

Children with Disabilities Team (CWD Family Help) Spectrum of Support

Guidance for Children and Families

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to staff and managers working with a child or young person with a disability, to determine whether allocation to the Children with Disabilities Team (CwD Family Help) is required.
- 1.2 Not all children with a disability need to be in the (CwD Family Help) Children with Disability team. Allocation to a social worker is based upon unmet social care need and the presenting needs of the child.
- 1.3 We encourage inclusion across all the Children and Families service and therefore many children who have a disability can have their needs met in the mainstream teams. This is because often needs can be met within universal, Early Support or Family Help in children social care. In addition, to the needs of children who are in mainstream and specialist education provision). Therefore, this document should be read in conjunction with [Warwickshire's safeguarding procedures](#) and [Warwickshire Safeguarding Board Procedures Manual](#).
- 1.4 If a child or young person deemed to meet allocation criteria requiring input from CwD Family Help is part of a sibling group, and lives as part of that sibling group, the identified social care needs of the whole sibling group will be met by allocation within CwD Family Help. The only exception to this would be if the social care needs of one child were not impacted on by the needs of their disabled sibling.

2. Criteria for allocation

The Children with Disabilities service is for children with unmet Social Care needs that meet eligibility for specialist (tier 4) services, and will have identified needs that will usually have evidence of:

- Severe learning disabilities
- Severe physical disabilities that require a high level of personal care support, without which their independence would be significantly restricted, including substantial sensory impairment together with auditory and/or visual impairment.
- Severe developmental delay in motor and/or cognitive functioning
- Profound multiple disabilities
- Complex and severe health problems that arise from the disability, that are life limiting, degenerative illness or organic disorder resulting in severe disability
- Children and young people who have a disability that has a significant impact on their communication needs, social and behavioural development.

Detailed information about the social care thresholds (tiers) can be found below

Level of	Mild to Moderate	Severe and Profound
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need				
Spectrum of support (DfE)				
	The statements below relate to children who, because of their disability, do not fall in line with expected developmental milestones			
CwD Family Help Criteria	Children presenting with some limitations but able to function independently. Children functioning slightly behind the level expected for age	Children where aids and/or assistance may be required to perform tasks. Children functioning around two thirds of the level expected for age	Children who are unable to perform tasks without aids and assistance most of the time. Children functioning below or around half the level expected for age	Children who are completely dependent upon carer to perform tasks
Dedicated CwD Resources	SEND Parenting Support, Family Support Workers, Family Information Service Local Offer Family Information Service Brokerage Officer (Financial Assessments), Family Network Coordinator			
Family Help	SEND Early Help Universal and Community Services		CwD Family Help: Held by SEND FH practitioner. or /and Community FH practitioner	

2.1 Criteria for Specialist Social Worker Support – Children with Profound and Severe Disabilities

For clarity, there are children who have disabilities across all teams in the Children and Families service. However, the spectrum of challenges or difficulties experienced by a child with disabilities can present differently as can the impact upon them. Therefore, whilst we advocate and wish to promote inclusion across the whole service; there are a small number of children and families for whom, due to the complexity of their impact their disability, or multitude of disabilities or illnesses will need support from an allocated social worker. This will be the most appropriate service to meet unmet social care needs.

2.2 Notwithstanding the fact that support may be required for the child and family, but in situations where the child has mild or moderate disabilities, support for these children will be met by either Early Support or the wider Family Help teams. For example:

- Physical disabilities that are effectively managed
- Specific learning difficulties
- Speech and language difficulties
- Sensory impairment
- Challenges accessing education provision
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural & Mental Health difficulties - including children with ADHD

- Mild to moderate developmental delay

2.3 Mental Health

The needs of children and young people with difficulties associated with their mental health are not best met from CwD Family Help, as a specialist mental health service may be the appropriate team, such as counsellors and psychologists, who are trained to address their primary issues. These professionals, along with other services, can also assist the children and their families.

For children with severe and profound mental health difficulties, which may put them at risk of requiring Tier 4 (inpatient) care, the Family Adolescent Support Team, the Wraparound Service, and the Key Worker project may be appropriate resources. Access to these services will be via discussions with advisors in Family Connect, who will determine the best pathway for support for them.

However, if there are other disability issues/learning issues that impact on the child/young person, it may be agreed that a CwD Family Help maybe the best placed to meet need. For children who are dealing with severe and profound mental health difficulties and who also present with the co morbidities. Whilst not supported independently, the accumulation of severe and profound physical disabilities, profound learning disabilities, and complex health issues for example, in addition to their severe mental health difficulties may be supported in the CwD Family Help team. It is recognised that each child is unique in their presentation and that their needs and the impact of their disability is taken into consideration when making the decision

2.4 Physical Health Issues

Severe health issues in children can encompass a wide range of physical and mental conditions. Here are some general criteria that are often used to identify severe health issues in children:

Physical Health Issues- General Criteria

1. **Duration and persistence:** The physical health condition is long-lasting or recurrent and has a severe and profound impact affecting the child's life over an extended period of time.
2. **Severity of symptoms:** The physical health symptoms are severe and intense, significantly disrupting the child's daily activities, education, and social interactions.
3. **Impact on functioning:** The physical health condition severely limits the child's ability to perform age-appropriate activities and tasks and limits their daily functioning.
4. **Need for ongoing specialised care:** The child requires specialised medical practitioners to support the ongoing health need of the child, for example, Neurology, Haematology, Cardiology, Oncology, Gastroenterology, to name a few.

2.5.1 It's important to note that a comprehensive evaluation by healthcare professionals is

essential to accurately diagnose and manage severe health issues in children. For specific concerns about a child's health, consulting with a paediatrician or a specialist is always the best course of action.

2.5.2 Within Children & Families, assessing and meeting the needs of those children with mild and moderate levels of disability (if there is a need for social work assessment/involvement) is the responsibility of the wider Family Help teams. This is to maximise the social inclusion of children and young people, increase the ongoing skills development of the wider teams so that all children have access to the support services they need. This also avoids unnecessary labelling of children and promotes independence from specialist services when mainstream services can provide appropriate help and support.

3.0 Support services

3.1 Early Support and Targeted Early Help

Families with children with disabilities can access support at a much earlier stage. No longer does a family need to escalate to need a Family Help Social worker, if their needs can be met by dedicated services much sooner. The CwD Family Help team have a range of dedicated support services available to families. This will enable families to access support at the earliest opportunity:

3.2 Family Information Service Local Offer

Warwickshire's SEND local offer brings together information about the local services and support available across education, health and social care for families with children and young people aged 0 to 25, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Watch the video to find out more about Warwickshire's [SEND Local Offer](#)

3.3 Family Information Service

To help navigate these services is the Family Information Service. Dedicated advisors can offer advice and guidance on a range of issues and can signpost to the relevant services, including advice and support from the CwD Family Helpline. You can find more information clicking on the [Family Information Service](#) link.

3.4 CwD Brokerage Officer

In the CwD Family Help team is a dedicated Family Information Service Brokerage Officer, who supports families who have Children with Disabilities with financial assessments. The purpose of a financial assessment is to ensure that the family are in receipt of all the benefits they are entitled too! In addition, during conversations with families it may be appropriate to offer short term help in other areas too. Therefore, the CWD Brokerage role, like that of a Social Prescriber, can signpost or refer to services, but can also complete charity applications and support in other ways as relevant to those

circumstances.

3.5 Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service: the importance of safe and well visits for families with children with disabilities

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service offers free Safe and Well visits to help families stay safe at home. Our visits provide tailored fire safety advice, smoke alarm checks, and essential planning in case of an emergency. These visits are particularly vital for families with children with disabilities, especially those who are not mobile or non-verbal, as they may need additional support in the event of a fire.

For families in these situations, having a clear emergency evacuation plan is a priority. In the event of a fire, parents and carers need to know exactly what steps to take, as quick action can save lives. When calling 999, it is crucial to inform the fire service that someone in the property is unable to evacuate unaided. This ensures that responding crews can act immediately to provide the necessary assistance.

During a Safe and Well visit, our team will assess potential risks, such as a child being unable to evacuate independently or requiring medical oxygen. This vital information is recorded on our system and will appear on our Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) if an emergency occurs, allowing firefighters to respond with the right plan in place.

To book a Safe and Well visit, call Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service on 01926 466282 or visit [Apply for a safe and well visit \(home fire safety check\) – Warwickshire County Council](#)

3.6 Family Network Coordinator (FNC)

A family network meeting is an independent service for families who are currently being supported by Warwickshire County Council, Children and Families. In the CwD Family Help team there is a dedicated Family Network Coordinator, specifically to support families who have a disabled child. The process is voluntary and is offered as an entitlement for children in CwD Family Help.

The meeting gives you the opportunity to decide how to deal with some of the challenges families are facing in a way that makes sense to you and your family. For the parents of disabled children, the reasons for having a Family Network meeting could be varied. It could be helpful to bring those close you and your family together so that everyone can understand the challenges the child and family are facing. Solutions are generated together which could be to seek short term, or longer-term support around the family or it could be what the plan of action would be in an emergency – such as sudden parental illness for example.

A Family Network Meeting is not coordinated because families are not coping, it's a process that empowers and supports parents' and carers in their decision making and brings together wider networks to have clear understanding, communication and action around a family.

The FNC is impartial and independent and helps families to come up with a plan that suits them. There is a dedicated SEND FNC role that sits in the CwD Assessment Team and therefore, advice could be sought to whether a Family Network Meeting is right for you and your family and what the benefits are. Please watch the animation to find out more. [Family Network Meetings](#)

3.7 SEND Parenting Support

Parenting Support can be perceived by some parents as negative and in some cases 'blaming' parents for not managing the needs of their children correctly. This is not the case, and it is important to reiterate the value of support in this area. Childrens needs present very differently and what can be helpful for one child can have the opposite effect on another, so we need to focus on the individual needs of the parents/carers and the children. Some parent and carers benefit from knowing a wide range of strategies that they could try with their children and for others, it is understanding the neuroscience behind the strategies. Whatever the situation, the ambition is the same, which is to be helpful and supportive to parents and carers, without judgement or fear of blame.

In 2025, representatives from Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice will be working with the Relationship and Family Team to look at the parenting groups offered and to give them all a unique SEND lens for delivery. In addition, we are training parent representatives to co deliver the courses with the parent trainers, to further support parental experience.

4.0 Assessment and Allocation

1. The Family Connect Team are the first port of call for support. Through a coaching conversation, there will be an in-depth conversation between the caller and the advisor about the strengths and needs of the child and family.
2. The Family Connect Advisor will either make direct recommendations for either access to community resources, or coordinated support, such as an Early Support Plan, a Family Help Plan (both completed by a Community Lead Professional), or an assessment completed by a Family Help practitioner. This might be from the Children's Team or the CwD Family Help Team.
3. The Family Connect advisors have access to direct consultation and support in their decision making from the CwD Family Help Assessment

Team. In cases where the decision will require joint decision making, the teams will collaborate and come up with a joint decision.

4. The decision around whether a child or young person meets the criteria for allocation to CwD Family Help is through a conversation with the Assessment Team Manager, or duty cover that day.
5. In coming to this decision, the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and education psychology advice and assessments may be considered, alongside diagnosis, presenting behaviours, opinions of professionals already involved, and the cumulative impact of differing disabilities/learning issues on both the child/young person and their family.
6. Annual assessments are requested to ensure that the needs of children are known, and the relevant support is in place. This can be sought from community, Early Support or Family Help as assessed by the CwD Family Help Assessment Team or allocated worker.
7. Following the annual or new assessment, support packages, including Direct Payments can decrease as well as stay the same or increase, as determined by the assessing worker.
8. The CwD Family Help team are not able to directly assess for specialist equipment as this will need specialist support from an Occupational Therapist. A referral to this team is accessed [here](#).
9. If the decision is that a child does not meet the criteria for CwD Family Help, support can be offered via the mainstream Family Help Team, or Early Support, or within community resources. The final decision regarding case allocation will be made by the SEND Assessment Team Manager.
10. All escalated cases will be reviewed by the SEND Service Manager and the Family Connect Service Manager to consider learning and understanding of criteria and the CwD Family Help remit.
11. If the child meets the criteria for a Family Help social work assessment, this will be completed by a Family Help Practitioner or a Family Help Social Worker. The assessment will be updated annually.
12. If the assessment determines that the child's needs at the time of the assessment would support the use of either direct payments or a commissioned package, this would not be a permanent arrangement as this would be reassessed periodically throughout the year (in response to emerging needs) or annually. Packages of support are based upon assessment of need and are subject to change. Packages can decrease, remain the same or increase based upon levels of evidential need.

13. Parent Carer Wellbeing Conversations are integral to the Family Help Assessments as the wellbeing of parents should be considered holistically. Assessed needs will be ascertained via a coaching conversation to understand the impact of the caring responsibilities on the parents and carers. Services such as Family Network Conferences, Financial Viability Assessments (to ensure that families have access to all benefit entitlements) and to signpost / access to specific community resources. (See the Parent Carer Assessment Policy 2025 for more information).
14. The CwD Family Help Assessment Team can provide advice and guidance to Family Help teams regarding direct payments and this process as well as parent carer wellbeing conversations.

5. Transfers

1. Request for transfers to the CwD Family Help team from the mainstream Family Help team will go via the Assessment Team who will determine whether the criteria is met. (see section 2)
2. Transfers that we are requested to come into CwD Family Help from other Local Authorities will need to show evidence of need prior to our Assessment Team assessing the child.
3. The LA are requested to send to CwD Family Help Assessment team a copy of their most recent assessment, and a copy of the up-to-date EHCP plan prior to transfer. This will enable the CwD Family Help Assessment team the time to coordinate an assessment and to determine need based upon Warwickshire's Spectrum of Support prior to the child moving into the Warwickshire area.
4. The purpose of which is to ensure as much as practicably possible that the child has continuous care - should this be deemed necessary following Warwickshire's Assessment Teams assessment of need against (section 2).
5. If the child's needs do not require a CwD Family Help allocated social worker, it will be determined where the child's identified needs are best met, and this will be communicated to the Local Authority prior to transfer into Warwickshire.