punctuality / pattern of regular school absences
- Not always engaged in play / learning, e.g. poor concentration
- No access to books / toys
- Some fixed term exclusions
- One-off / occasional short period missing from home

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Basic care is not provided consistently
- Parent/carer requires advice on parenting issues
- Some concerns around child's physical needs being met
- Young, inexperienced parents
- Teenage pregnancy
- Inappropriate child care arrangements and/or too many carers
- Some exposure to dangerous situations in the home or community
- Unnecessary or frequent visits to GP or unplanned care settings e.g. Emergency Department
- Parent/carer stresses starting to affect ability to ensure child's safety

Emotional warmth and stability

- Inconsistent responses to child/young person by parent/carer
- Parents struggling to have their own emotional needs met
- Child/young person not able to develop other positive relationships
- Starting to show difficulties with attachments

Family functioning and well-being

- A child/young person is taking on a caring role in relation to their parent/carer, or is looking after younger siblings
- No effective support from extended family
- Adopted

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Parent/carer offers inconsistent boundaries
- Lack of routine in the home
- Child/young person spends considerable time alone, e.g. watching television

- Child/young person is not often exposed to new experiences; has limited access to leisure activities
- Child/young person can behave in an anti-social way in the neighbourhood, e.g. petty crime

Housing, work and income

- Family seeking asylum or refugees
- Periods of unemployment of parent/carer
- Parents/carers have limited formal education
- Low income
- Financial/debt problems
- Poor state of repair, temporary or overcrowded, or unsafe housing
- Intentionally homeless
- Serious debts/poverty impact on ability to have basic needs met
- Rent arrears put family at risk of eviction or proceedings initiated
- Not in Education, Employment or Training post-16

Social and community including education

- Some social exclusion or conflict experiences; low tolerance
- Community characterised by negativity towards children/young people
- Difficulty accessing community facilities

Housing, work and income

- Chronic unemployment that has severely affected parents' own identities.
- Family unable to gain employment due to significant lack of basic skills or long-term substance misuse.

Family functioning and well-being

- Family have serious physical and mental health difficulties impacting on their child
- Community are hostile to family.
- Emerging involvement in gang or other activities which risks future exploitation
- Young person displays regular physical violence towards parents.

Level 3 -TARGETED:**Health**

- Child has some chronic/recurring health problems; not treated, or badly managed
- Child is not taken to appointments for serious medical / health conditions
- Developmental milestones are not being met due to parental care
- Regular substance misuse
- Lack of food
- 'Unsafe' sexual activity
- Self-harming behaviours
- Child has significant disability
- Mental health issues emerging e.g. conduct disorder; ADHD; anxiety; depression; eating disorder; self-harming
- Standard risk Child Sexual Exploitation with multiple vulnerabilities or medium risk of child sexual exploitation identified using the CSE risk and vulnerabilities assessment

Emotional Development

- Sexualised behaviour
- Child appears regularly anxious, angry or phobic and demonstrates a mental health condition
- Young carer affecting development of self

Behavioural Development

- Persistent disruptive/challenging behaviour at school, home or in the neighbourhood
- Starting to commit offences/re-offend
- Additional needs met by Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services
- Prosecution of offences resulting in court orders, custodial sentences or Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or Youth Offending early intervention
- Repeated short incidents of missing from home (less than 3 incidents in 90 days)

Identity and Self-Esteem

- Presentation (including hygiene) significantly impacts on all relationships
- Child/young person experiences persistent discrimination; internalised and reflected in poor self-image
- Alienates self from others

Family and Social Relationships

- Relationships with carers characterised by unpredictability
- Misses school consistently
- Previously had periods of Local Authority accommodation
- Young person is main carer for family member

Self-care skills and independence

- Disability prevents self-care in a significant range of tasks
- Child lacks a sense of safety and often puts him/herself in danger

Learning

- Consistently poor nursery/school attendance and punctuality
- Young child with few, if any, achievements
- Not in education (under 16)

Basic care, ensuring safety and protection

- Parent/carer is failing to provide adequate care
- Parents have found it difficult to care for previous child/young person
- Domestic abuse, coercion or control in the home
- Parent's mental health problems or substance misuse significantly affect care of child/young person
- Non-compliance of parents/carers with services
- Child/young person may be subject to neglect
- Child has no positive relationships
- Child has multiple carers; may have no significant relationship to any of them
- Child at risk of Female Genital Mutilation and other harmful traditional/cultural practices, Forced Marriage or Honour Based Abuse where a protective parent is engaging with targeted services to seek protection
- Child at risk of Modern Slavery and/or Human Trafficking but parents are accessing support and services

Guidance, boundaries and stimulation

- Parents struggle/refuse to set effective boundaries e.g. too loose/tight/physical chastisement
- Child/young person behaves in anti-social way in the neighbourhood

Level 4 - SPECIALIST

Health

- Child/young person has severe/chronic health problems
- Failure to thrive/faltering growth with no identified medical cause
- Refusing medical care endangering life / development
- Seriously obese / seriously underweight
- Serious dental decay requiring removal of multiple teeth through persistent lack of dental care
- Persistent and high risk substance misuse
- Dangerous sexual activity and/or early teenage pregnancy
- Sexual abuse
- Evidence of significant harm or neglect
- Non-accidental injury
- Unexplained significant injuries
- Acute mental health problems e.g. severe depression; threat of suicide; psychotic episode
- Physical / learning disability requiring constant supervision
- Disclosure of abuse from child / young person
- Disclosure of abuse / physical injury caused by a professional
- High risk of child sexual exploitation or actual abuse known to be happening

Emotional and Behavioural Development

- Puts self or others in danger e.g. missing from home inappropriate relationships
- Severe emotional/behavioural challenges
- Puts self or others at risk through aggressive behaviour

Behavioural Development

- Persistent disruptive/challenging at school, home or in the neighbourhood resulting in repeated school placement breakdown and/or family breakdown
- Regular and persistent offending and re-offending behaviour for serious offences resulting in custodial sentences or high risk public protection concerns
- Mental health needs resulting in high risk
- self-harming behaviours, suicidal ideation and in-patient admissions

- Basic care, ensuring safety and protection
- Parent / carers mental health or substance misuse significantly affect care of child

Identity and Self-Esteem

- Failed Education Supervision Order – three prosecutions for non-attendance: family refusing to engage
- Child/young person likely to put self at risk
- Evident mental health needs
- Young person exhibiting extremist views, threats, suggestions or behaviour which meets PREVENT criteria
- Young person involved / closely associating with gangs Family and Social Relationships
- Relationships with family experienced as negative ('low warmth, high criticism')
- Rejection by a parent/carer; family no longer want to care for - or have abandoned –child / young person
- Periods accommodated by local authority
- Family breakdown related to child's behavioural difficulties
- Subject to physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect
- Younger child main carer for family member

Learning

- No school placement due to parental neglect
- Child/young person is out of school due to parental neglect

Other indicators

- Professional concerns – but difficulty accessing child / young person
- Unaccompanied refuge / asylum seeker
- Privately fostered
- Abusing other children
- Young sex offenders
- Serious or persistent offending behaviour likely to lead to custody / remand in secure unit/ prison
- Trafficked child with no family support or protection
- Forced criminality, forced labour
- Missing for more than 48 hours
- Evidence of dependency. Using opiates (e.g. heroin, crack). Injecting. Supply of substances to others. Dependency putting others at risk.
- High levels of social isolation that may be exacerbated by personal, cultural, sexual identity or education needs

Housing, work and income

- Homeless - or imminent if not accepted by housing department

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents / carers unable to care for previous children • Instability and violence in the home continually • Parents / carers involved in violent or serious crime, or crime against children • Parents/carers own needs mean they are unable to keep child / young person safe • Severe disability – child / young person relies totally on other people to meet care needs • Chronic and serious domestic abuse involving child/young person • Disclosure from parent of abuse to child / young person • Suspected/evidence of fabricated or induced illness • Young person at risk of Female Genital Mutilation and other harmful traditional/ cultural practices, Forced Marriage or Honour Based Abuse with family who lack willingness to protect • Medium risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and parents/carers lack willingness to protect <p>Emotional warmth and stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent’s own emotional experiences impacting on their ability to meet child/young person’s needs • Child has no-one to care for him/her • Requesting young child be accommodated by local authority <p>Guidance, boundaries and stimulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No effective boundaries set by parents / carers • Multiple carers • Child beyond parental control • Persistent and regular incidents of missing from home (three or more incidents in 90 days) • Missing from home for long periods of time <p>Family functioning and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant parental / carer discord and persistent domestic violence and discord between family members • Child / young person in need where there are child protection concerns • Individual posing a risk to children in, or known to, household • Family home used for drug taking, prostitution, illegal activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing dangerous or seriously threatening to health • Physical accommodation places child in danger <p>Extreme poverty / debt impacting on ability to care for child</p>
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