



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Swindon Local Protocols for Assessment and Support

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. What is an Assessment?	4
3. Swindon Continuum of Help & Support Pathway.....	5
3.1. Level 1- Universal Services	6
3.2. Level 2 -Early Help Additional Needs.....	6
3.3. Level 3-Early Help Complex Needs.....	7
3.4. Level 4 - Specialist/Statutory Support.....	8
3.5 Key Principles.....	10
4. Referrals	11
5. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	12
6. Assessment Principles.....	13
7. Swindon Family Service & Practice Framework & Guide.....	16
8. Early Help Assessments (EHA).....	18
9. Child & Family Assessment.....	20
10. Section 47 Enquiries & Child Protection Investigations.....	21
11. Swindon Public Law Outline (PLO): Framework for Supporting Families Through Change.....	22
11.1 Public Law Outline.....	22
11.2 Court Assessments.....	25
12. Assessing and Planning for Permanence.....	26
13. Children with Disabilities.....	29
14. Other Assessments.....	30

14.1 Pre-Birth.....	30
14.2 Pre-Birth Guidance.....	30
14.3 Children with Special Educational Needs.....	32
14.4. Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.....	32
14.5. Personal Budgets.....	34
14.6. Young Carers.....	34
14.7 Domestic Abuse.....	36
14.8 Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harmful Behaviour.....	37
14.9. Children and Young People involved in the Criminal Justice System....	40
14.10. Separated Minors & Age Assessments.....	44
14.11. Private Fostering.....	46
14.12. Special Guardianship.....	47
14.13. Channel/Prevent.....	49
14.14. Safeguarding children at risk of abuse through female genital mutilation (FGM).....	51
14.15. Tackling Violence and Exploitation Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	52
14.16. Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE).....	56
14.17. Reunification- Children We Care For, Returning Home from Care.....	57
14.18. Homeless 16- & 17-Year Olds.....	59
15. Contacts.....	62

1. Introduction.

The primary aim of Swindon Children Services is to provide the right help at the right time for children and families. This protocol outlines our framework for assessing and responding to children's needs, ensuring effective multi-agency collaboration and appropriate support levels.

Building on the principles established in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Swindon Children's Services has developed this protocol to outline our local approach to supporting vulnerable children and families. This document serves as our operational framework, detailing how we coordinate support services and conduct assessments to ensure every child receives the right level of intervention at the right time.

Our approach emphasises the importance of collaborative working across all agencies involved in children's lives, fostering strong partnerships between practitioners, parents, carers, and most importantly, the children themselves. This integrated approach ensures that every child's unique needs are met through a coordinated response that places their well-being and safety at its heart.

This protocol should be read alongside the following guidance documents:

- Swindon's Early Help Offer
- South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP)
- Swindon Children, Families and Community Health Procedure Manual
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners
- Swindon's Neglect Framework and Practice Guidance (March 2025)
- Multi-Agency Pre-birth Protocol to Safeguard Unborn Babies
- The Right Help at the Right Time (2024)

The protocol provides a framework for agencies to work together in the best interests of children, ensuring they are supported, safe, and enabled to reach their full potential within Swindon's service framework.



Key definitions:

- A child is defined as pre-birth (unborn) and anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday
- The term 'practitioners' refers to individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity

Purpose

This protocol aims to:

- Ensure consistent assessment and support practices across Swindon
- Provide clear guidance on thresholds and interventions
- Promote effective multi-agency collaboration
- Support early intervention and prevention
- Ensure child-centred decision making

Core Principles

Our assessment approach is built on the following principles:

- Child-centred practice focusing on the lived experience of children and families
- Early intervention and prevention
- Multi-agency collaboration and information sharing
- Proportionate and timely responses
- Continuous improvement through reflection and learning

2. What is an Assessment?

An assessment is a systematic process that helps us understand a child's world and identify their unique needs. When a child comes into contact with Swindon Children's Services, we gather information from multiple perspectives to build a complete picture of their situation. This involves





listening to the child's voice, understanding their experiences, and gathering insights from their caregivers, schools, healthcare providers, and other supporting agencies.

At Swindon Children's Services, we recognise that every child's circumstances are unique. Some children may require additional support due to disabilities or specific challenges, whilst others may need temporary assistance during difficult times. Our assessment process acknowledges that each family operates within its own distinct context, shaped by their individual strengths, challenges, and cultural background.

We believe that parents and carers play a vital role in their children's lives and typically possess valuable knowledge about their child's needs. Therefore, we work collaboratively with families throughout the assessment process, respecting their expertise whilst contributing our professional perspective.

The primary goal of our assessment is to determine the most appropriate level of support needed to ensure the child's wellbeing and safety. This might involve connecting families with early help services, coordinating existing support, or identifying additional resources that could benefit the child. Through this thorough evaluation, we aim to provide targeted interventions that address each child's specific needs whilst empowering families to maintain their caring responsibilities effectively.

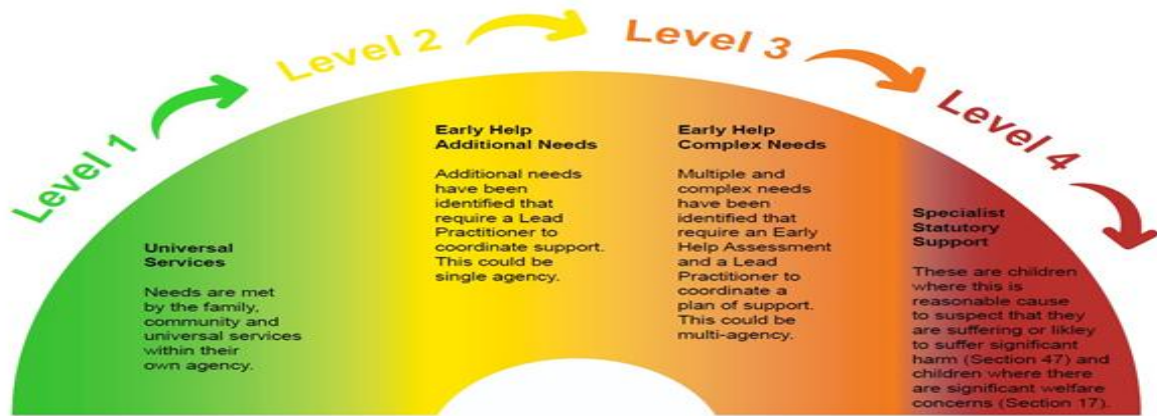
Assessment

3. Swindon Continuum of Help & Support Pathway

The Swindon Continuum of Help & Support Pathway provides a framework for practitioners working with children and families in Swindon. This pathway, updated in February 2024, helps identify when children may need additional levels of support to achieve their full potential.

The levels and their descriptions are based on the Swindon Continuum of Help & Support Pathway information found in safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk





3.1 Level 1: Universal Services

Children and young people whose needs are met by universal services such as schools and healthcare services, alongside the love, care and protection from parents and carers. Children and young people in this category are making good overall progress in all areas of their development. Some limited intervention from a universal service may be required to avoid needs arising or to meet a single identified need. The majority of children living in Swindon will fall into this category.

Response Assessments

- Agencies should identify what they can do first to support the child and their family through their own service
- Agencies may use their own assessment processes to tailor the services they provide

Consent

- Consent must be sought to access services and share information with others
- Any information sharing between agencies without consent must be clear as to its legal basis
- Ensure privacy information is shared with the family and a consent form completed

Outcome

Children, young people and their families make good progress in most areas of development.

3.2 Level 2: Early Help Additional Needs

Level 2 additional support relates to children, young people and their families with additional needs that can be met through a single agency response. This includes children who may have a special

educational need and/or disability (SEND support). The single agency will coordinate the assessment and plan with the aim of achieving positive outcomes and preventing the need for a higher level of support. The support required may only be short term, but if ignored, these issues could escalate further.

Response Assessments

- Professionals should refer to a single agency to meet identified need
- Agencies can be identified through Contact Swindon who can provide details of services and support
- Agencies should consider using their own internal assessment frameworks or other tools such as the Neglect Screening Tool
- Agencies should complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) and arrange a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting
- The EHA will ensure that information is held centrally and is visible (with consent) to other professionals who may also have concerns

Consent

- Consent must be sought to access services
- Any information sharing between agencies without consent must be clear as to its legal basis
- Ensure privacy information is shared with the family and a consent form completed

Outcome

Children, young people and their families make good progress in most areas of development. Additional support has been put in place to improve overall outcomes for the family. If improvement has not been made, consideration should be given to review level of need and additional interventions that may be required at Level 3.

3.3 Level 3: Early Help Complex Needs

Level 3 applies to children and families who require support from more than one agency due to multiple and complex needs. This includes where a child may have special educational need and/or disability and is identified as SEND support by their school. These families need services to work together in a co-ordinated way to assess, plan and work directly with the family to bring about change. The support required may only be short term, but if not addressed, these issues could escalate to require statutory intervention.

Response Assessments

- Following appropriate consent, agencies should initiate an Early Help Assessment (EHA) to assist in identifying the correct level of needs for children and families and inform any support plan required to meet those needs
- The EHA is designed as a shared tool to be used by all agencies who are delivering early help support to children and families
- Advice to support children and families at this level would benefit from a discussion at a Locality Panel
- The identified Lead Practitioner will coordinate work with the family and across agencies to support their needs
- In addition to the EHA, other tools for assessing need are the Neglect Screening Tool, Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF) and any local, regional, or nationally specialist assessment tools

Consent

- Consent must be sought to access services
- Any information sharing between agencies without consent must be clear as to its legal basis
- Ensure privacy information is shared with the family and a consent form completed

Outcome

Children, young people and their families make good progress in most areas of development; additional support has been put in place to improve overall outcomes for the family. If improvement has not been achieved and there is a risk that a child or young person is likely to suffer significant harm, the support and intervention needs to be considered at Level 4. There should be no unnecessary delay.

3.4 Level 4: Specialist/Statutory Support

Level 4 specialist/statutory support is for children, young people, and families with a high level of unmet or complex needs including:

- Children in need; a child who has significant developmental or disability needs
- Child protection; a child who is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- Children looked after and privately fostered

- Young people who have committed an offence
- Children with acute mental health needs
- A child who may need an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment
- Children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Children subject to an Emergency Protection Order
- Interim Care Order or a full Care Order
- A child who is remanded by a court into local authority accommodation or youth detention accommodation will also be deemed as a Child Looked After

Response Assessments

- Agencies should refer to Contact Swindon by completing a Request for Help and Support Form
- If there is a concern that a child is immediately at risk, dial 999
- If there is a concern that a child's health is at immediate risk, medical support should be sought by contacting 999 in an emergency, 111, GP, Emergency Department or the child's existing health provider
- A child who requires a statutory/specialist assessment will take place under the provisions of the Children Act 1989
- A child who needs a Statutory Needs Assessment (SEND) under Children and Families Act 2014

Consent

- Professionals should normally seek consent to share information for Level 4 referrals, except where this would place the child at potential risk of harm, or compromise a police investigation
- If consent is withheld for a Level 4 referral, the professional should consider with their Safeguarding Lead whether they have grounds to override consent in order to protect the child
- Where a safeguarding lead is not available, this should not delay a timely referral
- Contact Swindon can provide advice

- Rationale for not pursuing consent should be recorded
- Where a referral is necessary to protect the child, professionals will have a legal basis to share information without parental consent

Outcome

Children and young people will be supported through the intervention of specialist services, within a statutory role.

3.5 Key Principles

The pathway is guided by several key principles:

1. Focus on Early Help as established in Working Together 2023, including:

- Whole family working
- Effective communication
- Co-ordinated assessments and plans
- Use of family networks
- Incorporating SEND needs as part of a graduated response

2. Emphasis on consent and information sharing:

- Professionals are expected to have open and honest conversations with families about their worries
- Families should be fully informed about services being referred to
- Consent should be obtained before making referrals, with exceptions for emergency situations

3. Focus on constructive conversations to identify:

- Views and worries
- Strengths and protective factors
- Family needs and capabilities

This pathway ensures that children and families in Swindon receive the appropriate level of support at the right time, while maintaining a focus on early intervention and prevention. The framework is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current best practices and legislative requirements.

4. Referrals

In Swindon, families can directly access Level 1 (Universal) and most Level 2 (Universal Plus & Early Help) services by contacting the relevant service provider. Professionals can also make referrals to these services with family consent. When concerns arise or when unsure about the appropriate level of support, professionals can seek guidance through Contact Swindon or, for complex cases requiring multi-agency consideration, consult with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Contact Swindon can provide information about available services and support options, helping professionals make appropriate referrals to the most suitable level of service.

Contact Swindon serves as the primary point of contact for professionals seeking to make appropriate referrals in Swindon. The service provides comprehensive support through several key functions:

1. Initial Assessment and Guidance
 - Provides immediate consultation for professionals with concerns about children
 - Offers expert guidance on appropriate service levels and referral pathways
 - Helps determine the most suitable level of support needed (Levels 1-4)
2. Service Navigation
 - Provides detailed information about available services and support options
 - Helps professionals understand the range of services at each level of need
 - Facilitates connections to appropriate service providers
3. Multi-Agency Coordination
 - Acts as a gateway to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for complex cases
 - Facilitates communication between different agencies
 - Ensures appropriate information sharing and coordination
4. Professional Support



- Offers guidance on referral processes and documentation requirements
- Provides information about service availability and capacity
- Helps professionals make informed decisions about the most appropriate level of intervention

Through these functions, Contact Swindon ensures that professionals can make well-informed referrals that match children's needs with the most appropriate level of support, whether that's universal services, early help, or statutory intervention.

5. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Swindon MASH serves as the single point of contact for safeguarding concerns and complex cases requiring multi-agency consideration. The partnership brings together professionals from key agencies including Wiltshire Police, Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Swindon Borough Council Education Services, Swindon Children's Social Care, Early Help Services, and other specialist agencies.

The partnership works collaboratively to:

- Screen all contacts received into MASH
- Share and analyse information across multiple client data systems
- Build a comprehensive picture of the child's history and current circumstances
- Make proportionate and timely decisions about the type and level of services needed
- Ensure children receive the right level of support based on their assessed needs

When children are referred to MASH, they can:

- Be signposted to appropriate services
- Be referred for an Early Help Assessment
- Have their case screened by the MASH partnership to understand the complete picture
- Have their needs assessed against Swindon's levels of need framework

Consent must be obtained for multi-agency checks unless there is an identified risk to the child or it is in the public interest not to do so. In all cases where consent is not obtained, the rationale must



be documented. When the initial outcome is unclear, MASH can convene a multi-agency threshold discussion to determine the most appropriate course of action.

All safeguarding concerns about a child must be referred to MASH, where they will be considered for potential referral to Children's Social Care. This ensures that all children receive the appropriate level of support based on their assessed needs, whether that's universal services, early help, or statutory intervention.

https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/630/referral_form_-_request_for_help_and_support.docx

The screenshot shows the website header with the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership logo and a search bar. The navigation menu includes: About, Adults, Children and young people, Community safety, Policies and publications, and Training. The breadcrumb trail reads: You are here: Home | Children and young people | For professionals | Request for help and support guidelines and contact information. The main heading is 'Request for help and support guidelines and contact information'. The text below states: 'Children and Families Contact Swindon is the new 'front door' for the Council's children's social care services, and provides a single point of contact to request help and support for families or report safeguarding concerns.' It then lists contact information: Telephone: 01793 464646 and E-mail: contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk. A final note states: 'This approach has been developed to ensure that families and children get the right help, at the right time, from the most appropriate teams.'

6. Assessment Principles

The Assessment Triangle serves as Swindon's primary framework for understanding children's needs. This comprehensive approach guides practitioners in assessing three interconnected domains that influence a child's life and development, providing a structured way to understand the complex interplay between different factors affecting children's lives. The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families provides the conceptual foundation for social work assessments in Swindon. This framework, updated in 2024, guides practitioners in understanding the complex interplay between different factors affecting children's lives through the Assessment Triangle.





1. Child Development

- Understanding child development across different ages and stages
- Knowledge of attachment theory and its impact on relationships
- Recognition of factors influencing children's identity and self-esteem
- Analysis of how various factors affect child development and outcomes

2. Parenting Capacity

- Understanding different parenting styles and approaches
- Assessment of basic care and discipline practices
- Evaluation of parenting difficulties, including:
 - Learning disabilities
 - Mental health
 - Alcohol and substance misuse
 - Domestic abuse
 - Offending behaviour

- Assessment of capacity for change within the child's timescales

3. Family and Environmental Factors

- Analysis of socio-economic influences
- Assessment of housing situations
- Understanding of immigration and cultural/religious factors
- Evaluation of access to community-based support
- Analysis of wider family systems and their impact

In Swindon, practitioners use this framework to:

- Draw on comprehensive knowledge and skills to understand unique circumstances
- Analyse interconnected risk and protective factors
- Make professional judgments about support and protection needs
- Consider how factors interact across all three domains

Our assessment approach is underpinned by the 'Think Family' practice guidance, which emphasises working with all members of the family to support positive change. This approach, as outlined in the Think Family Practice Guidance 2024, recognises that effective support requires considering the needs and strengths of the entire family system. [Think Family Practice Guidance 2024 - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

The Think Family model aligns with Swindon's commitment to:

- Working collaboratively with all family members
- Building on family strengths and resources
- Supporting sustainable, long-term positive change
- Providing targeted interventions based on assessed needs

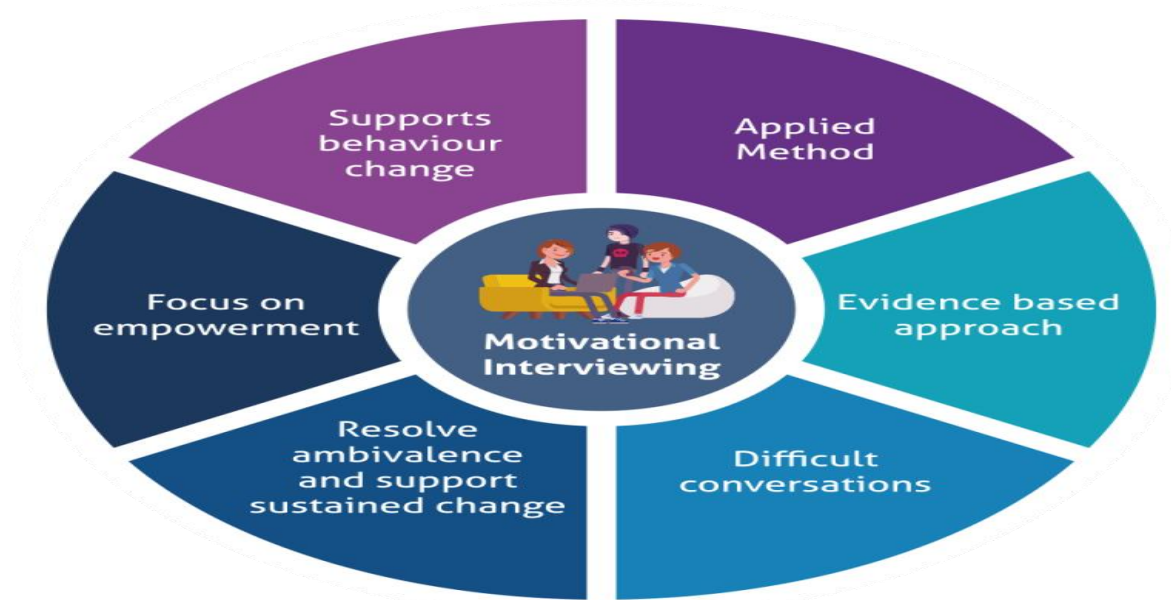
This approach ensures that assessments consider the whole family context while maintaining a focus on the child's needs and safety.

7. Swindon Children Services & Practice Framework & Guide

In Swindon, we believe that every child has the right to a healthy, happy childhood. We are committed to ensuring all children living in the borough have equal opportunities to learn, have fun, participate, and thrive. To achieve our ambitions, our Family Safeguarding model, supported by Motivational Interviewing and Reflective Practice, aims to create opportunities for positive change by building on existing strengths and aspirations.

Swindon Family Safeguarding Model

Our practice framework, sets out our approach for practice leaders, managers, practitioners, and partners to ensure a shared understanding of our Family Safeguarding model and the various strengths-based ways of working we use to improve children's circumstances and outcomes. [About family safeguarding | Swindon Borough Council](#)



Our assessment framework is guided by several key principles:

1. Timely and Proportionate Assessments

- Assessments are conducted within appropriate timescales based on individual needs
- The level of assessment is proportionate to the identified needs
- Assessments are aligned with Swindon's levels of need framework

2. Clear Communication

- All documentation is written in plain English
- Assessment findings are clearly communicated to families
- Information is shared appropriately between agencies

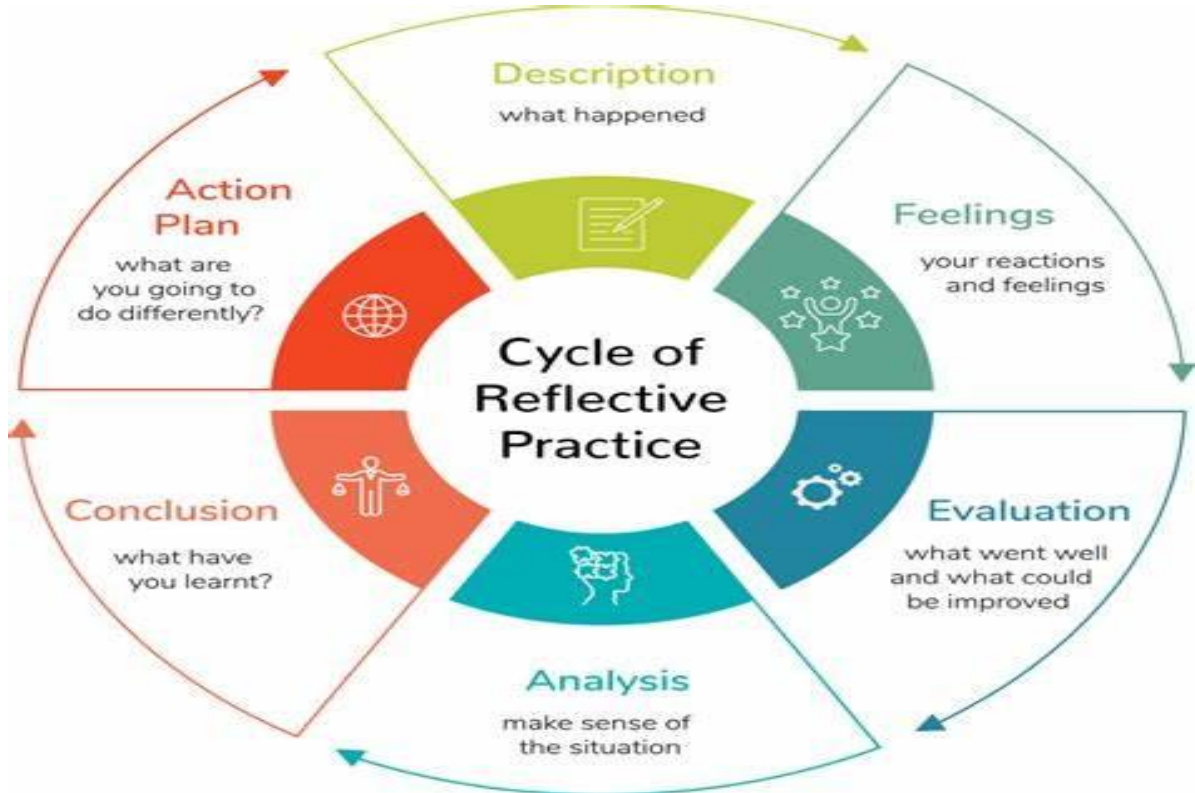
3. Family Strengths Focus

- Practitioners actively identify family strengths and protective factors
- Assessments recognise successful coping strategies
- Support systems are identified and engaged
- Family resilience is built upon existing capabilities

4. Child-Centred Approach

- The child's lived experience is central to all assessments
- Children's voices and concerns are directly heard and recorded
- Assessments examine the child's experience within their family context
- The child's perspective informs all decision-making

This approach ensures that all children in Swindon receive appropriate support while maintaining a focus on their unique needs and circumstances.



8. Early Help Assessments (EHA)

In Swindon, universal services are available to all children and families, with most services accessible through direct registration rather than referral. The Early Help offer includes childcare support packages such as Free Education Entitlement (FEE) for two and three-year-olds, with expanded eligibility for working parents from April 2025. From September 2025, eligible working parents will be able to access up to 30 free hours per week of early education and care for children from age 9 months until they start school.

Swindon's Early Help system operates through a tiered approach:

1. Universal Services
 - Available to all children and families
 - No referral needed

- Includes childcare support packages and early education entitlements
 - Accessed through direct registration
2. Universal Plus Interventions
- Brief, focused interventions (typically 6-12 sessions)
 - Includes evidenced-based parenting programmes
 - Family support interventions
 - Positive activities and Children's Centre provision
 - Accessed through direct referral to the relevant service
3. Early Help Assessments (EHA)
- Initiated when children require coordinated multi-agency support
 - Requires parental consent
 - Discussed at the weekly Early Intervention Locality Panel
 - Identifies appropriate agencies for the Team Around the Family (TAF)
 - Provides a consistent approach to assessment across Swindon's Early Help system

The EHA is used when:

- There are concerns about a child's progress in health, welfare, or learning
- Additional services are needed to support good outcomes
- A child has wider family needs beyond their Education Health Care Plan (where applicable)

This approach ensures coordinated provision of services with an identified Lead Practitioner, reducing duplication and ensuring families tell their story only once.

9. Child & Family Assessment

In Swindon, when a child is referred to Children's Social Care Services for a statutory assessment of need, they will have a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

This comprehensive evaluation is conducted by qualified social workers under the supervision of experienced Assistant & Team Managers, ensuring thorough assessment of the child's needs and circumstances.

The assessment process involves several key components:

- Home visits and, where appropriate, nursery or school visits
- Direct engagement with the child, their parents/carers, and siblings
- Consultation with relevant professionals involved in the child's life
- Individual and joint interviews to gather comprehensive information

During the initial planning phase, the Assessment & Child Protection Team (ACP) Social Worker, in consultation with their manager, considers several critical factors:

- The nature of the referral and any identified concerns
- Information sharing protocols with parents/carers and key agencies
- Consent requirements for agency checks
- The child and family's communication and cultural needs
- Arrangements for accessing the child's views
- Engagement strategies for non-resident parents
- Required professional contributions
- Support needs for parents with learning disabilities
- Mental health and substance misuse considerations
- Domestic violence situations
- Specific requirements for unborn children

Additional assessment considerations include:

- Response plans for emerging information or changing circumstances
- Environmental factors affecting risk levels
- Non-resident children in the household
- Previous service involvement and family history
- Immediate service requirements

The assessment process typically concludes within 45 working days, unless justified extensions are required. Managers maintain oversight through regular supervision with the social worker and document any reasons for timeline extensions.

Upon completion, the assessment determines:

- Eligibility for section 17 services
- Need for accommodation under section 20
- Required safeguarding measures
- Appropriate service levels for improved outcomes

10. Section 47 Enquiries Children Act 1989 & Child Protection Investigations

In Swindon, section 47 Children Act 1989 enquiries are initiated when there are reasonable grounds to believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, or when a child is subject to Police Protection or an Emergency Protection Order. This includes situations where a child has made serious allegations of abuse, sustained unexplained or non-accidental injuries, or is experiencing neglect.

All child protection investigations in Swindon follow a structured approach:

- Initial planning occurs through a Strategy Discussion or Meeting with Police, Health services, and other relevant agencies
- Investigations are conducted either jointly with the police or as a single agency response by Children's Social Care.
- All investigations are informed by information gathered through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The investigation process includes several key components:

1. Safety Planning
 - Immediate assessment of the child's safety needs
 - Development of temporary safety arrangements if necessary
 - Arrangements for alternative accommodation with relatives, family friends, or foster carers when required
2. Child Assessment
 - Direct engagement with the child in a safe environment
 - Individual assessment sessions to gather the child's account
 - Documentation of the child's experiences and concerns
3. Evidence Gathering
 - Video recorded interviews conducted by police officers
 - Trained social workers attend interviews where possible
 - Medical examinations by paediatricians when necessary
 - Collection of relevant documentation and evidence
4. Multi-Agency Planning
 - Assessment of whether an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) is required
 - Development of a multi-agency safeguarding plan (Child Protection Plan)
 - ICPC convened within 15 working days of the strategy discussion
 - Ongoing monitoring and review of the child's safety and well-being

11. Swindon Public Law Outline (PLO): Framework for Supporting Families Through Change

11.1 Public Law Outline

The Public Law Outline (PLO) in Swindon establishes a structured approach for supporting families while addressing child protection concerns. Under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, Swindon



Borough Council implements this framework to work collaboratively with families to prevent the need for court proceedings whenever possible. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

Core Principles

Swindon's PLO implementation focuses on two critical objectives:

1. Diverting cases away from formal court proceedings through effective intervention
2. Ensuring thorough preparation of evidence and assessments to facilitate efficient case progression if proceedings become necessary

Pre-Proceedings Process

The Swindon PLO process includes several key stages:

Legal Planning Meeting

- Conducted before initiating formal proceedings
- Evaluates whether Threshold Criteria are met
- Determines if additional family support would be beneficial
- Decides whether immediate proceedings are required

Letter Before Proceedings

- Sent within five working days of PLO decision
- Includes clear summary of concerns in simple language
- Outlines support already provided
- Specifies required parental actions and timescales
- Provides information about legal advice options

Pre-Proceedings Meeting

- Held within seven working days of letter receipt
- Brings together parents, legal representatives, and local authority
- Focuses on reaching agreement about necessary protective measures
- Establishes specific 'bottom line' actions for change

Period of Change

- Structured timeframe for implementing agreed changes
- Active monitoring through core group meetings
- Regular review of progress against agreed actions
- Ongoing support provision

Possible Outcomes

Following the Review Meeting, cases may progress in three ways:

1. Successful Completion

- PLO process ends due to sufficient parental progress
- Child protection plan continues unless significant improvement achieved
- May transition to Child in Need plan if appropriate
- Social work involvement may be reduced or ended

2. Extended Period

- Additional time granted for change implementation
- Maximum duration of 16 weeks total
- Second review meeting scheduled within 6-8 weeks
- Further extension requires exceptional circumstances

3. Care Proceedings

- Initiated when insufficient progress demonstrated
- Requires approval from Children's Social Work Decision and Review Panel
- Must satisfy Threshold Criteria for significant harm
- Parents notified within two weeks of decision

Key Features

- Total care proceedings target completion time: 26 weeks



- Early legal advice involvement
- Structured assessment approach
- Focus on measurable outcomes
- Emphasis on family engagement and support

Swindon's implementation emphasises early intervention and collaborative working while maintaining clear expectations and timelines for change. The process ensures thorough preparation of evidence and assessments, facilitating efficient progression whether through family change or court proceedings.

11.2 Court Assessment

A Legal Planning Meeting between the social worker and Swindon Borough Council's legal department determines if the threshold is met to issue Court Proceedings. Once determined, the local authority sends parents a 'letter before proceedings' which triggers public funding for legal advice. This letter outlines Swindon's specific concerns and assessment timescales, following the local authority's statutory assessment framework. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

The social worker and Swindon Borough Council's solicitor prepare required court documents, including the Independent Reviewing Officer's details.

Court applications must include:

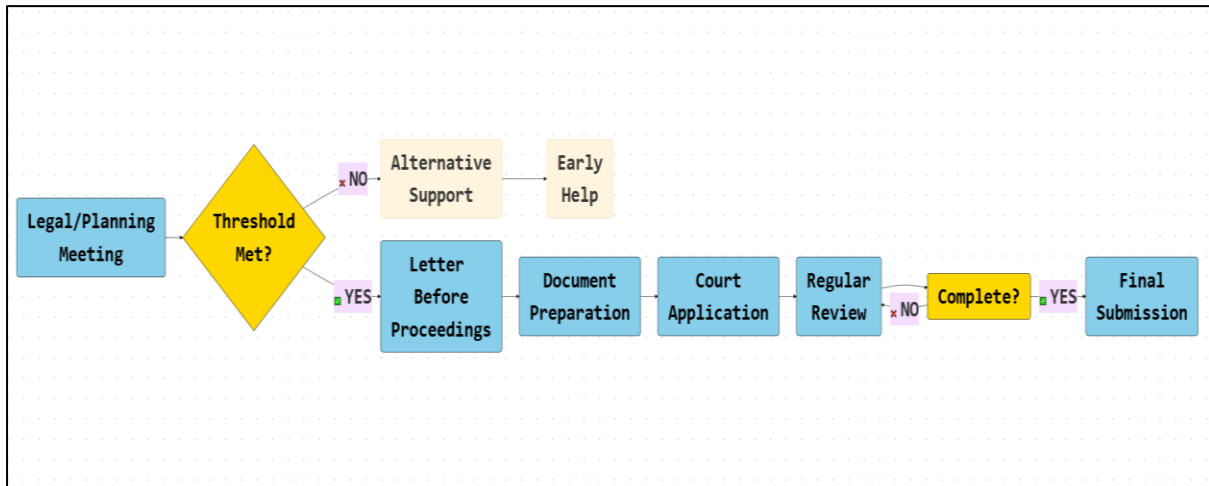
- Social work Chronology
- Social work statement and Genogram (including Connected Carers)
- Current family assessments
- Assessment Plan with completed and pending assessments
- Care Plan

Swindon Children Services uses the Social Work Evidence Template (SWET) for court documentation, incorporating local requirements and standards. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

The assessment process must be child-centred, with clear outcomes and regular review points.

The diagram below incorporates key elements including the legal planning meeting process, the document preparation requirements and the review process.





The diagram above illustrates the complete court assessment process in Swindon.

A few key points to note:

- The "Threshold Met?" decision point refers to whether the legal criteria for court proceedings are satisfied, as determined by the Legal Planning Meeting
- The SWET (Social Work Evidence Template) is the standardized format used by Swindon Children Services for court documentation. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com
- The IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) is responsible for overseeing the child's care plan and ensuring their voice is heard in the process
- Regular review points ensure timely progress and allow for adjustments to support plans if needed

12. Assessing and Planning for Permanence

Children entering alternative care arrangements through Section 20 or Court Proceedings enter Swindon's Family Safeguarding pathway, where permanence planning begins immediately through our multi-disciplinary approach. All children must be presented to Swindon's Children's Resource Panel and tracked via the Permanency Tracker Meeting swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

Assessment must consider:

1. Relational Permanence

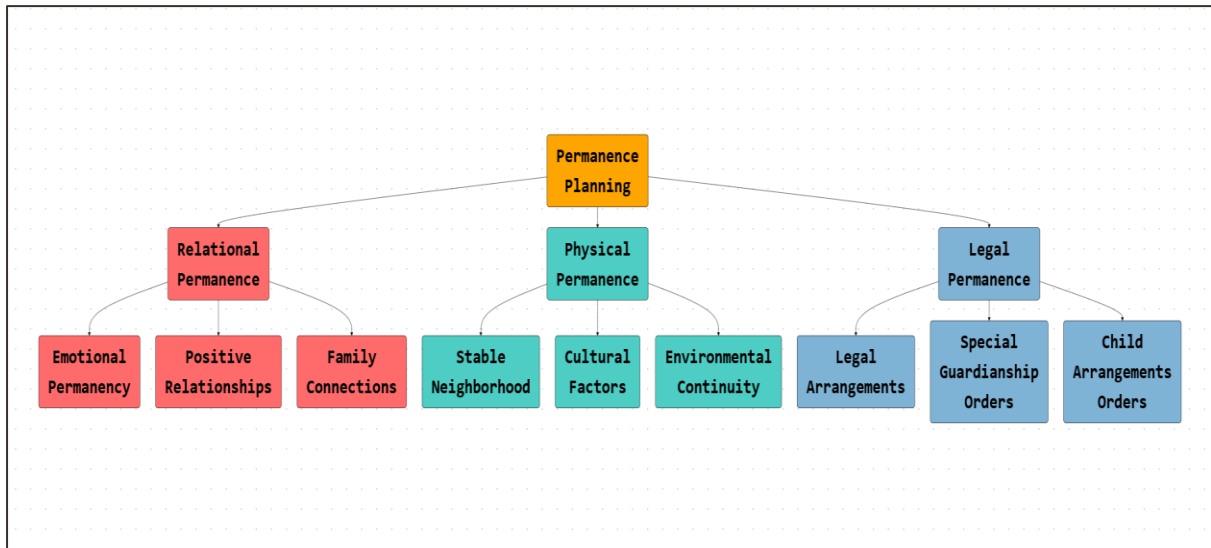
- Focus on emotional permanency and positive relationships
- Assess existing family connections and lifelong links
- Evaluate capacity for forming secure attachments

2. Physical Permanence

- Assess stability within familiar neighbourhoods
- Consider cultural and environmental factors
- Ensure continuity of relationships with family and friends

3. Legal Permanence

- Evaluate options for legal arrangements
- Consider Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)
- Assess Child Arrangements Orders (CAOs)



Assessment Requirements

All assessments must include:

1. Outcomes Focus

- Align with Swindon's Family Safeguarding model
- Consider long-term stability and sustainability
- Focus on achieving permanence within shortest possible timescale

2. Stability Assessment

- Evaluate family dynamics and support networks
- Assess capacity for long-term care arrangements
- Consider cultural and religious continuity

3. Family Links Assessment

- Evaluate existing relationships with parents and siblings
- Assess wider family network connections
- Consider support for maintaining lifelong links

4. Integration with Previous Assessments

- Link directly to previous assessments and plans
- Consult with family members and community networks
- Consider historical context and cultural background

Implementation Requirements

1. Timeline Expectations

- Every child in Swindon's care must have defined permanence route within four months
- Regular review and updating of permanence plans

- Clear timescales for achieving stability

2. Support Framework

- Access to Family Time support for maintaining connections
- Development of Family Links networks
- Provision of cultural and religious support where needed

3. Quality Assurance

- Regular review through Permanency Tracker Meeting
- Annual assessment updates
- Multi-agency consultation and collaboration

This framework emphasises Swindon's unique Family Safeguarding approach while ensuring comprehensive support throughout the permanence journey. The focus remains on achieving stability and maintaining important relationships while providing clear pathways to permanence.

13. Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are 'children in need' and therefore require assessment of their needs to establish what kind of help and support they require, if any. An Early Help Conversation may be sufficient on its own to establish the kind of help and support needed for children with disabilities but in some cases, a specialist or statutory social work Assessment may be required because of concerns about their safety and welfare. The majority of such Assessments will be undertaken by the Children with Disabilities Service.

In Swindon, children with disabilities undergo a comprehensive assessment protocol that begins with an Early Help Conversation, integrating with Swindon's Family Safeguarding model to identify immediate support needs swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

When indicated, specialist/statutory assessments are conducted through multi-disciplinary collaboration, considering long-term support requirements and maintaining consistency throughout childhood into early adulthood. Regular reviews through the Permanency Tracker Meeting ensure continuous monitoring and adjustment of support packages, while maintaining crucial support networks and providing therapeutic interventions as needed.

14. Other Assessments

14.1 Pre-Birth

A pre-birth assessment should be undertaken when there are concerns about whether parents/carers will be able to safely care for their new born baby or provide adequate parenting throughout childhood . These assessments are particularly crucial as babies under one year represent nearly half of all Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, highlighting their vulnerability during this critical period. Success in Swindon Children Services' pre-birth assessment program relies on several key factors: early identification of risk factors (from as early as 12 weeks gestation) , thorough multi-agency collaboration involving Children's Services, Maternity Services, Primary Care Services, Mental Health Services, and other key agencies , and comprehensive assessment of both parents' capacity including their history, mental health, substance misuse issues, and domestic abuse concerns . The process must be completed within 45 days of commencement, with regular review by the multi-agency Pre-Birth Panel ensuring consistent oversight and support.

What makes these assessments particularly successful in Swindon is their proactive nature, allowing time for interventions while parents are most receptive to change during pregnancy, combined with careful corroboration of information through extended family and professional networks.

This comprehensive approach enables early identification of risks and implementation of support measures before birth, ultimately helping to ensure the baby's safety while maintaining family relationships whenever possible.

14.2 Pre-Birth Assessment Guidance

The Swindon Pre-Birth Assessment Protocol is a comprehensive framework designed to ensure the safety and well-being of unborn children through early identification, assessment, and intervention. This protocol emphasises the importance of multi-agency collaboration and individualised support for families. [06 Swindon Prebirth Guidance Updated July 2024.docx](#)

Key Principles

The protocol operates on the following fundamental principles:

- Early identification and intervention
- Comprehensive multi-agency assessment

- Individualised family support
- Proportionate response to risk
- Focus on prevention and early help
- Collaborative working between agencies

A pre-birth assessment should be undertaken in the following situations:

Required Circumstances

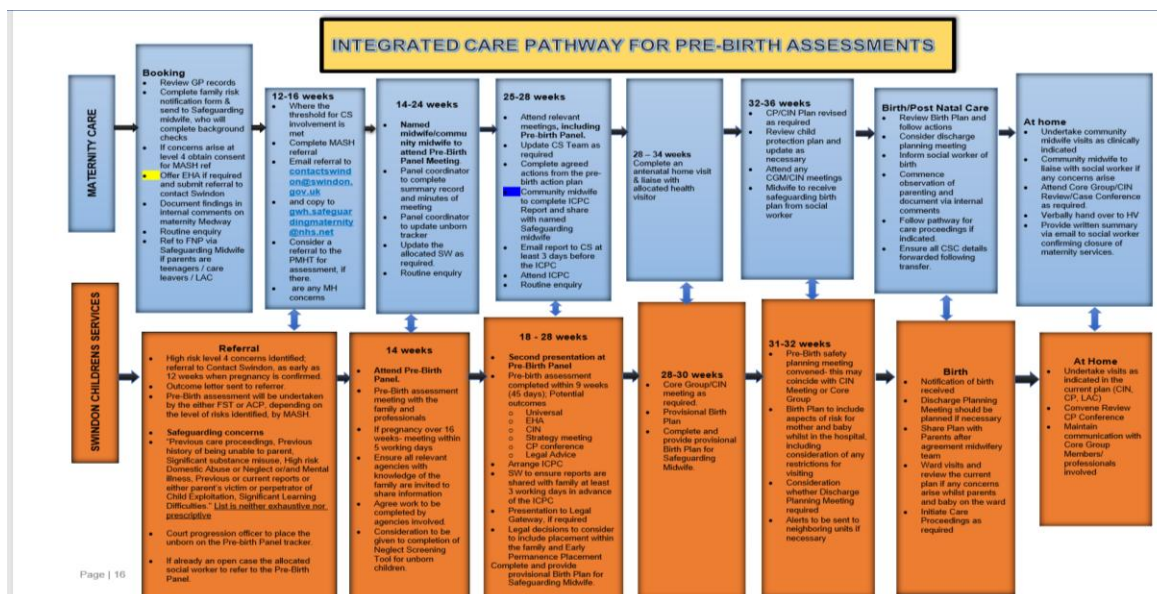
1. When prospective parents may need support services beyond early help services
2. When the unborn baby may have suffered, or be likely to suffer, significant harm

Specific Triggers

- Previous unexplained death of a child in parental care
- Parent or household member identified as presenting risk to children
- Children in household currently subject to child protection plan
- Previous child removed from household
- Serious concerns about parental ability to care for unborn baby
- Maternal risk factors (e.g., concealed pregnancy, non-cooperation with services)

Timing

- Start immediately after viable pregnancy confirmation (as early as 12 weeks in Swindon)
- Complete within 45 days of initiation
- For concealed pregnancies, begin assessment immediately upon discovery



This protocol ensures a comprehensive, coordinated approach to safeguarding unborn children in Swindon, with clear pathways for assessment, intervention, and support based on identified needs and risks.

14.3 Children with Special Educational Needs

In Swindon, schools and education settings can initiate the EHC needs assessment process for their students. Additionally, parents/carers and young people aged 16-25 who have completed statutory education can also request an assessment directly through Swindon's SEND portal. swindonsias.org.uk

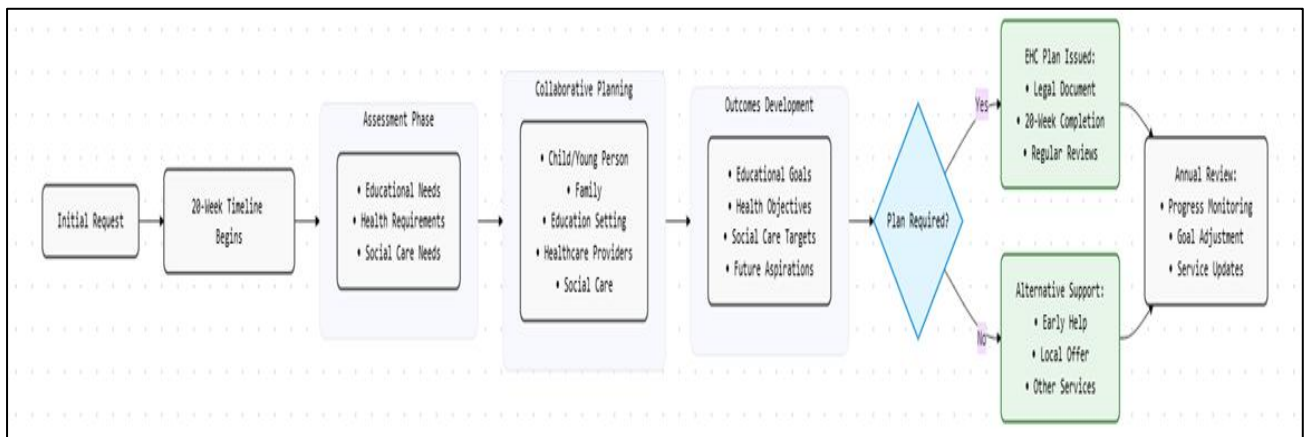
For detailed information about the EHCP process and requirements, please visit [Swindon's Education, Health and Care Plans webpage](#)

14.4 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan

In Swindon, an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHNA) is a comprehensive evaluation of a child or young person's special educational needs and the support they require to learn and develop. swindon.gov.uk

This assessment is carried out by Swindon Borough Council's SEND team to determine if a child needs additional support beyond what their school or education setting can provide. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

Following an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA), Swindon's SEND team determines whether a child or young person requires support through an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. If approved, the plan must be finalised within 20 weeks from the initial request. swindonsias.org.uk



An EHC plan is a legally binding document that outlines:

- The child or young person's special educational needs
- Health and social care requirements
- Required educational provision
- Designated education placement
- Co-produced outcomes with the family

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice guides Swindon's approach to outcomes, focusing on helping children and young people achieve their aspirations. These outcomes are developed collaboratively through discussions with:

- The child or young person
- Their family

- Educational setting
- Healthcare professionals
- Social care providers

For detailed information about Swindon's EHC plan process and the SEND Local Offer, visit [Swindon's Education, Health and Care Plans webpage swindon.gov.uk](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/education-health-and-care-plans)

14.5 Personal Budgets

In Swindon, children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans have the right to request a Personal Budget, which may contain elements of education, social care, and health funding. [swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com](https://www.swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com)

This right is available when agreement has been reached to issue an EHC Plan.

If we refuse a request for a Personal Budget, we must:

- Provide written reasons for the decision
- Inform the family of their right to request a formal review
- Consider any subsequent representations
- Notify the outcome in writing

For disagreements about special educational provision through Personal Budgets, families can appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability)

14.6 Young Carers

In Swindon, a young carer is defined as a child or young person (under 18 years old) who provides regular care and emotional support to a family member who is ill, has a disability, mental illness, or is affected by substance abuse. [swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com](https://www.swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com)

The Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 provide the framework for Swindon Children Services to ensure young people are not taking on inappropriate caring responsibilities and that whole family needs are met



When a young carer's needs are identified, Swindon Children Services determines the most appropriate person to lead the assessment. If the family isn't currently receiving support, a referral is made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The assessment process in Swindon:

- Considers whether ongoing care is appropriate for the child's age
- Evaluates the impact on social and educational development
- Considers the young person's wishes
- Includes the young person, their parent/carer, and other significant individuals

Support services in Swindon:

- Swindon Carers Centre provides dedicated support for young carers
- Support is available for young carers aged 5-18
- Services include:
 - One-to-one support
 - Group activities
 - School support
 - Holiday activities
 - Information and advice

Contact information for Swindon Young Carers Service:

- Swindon Carers Centre
Address: Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon SN1 1HJ
Phone: 01793 531133
Email: info@swindoncarers.org.uk



14.7 Domestic Abuse

The assessment of domestic abuse necessitates a comprehensive multi-agency approach to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors and their dependents. Swindon's safeguarding framework & strategy, provides a structured methodology for assessment and support. swindonjsna.co.uk

Core Principles

1. Maintaining Family Safety Through Parental Support

- Supporting the non-abusing parent's capacity to provide safe care for their children
- Recognising and building upon the protective capabilities of the non-abusing parent
- Providing targeted resources and support to enhance parenting capacity
- Developing individualised safety plans that maintain family stability where appropriate

2. Collaborative Working with Parents

- Establishing strong partnerships with non-abusing parents
- Acknowledging and utilising their strengths in child protection
- Providing access to Swindon's specialist support services
- Regular review and adaptation of support strategies

3. Addressing Perpetrator Behaviour

- Direct intervention with perpetrators to reduce risk to children
- Holding perpetrators accountable through Swindon's multi-agency approach
- Implementation of risk reduction strategies
- Ongoing monitoring of perpetrator compliance with interventions

Implementation Guidelines

1. Initial Assessment Process

- Comprehensive multi-agency risk evaluation

- Assessment of immediate safety requirements
- Preliminary evaluation of impact on children
- Development of initial support strategies

2. Ongoing Assessment

- Regular review of risk levels
- Monitoring of safety measures
- Evaluation of support effectiveness
- Adjustment of intervention strategies as necessary

Safety Prioritisation

- Identification of immediate risk factors
- Development of personalised safety plans
- Implementation of protective measures
- Regular review of safety arrangements

Documentation Requirements

- Comprehensive risk assessment documentation
- Recording of harm indicators
- Maintenance of impact assessment records
- Development and review of support plans
- Regular update of assessment findings

Swindon's multi-agency approach to domestic abuse assessment and support, ensures a comprehensive response to families affected by domestic abuse while maintaining focus on child safety and well-being.

14.8 Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harmful Behaviour

Sexual abuse assessment requires a sensitive and multi-agency approach, prioritising the wellbeing and safety of victims while gathering essential information for legal and protective measures. In Swindon, all cases involving sexual abuse are managed through established protocols and



partnerships, ensuring comprehensive support and intervention. [Search Results - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Assessment Framework

Assessments must be conducted in accordance with Swindon Children, Families and Community Health Procedure Manual guidelines, ensuring:

- Timely and transparent processes
- Proportionate response to identified risks
- Comprehensive analysis of developmental needs
- Integration with existing support structures

Key Principles

1. Child-Centred Approach

- Direct engagement with children throughout assessment process
- Age-appropriate communication tools and methods
- Regular review of child's perspective and experiences
- Documentation of child's views in their own words where possible

2. Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Integration with Swindon Safeguarding Children's Partnership protocols
- Coordinated information sharing between agencies
- Regular review meetings with partner organisations
- Clear communication channels and responsibilities

Assessment Process

The assessment framework incorporates:

1. Initial Response

- Immediate risk assessment and safety planning
- Coordination with specialist services



- Documentation of initial concerns and actions taken

2. Comprehensive Evaluation

- Analysis of developmental needs and protective factors
- Assessment of family dynamics and support networks
- Evaluation of environmental and community factors
- Review of historical information and chronology

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Assessment

Developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people requires specialised assessment approaches:

- Comprehensive risk evaluation frameworks
- Integration with existing safeguarding protocols
- Focus on both victim support and perpetrator intervention
- Regular review and adjustment of support strategies

Safety and Protection Measures

All assessments incorporate:

1. Risk Management
 - Identification of immediate protection needs
 - Development of safety plans
 - Regular review of risk levels
 - Adjustment of interventions as necessary
2. Support Structures
 - Access to specialist services
 - Family support mechanisms
 - Ongoing monitoring and review
 - Clear communication pathways

Documentation and Review

Records maintained include:

- Detailed assessment findings
- Action plans and outcomes
- Progress reviews
- Communication with partner agencies
- Decisions and rationale

Relevant Resources

- Swindon Safeguarding Children's Partnership Multi-Agency Threshold Guidance
- Local Child Protection Procedures
- Specialist assessment tools and frameworks
- Training and support resources for practitioners

Swindon aligns with national safeguarding standards while incorporating specific Swindon procedures and partnerships, ensuring a coordinated approach to sexual abuse assessment and intervention.

14.9 Children and Young People involved in the Criminal Justice System

Swindon Youth Justice Service (YJS) provides comprehensive support to children aged 10-17 (and their families) to tackle issues that might lead to offending behaviour. Swindon YJS is committed to providing effective interventions while supporting children to make positive life choices and increase self-esteem, which leads to reduced risk of harm to or from others and reduce the likelihood of re-offending. The service operates within established legal frameworks and national standards, ensuring comprehensive support for children involved in the criminal justice system.

Swindon YJS utilises a case formulation approach with a focus on identity and its link to offending. This promotes interventions with children and young people that focus on positive identity development, which naturally shifts them away from risk and offending behaviour.



The service operates as a multi-disciplinary partnership, combining expertise from various agencies to deliver targeted interventions and support. swindon.gov.uk

Assessment and Intervention Framework

The assessment process utilises the AssetPlus tool to evaluate:

- Child and family lived experiences
- Current and historical offending patterns
- Risk levels and potential neglect or harm indicators
- Factors affecting desistance
- Personal circumstances and family dynamics
- Educational engagement and employment prospects
- Mental health and wellbeing factors
- Substance misuse concerns
- Resilience and protective factors
- Tailored, future focussed intervention plans
- Requirements and controls for safety and risk management

Multi-Agency Partnership

The service operates through a collaborative framework involving:

- Youth Justice Team Workers
- Social Workers
- Probation Officers
- Police
- Health (Nurse) Specialist
- Family and Parenting Support
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Speech Language and Communication Therapist



- Psychologists
- Victim and Restorative Justice Specialist
- Education, Training and Employment Specialist
- Community Volunteers

Core Services

1. Police Station Support
 - Provision of appropriate adults for children in custody
 - Linking with Integrated Non-Custodial Services (IN-CS)
 - Support during police interviews
 - Co-ordination with custody staff
 - Daily Risk Briefing and Intelligence gathering by dedicated Police Staff
2. Court Proceedings
 - Attendance at Swindon Youth Court and Crown Court
 - Support for children and families during proceedings
 - Provision of pre-sentence reports
 - Assistance with bail applications
3. Community Interventions
 - Supervision of both diversionary education pathways and community sentences
 - Tailored intervention delivered through a Child First lens, to support the development of pro-social identity
 - Implementation of restorative justice programmes
 - Support for health and substance use concerns
 - Mental health interventions
 - Education, training and employment guidance
4. Custody Support

- Regular contact with children in custody
- Preparation for release planning
- Dedicated child and family re-settlement work
- Coordination with secure establishments
- Support during transition back to community

Restorative Justice Approach

The service prioritises restorative justice principles, enabling children to:

- Make amends for their actions
- Understand the impact on victims
- Develop empathy and personal responsibility
- Work towards positive behavioural change

Partnership Working

The service maintains strong links with:

- Children's Social Care
- Wiltshire Police
- Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Youth Justice Board
- Education providers
- Health services
- Community organisations
- Voluntary sector agencies
- Local community groups

Support for Families

The service provides comprehensive family support through:



- Parental guidance and advice
- Family intervention programmes
- Access to specialist services
- Support during court proceedings
- Coordination with other family services

Key Contacts

- Swindon Youth Justice Service: 01793 464662
- Email: YOTeam@swindon.gov.uk
- Web: swindon.gov.uk

14.10 Separated Minors & Age Assessments

Swindon Family Services undertakes age assessments when there exists uncertainty regarding the age of persons seeking asylum as unaccompanied or trafficked children. The Home Office frequently requests the local authority to conduct such assessments when substantial doubt pertains to the individual's presented age. swindonchildcare.proceduresonline.com

Initial Response and Immediate Action

- Services continue throughout the assessment period
- Immediate protection measures implemented regardless of age dispute
- Assessment completed within 35 days from date of dispute
- Presumption of childhood status maintained during assessment period

Assessment Process Details

- Age assessments conducted only when significant doubt exists about claimed age
- Multi-agency collaboration involving social workers, legal representatives, and interpreters
- Comprehensive documentation including spelling verification and family relationship descriptions
- No assumptions made about language skills; qualified interpreters used throughout

Support During Assessment

- Specialist asylum and immigration legal representation provided
- Legal Aid available for eligible cases
- Social worker accompaniment during legal meetings
- Immediate protection measures implemented regardless of age dispute [swindon.gov.uk](https://www.swindon.gov.uk)

National Age Assessment Board Integration

- Swindon works with National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) launched March 2023
- Access to specialist social workers for expert assessment support
- Implementation of scientific methods when available
- Standardised Merton-compliant assessment procedures followed

Documentation and Record Keeping

- Detailed case records maintained for all assessments
- Careful attention paid to personal details and relationships
- Regular review of arrangements every six months
- Clear recording of decisions and reasons

Outcomes and Next Steps

- Child status confirmed: Full Children's Services support implemented
- Adult status determined: Alternative support pathways arranged
- Service provision adjusted according to final determination
- Ongoing monitoring and review of support needs
- Integration with Swindon's broader safeguarding framework

This comprehensive framework ensures that separated minors receive appropriate support while undergoing age assessment, maintaining Swindon's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable children while following national guidelines and standards.

14.11 Private Fostering

In Swindon, private fostering arrangements occur when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. This includes situations where children are cared for by extended family members, family friends, or other adults known to the child's family. Close relatives, defined as grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, or step-parents by marriage, are excluded from this definition. swindon.gov.uk

Notification Requirements

- Parents must notify Swindon Borough Council at least six weeks before the arrangement commences
- In emergency situations, notification must be made within 48 hours of the arrangement beginning
- Existing arrangements must be reported immediately

Assessment Process

The assessment process in Swindon evaluates:

- The suitability of prospective carers and all household members
- The child's health and wellbeing needs
- Integration within the community
- Educational support and opportunities
- Maintenance of important relationships
- Property safety and suitability
- Financial arrangements and support needs kinship.org.uk



Monitoring and Support

Swindon's monitoring framework includes:

- Regular visits from social workers (at least every 6 weeks in the first year)
- Documentation of the child's views and experiences
- Evaluation of the carer's ability to meet the child's needs
- Assessment of education, health, and family contact arrangements
- Annual reviews chaired by team managers

Contact Information

For information about private fostering arrangements in Swindon:

- Contact: Children and Families, Contact Swindon
- Telephone: 01793 464646
- Email: privatefostering@swindon.gov.uk

This framework ensures that the children of Swindon in private fostering arrangements receive appropriate support and protection while maintaining Swindon's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable children.

14.12 Special Guardianship Assessment Process

Special Guardianship provides a permanent care arrangement that offers children stability while maintaining connections with their birth family. This legal framework creates a secure environment for children who require long-term care outside their family of origin, while preserving the possibility of ongoing relationships with their birth relatives.

This arrangement is especially suitable for children who require a permanent care solution but may find the complete legal separation from their birth family associated with adoption too absolute. It provides a balanced approach that prioritises the child's need for stability while respecting their desire to maintain meaningful relationships with their birth family.

In Swindon, the assessment of potential special guardians involves a comprehensive evaluation of both the applicants' suitability and the arrangement's potential impact on the child's welfare. The local authority must carefully consider whether any proposed arrangement would be inconsistent with the child's welfare or impractical to implement.

Pre-Assessment Information and Preparation

Prospective special guardians in Swindon receive:

- Detailed information about the assessment process and requirements
- Clear explanation of the time commitment and responsibilities involved
- Written guidance outlining expectations and considerations
- Support throughout the evaluation process

Assessment Framework

The assessment process in Swindon incorporates:

- Evidence-based evaluation methods
- Child-centred approach focusing on individual needs
- Consideration of existing relationships with the child
- Evaluation of parenting experience and capabilities
- Assessment of the child's network and family connections
- Analysis of long-term commitment requirements until age 18
- Consideration of any additional needs resulting from previous experiences

Interim Placement Considerations

Swindon may consider interim placements when:

- Establishing relationships between child and proposed special guardians
- Evaluating applicants' parenting capabilities

- Assessing ability to meet the child's needs
- Promoting the child's welfare and best interests
- Gathering evidence for the final assessment

Final Assessment Requirements

The local authority ensures that:

- All essential assessment tasks are completed before final recommendations
- Evidence-based conclusions are drawn
- The child's welfare remains paramount
- Long-term implications are carefully considered
- Support arrangements are planned appropriately

This framework ensures that special guardianship arrangements in Swindon are thoroughly assessed while maintaining focus on the child's welfare and best interests.

14.13 Channel/Prevent

Swindon Council implements the Prevent programme as a statutory safeguarding duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This initiative focuses on protecting vulnerable individuals from radicalisation and extremist influences, operating within a pre-criminal space to provide early intervention and support.

Core Principles

- Early intervention to prevent radicalisation
- Protection of vulnerable individuals
- Support for those at risk of extremist influences
- Community-based approach to safeguarding

Swindon's Implementation



- Integration with existing safeguarding procedures
- Multi-agency collaboration and information sharing
- Focus on early intervention and support
- Community engagement and partnership working

Key Definitions

- **Radicalisation:** The process by which individuals adopt increasingly radical views opposing political, social, or religious status quo
- **Extremism:** Active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, rule of law, and respect for different faith systems
- **Terrorism:** Use or threat of action designed to influence or intimidate for advancing political, religious, or ideological causes

Support Framework

- Channel programme for vulnerable individuals
- Multi-agency assessment and support
- Early intervention strategies
- Community-based prevention initiatives

Swindon Documentation and Resources

- **Safeguarding Partnership:** <https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk>
- **Prevent Programme:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prevent-programme>
- **Channel Programme:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/channel-programme>
- **Swindon Safeguarding Procedures:** https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/info/15/for_professionals
- **Swindon Prevent and Channel Overview:** [Swindon Prevent and Channel Overview Slides](#)



This framework ensures that Swindon's Prevent programme operates effectively within the broader safeguarding context, providing support and protection for vulnerable individuals while maintaining strong community partnerships.

14.14 Safeguarding children at risk of abuse through female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM is defined as any procedure involving partial or total removal of external female genitalia or injury to female genital organs for non-therapeutic reasons. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it an offence to perform, assist in performing, or facilitate FGM in the UK or abroad.

Swindon's Response

- Immediate referral to MASH for suspected cases
- Strategy Meeting within 2 days for high-risk cases
- Joint investigation with Police under s47 Children Act 1989
- Consideration of all female children in household
- Assessment of unborn female children

Assessment

- Risk assessment of immediate danger
- Evaluation of family circumstances
- Assessment of cultural and social factors
- Review of medical history and status
- Consideration of travel plans and risks

Legal Framework and Responsibilities

- Prohibition on performing FGM in the UK
- Prohibition on assisting FGM in or outside the UK
- Prohibition on facilitating self-performed FGM
- Mandatory reporting duty for specified professionals

Protection Measures

- Alternative care arrangements when necessary
- Police protection powers
- Emergency protection orders
- Child protection conferences for unresolved issues

Swindon Documentation and Resources

- [Female genital mutilation \(FGM\) - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

This framework ensures Swindon's effective response to preventing FGM while protecting vulnerable children and providing appropriate support services.

14.15 Tackling Violence and Exploitation Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

As young people develop their independence and form relationships outside the family home, they become increasingly vulnerable to extra-familial harm. This risk manifests within friendship groups, relationships, and online communities, where peers and adults may exert coercive control. Often, these individuals remain hidden from family and professionals, leading to the young person's isolation from trusted relationships. Swindon has a number of strategies in place to assess and address this.

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF)

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (CERAF), published August 2024, provides Swindon's structured approach to assessing and managing exploitation risks. This framework ensures consistent assessment and intervention across all agencies. [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework \(CERAF\)](#)

Contextual Safeguarding

Swindon's approach to tackling exploitation is grounded in its Contextual Safeguarding framework, which considers four key domains:

1. **Contextual Understanding:** Identifying and addressing the social conditions and environments associated with abuse



2. **Legal Framework:** Implementing child protection legislation alongside community safety approaches
3. **Partnership Working:** Collaborating between children's services, young people, families, and community agencies
4. **Outcome Measurement:** Assessing impact across public, educational, and peer settings

Core Principles

Swindon's approach is built on five fundamental principles:

- **Collaborative:** Working together with professionals, children, families, and communities
- **Ecological:** Understanding the connections between harmful environments and social inequalities
- **Rights-based:** Protecting children's rights and human rights
- **Strengths-based:** Building on individual and community strengths
- **Evidence-informed:** Grounded in lived experiences and practical realities

Assessment Process

CERAF Form

The CERAF form is Swindon's comprehensive assessment tool for evaluating exploitation risks. Highlighted below are the key sections and their purposes:

Basic Information Section

- Collects essential details about the young person and practitioner
- Includes demographic information (age, ethnicity, legal status)
- Documents involved agencies and services
- Records language preferences and refugee/asylum status

Information Sharing & Disclosure

- Tracks awareness of the assessment
- Documents consent status



- Records exploitation evidence
- Identifies potential perpetrators

Risk Assessment Questions

The form evaluates three key timeframes:

1. Historical Experiences:

- Family dynamics and relationships
- Previous abuse or neglect
- Health and disability factors
- Educational engagement

2. Current Behaviours:

- Social patterns and relationships
- Living arrangements
- Educational attendance
- Online activities

3. Recent Activities (6 months):

- Missing episodes
- Relationship patterns
- Financial indicators
- Geographic movements

Assessment Outcomes

The form uses a color-coded system to determine risk levels:

- None: No emerging concerns beyond peer group
- Green: Emerging concerns with vulnerabilities
- Amber: On the cusp of experiencing harm



- Red: Currently experiencing harm

Each level triggers specific actions and interventions, ensuring appropriate support and protection measures are implemented.

Swindon response to high level exploitation risk

The OPAL team in Swindon functions as a specialist Child Exploitation Team, that coordinates responses to exploitation concerns identified through the CERAF assessment process. They become involved when assessments indicate moderate to high risk levels (Amber or Red), providing oversight and support for the implementation of protection measures. The team's involvement is triggered through the CERAF assessment process, particularly when:

- A child is identified as being on the cusp of experiencing harm (Amber level)
- A child is currently experiencing harm (Red level)
- Multiple risk indicators are present in the assessment
- Complex intervention strategies are required

The OPAL team works alongside other agencies to ensure coordinated support and protection measures are implemented effectively, with their involvement documented in the CERAF form's oversight section.

This framework ensures Swindon's effective response to tackling exploitation while protecting vulnerable children and providing appropriate support services. Moreover, the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership has established All Age Exploitation as a strategic priority, demonstrating a commitment to protecting both children and adults from all forms of exploitation. This approach recognises the evolving nature of exploitation risks and the importance of comprehensive safeguarding measures.

[Swindon Safeguarding Partnership All Age Exploitation Strategy 2024 2027.pdf draf](#)

Swindon Documentation and Resources

- CERAF Framework: [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework \(CERAF\)](#)
- CEARF Form: [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework \(CERAF\) Form 2024 - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)
- Harm Outside the Home: [Harm Outside the Home](#)



Process for responding to concerns of Harm Outside the Home:

Request for support via Children and Families Contact Swindon – The Integrated Front Door by email to contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk. Children and Families Contact Swindon will consider next steps.

Where a child is allocated to a Social Worker/Lead professional, complete the **Child Exploitation Referral Assessment Framework (CERAF)**, is now a 'Person Form' on Care Director. Once the CERAF is completed on Care Director, an email needs to be sent to Opal@Swindon.gov.uk to advise Opal.

Opal will then arrange a case discussion where along with the referrer, will agree on the level of risk indicated by the CERAF and appropriate next steps (MACE, allocation of Opal worker, consultation, mapping advice and guidance etc.)

Where a child has been reported missing and there are concerns about Harm Outside The Home, then the Missing Co-ordinator will request that the Social Worker or Lead Professional is to complete the **Child Exploitation Referral Assessment Framework (CERAF)**.

Where there is no Social Worker/Lead Professional, the Missing Co-ordinator will complete a Request for Help and Support, once Return Home Interview (RHI) has been completed and Parent(s)/Carer(s) are aware. Request for the child will be made via **Children and Families Contact Swindon – The Integrated Front Door** by email to contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk

Once allocated to a Social Worker/Lead Professional is to complete the **Child Exploitation Referral Assessment Framework (CERAF)**, Once the CERAF is completed on Care Director, an email needs to be sent to Opal@Swindon.gov.uk to advise Opal.

14.16 Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE)

Contextual safeguarding is an approach of protecting children and young people from harm that recognises the importance of the environments in which they spend their time. Rather than focusing solely on risks within the home or family, contextual safeguarding looks at wider social settings, for example, schools, peer groups, online spaces, neighbourhoods, and other public environments. The MACE Meetings are aligned with the three Neighbourhood Police Team locations within Swindon and overseen by a Police Inspector. These are Stratton, Central Swindon North and West Swindon Neighbourhood Area Gablecross, North, East and Rural Neighbourhood Area Gablecross and Central South Neighbourhood Area Town Centre Point

The Swindon Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting keeps the safety and wellbeing of Swindon's children and families as its primary focus. The MACE meeting does not replace regular



(Team around the Family, Child in Need and Core Group meetings) multi-agency meetings to share information, respond and mitigate harm and progress planning for children.

The purpose of the MACE meeting is to provide independent oversight and scrutiny of the management for individual children and groups of children identified as being vulnerable to harm outside the home. We are aware that harm outside the home can occur in the local community and therefore information known to statutory as well as voluntary sector agencies should be used to highlight the vulnerabilities and threats as well as to establish and reduce harm.

The MACE meeting will provide the framework to allow regular information sharing and action planning to tackle harm outside the home across Swindon. The meeting will take every 2 weeks and will be chaired by the Swindon Borough Council Integrated Adolescent Service, Service Manager.

Additional MACE meetings can be arranged to target specific concerns in locality areas or groups of children and young people, or in order to respond to children at times of additional demand.

For more information on the MACE meeting, see the [Harm Outside the Home Multi-Agency Practice Guidance 2024](#).

14.17 Reunification - Children We Care For, Returning Home from Care

When children in voluntary care (Section 20) prepare to return home, a comprehensive Care Plan must be developed to ensure successful reintegration and prevent future care system involvement. This plan requires collaborative agreement among the child, their family, and all involved professionals during a dedicated planning meeting.

The Swindon Family Safeguarding Model of practice supports a holistic approach to enable children to return home from care when it is safe to do so. This includes in house training to promote good holistic assessment of need and provision of support to parents and children. To enable those working with families to put together a support plan of services developed with the child and their family.

In Swindon children who are identified for reunification will be tracked as part of the permanence panel process.

Assessment and Planning Process

- Social workers conduct assessments when considering potential reunification
- These assessments evaluate necessary support levels for a successful home return

- Team managers and senior leaders must authorise all assessments
- Permanence Panel attendance scheduled to align with assessment completion

Implementation Process

Following a positive assessment outcome:

Schedule a Children We Care For Review

- May require earlier-than-planned scheduling
- Must obtain agreement for plan modifications

Special Considerations for Care Orders

- Section 31 Care Order cases require:
 - Assistant Director CSC signature on placement at home agreement
 - Comprehensive child and family assessment
 - Covering confirmation documentation
- Reunification planning at next Children We Care For Review
- Gradual transition through increased overnight stays
- No overnight stays permitted until formal approval

Best Practice would be for support services to be thought about and implemented in advance of a child/young person's return home.

Support Services suggestion

- Referrals made to edge of care services as needed
- Family group conferencing arranged when beneficial
- Additional support services identified and implemented
- All referrals processed ASAP to ensure timely intervention

Post-Return Requirements

For children returning under Care Orders:

- First post-return Children We Care For Review must address Order revocation

- All subsequent reviews continue evaluating Order revocation necessity

14.18 Homeless 16 & 17-Year Olds

Swindon Borough Council's Joint Housing Protocol for Homeless Young People (16-17 years) outlines our collaborative approach to supporting vulnerable young people facing housing difficulties. This protocol ensures comprehensive support through integrated working between Housing Services and Children's Social Care teams.

Initial Response and Assessment Process

When young people present as homeless or at risk of homelessness, our teams implement a proactive, multi-disciplinary approach to address immediate needs while identifying sustainable solutions.

Understanding the Assessment Process

- **Initial Response:** Immediate safety assessment leads to emergency support measures
- **Joint Working:** Parallel housing and social care assessments ensure comprehensive understanding of needs
- **Ongoing Support:** Regular reviews enable dynamic adjustment of support plans based on progress

Core Principles

Our approach is built on several fundamental principles:

1. Proactive engagement with young people and their families
2. Integrated working between Housing Services and Children's Social Care
3. Focus on early intervention and prevention
4. Emphasis on maintaining family connections where appropriate
5. Comprehensive assessment of individual circumstances

Assessment Framework

All assessments follow a structured framework:

- Joint assessment with Housing Options team this assessment should be carried out within 3 working days of the young person contacting Children and Families Directorate/Housing or any other agency/department.
- A young person who has no accommodation (or accommodation which is unreasonable for them to occupy) and where contact cannot be made with the family, will be given a joint interview on the same day that they make contact, where possible or within 24 working hours.
 - This assessment will include:
 - Undertaking a Joint Home Visit, by a Social Worker and Housing Officer
 - mediation to the child and their parent/person with parental responsibility will be offered
 - Considering evidence of homelessness, (reminding all that if there are no safeguarding issues and a parent will provide accommodation they are NOT homeless)
- Focus on individual strengths and challenges
- Examination of family dynamics and community connections
- Identification of potential support networks

Support Services Integration

Our support structure includes:

- Emergency accommodation arrangements under Section 20 Children Act 1989
- Family Group Conference facilitation
- Housing Options assessment
- Allocation of social worker for statutory intervention
- Community resource identification

Support Planning

- Development of individualised support plan
- Regular review meetings
- Adjustment of support based on progress



- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Implementation Guidelines

For young people requiring immediate assistance:

Initial Contact

- Present at Swindon Borough Council offices
- Contact Housing Services directly
- Referral through partner agencies

Review and Monitoring

Our commitment to young people includes:

- Regular review of support arrangements
- Dynamic adjustment of plans based on progress
- Maintaining open communication channels
- Continuous assessment of changing circumstances
- Proactive intervention when needed

Swindon Documentation and Resources

- [1617_homelessness.pdf](#)

Key Contacts

- Swindon Borough Council Customer Services: 01793 445503
- Emergency Out-of-Hours Service: 01793 436262
- Housing Options Team: housing.options@swindon.gov.uk
- Children's Social Care: 01793 466903





This protocol ensures comprehensive support for 16-17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Swindon while maintaining flexibility to respond to individual circumstances and changing needs. Regular review ensures support remains appropriate and effective throughout the intervention period.

15. Contacts

Should you require any further information relating to the contents of this document or you have any concerns for the welfare of a child please contact us for advice and information.

Contact Details

Swindon Borough Council
Children and Families Contact Swindon
Civic Offices
Euclid Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH

Phone: 01793 464646

Email: contactswindon@swindon.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.swindon.gov.uk>

Emergency Out-of-Hours Service

For urgent matters outside normal working hours:

Phone: 01793 436699

