



Threshold Guidance for Working With Disabled Children and Young People

A Supplement to the Norfolk Threshold Guide

Introduction

This guidance supports professionals and families in understanding how children and young people with disabilities can access the right support at the right time. It complements the Norfolk Threshold Guide and aligns with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989/2004, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Equality Act 2010, the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, Children and Families Act 2014, Care Act 2014, and Working Together 2023.

Every disabled child has the **right to protection, participation, and support** proportionate to their needs. Professionals must work **together early**, listen to the **child's voice**, and make **reasonable adjustments**.

Key principles

- **Child-centred:** The child's voice and lived experience are central to all decisions;
- **Early help:** Support should be offered early to prevent escalation;
- **Strength-based:** Build on family and community strengths;
- **Inclusive access:** All disabled children should access universal and targeted services;
- **Fair and transparent:** Decisions are made consistently and equitably;
- **Whole family approach:** All children's needs within the family will be considered and supported as appropriate.

Accessing support

We want to encourage families and young people to access services themselves directly wherever possible. Information about what is available can be found by accessing [the Norfolk Directory \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk) and [the Local Offer \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk). The below provides a guide to how decisions are made about support and services for children with disabilities.

Level	Need/situation	Examples/ indicators	Action/response	Legal framework
Level 1 Universal	Needs met through mainstream services. Disability managed with adjustments.	Attending school, health monitored, stable family.	Universal health, education, community inclusion, reasonable adjustments.	Equality Act 2010 – reasonable adjustments
Level 2 Additional /Targeted	Emerging or low-level additional needs.	Early developmental delays, minor family stress, intermittent support needs.	Early Help Assessment, short breaks, targeted youth/health input.	Children Act 2004, section 10 (s.10) – duty to cooperate
Level 3 Complex/ Multiple	Disability significantly affects daily life or learning.	Ongoing care needs, frequent absences, emotional/behavioural impact.	EHC assessment and plan; coordinated multi-agency planning.	Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3
Level 4 Specialist/ High Risk	Serious welfare or safeguarding concerns linked to disability or care.	Neglect, unsafe care, risk of harm or exploitation.	Children's Social Care assessment under section s.17 or s.47; possible Child Protection Plan.	Children Act 1989, s.17 and 47
Level 5 Transition to Adulthood	Ongoing care or support beyond age 18.	Preparing for adult life, education, or care continuity.	Joint planning (Children's and Adult Services); Care Act assessment.	Care Act 2014; Children and Families Act 2014

Short breaks and parent carer needs assessments (PCNA)

The Short Breaks Team is an Early Help Team who offer activities and services which support families with children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They can include:

- Daytime or overnight care (home or elsewhere)
- Leisure or educational activities
- Support during evenings, weekends, and holidays

To access short breaks or a parent carer needs assessment to see what other support might be available, families can self-refer via the Norfolk SEND Local Offer. Professionals should support families as appropriate to complete applications. Families do not need to be active to Children with Disabilities Services.

All parents and carers of children with SEND have a statutory right to be offered a Parent Carers Needs Assessment (Children and Families Act 2014). A PCNA is an assessment focussing on the adults' needs as a parent carer to a child with SEND. It is separate to any assessment that the child may have, which focuses on their needs. This includes considering practical matters as well as exploring how caring affects their physical and mental health, work, free time and relationships. The PCNA is designed to help identify the parent's support needs, so that they can be directed to related support intended to make their life easier. To access a parent carers assessment Call 0344 800 8020 or [Visit our Early help for children and families webpage \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](#) and select "Request early help" to fill out the online form or speak to your child's allocated worker, if they have one.

Where needs are complex, a social care assessment may be required via a referral through CADS. Parental consent is required unless there is a safeguarding concern.

Support with health needs

Access to community health services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) adult mental health services (for young adults) or specialist paediatric or other health support for disabled children and young people is through the young person's GP or through Just One Norfolk where there will be information on services and referral pathways. Some services can be self-referrals whereas others require a GP referral.

Continuing Care is a way of funding health care packages for babies, children and young people (from birth to 18 years old) with complex healthcare needs whose needs cannot be met by existing mainstream or specialist health services. These complex needs may be as a result of disability, accident or illness.

[Children and Young People are assessed using the National Framework for Children and Young People's Continuing Care \(assets.publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) (DOH 2016). This framework is designed to support Integrated Care Boards in determining if a child's needs are such that they can only be met through a package of continuing care.

The framework also sets out an equitable, transparent and timely process for assessing, deciding and agreeing these bespoke packages of care. Each care package will be commissioned to meet the individual needs of each child/young person and their family and can involve health education and social care. If specific health needs are identified a Continuing Health Care checklist may be completed to indicate whether a full Continuing Care Assessment is required.

[More information can be found on the Norfolk SEND Local Offer website.](#)

Entitlement to services from children with disabilities teams

The Children with Disabilities Team supports children who have a substantial and permanent disability where the impact on the child and family functioning and services cannot be met need at a Level 1 or 2.

The child or young person's primary need is likely but not limited to the following list:

- Children with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and other physical disabilities that significantly impact on their well-being;
- Children and young people with severe learning disabilities;

- Children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder;
- Children and young people with significant global development delay;
- Children and young people with significant sensory impairment;
- Children and young people with significant neurodevelopmental disorders;
- Children and young people with complex physical disability and health needs.

An assessment will be carried out by a practitioner talking and listening to the child/young person, their family and family network, and gathering information from professionals who know the child, such as GP, school and health visitor. The assessment will consider the specific needs of the child or young person alongside their parents and other people in the family network providing care and support. Occupational Therapists (OTs) will work alongside the practitioner as required, to assist in understanding and responding to the needs of disabled children whose behaviour can be challenging as well as for equipment and adaptations.

The assessment will enable Children's Social care to make a judgement about what support could be helpful and available. This will enable the child, parent, carers and family network to decide on a plan and what else they can do collectively to improve the everyday lived experience of the child.

Where ongoing social care support is needed, the plan will include what care and support is to be made available to the family either through a direct service or through a direct payment/Individual budget and will allow the family to plan how this can best work for the child and their carers.

Where children/young people need overnight short breaks or longer-term care outside the home, the team work with the family network to see how this can be provided in a family setting through connected carers or foster care and in a way that helps maintain strong connections to their parents and family network. A direct payment/individual budget will be agreed for the level of social care support beyond what the family are able to provide themselves through their own resources or accessed via the Short Breaks Team.

When is a child 'looked after'?

A child receiving overnight short breaks may be considered 'Looked After' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 if:

- They receive more than 75 nights of care in one setting per year;
- They receive care in multiple settings;
- Their needs or family circumstances require formal accommodation.

Support for the child will be agreed with them and their parents and network through care planning arrangements and reviews which will be chaired by their Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

Moving to adulthood

Education, Children's services and Adult social care have a responsibility to support young people with a disability moving into adulthood. The transitions process for children and young people with additional needs should begin in year 9 (age 14). Evidence from research shows that early and well-planned transitions lead to smoother transitions to adulthood and better outcomes for the young person.

A transition Care Act assessment may take place to determine eligible needs ahead of adulthood, this would be carried out by the Preparing for Adult Life (PfAL) Team and should be carried out as early as possible. Referrals to PfAL can be made between 14-17 by the allocated worker from Children's Services or any other professional or family member.

The lead practitioner for the young person will co-ordinate a meeting with other relevant professionals and family members to make a transition plan. Depending on the needs of the young person this plan can be made as part of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) review, Children Looked After (LAC) review, or Section 17 review. The plan will be:

- **Coordinated** across education, health, and social care;
- **Person-centred**, the young person and their family should lead the plan;
- **Timely**, to ensure continuity of support into adulthood.

Contact and further information

- **Norfolk SEND Local Offer:** www.norfolk.gov.uk/send;
- **Short Breaks Team:** cs.shortbreaks@norfolk.gov.uk | 01603 692455;
- **Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS):** For professional referrals and safeguarding concerns.