

Practitioner Reference Pack (V4)

Formulate for Children's Social Care

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1 What is Formulate?

Formulate is a tool to help you calculate an Estimated Budget. It has been designed to be fair, accurate and consistent.

Formulate is based on an assessment of need – and helps to eliminate variation in provision for children and young people with the same needs. It helps to ensure that the families you work with get a fair care and support allocation compared to others with similar needs and situations.

The purpose of the Estimated Budget is to provide a starting point for the care and support planning process. The figure provides a framework to enable choice, control and person-centred care within a sustainable financial envelope. This helps move the conversation away from more traditional service or provision-led thinking.

Benefits for practitioners

- Clarity in understanding the money available for care and support planning.
- Confidence in decision making through the use of a robust, evidence-based tool.
- Free to focus on the child or young person and their family rather than the money.

Benefits for children and young people and their families

- Clarity in understanding the money available for care and support planning.
- Empowered to exercise choice and control - allows for greater creativity.
- Assurance that allocation is fair and driven by needs and outcomes - rather than decisions on cost.

Benefits for Local Authorities

- Supports financial and budgetary planning and control – helping to inform future commissioning arrangements.
- Benchmarking against other Local Authorities.
- Delegated decision making – potential to reduce moderation/panels.

2 Where does Formulate fit into the process?

Once a child or young person's assessment has been completed and it has been decided that social care funding is needed for care and support, the 'Needs Profile' would be completed which contains the questions which are used by Formulate to calculate an Estimated Budget.

In a strengths-based approach, you would usually have explored all of the strengths of the child or young person and their family, maximised their independence, and looked for any community resources or support networks, before completing the Needs Profile – so the Needs Profile is about the remaining unmet need.

3 How does Formulate work?

The Needs Profile captures information about the 'additional needs' of the child or young person and the impact these have on their parent(s)' or carer(s)' ability to look after them.

This information is captured in a measurable way – sometimes called 'scores' (although the 'score' is just referring to the level of need you've chosen – there aren't any points sitting behind them!)

There are three main steps involved in how the Formulate algorithm calculates an Estimated Budget. These are set out below. Within each step, the estimated sum of money is calculated by referencing the local rates and configuration decisions set by your local authority in their Formulate 'Configuration Template' – such as the cost of an hour of personal care locally.

3.1 Step one – Self-care

If additional needs related to self-care tasks are identified for the child or young person in the Needs Profile, and parent(s) or carer(s) are not able to fully meet the additional needs, Formulate will allocate an estimated sum of money for this area.

The following parts of the Needs Profile are used during this part of the calculation:

- How often support is needed with self-care tasks per day
- Usual length of time needed to support with self-care tasks
- Self-care areas where more than an age-appropriate level of support is needed to maintain or develop independence (including getting up and ready for the day, eating and drinking, washing whole body, using the toilet and managing continence, and getting ready for bed)
- Support needed with staying comfortable and repositioning, and any impact of weight, frame, balance or strength on mobility
- Any self-care areas where support from two or more adults is needed
- Impact of any behaviour which causes worry, upset, concern or harm
- Number of mornings, daytimes and evenings each week that parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) can meet self-care needs in the term-time and in the holidays
- Daytimes where support may be provided by an education setting (either full-time or part-time)

There are some important points to note, as follows:

- The Formulate calculation will not simply allocate hours for each individual area of need and add them up. The number of hours allocated is based on the full picture of the child or young person's additional needs across all of the above areas.
- An estimated allocation is only given for times during the week where it is recorded that parent(s) or carer(s) cannot meet self-care needs every day.

For children or young people in full-time education, Formulate will not normally include self-care allocations for weekday daytimes during term-time.

3.2 Step two – Short breaks and social activities

If the Needs Profile identifies that parent(s) or carer(s) would benefit from daytime short breaks through social care, Formulate may make an estimated allocation for this, depending on the answers within the 'Sustainability of parenting or caring role' section.

The following areas of the Needs Profile are used during this part of the calculation:

- Whether parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) would benefit from daytime short breaks through social care to help them manage
- Whether parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) already receive support from a daytime short breaks service outside of children with disabilities services
- The impact on the parent(s)' or carer(s)' ability to continue providing support beyond normal parenting and caring duties – in the term time and during the holidays. This is recorded for the following six areas:
 1. Not having sufficient support with the caring role
 2. Having other caring roles
 3. Not being able to carry out day-to-day activities due to caring role
 4. Difficulties relating to the housing situation or home environment
 5. Not getting sufficient good quality sleep
 6. Their own health issues or their understanding of the child or young person's needs

If the Needs Profile identifies that parent(s) or carer(s) are not able to support all of the child or young person's social or community activities, Formulate will make an estimated allocation based on how many activities per week require additional specialist support.

The following areas of the Needs Profile are used during this part of the calculation:

- Level of independence with participating in social, leisure, cultural and spiritual activities
- Whether parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) would benefit from the child or young person attending any activities or groups in addition to daytime short breaks
- If so, how many activities would be beneficial per week in the term-time and in the holidays

Important note: In some situations, the Needs Profile will indicate that an estimated allocation is needed for both short breaks and support with social and community activities. In this case, the greater of the two allocations will be given rather than adding them together, as the parent(s) or carer(s) would be able to take a break whilst the child or young person is supported with a social or community activity.

3.3 Step three – Overnight breaks

If the Needs Profile identifies that overnight breaks are needed or would be helpful for the family, Formulate may make an estimated allocation for this, depending on the reason for needing overnight breaks and the answers within the 'Sustainability of parenting or caring role' section.

The following areas of the Needs Profile are used during this part of the calculation:

- Whether overnight breaks would promote independence, help to sustain parenting or caring role(s), or prevent parenting or caring role(s) breaking down.
- The impact on the parent(s)' or carer(s)' ability to continue providing support beyond normal parenting and caring duties – in the term time and during the holidays – across the six areas already set out for step two above.

Important note: Local decisions within the Configuration Document may mean that overnight breaks are excluded from the scope of Formulate, or only calculated as an estimated number of nights per year without an associated budget amount. This is usually related to the availability and cost of relevant services in the local area.

4 How do I complete the Needs Profile?

The Needs Profile captures information in a measurable way – meaning that it is made up of a combination of scales and checkboxes. The narrative from your assessment should provide the written evidence for the responses you choose within the Needs Profile.

For each question, you need to choose the most relevant answer for the child or young person's and their family's situation. People are different and we are not trying to fit people into boxes – it's about which answer most closely reflects the situation – in order to generate an accurate Estimated Budget.

To help choose the most relevant answer, there are some key principles you should apply.

Key Principles - Needs

- Use the multiple choice options to identify the child or young person's additional support needs, rather than needs associated with their age.
- Reflect the 'underlying need'. Imagine the child or young person on their own without any paid or unpaid support in place.
- Any equipment or technology already in place should be taken into account.
- After following all of the above principles, if in doubt between two responses, choose the higher level.

Key Principles - Sustainability of parenting or caring role(s)

- Identify the parent(s)' or unpaid carer(s)' strengths and the impact each factor has on the caring situation.
- Reflect the impact on the caring situation as if parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) were on their own without any paid support in place.
- 'Overwhelming impact' should only be scored where there is a concern of the caring situation breaking down in this area without support.
- Consider how the impact in each area may change between term-time and non term-time.

Key Principles - Support from parent(s) or unpaid carer(s)

- Select each response based on what the parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) will provide on a 'usual' week during term time and non-term time.
- If the child or young person is managing by themselves in an area, choose 'The child or young person does not need support at this time'.
- If the child or young person is in full-time education and needs personal care support during the day, score the number of daytimes outside of the child's education that parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) can support.
- If the parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) can't offer the same level of support in the school holidays, select a response based on what they will provide on a 'usual' week during the holidays.
- If a family member or friend is employed as a personal assistant, exclude this support when recording the unpaid support the family or friends can offer.

5 What are the other Formulate outputs?

As well as an Estimated Budget, you may see some additional outputs. These are described below. The actual outputs you see will be dependent on your local system configuration.

- Automatic Quality Assurance (QA) Summary
 - A set of checks and balances on the information recorded within the Needs Profile, ensuring that answers are not contradictory. This provides an in-built training resource for quality improvement.
- Allocation Summary
 - A breakdown of how the Estimated Budget has been calculated at a domain level. This can be provided as a monetary breakdown and a unit breakdown.
 - The monetary breakdown can help give a framework for support planning, allowing a creative and flexible approach to be taken.
 - These figures can also act as an internal benchmark, by creating a picture of the areas of identified need from the assessment, allowing for comparison to what is specified in the support plan.
 - The unit breakdown can help you where provider costs vary significantly as they allow you to see the **amount** of care and support that has been estimated by Formulate – factoring-out things like hourly rates and leading to a focus on the preferred type of support and how it may meet the person’s outcomes.
- What Ifs
 - A set of hypothetical outputs to help with future planning
 - “Estimated Budgets for Agency or Personal Assistant” shows two different Estimated Budget figures which are based on the cost of agency care and the cost of Personal Assistants respectively.
 - “Possible eligibility in Adult Social Care” sets out which Care Act domains are likely to have eligible needs for a young person approaching adulthood
 - The “What If Transition Scenarios” provide ‘ballpark’ Estimated Budget figures for Adult Social Care support based on living independently (with and without unpaid support), living in Supported Living and living with a Shared Lives carer.
 - These figures can be used in financial modelling, to understand the variation in cost for different accommodation and support types.

6 What if I disagree with the Estimated Budget?

It is important to remember that Formulate produces an Estimated Budget – the Actual Budget may well be different. However, there are cases where recording issues may result in an inaccurate Estimated Budget. There are some examples below of situations where the Estimated Budget doesn't look right and checks you can do to resolve this.

6.1 The Estimated Budget is £0

You can carry out the following checks:

- For the self-care area:
 - Have needs been scored in the 'Self-care' section?
 - Has "Are parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) able to meet all of the child or young person's identified self-care and/or health needs in an average week?" been answered as "Yes" (which would prevent an allocation)?
 - Have parent(s) or carer(s) been scored as meeting self-care needs every morning, daytime and evening in both term-time and holidays?
- For the social activities and/or daytime short breaks area:
 - Has the child or young person been scored as needing support in the 'Social and emotional needs' section?
 - Has the impact on the parent(s)' or carer(s)' ability to continue providing support been scored sufficiently high (at least one 'Impact factor' scored as 'Large impact') in the 'Sustainability of parenting or caring role(s)' section?
 - Has "Would the parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) benefit from daytime short breaks through social care to help them manage?" been answered as "No" (which would prevent any allocation for short breaks)?
 - Has "Would the parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) benefit from the child or young person attending any activities or groups in addition to daytime short breaks?" been answered as "No" (which would prevent any allocation for social activities)? Or has it been answered as "Yes" but then a number of activities has not been selected underneath
- For the overnight breaks away from the home area:
 - Has the impact on the parent(s)' or carer(s)' ability to continue providing support been scored sufficiently high in the 'Sustainability of parenting or caring role(s)' section?
 - Has "Are overnight respite breaks needed?" at the end of the Needs Profile been scored as one of the 'Yes' options? Also note that your local authority's configuration **may** mean that there is no allocation given for one or more of the "Yes" options

6.2 The Estimated Budget seems too low

You can carry out the following checks:

- Needs Profile – ‘Ongoing support from parent(s) or unpaid carer(s)’ section – Ensure you have completed this section to reflect what parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) are able to provide on an **ongoing** basis (particularly if the current situation is unsustainable).
- QA Summary– Are any QA statements shown? Have you corrected the related issues in the Needs Profile where relevant?
- Allocation Summary – Are there any domains where you were expecting to see an allocation but are showing as £0?

If you are happy with how you have captured the needs and situation in the Needs Profile, then variation may be due to the local configuration, for example:

- There may be things not included in the Estimated Budget due to your local authority’s configuration decisions (such as overnight breaks allocation for promoting independence).
- Configured rates might be different to the cost of the actual care sourced.

6.3 The Estimated Budget seems too high

You can carry out the following checks:

- Needs Profile – ‘Self-care’ section – Have these questions been answered in a way that correctly reflects the assessment of need?
- Needs Profile – ‘Support from two or more adults’ section – Have you marked that support of two is needed with tasks where this is not required?
- Needs Profile – ‘Sustainability of parenting or caring role(s)’ section – Has the impact on the parent(s) or carer(s) ability to continue providing support been scored too high in any of the impact areas?
- Needs Profile - ‘Ongoing support from parent(s) or unpaid carer(s)’ section – Have you recorded that parent(s) or unpaid carer(s) are not providing all support in some areas when they will be doing so?
- Allocation Summary – Check whether there are any areas with an allocation that you would not expect (for example overnight breaks)?

If you are happy with how you have captured the needs and situation in the Needs Profile, then variation may be due to the local configuration.