Document Name	**Child Eligibility and Support Criteria**
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Related Policies	Safeguarding Policy Disciplinary procedure Data protection policy

1. Introduction

a. The Dorset Children's Foundation (the DCF) is committed to helping local disabled children and their families in our community. We help to fund medical expenses, mobility equipment, and therapies, not covered by the NHS.
b. This document details how the DCF decides if they can support a child and what support can be provided.
c. Every child's situation is unique and therefore all applications are dealt with confidentially on an individual basis. Safeguarding, welfare and wellbeing of the child is always the primary concern.
d. Our aim is to treat every family (applicant) as an individual and for them to be treated with kindness, consideration and care throughout the whole process.
e. The DCF work pro-actively enabling us to provide immediate assistance as deemed necessary by the trust.

2. Referrals for Support from the DCF

a. Referrals made to the DCF come from a variety of sources. Parents or carers can self-refer at any time through our website, via email or by phone.
b. We also get referrals from a range of health care professionals that work closely with individual children including physios and OTs, and via local specialist and mainstream schools.

3. Child Eligibility for Support

The decision to pursue an application to support a child in need is based on a variety of factors including whether:

a. The child lives in the Dorset area or has strong links with the area, for example, who lives outside of Dorset but attends a Dorset school.

b. The request fits within the DCF constitution (See Appendix 1)
c. There are other means of accessible funding available to support the child and their family.
d. The family are in a financially secure position to be able to self-fund the support or equipment they are requesting.
e. A letter of referral has been received from a UK medical professional. This is required in cases requiring medical intervention or therapy not currently available on the NHS but is not essential for other areas of support or equipment.

4. Assessing Level of Need

The DCF will accept referral via a phone/zoom/email conversation or a formal written letter.
To assess the child's level of need the DCF will:

a. Use the information provided by parents and/or carers
b. Will request supporting information from other health care professionals, where appropriate and will work closely with the therapists who support our children and receive frequent reports on progress.
c. Ask what the family will be contributing towards the cost. The DCF does not complete a formal means-testing to assess level of support to be provided, however, may not provide support if it is deemed that the applicant is clearly able to financially support the requested funding themselves.
d. The Co-Founders or outreach team will conduct an initial home-visit to evaluate the extent to which the child needs DCF support, and how quickly we may need to act.
e. In some situations, a phone or zoom conversation would be acceptable, if agreeable with both parties.
f. In the case of mobility equipment, it should be determined if this is available through statutory services and parents supported to follow this route.
g. In the case of therapy, The DCF will agree to fund a proportion of the therapy costs for a pre-determined amount of time unless it is decided the circumstances are exceptional.
h. We work especially closely with Total Children's Therapy (TCT) and have introduced an introductory assessment appointment to determine the level of help that is required.
i. TCT know The DCF criteria and those that do not conform to this will be signposted to other organisations.

NB: The DCF does not provide money directly to families, but instead takes responsibility for paying invoices relating to the therapy or activity provided for a specific child.

5. Fundraising

The main way the DCF supports families is by:

a. Each family sets up their own on-line fundraising campaign through the DCF, and donations are managed directly by the charity.
b. We help to promote each child's campaign using our social media channels, and through our links with local companies and other grant-giving organisations.
c. External donors choose for themselves which child campaign they would like to support and transfer funds to the DCF in the child's name.
d. We also publicise child campaigns in our DCF newsletter, which is circulated to both parents and charity stakeholders.

e. In some circumstances, at the discretion of the Trustees, the DCF may offer financial assistance to a child for equipment or therapy, without a fundraising page. This is to give us flexibility to provide emergency support to families with an immediate need.

6. Approval for purchases over £5000

a. Agreement for The DCF Board of Trustees will be required for any purchases made for a child over £5000, except where the parents have fundraised the money themselves.
b. Any purchases made for a child under £5000 will be automatically authorised by the Co-Founders.

7. Requests for Support of Large Projects

a. If families request money for large projects, such as house renovations or garden alterations we look to signpost to other organisations that might help – as there are government grants available solely for these purposes.
b. Alternatively, families are encouraged to set up their own fundraising page through the DCF.

8. Purchasing Equipment

a. Monies donated to the DCF for equipment are restricted funds and can only be used for this purpose. It is not necessary for the Trustees to vote on this for amounts over £5000.
b. If funds / grants have been donated for a specific purpose or for a specific piece of equipment, the Founders will use this document as guidance to determine whether the applicants meet the DCF criteria.
c. All equipment provided **IF** funded by The DCF will remain the property of the charity and will be on loan until it is no longer required.
d. Families will be asked to ensure the piece of equipment being returned is clean and in a functioning order. Where the item no longer functions details of the problem should be provided so remedial action can be taken, where possible.

9. Funding for Activities

a. The DCF organises and directly funds a number of activities through their Accessible for All programme (see Appendix 2) and where possible at least 3 activities per week are arranged for children during school holidays.
b. As we continue to grow as a charity and expand our accessible for all programme it's important to have guidelines in place for those organising events and play opportunities. With nearly 400 disabled children now registered with us, the majority of whom are neurodiverse children, we need to make sure that those with more severe and physical disabilities are not getting lost and stay at the core of what we set out to do when the DCF opened their first shop all those years ago.
c. When arranging accessible activities, we must try:
    - To make sure that all disabilities are catered for
    - To open these activities to all the children on our books using a clear booking system.
    - To assess how we advertise these events to reach as many of our families as possible, so they all have an equal opportunity to book.

- Where possible, provide outdoor events, weather permitting, so we can accommodate as many families as possible and encourage our families to come together.

d. With so many families registered with the DCF we cannot possibly provide for all children at single events but by spreading out our events over a wider area, increasing the frequency and utilising our subgroups like the Saturday Club, SENturians and Little Stars we should be able to provide something for those that want/need it.
e. When numbers are restricted due to venue size the following guidelines should be used to prioritise those children that can attend:
    - Children with access requirements who would not have the option to attend a mainstream event or one of the SEND activities provided by the local council or other local organisation (we will continue to work with the local councils to help them improve their provision).
    - Children with life limiting/serious medical conditions who regularly have hospital stays that impact their quality of life and access to play opportunities.
    - Families who are currently accessing our counselling services (these families will be encouraged to attend our events by our counsellors to ensure confidentiality).
    - Those who we have identified, through building relationships etc as needing extra support.
f. To ensure we fully understand the families we have on our register we will:
    - Regularly update our registration forms so we can easily identify those with physical disabilities who require accessible venues and facilities so we can see 'at a glance' the location of our families, which will help us plan our activities to meet the location needs of as many children as possible.

Please note: This document is to be used to advise and inform decisions made in the assessment of need for individual families. The criteria used may be subject to change if fully supported by the Co-Founders.

Appendix 1

Dorset Children's Foundation Constitution states its purpose as:

The relief of sickness and the preservation of health among children with long term illnesses and/or disabilities by providing or assisting in the provision of medical equipment, treatment and rehabilitation not normally provided by the statutory authorities and such other support as the trustees may determine.

Appendix 2

Activities funded by the DCF

Full funding provided to:

1. DCF Football Association
2. Golf – Working with a local professional golf coach who has experience coaching children and adults with disabilities at Ferndown Forest Golf Club.
3. Tennis coaching
4. Poole Disability Track and Field Race Running. DCF cover the cost of the track hire and have purchased several race runners and a trailer to transport equipment.
5. Paddy's Purpose - a disability workshop delivered to schools and youth groups, aimed to break down the barriers associated with disability and educate the youth of today.
6. Paddy's Purpose Mental Health programme which provides:
    - Emotional support to parents of disabled children to provide a listening ear to parents and educate them about mental health symptoms.
    - Signposting to more specialist support when required.
    - A counselling service based at Linwood school.
7. Little Stars – A stay and play group for preschool children to help little ones explore, socialise and communicate.
8. The Saturday Club - This club is exclusively open to our PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulty) wheelchair users. It is held at a local specialist school that has all the appropriate changing facilities and is fully accessible.
9. Super Siblings - for children who have **siblings** with additional needs
10. Forest School - Runs every Monday morning in Wimborne with our outreach team. During these weekly sessions, pre-school children can play outdoors and explore nature in a safe, secure environment, learning important life skills.
11. Story Time – held in Wimborne Library on a Monday afternoon, directly after our Forest School session.
12. Early Years Co-Motion - sensory dance sessions available weekly to our early years children.
13. Fully Inclusive Family Activities - regular play opportunities open to all our members of any age or ability including private hire of an indoor soft play centre and indoor skate park and our sensory dance classes, co-motion.
14. Wet Wheels – A sailing experience exclusively for our members. We offer two different experiences – leisure trip, where children get to steer the boats and experience a 90-minute sail, and pirate trips, which involve two boats sailing side by side, with a pirate crew and armed with water cannons!
15. Family Adventure Weekend - We work with local activity centre Avon Tyrrell to provide the opportunity for 10 disabled children and their families to attend a residential weekend providing different experiences including kayaking, zip-wire, climbing and archery. We hire an accessible lodge that accommodates wheelchair users with their accompanying parent/carer, and we invite siblings and other parents to camp in an exclusive field adjacent to the lodge. This is an annual event with a focus on memory making and helping families enjoy quality time together.
16. Sensory Tent - We have been using this tent to engage with the local community more at public events. We provide a 'quiet zone', full of sensory toys for anyone who wishes to escape the crowds.

17. Outreach services - We have two outreach workers, a befriender and a parent liaison role. They work with families of predominantly pre-school children meeting new families that may be just coming to terms with a diagnosis and accessing services for the first time.
18. Parent/Carer wellbeing activities - sewing club, yoga, coffee, and craft mornings, running, paddle boarding/kayaking sessions and cold-water dipping.
19. Counselling - We have a highly qualified counsellor available to parents (and some children) who need it.
20. Music Therapy - Sessions facilitated by Total Children's Therapy and can take place at their centre or in the family home.
21. Art Therapy - a new service held at Creative Kids in Boscombe offering specialist art therapy sessions for children with disabilities who may be struggling to cope with the restrictions and anxiety associated with their health problems.
22. Equipment - We continue to provide funding for equipment that is currently not available from the NHS. We can part or fully fund specialist all-terrain wheelchairs that can cope with beaches and forest floors, and special 'we-go' seats that can be used on the floor or taken out easily to adapt any standard seat into one with full postural support, giving children more opportunities and less boundaries so that they can explore the world just as much as other children their age.
23. The Play Prescription – a service is available to vulnerable children that find it difficult to engage with play at all and who aren't able to come to our various other play opportunities. In these situations a local play expert visits children in their homes. Each child receives a play package of six, 1-1 sessions. During these sessions the parents and carers are shown different ways to engage their children in play so that once the six sessions are over, they have the tools and the confidence to be able to play and interact with their children.

Partial funding provided to:

1. Something Special – A group for pre-school children with any kind of additional needs held weekly in Corfe Mullen
2. Doors Open – A neuro-physiological therapy programme that offers help in addressing child development and educational challenges.
3. SENturians - A weekly held support group for families of children with any additional needs.
4. Awesome Archie - Celebrating and supporting neurodiversity at school and at home
5. Surf Therapy - After helping Wild and Free last year by contributing £2000 towards an adapted surfboard, we continue to work with them, and in the past year have funded surf therapy for 24 children who attend weekly sessions over a period of 6 weeks.
6. Children's Therapy Services - Specialist therapies are identified and recommended to children that are unavailable on the NHS, we can fund, or partially fund, giving the children that need them, a better chance of reaching their full potential. Therapies we fund include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hydrotherapy and speech, and language therapy.