

Guidance for Stepping-down from Children's Social Care to Early Help

Peterborough City Council

October 2020

Background

This guidance sets out how cases should be stepped down from Children's Social Care to other agencies for continuing support. Practitioners should also refer to the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Board Effective Support for Children and Families document.

Routes for Stepping Down

There are a number of circumstances where it is appropriate for child care cases to be stepped down from children's social care to continuing support from either a single agency or through a multi-agency support plan. Principally, these include:

- Contacts / referrals made to Children's Social Care where the needs identified do not meet children's social care thresholds;
- Cases held within Children's Social Care in the Assessment Service for assessment where the outcome of the assessment is that the identified needs do not indicate a need for continuing involvement by Children's Social Care, but where there are other needs identified;
- Cases where children have been open to Children's Social Care and the identified needs have been met but ongoing support from Early Help Services may be relevant

1. Contacts made to Children's Social Care not meeting Threshold for Social Care Services

Where a child is referred to Children's Social Care, the Customer Services Centre will make a recommendation using the Pathway Document to determine a suggested receiving team based on the concerns identified on the referral.

Contacts passed to MASH and the Assessment Team are reviewed by a Team Manager or Senior Practitioner and the recommendation from the Customer Services Centre can be:

- Accepted and a MASH Enquiry completed
- Accepted and progressed to a referral within LCS
- Recommendation is not accepted by receiving team and contact is reassigned to EHH for consideration of Early Help support.
- Closed as No Further Action

Where the MASH or Assessment Team believes that the family may benefit from multi-agency support at an Early Help level, these contacts are passed to the Early Help Hub for their consideration. The Early Help Hub will review if there is already early help support in place and offer suggestions to sources of additional support; may recommend referral to a single service; may provide information and advice to both the referrer and the family; where it is considered an Early Help Assessment is needed the EHH will provide assistance in identifying the most appropriate

agency / lead professional to work with the family, assuming that there is consent by the family for this course of action.

Contacts not meeting Children's Social Care Thresholds

Where a contact made to Children's Social Care is deemed not to meet threshold for Social Care involvement, but the MASH or Assessment Team are of a view that Early Help support might be appropriate, the MASH or Assessment Team:

- Review the contact and record a rationale as to why the contact should be reassigned to the EHH
- The contact is saved but not finalised and is reassigned to the Contacts Early Help Tray in EHM
- The EHH Team Manager / Senior Practitioner will review these within 24 hours of receipt and will action and close the contact as appropriate – this may include linking to an existing Early Help Episode, starting an Early Help Hub Enquiry or progressing to start an Early Help Assessment.

Referrals not meeting Children's Social Care Thresholds

Where a contact has been accepted by an Assessment Team and progressed to a Referral but the decision is not to complete a C&F Assessment, then the Assessment Team will need to decide whether a step down to Early Help is appropriate. If the decision is to progress to Early Help and the family have consented to this then the Assessment Team will:

- Complete the Referral record with an outcome of step down to Early Help
- Initiate the Transfer from LCS to EHM detailing the decision and what needs have been identified for Early Help.
- Upon receipt of the Transfer the EHH will review the information and accept the transfer as appropriate with further discussion between Team Managers if required- this may include linking to an existing Early Help Episode, starting an Early Help Hub Enquiry or progressing to start an Early Help Assessment.

MASH Enquiries with an outcome of Early Help

Where a contact has been accepted by MASH and a MASH Enquiry has been completed with a recommendation of Early Help. The MASH Team will:

- Complete the MASH Enquiry record with an outcome of step down to Early Help
- Initiate the Early Help Hub Enquiry in EHM detailing the decision and what needs have been identified for Early Help and reassign to the Contacts Early Help Tray.

Upon receipt of the Early Help Hub Enquiry the EHH will review the information and accept the transfer as appropriate with further discussion between Team Managers if required- this may include linking to an existing Early Help Episode, completing an Early Help Hub Enquiry or progressing to start an Early Help Assessment.

Note: parents and young people are able to decline the offer of a service from a single or multiple agencies. Contacts / Referrals / MASH Enquiry requests should only be sent to the EHH where the family consented to the safeguarding referral and /or have consented to Early Help support as an outcome of the contact.

The Early Help Hub do not undertake Early Help Assessments themselves; their role is to support and encourage completion of the assessment by partner agencies / lead professionals working with the child or family or provide signposting to appropriate Early Help services.

2. Stepping-down Assessment/Family Safeguarding following Child and Family Assessment

Children and young people who have had a Single Assessment may not need continuing support from Children's Social Care, but may need continuing support from one or more other agencies. In these circumstances the following actions are to be completed:

- For single agency support: The social worker refers the child or young person and their family on to the agency concerned. The social worker in this instance selects NFA as the outcome on Liquid Logic.
- Where a multi-agency support plan is indicated: The social worker should first discuss the case with the Early Help Service. In all cases where a multi-agency support plan is indicated, the case will first be heard at the Multi-Agency Support Group [MASG], which will identify an appropriate the lead professional and agree resources needed to support the child or young person and their family.

Note: The parent or carer must agree to a continuing support plan in Early Help and have given their consent either to the referral being made to the single agency or to the information contained within the Child and Family Assessment to be shared with the agencies that make up the MASG. Consent to information being shared in this way must be clearly noted on Liquid Logic.

In order to step the case down to MASG, the outcome of the Child and Family Assessments must be 'Referral to Early Help' and within the narrative comments, the social worker or team manager MUST record that the case is to be stepped down via the MASG. Do NOT select NFA as the outcome in these circumstances.

The social worker will be invited to attend the MASG to present the needs of the child, young person and their family. It is often helpful to the panel if the referrer can attend as they can often present more contextual information than that which is available in any assessment, no matter how thorough.

The case can be closed to Children's Social Care once the case has been accepted for discussion at the MASG.

3. Stepping-down from Child in Need Plans

Where a case that has been subject to a child in need plan is to be stepped down to multi-agency support through a Team around the Child and there is agreement to this course of action within the multi-disciplinary team supporting the Child in Need plan the following process needs to be followed:

- Agreement to step down to TAF must be clearly recorded in the notes of the Child in Need Meeting together with the name of the nominated Lead Professional from an Early Help partner agency who will pick the case up following closure to Children's Social Care;
- Outcome selected on Liquid Logic is 'Referral to Early Help ' and NOT 'NFA'.

These cases do not need to be presented to any of the three MASG panels as the lead professional is already identified; there is already an established multi-agency team around the child; there is already a SMART action plan to improve outcomes.

In the event that a case steps down from a CIN Plan to a single agency referral, the social worker would make the referral to that agency in the usual way.