

## Assessing the needs of disabled children and their families

The Children Act 1989 is the piece of legislation that enshrines in law the provision of services for children in need.

“It shall be the general duty of every local authority -

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and
- So far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs.”

Children Act 1989 s17(1)

The criteria under which a child is defined as being in need is:

“A child shall be taken to be in need if-

- a) he is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority....
- b) his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- c) he is disabled,

And “family” in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom he has been living.

Children Act 1989 s17(10)

The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need (Department of Health 2000) provides detailed information as to the criteria and assessment process in order to access community care assessments.

In short, the main areas considered in the assessment are:

1. Dimensions of child's development needs
  - Health
  - Education
  - Emotional and behavioural development
  - Identity
  - Family and social relationships
  - Social presentation
  - Self Care Skills
  
2. Dimensions of parenting capacity
  - Basic care
  - Ensuring Safety
  - Emotional Warmth
  - Stimulation
  - Guidance and Boundaries
  - Stability
  
3. Family and environmental factors
  - Family History and functioning
  - Wider family
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Income
  - Family's social integration
  - Community resources

Further and more detailed information can be found at the Department of Health's website [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)