

# **Step Up and Step Down Procedure – Early Help and Childrens Social Care**

## **Rationale**

This guidance has been developed in order to ensure there is a clear and consistent approach to allocations, the step up/step down process and to seeking consent.

## **Contacts received on open Early Help Episodes**

When a contact is received by a professional on a family open to Early Help, the contact is triaged by the ICRT Team manager and in the case of CCN's by the police. There are three possible outcomes:

- I. Contact is triaged and assessed as appropriate to remain with early help. Details of contact passed to Early Help Advice and Allocations Team (EHAAT) to forward;
- II. Contact may meet the threshold for CIN assessment (Amber process to be followed). Consent must be evidenced or sought;
- III. Contact identifies significant concerns and requires a strategy meeting (red process to be followed).

## **Step up/step down process**

### **Step Up of open Early Help cases**

For families open to Early Help where the worker has concerns that the worries for the family meet the Level 3 Threshold and required CIN Assessment, this should be discussed with their team manager in the first instance and consideration given to a joint visit or team manager chairing an Early Help Review. Should there continue to be concerns that the family requires intervention from Children's Social Care then a case discussion should be held with the Early Help Team Manager. The Early Help worker will complete the Step Up request form and discuss the family's needs in depth with their manager. At this point all aspects of intervention would be considered and the team manager would add their views to the form. Consent to step up for assessment must be obtained from the family.

The Early Help Team Manager will send the completed form ready for discussion with the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager within ICRT. They will review the current concerns and plan in place to determine threshold and provide advice re any further support which could be considered should the threshold not be met. This discussion and decision will be recorded within the form and the form placed on the child's file to evidence robust decision making.

If it is agreed that the case meets the threshold for CIN assessment, then the case will be transferred straight to the relevant team.

On agreement of the family transferring to social care the following information must be passed to the Duty Team tray through the 'Transfer to ICS' process in EHM

- Early Help Assessment and Plan;
- Chronology where appropriate;
- Evidence of consent.

The Early Help Worker will remain involved initially and a checkpoint will be held within 15 days to review the level of risk and determine ongoing intervention. This is to determine a more streamlined process for families and provide consistency of workers and intervention avoiding a 'stop/ start' approach should the family require 'stepping back down' to Early Help. If at the 15 days point it is clear that the concerns within the family continues to meet the Level 3 threshold then the Early Help Worker's intervention would end and the family will close to Early Help.

In the event of an Early Help Worker identifying a cause for concern which they believe meets the threshold for Child Protection, the Worker will have an immediate conversation with their Manager, or an alternative manager if necessary. That manager will speak to the ICRT Manager on duty and outline the concern. The step-up will be agreed by both managers and an immediate Step Up to Children's Social Care will be made from EHM to LCS. The case will remain open to Early Help until such time as an alternative pathway is agreed.

If another professional contacts about a case they feel should be stepped up to CSC whereby there is an open Early Help Plan the worker will have a discussion with the Early help Team Manager to determine whether they feel that the threshold is met and this will be recorded as part of the contact. Similarly if another professional contacts early help to discuss concerns, this will be recorded within a case note if the case does not warrant a further contact to CSC being made.

### **Step Down of open assessment cases**

Families open to Early Help:

Should the decision be made at the assessment checkpoint that the family should continue to need Early Help support following completion of assessment, then a meeting should be held between the Early Help Worker, the social worker and the family (To include the Team Around the Family if appropriate).

At the point of transfer, the social worker is to complete the 'transfer to EHM' from LCS, including documents such as most up to date plan, assessment and minutes from last meeting.

Families not open to Early Help:

The social worker will complete the step down to Early Help form in LCS. The Assessment Team Manager will contact the Early Help Team Manager in the relevant locality to discuss the circumstances of the family. An Early Help Worker will be allocated and will make contact with the social worker in order to carry out a joint visit and be introduced to the family and a step-down meeting will be arranged. At the step-down meeting the family will sign the Early Help Registration and Consent Form and be given an Early Help Privacy Notice (necessary for the Troubled Families programme). It is expected that there will be an up to date chronology completed. A clear plan is to be identified at that meeting and an Early Help Review to be arranged within six weeks.

### **Step Down from Child in Need Plans**

Whereby there is a short term Child in Need plan following assessment open to the assessment team, this will be reviewed within CIN panel every two weeks by managers, an Early Help Manager or Service Manager will attend the CIN panel to support with exit planning and stepping down to Early Help/ Universal services where appropriate. The social worker in those cases should invite Early Help Services to the second CIN review if it is deemed the family requires an Early Help worker.

All families stepping down from CIN to Early Help including those from locality teams require a step down meeting which will be requested via the Early Help Team Manager. Consideration will also be given to a joint visit to the family where this is appropriate.

**If there is a dispute between the Assessment Team Manager and Early Help Team Manager in relation to either Step Up or Step Down, the ICRT manager will review this independently.**

**If there is a dispute between the ICRT Team Manager and the Early Help Manager in relation to a child protection referral, an Assessment Team Manager will review this independently.**

**Clear case notes and management sign-off notes will be added at all stages in both EHM and LCS detailing all decisions and the reasons for them.**