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Short Breaks Personal Budget Banding System

GUIDANCE

## Who is involved in completing the questionnaire?

This Resource Allocation System (RAS) questionnaire is designed to help families participate in decision making about funding and is shared openly with them. Families should have copies of the questionnaire so that the scoring is transparent. The RAS questionnaire is a tool the family and worker use to work together to establish the level of support needed. The paperwork is then completed by the worker and shown to the family.

## How the questionnaire fits in with assessments

The RAS questionnaire is part of the information gathering stage of the assessment and does not, by itself, meet the Local Authority’s duties to assess children in need. The child needs to meet the criteria for the Disabled children’s service in order to qualify for a short break.

The questionnaire adds to the assessment by scoring the answers to questions and using the total result to work out how much money should be provided. Some children‘s needs will score consistently in one support band throughout the RAS questionnaire. This will be taken into account when the worker evaluates what band of support best describes the child’s needs. This will be stated clearly within the analysis of the assessment. Therefore the results of the RAS questionnaire should be read in conjunction with the assessment analysis section. The RAS questionnaire is authorised by a Manager.

When assessing the support that the child requires all the **natural support** should be taken into account within the questionnaire (the family circumstances, extended family networks and community resources that are normally accessed) because funding should be in addition to the strengths and resources within the family and community. However because the council is assessing the right amount of paid support to offer in the future the questionnaire also should be completed as if there was no **paid support** already involved in supporting the child.

The questionnaire captures a snapshot of support needs at the present moment in time and should relate to the child’s present circumstances. There will be some examples which do not fit the circumstances of the child well. No guidance can hope to be so specific that it addresses each child’s circumstances exactly.

The funding that follows from the assessment is indicative and can be considered again if requested by the family when the plan is complete. This means before the funding is confirmed the council is clear that the child’s needs are met within the support plan by supporting the family to achieve good outcomes for the child and provide the family with reasonable short breaks.

## Understanding the Bands of Support

The questionnaire has a set of statements that every child can expect as a reasonable lifestyle and each statement has a score. There is guidance underneath each statement which explains how to score the questionnaire by showing in detail our understanding of each statement and explaining what is meant by each level of support.

When completing the questionnaire the worker selects the point that is appropriate to the needs of the child and completes the summary sheet at the end of the document. In general terms the bands can be described in the following ways:

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| **No Support** (no specialistsupport required)  Shows that the child needs no additional support or that this statement is not appropriate for the child. |
| **Small Support- Low level needs**  Shows that the child needs a minimum level of support. |
| **Some Support Moderate Support Needs**  Shows that the child needs a little additional support on a continual basis or a lot of support to manage change |
| **Lots of Support - High Level Needs**  Shows that the child needs supervision and support throughout most of the day this often includes 1:1 support from specialist services. |
| **Exceptional Support - Very Complex Needs and/or Exceptional Circumstances**  Shows that the child has complex needs or there are high levels of risk to manage and usually requires 2:1 support from specialist services |

In the family section of the questionnaire the families’ needs are banded in a similar way as those above. This family section refers directly to the support needs of the family rather than the child’s needs.

In the Safety Section this question is scoring how risk aware the child is within their home and how much supervision is required to support them to be safe around the house. It is not trying to rank parenting capacity (whether there are any safety issue as a result of the quality of care parents provide). If the council has concerns around parenting issues these would be worked with as a safeguarding or parent support issue

## How the points are scored

Each statement has a set of points. Some point scores are higher than others because some questions have a bigger impact on the child and family. For example questions around safety and health have bigger scores with larger total of points than for other outcomes.

Where there is some overlap between bands and you feel that the question could be answered in either band always pick the higher band; it is easier to reduce support later on rather than deal with the consequences of providing too little support.

There is no expectation that a child will score in every question, or that every question will be appropriate for every child. Where you are clear that a statement does not relate to the individual they will score zero. An example of this would be when a child will be at an extremely low risk of bullying because they have a complex learning disability and have a constant level of adult supervision everywhere they go. The questionnaire is balanced so that children with complex needs will score highly in other parts of the questionnaire.

## How points help the council make an indicative offer

Once points have been allocated, then the total points will be calculated against a table of funding bands which rise step by step as the points increase. This funding table is shown below. We have based the funding amounts on comparisons with what funding has worked well in the past for a child with similar levels of need. This calculation will be taken into account when an indicative allocation is offered to the family to plan with.

For existing users of the service how the funding is worked out also takes into account the funding which is currently being provided to the family.

The council will always do a lot of preparation before setting children’s allocations so that everyone can see that the child has received their fair share of the budget. The amount of the indicative allocation is based upon the best estimate of the council about how much money is required to support a child’s needs well. At the end of working through the support plan with the family the council will consider again whether the funding and resources allocated meet the child’s needs. When the support plan has been approved the budget is confirmed.

When we are working with children with complex needs it is important to make sure contributions from health, social care and education are co-ordinated together and every effort will be made to ensure that there is joint planning between all agencies working with the family to maximise resources.