Wandsworth's Eligibility Criteria for Disabled Children – February 2025

The Supporting Disabled Children's Service support disabled children and young people if they are aged under 18 and live in the London Borough of Wandsworth. The Local Authority is guided by the following principles in our work with disabled children and their families which stem from the Children Act 1989:

- The welfare of the child should be safeguarded and promoted by the provision of services.
- Recognition of the importance of the parent and families in children's lives.
- Partnership between parents and carers and local authorities and other agencies.
- Disabled children have the right to access services that all children access. Mainstream provision should work to make their services as accessible as possible to disabled children. Only when it is not possible to make a mainstream provision accessible to disabled children (e.g. play services, after school clubs, etc.), should specialist services be approached.

Legal Framework and Definition of Disability

In Wandsworth, services for children and young people with a disability are developed within the context in particular of the Children Act 1989, Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (section 2) and the Equality Act 2010:

The Children Act 1989 says:

a child is disabled if he is blind, deaf or dumb or suffers from mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed, and in this Part—

- "development" means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; and
- "health" means physical or mental health.

The definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010:

- a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed.
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more.

Eligibility for assessment

All disabled children and young people under 18 years old are entitled to an assessment of their needs. This involves gathering information about them and their family to find out what level of support they need.

Parents, carers or any professional involved with the family, as well as the disabled child or young person themselves (providing they are over 16 years of age), can ask for an assessment if they feel that the above criteria apply.

Most children in Wandsworth who require services will receive them through universal-type provision (e.g. schools and GPs) within their local community and therefore they may not need or their families may not want to have an assessment. The same should be true for any disabled child.

If your child's needs cannot be supported by access to the services outlined above, for example, if your child has a severe and permanent disability that means that your child needs access to specialist services, a social worker from the Supporting Disabled Children's Service will work with you to consider how best to support you and your child, this may include support services such as parenting advice, specialist play activities and short breaks.

The law gives the Local Authority a duty to provide services to disabled children where it is necessary as opposed to desirable to do so. In reaching that decision, the council has to take account of its limited resources in identifying and providing services for children. To meet the needs of disabled children and their families, the Supporting Disabled Children's Service have to be as fair and as consistent as we can in assessing and allocating services. (*Formulate link).

It is important for you to know that rigid eligibility criteria for provision of services through the Supporting Disabled Children's Service are not set because of the unique combination of each child's disability, the circumstances of their home life and the wider context of their social environment means that each child and family's situation must be assessed on its merits.

Because of this, whenever we assess a disabled child's needs, we will also ask to carry out a 'parent carer needs assessment' for the parent or parents, so we can understand the family's wider needs and make a decision about what level of support the family needs overall. Where there are siblings (brothers or sisters), we will also carry out any appropriate assessments for them, for example a young carer's assessment or a child in need assessment.

There are some factors that are recognised as placing additional stresses on families and some, or all, of the following factors may also be present for a family requesting a service and may point towards the child having eligible needs:

- Family breakdown, either imminent or likely in the future, which is due to the additional stresses caused by bringing up a child with a disability, which

would be eased by the provision of a service. In this regard, the Local Authority has a duty to provide accommodation to disabled children if their family is in crisis.

- Severe challenging behaviour from a disabled child which impacts on all aspects of the child/young person's functioning or pose a risk to self or others.
- Single carer, particularly if there are other children in the household.
- The effect of disturbed nights on the carer and their family.
- Impact that Moving & Handling has on the wellbeing of the carer.
- Health of the carer.
- Number of children in the household their ages and needs.
- The family's own resources and/or Universal and Targeted services are unable to provide the required level of support.
- Disabled children who have recently been subject to a child protection plan, and who remain in need of ongoing specialist services.
- No or a limited extended family network.
- Opportunities for a young person to gain skills and experience to support independence appropriate to their ability are not available.

It is important to note that some disabled children may be assessed as needing specialist services other than social care, for example a child who needs support from speech and language therapy. It may also be that services can also be provided through the Family Information Service (Local Offer) website. If this is the case, we will provide advice and guidance about how to access these services and where to find the Local Offer/ Family Information Service website.

Disability	**Meets Criteria for Specialist Provision**	
Level	**Profound**	**Severe**
Health	Complex health needs prevents participation in social and educational activities without constant 24 hour minimum of 1:1 specialist support.	Requires daily specialist medical or nursing care. Regular admissions to hospital for treatment. Daily use of specialist equipment that needs operational assistance.

Disability	**Meets Criteria for Specialist Provision**	
	Condition is unable to be controlled by medication.	Life limiting condition. Requires intensive therapy programme. Health needs have a significant impact on development and learning.
Education	Child has a profound learning disability. Attends educational provision for children with profound learning disability. Children who are following pre-key stage standards within their educational setting.	Child has a severe learning disability. Attends educational provision for children with severe learning disability. Children who are following pre-key stage standards within their educational setting.
Communication	No verbal communication. Unable to communicate needs using any method. Unable to use communication aid. Severely delayed processing skills.	None or very little communication used but can communicate at least basic needs using any method. Significantly delayed processing skills.

Disability	**Meets Criteria for Specialist Provision**	
Visual Impairment	Mobility restricted without special provision. Requires education by non-sighted method. Eligible for registration as blind.	Mobility restricted without special provision. Unable to read large print without intensive educational assistance or aids. Severe visual field defect with impaired visual acuity. Eligible for registration as blind or partially sighted.
Hearing Impairment	Total or near total loss of hearing (>95dB).	Severe hearing loss (71-95Db).
Behaviour associated with the disability	Profound challenging behaviour which impacts on all aspects of the child functioning and child poses a severe risk to self or others. Requires constant monitoring, supervision and a structured programme for managing behaviour overseen by specialist services. Frequent behaviour that may be of risk to the child or carers No	Behaviour demonstrates significant risk to self or others. Requires monitoring, supervision and a structured programme for managing behaviour overseen by specialist services. Challenging behaviour which impact significantly on community life and requires specialist provision to function socially/ educationally.

Disability	**Meets Criteria for Specialist Provision**	
	awareness of impact of behaviour on others.	
Family and Social Relationships	Inability to build and maintain friendships and relationships without constant support with all aspects.	Limited ability to build and maintain friendships without significant support with all aspects. Total dependence on carer for social integration. Very limited awareness of impact of behaviour upon others.
Self-care	Fully dependent on others for all personal care (eating/ drinking/ toileting and washing). Needs physical support with all personal care. Requires specialist equipment to support all their care needs.	Needs physical assistance with personal care. Needs a high level of supervision with all personal care (eating/ drinking/ toileting and washing).
Safety	Needs constant supervision both during the day and night. Doesn't have any awareness of	Needs constant supervision during the day. Would place themselves or others at risk without supervision.

Disability	**Meets Criteria for Specialist Provision**	
	danger to self or others.	No awareness of danger to self or others.
Mobility	Unable to walk. Uses a wheelchair. Totally dependent upon carer for mobility.	Unable to walk. May be able to stand or transfer with support. Able to manoeuvre self at least some of the time.

Children who are not included in the Eligibility Criteria

- A disability or disabilities that are not permanent and substantial.
- Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties due to social or environmental factors i.e. the behaviour is not associated with a disability.

Referral Processes

All referrals for individual disabled children are sent to Children's Services Front Door who will send the referral to the Supporting Disabled Children Service Team Managers should an assessment be required.