



**Step Up/ Step Down Process and Transfer
Protocol
within Children's Social Care and Council Early
Help Services**

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Contents Page

Chapters	Page No
1. Introduction	3
2. Interface between the Early Help and the Duty and Advice Service	3 - 5
3. Interface between Social Work Teams and Early Help	5 – 7
4. Transfers between social work teams	8-10

Useful Links

- Councils Early Help Offer and the Early Help Assessment – www.leicester.gov.uk/earlyhelp
- Leicester Safeguarding Childrens Partnership - <http://www.lcitylscb.org/>
- Tri-X Procedures - https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicester_city/index.html
- Family Information Directory - <https://families.leicester.gov.uk/>
- My Choice Directory - <https://mychoice.leicester.gov.uk/>

Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The City Council is committed to achieving excellence through continual improvement where children and their families are at the heart of everything that we do. Therefore, we need to provide improved and sustained early help, safeguarding, child protection and looked after children services which facilitate a focus on supporting and promoting the interests and welfare of children and young people in Leicester City.
- 1.2 In order to achieve our aim for services to children and families to be of high quality, easy to access and provided by skilled staff, Leicester City Council Social Care and Early Help operate one front door.
- 1.3 This protocol sets out the pathway and process for transfer and step up/down of cases between early help and social care and stipulates the transfer protocol between social work teams.
- 1.4 The implementation and monitoring of this protocol will be via:
 - a) Induction
 - b) Staff Meetings
 - c) Tri-X Procedures
 - d) Supervision
- 1.5 This protocol is for all frontline staff and managers within children's social care and early help services and has been approved by the Children's Senior Management Team.
- 1.6 This protocol has been built into the LiquidLogic system for both Social Care and Early Help. This protocol will be reviewed annually and is owned by the Heads of Services for Early Help and Prevention and Children's Social Work Teams.
- 1.7 The protocol is to be read in conjunction with the LSCB agreed thresholds document: <http://www.lcitylscb.org/information-for-practitioners/>

Chapter 2

Interface between the Early Help and the Duty and Advice Service (DAS)

- 2.1 Leicester City Council has a 'one front door'. This development aims to provide better customer services at the point of initial contact/ referral to ensure timely advice, guidance, assessment and intervention relating to children and families in Leicester City.

Initial contact received by DAS in relation to a child already open to Leicester City Council's Early Help Services

- 2.2 If a contact is made by a professional in relation to a child already open to council Early Help and Prevention services, the DAS SW will consider and appraise the information provided (as per the Initial Contact (IC) /Referral guidance) and create / complete an Initial Contact on the Children's Social Care Liquid Logic. Based on the information provided, threshold will be applied, and a decision will be made relating to the outcome of the IC. In these cases, the information should be considered by DAS and not just signposted to Early Help or the Multi Agency Support Panel (MASP) . A record of the decision and management oversight will also be recorded in the Initial Contact.

Transfer of calls from DAS to Early Help Response (EHRT) – when threshold for Children’s Social Care is NOT MET

- 2.3 If contact is made by a professional to DAS, however, the reported concerns do not meet threshold for Children’s Social Care (but it may meet Early Help thresholds) – the Social Worker will have a discussion with the Early Help Practitioner (EHP) , agree action and then advise the caller of the decision around threshold and provide them with the opportunity to be transferred to the EHP. Once the call is transferred, it is the responsibility of the EHP to gather all the relevant information and record an Initial Contact on the Liquid Logic Early Help Module. In this scenario there will be no record of the contact on the Liquid Logic social care system.
- 2.4 The Early Help Initial Contact needs to be completed and endorsed by the Manager within 72 hours (working days only)

Transfer of calls from Early Help Response (EHRT) to DAS – when threshold for Children’s Social Care is MET

- 2.5 If contact is made by a professional to EH, and the reported concerns do meet threshold for Children’s Social Care (not Early Help) – the EHP will have a discussion with the SW, agree action and then advise the caller of the decision around threshold and inform them that the call would be transferred to the DAS SW. Once the call is transferred – it is the responsibility of the DAS SW to gather all the relevant information and record an Initial Contact on the Liquid Logic Social Care Module. In this scenario there will be no record of the contact on the Liquid Logic Early Help Module.
- 2.6 The Children social care initial contact needs to be completed and endorsed by Manager within 24 hours.

Transfer of Police (email) contacts from DAS to EH when threshold for Children’s Social Care is NOT MET

- 2.7 If notification is sent by Police via the DAS secure inbox, but the reported concerns do not meet threshold for Children’s Social Care (but it may meet Early Help thresholds) – the email will be forwarded to the EH inbox with the decision around threshold. It is the responsibility of the EHP to gather all the relevant information and record an Initial Contact on the Liquid Logic Early Help Module.
- 2.8 The Early Help Initial Contact needs to be completed and endorsed by Manager within 72 hours (working days only) However, if there is a disagreement and it is felt that the contact exceeds early help thresholds, this should be escalated between the Team Managers for DAS and EHRT for a discussion and decision.

Transfer of Police (email) contacts from EH to DAS when threshold for Children’s Social Care is MET

- 2.9 If notification is sent by Police via the EH secure inbox, but the reported concerns do meet threshold for Children’s Social Care– the email will be forwarded to the DAS Secure inbox with the rationale around threshold. It is the responsibility of the DAS SW to gather all the relevant information and record an Initial Contact on the Liquid Logic Social Care system.
- 2.10 The Children Social Care Initial Contact needs to be completed and endorsed by Manager within 24 hours.

Step up from Early Help Response or Clusters (council early help services within the community) to Social Care (DAS)

- 2.11 In the event of a contact within Early Help Response requiring a step up, the EH worker and DAS social worker should initially have a threshold discussion and provide the information as per the summary headings used. If agreement about threshold is not reached, workers should escalate to their respective

team managers. A DAS Team Manager and Early Help Team Manager need to have a Threshold discussion to progress.

- 2.12 If an open Early Help case (EHA) is referred (stepped up) to social care, the Early Help service will remain in place until the outcome of the Single Assessment undertaken by children's social care is known. If advised, to take the case to MASP, the EH practitioner or lead professional must be complete a referral to MASP as per the protocol. (Refer to page 7 onwards). The case needs to be stepped up within 24 hours once Children's Social care have accepted it. If the issues of need are significant and of a child protection nature, this must be stepped up immediately.
- 2.13 The allocated social worker should ensure that the early help practitioner/lead professional is invited to the first CIN meeting/ CP conference. This will ensure a smooth handover, holistic assessment and the opportunity to continue providing early help support as joint work.

Step up - Guidance to be considered by an Early Help Practitioner prior to making a referral to DAS

- 2.13 If a practitioner believes a child is in immediate danger you need to contact the Police using the emergency 999 line. Thereafter, contact should be made with the Duty and Advice Service on 0116 4541004. If there is no immediate danger to the child, but Child Protection concerns have been identified contact must be made with the Duty and Advice Service.
- 2.14 Each morning, there is an allocated slot where Early help Managers can discuss cases with Duty and Advice Managers. These discussions take the format of mapping in a signs of safety approach to support the discussion.
- 2.15 Where the Lead Practitioner or a multi-agency group consider that the needs of a child have become more complex or stuck at an Early Help threshold and may need intervention from Social Care, an option is for a referral to be made to the MASP (Multi Agency Support Panel) for discussion and action agreed.
- 2.16 Alternatively, if, despite attempts/ work being undertaken with the family by the multi-agency group, emerging safeguarding concerns arise (that cannot await the next MASP panel) - then contact should be made with Duty and Advice service without any delay. In these cases, the information should be considered by DAS and not just signposted to MASP (Multi Agency Support Panel).
- 2.17 Prior to the referral to the Duty and Advice Service, the EH Worker or Lead Practitioner should;
- a) If relevant, review the current assessment and plan to ensure it identifies all changes to the child(s)/ young person(s) circumstances including newly identified needs.
 - b) Communicate their concerns with the family and ensure they are fully aware of the steps being taken.
 - c) Be familiar with the threshold criteria for level of need. (Refer to LLR Threshold Procedures) <http://www.lcitylscb.org/information-for-practitioners/>

Transfers from DAS to Early Help as an outcome from a referral to social care

- 2.18 Following the completion of a of a referral, the DAS SW will evaluate the information provided alongside any existing information held and determine any action that needs to be taken. In the event where the need for subsequent intervention from early help services is identified, this is actioned using the 'request for early help' outcome within Liquid Logic IC/Referral forms.
- 2.19 For all transfers and step downs, the SW must make it clear within the request what support they feel is required and whether any action needs to be taken if the family do not engage with Early Help.

Chapter 3

Interface between Social Work Teams and council Early Help Services

Joint assessment between Single assessment Team SW and Early Help Practitioner

- 3.1 In some cases the need for early help support for families is apparent at the initial stage of the single assessment.
- 3.2 A request will be made by the Social Worker to the EH Response Team Manager for an early help practitioner to undertake a joint home visit with the allocated SW. This will provide both workers with an opportunity to build a rapport with the family and any work required could be implemented without any further delay.
- 3.3 If the outcome of the single assessment is for closure to social care and the early help work to continue, this will be sent out to the clusters by EHRT to continue this work as the EHRT is joint work only.

Request for Early Help as part of (an ongoing) social care plan

- 3.4 Early Help Services can undertake a specific piece of single agency work as part of a child in need (CIN) , child protection (CP) or looked after child (LAC) plan. This can be requested by choosing the step-down option in LL and then selecting 'Joint work' within the transfer form. Support includes targeted youth support and family support. There is a separate process in place for MST-FFT and Youth Justice Services. There are no specific timescales for work to be completed, however the work must be relevant and time limited with a clear trajectory.
- 3.5 Once the request has been processed, the Early Help Service will become a key agency attending future reviews and recording all work on the Early Help Module which is accessible to social workers. The key agency will need to be added by the social worker. Any early help work will be recorded on the STW workspace within the Early Help module.
- 3.6 Information on the council's Early Help offer can be found here: www.leicester.gov.uk/earlyhelp

Step Down from statutory intervention (CP, CIN, LAC) to Early Help Services

- 3.7 Social care teams always aim to reduce their involvement as the child's needs are met. If a decision has been made that a child is no longer assessed as a child 'in need' (CIN) but ongoing support is required from Early Help services, and the family have given consent to the support and to information being shared, then Social Care services should adhere to the following process.
- 3.8 The CIN meeting/ CP review conference/LAC review where step down is being considered must be attended by a representative from the Early Help. This will serve as the first team around the family meeting (TAF). The form within the Liquid Logic system must be completed by the social worker and passed through to the Early Help Response Team. The most recent review and plan must be up to date on LCS (social care electronic record).
- 3.9 The Social Worker should:
 - a) Discuss with the family the benefit of continued support for Early Help services and gain written consent.
 - b) With the family's agreement, have a discussion with the Family Support Manager in Early Help (Response) and ensure EH Response are invited to the closure/review meeting.

- 3.8 EH Response will allocate the request to the relevant cluster. The social worker should attend the first TAF multi-agency meeting to support family and ensure a smooth handover. The SW must make it clear what they feel the support required is and what action should be taken if the family do not engage with Early Help.

Early Help Plans

- 3.10 The Team around the Family (TAF) meeting must prepare an action plan which identifies the key agencies, resources and services which will be needed to achieve the planned outcomes within the agreed timescales. The plan must include:
- a) The desired outcome
 - b) Highlight the strengths of the family
 - c) Describe the identified developmental needs of the child and services required to meet need.
 - d) Include realistic and specific actions to achieve the desired outcomes.
 - e) Include a contingency plan if circumstances change
 - f) Include achievable timescales.
 - g) Identify the key individuals and their responsibilities, including frequency of contact with family members/visits to the child.
 - h) Identify review dates within the agreed timescale of 3 months.
 - i) Further meetings can be organised earlier if there are changes in the family circumstances or more frequent tracking has been agreed.

Multi Agency Support Panel (MASP)

- 3.11 Where a case is open to early help or social care and meets one of the following criteria, a referral can be made to MASP:

- a) High cost to the authority
- b) No improvement
- c) Escalation of problems

- 3.12 The purpose of the panel is:

- a) To provide a multi-agency management perspective between partner agencies for cases currently open to early help services, providing scrutiny and challenge, guidance and access to resources to prevent escalation and progress outcomes.
- b) To provide multi agency management oversight and enable decision making to ensure that wherever possible children and young people are supported to live with their family or within their kinship network unless by doing so their wellbeing or safety would be compromised.
- c) The panel will seek to ensure that children and young people have access to all relevant services that can support them to manage their needs and improve outcomes for the whole family.
- d) At an earlier stage as possible, the Panel will review cases where children are at risk of requiring statutory social care intervention using a range of statutory and non-statutory services to support both prevention and de-escalation.

- 3.13 More importantly it will ensure that children and families will get the right help at the right time and reduce the number that escalate and require social care intervention. It will also provide an opportunity to identify trends in service provision and demand, to track outcomes and to enable a proactive approach to service design and commissioning and reducing costs. Refer to:

Chapter 4

Transfers between social work teams

Transfer of work from Duty and Advice Service (DAS) to Single Assessment Team (SAT)

- 4.1 The Duty and Advice Service take all new referrals for children living within Leicester City. This may be within normal hours or outside of hours. Any referral deemed to meet threshold will be transferred to the Single Assessment Team. There are exceptions to this which are;
- i) the referral relates to an unborn child, where there have been court proceedings on siblings or the parents are a looked after child. The Single Assessment will be passed to the Children in Need (CIN) Social Work Teams to progress.
 - ii) If a case was previously open to the CIN service and within a 3-month period an additional referral is made, then this will be returned to the previous worker.
 - iii) Any child/young person that is remanded and not currently open to the service, will be directly transferred to the Looked After Children's (LAC) service.
 - iv) Any new referral relating to an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) will be directly transferred to the LAC service.

Transfer of work from the Single Assessment Team to the Child in Need (CIN) service.

The Single Assessment team progresses all new single assessments.

- 4.2 The transfer points are:
- a) Initial Child in Need meeting
 - b) Initial Child Protection Conference
 - c) First Looked after Children's review
 - d) First hearing for an Interim care order.
- 4.3 SAT will notify CIN of pending transfers the week prior to transfer, CIN will provide a new allocated Social Worker to attend the proposed meeting and meet the child and family. A joint visit will be booked where the worker cannot attend the meeting already set up.
- 4.4 All case records for the child/young person must be up to date and in good order prior to the CIN service accepting responsibility for the case. Records must include the following:
- a) Chronology
 - b) Genogram
 - c) All case recordings must be up to date.
 - d) All assessments must be completed and up to date.
 - e) All statutory visits up to date.
 - f) A recent case supervision.
 - g) Case summary
 - h) Child's data to be up to date.
 - i) All relevant documents and direct work uploaded to LL
 - j) Joint visits agreed.

Case Transfer Arrangements to from the Child in Need service (CIN) to the Looked After Children Service (LAC)

4.5 Cases will be transferred to the Looked After Children service whenever it is identified that long term care is the permanence plan for a particular child. The exceptions to this are:

- i) Those children and young people remanded into care
- ii) Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking children (UASC)

These are transferred directly from DAS as mentioned above.

Children subject to Private Fostering Arrangements will have a single assessment undertaken. The social Worker will work alongside a worker who will undertake the suitability of the Private Fostering assessment. The Private fostering practice guidance can be found https://www.proceduresonline.com/llr/childcare/leicester_city/p_private_fost.html?zoom_highlight=private+fostering

4.6 The transfer points are:

- a) Within 2 weeks of the making of a Section 31 Care Order where a child/young person is placed with; kinship carers, placement with parents, foster carers or a residential placement.
- b) Following the LAC review agreeing that permanent care is the plan for a child/young person where that child is placed with consent (section 20).

4.7 In order for transfer to take place the CIN Team Manager and Social Worker should meet with the new LAC Social Worker and Team manager. They will discuss the details of the child(ren) which includes the history, work undertaken, the plan, any risks and any contact arrangements. A joint visit will be booked to ensure that the new SW can be introduced to the child(ren) and carers. The details of the case file will be discussed to ensure this is up to date and in good order. Clear action will be agreed where this is not the case.

The case file will need to show that;

- a) All case recording must be up to date
- b) All Statutory visits must be up to date
- c) LAC care plan must be up to date and specifying permanency for the child/young person
- d) All assessments must be completed and up to date
- e) An up to date Health Assessment must be completed.
- f) An up to date Personal Education plan to be completed
- g) The Chronology must be up to date
- h) A clear genogram will be on file detailing who is in the child's extended family
- i) All legal proceedings & court applications must be finalised by the transferring team.
- j) LL pathways must be completed and up to date