

Step Up/Step Down Procedure

For all staff in Children and Families

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This document is intended to support all staff working with children and families (within the county council and its partners) on the continuum of help and support available particularly where needs are either escalating or de-escalating. Clear step-up and step down processes are essential to ensure that interventions are proportionate to need, seamless in provision and maximise impact through the most efficient and effective manner. Partnership working and the voice of the family and especially the child are essential to improving outcomes.
- 1.2 The principles that underpin the approach set out in this document fall within the overarching 'Journey of the Child'. Key elements of the vision and approach are:

Values and Principles

1. Our **focus is the child** and the family and the outcomes we can help them achieve - with their voice at the centre of our engagement;
2. We value and make the most of **partnerships and our colleagues** and the skills they bring to the table (including our foster carers);
3. We **avoid duplication and bureaucracy** wherever we can;
4. We share a **single system for assessment and a single plan** wherever children and young people receive help;
5. We deliver the level of intervention **proportional to the needs** of the child and family;
6. We work together to safely deliver within the **context of financial constraint** and seek the opportunities as well as facing the challenges this provides.

Priorities

- A** Developing a joined up children and families **pathway for children in need of help and protection which is proportionate to need at the time it is required**, which proactively aims to break the cycle of poor outcomes in families. Along with a range of interventions, with particular focus on getting parents into work and children attending education.
- B** Supporting children in their own families and where this is not possible in local alternatives. This will include a **real focus on alternatives to care for young people**, but also a drive to recruit and retain colleague foster carers to offer real placement variety and choice.
- C** Promoting and supporting **excellence and consistency** in the quality of practice and **making Warwickshire the best place to practice**.

1.3 The remainder of this document seeks to set out the processes for step up and step down. During consideration of this document due reference and understanding should be given to:

- [Warwickshire Thresholds for Intervention](#)
- [Child in Need Procedures and Practice Guidance](#)
- [WSCB procedures](#)
- [The Stepped Approach](#)
- [Single Assessment Process](#)

1.4 It should also be emphasised that safeguarding arrangements and the safety of the child should override any considerations. Where this is the case an immediate referral should be made to the [Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#).

2. Step-up procedure

2.1 Any person who believes that a child is at risk of harm should report such concerns to the MASH using the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF). Information concerning the safety or well-being of a child or young person should be articulated in a clear and informative manner. This may relate to:

- A deterioration in family circumstances to such an extent that there are child protection concerns for the child/young person;
- A concern which relates to the ongoing care and well-being of a child which may indicate neglect.

2.2 Following consideration by the MASH:

- If it is clear that the threshold for statutory services have been met then a referral will be made to the relevant children's team;
- If it is considered that further information needs to be gained in order to make an informed decision about thresholds, the referral may be triaged through the MASH partnership systems in order to make a decision on thresholds. This may subsequently result in a referral to the relevant children's team.

2.3 If the thresholds for children's social care have not been met:

- If it is clear that the issue relates to information, advice and guidance, relevant signposting will be undertaken by early help MASH officers to

community and universal based services via the [Family Information Service](#).

- If it is clear that an early help response is required, the MASH may recommend to the referrer that an [Early Help Single Assessment \(EHSA\)](#) needs to be implemented to support the family. The relevant early help officer will be referenced as a source of advice and support for the referrer. It will be the responsibility of the referrer to initiate or to provide a rationale as to why the recommendation was not implemented.
- If it is clear that social care thresholds have not been met then a referral may be made to the relevant Locality Panel where it has been identified that a case may be complex, concerning and in need of a multi-agency approach and response. This may also be the case where the referrer is not able to initiate an [Early Help Single Assessment \(EHSA\)](#), where the threshold is disputed and/or there is a high degree of probability that no further action is likely to result in a re-referral within 6 months.

3. Step down

3.1 Where a Child Protection (CP) Plan has ended or a Child in Need (CiN) has been assessed at a meeting and the level of need and or risk has been assessed as reduced, a decision may be made for the matter to be stepped down. For such a decision to be made it must be evident that the thresholds which originally led to a social care intervention are not now being met (due to the successful implementation of the CiN/CP Plan), consent has been obtained and the direction of travel in relation to the child and family is de-escalation. Step down processes may also apply where after initial referral from the MASH, and initial assessment by social care teams deem that no further action is required, but there are sufficient concerns to suggest that there is a high degree of probability that a re-referral will occur within 6 months.

3.2 In such instances there will be four principal routes for step down:

- Stepped approach to universal services (3.3 below);
- Early help brokerage to the wider early help network (3.4 below);
- Intensive support through the family support worker service or Targeted Support for Young People(3.5 below);
- Locality Panels: Where the case retains a degree of complexity and requires a multi-agency approach to retain the momentum of de-escalation. This may also be the case where the referrer is not able to

initiate an Early Help Single Assessment (EHSA) or where the threshold is disputed.

- 3.3 The stepped approach to universal services applies to those families where de-escalation is to such an extent that there are no further concerns and ongoing community based support is sufficient to ensure momentum is maintained. An exit plan should be developed by the social worker in consultation with the Family Information Service or by the family support worker (where one is attached to the CiN) involving the stepped approach and this should be communicated to both the referrer (where relevant and appropriate) and the family. This exit support would be worked within a 60 working day maximum period.
- 3.4 Where de-escalation results in circumstances not requiring the intensity of a family support worker but there are sufficient concerns to suggest that the family still has additional needs which would not be met by community resources alone; then the case will be assigned to the relevant early help officer. The early help officer will ensure that appropriate interventions and monitoring mechanisms are in place (via the single assessment and the identification of a lead professional from the early help network), to ensure that families are maintaining the momentum of de-escalation and also that any issues of potential escalation are addressed promptly. The social worker will attend the first meeting in such instances including where the single assessment has concluded 'no further action'.
- 3.5 Where families who are ending a CIN plan but intensive support is required from a family support worker to maintain the momentum of de-escalation there will be two routes for referral. Referrals for family support worker/targeted youth support may either be through the Locality Panels process; or where there is less complexity (but still the need for an intensive approach) via consultation between the social worker (after agreement with their manager) and the early help brokerage team who will consider and allocate as part of their weekly allocation meetings. At the weekly allocation meetings, the early help officer in conjunction with the early help operations manager will broker an appropriate package of interventions which is proportionate to need using the following guidance:
- [Thresholds for intervention](#);
 - Step up/step down processes;
 - The stepped approach;
 - [Priority Families criteria](#).

4. Monitoring, evaluation and audit

4.1 Step down performance measures will be developed using the following data sets:

- Number of EHSA stepped down;
- Number of early help episodes stepped up.

5. Further information and reference

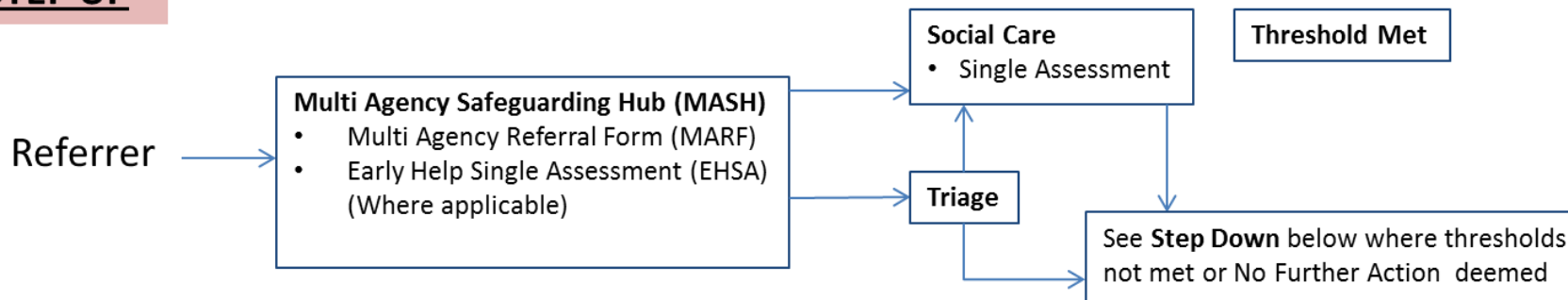
[Children's Social Care Referrals and Assessment Processes](#)

[Locality Panel Referral: \(DOCX, 59.36 KB\)](#)

[Locality Panels – Terms of Reference 09/2016 \(DOCX, 159.15 KB\)](#)

6. STEP UP / STEP DOWN PROCESS FLOWCHART

STEP UP



STEP DOWN

