



Step up/Step Down Guidance

CAF/CIN Support

September 2013

IMPLEMENTATION OF STEP UP/STEP DOWN PROCESS

The purpose of this guidance is to support staff in Universal Services, Social Care Teams and other agencies, in achieving progression both upwards and downwards through the levels of support available to children and their families. The desired outcome is that all interventions are proportionate to the child's needs and at the optimum level to have the maximum impact and benefit for the child/family, using resources in the most efficient manner.

The child and family should experience the process as seamless and without delay. Key relationships should be maintained where this is in the child's best interest.

The Step Up/Step Down process will be strengthened to improve the experience for children and families where their needs escalate and de-escalate, specifically to ensure a smooth transition across the interface between the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) process and Children's Social Care services.

The needs of these families *can* be effectively met if within the agreed Step Up/Step Down process there is consistency, a culture of working together with collective responsibility, a trusting relationship between practitioners, and the recognition that 'one size does not fit all'.

With this in mind, particular attention has been given to establishing clear and simple processes for those children, young people and families who no longer meet the criteria for Children's Social Care (Step Down). There has been recognition that differentiated processes are needed in different situations to provide the best transition of support.

Principles:

- Families tell their story once
- Key information and assessment conclusions (including intervention plan) are transferable across services (with family consent in place)
- Families are kept informed/know who to contact
- Transfer process is timely – a prompt response
- Clarity about who is lead person/lead professional
- Promotes credibility, trust and respect for staff working in universal and targeted services
- Clear roles, responsibilities and accountability
- Step down process avoids duplication and is clear, simple and deliverable

'STEP UP': A service request is made to Social Care Services for a child currently supported within the Team Around the Child (TAC) /Integrated Service.

'STEP DOWN': A service request is made to TAC/Integrated Team provision for a child currently supported by Social Care Services (an open case)

1. Step Up' Referral from Professional L3

1.1 If Children's social care receives a referral that clearly does not meet the criteria for an assessment as a child in need, referrer to be contacted and the outcome of the decision to be made known. If appropriate, encourage the referrer to start a CAF to offer on-going support to the family.

1.2 If professional is unsure how to complete a CAF, Social Worker to complete CAF information sheet and email to CAF team. CAF Team to contact referrer and offer support.

2. 'Step Up' If a CAF is already in existence

2.1 A child who has been assessed via the Common Assessment Framework and is being supported by a Team around the Child may need a service from a Social Care Team. This could be because the child's needs have changed or escalated. The child may require a *different* service to that offered by the TAC, or may require a specialist service *in addition* to that offered by the TAC.

2.2 The TAC (or any individual member) may at any point conclude that a specialist intervention is necessary. If a child protection concern is identified, a referral should be made without delay via Crossfield Mill. Other concerns should first be discussed with the professionals line Manager. The guiding document in relation to thresholds: 'Children's Needs and Response Framework' is available at http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_thresholds.html).

Where it is not clear that a referral is required, please consult the threshold guidance, or seek your manager's advice. Being clear about thresholds will avoid unnecessary requests or assessments, saving time and resources in both services. It also avoids subjecting children and families to these processes unnecessarily.

2.3 Consent should be sought from the family prior to a step up request, unless it is not possible to obtain consent and delay would be detrimental, or unless seeking consent would place the child at increased risk of significant harm. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with the Line Manager of the relevant agency. Guidance on information sharing and informed consent can be found at: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0072915/information-sharing

2.4 For all step up requests, complete a Multi-Agency Referral form and send via email with the Common Assessment (CAF), the TAC delivery plan, and record of the last TAC meeting to Childcare.duty@rochdale.gcsx.gov.uk

2.5 *Where the referrer is not the lead professional (i.e. may not be aware of whether there is an active CAF) they should:*

- Be familiar with the threshold criteria for Social Care intervention.
- Be familiar with Rochdale's Safeguarding Procedures.
- Follow Rochdale's Children Social Care referral process
- Follow their agencies' recording policy indicating on their records that referral to Social Care has been made.

2.6 If the service request to Social Care Services is not accepted by the First Response Team as meeting the 'child in need' threshold, the TAC should continue as before, although

a further request should be made if concerns escalate in future. Lead Professional should be informed of the decision.

2.7 If the case is allocated for an Initial Assessment within Social Care Services, a social worker will contact the family and partner agencies already involved with the child. Any service provided by TAC should continue while the Initial Assessment or S47 enquiry is carried out. Communication must take place between the Social Care Team and the TAC Lead Professional to ensure service provision is maintained until the conclusion of the assessment.

2.8 If, following initial assessment, the child is assessed to be 'in need' and Social Care Services provide a service, the allocated social worker will assume the lead professional role and will convene a Child in Need meeting within 7 days or Child Protection Conference as appropriate within 15 days. Those professionals already involved should be invited to these meetings.

2.9 Social Care Services will convene reviews of the CIN Plan every four weeks with the aim to offer support and to reduce the need for Social Care involvement.

3. Accessing CAF/TAC Services as an outcome of an Initial Assessment

3.1 Following an Initial Assessment, the child may not be considered a Child In Need and support from CAF/TAC identified and agreed with the family. The Social Worker (First Response Team) should communicate the decision to the family and establish whether they wish to be supported through a CAF.

3.2 If the family wish to gain support via the CAF process, the agreement letter is to be completed and the CAF information sheet completed and emailed back to the CAF Team: **CAF.Team@Rochdale.gov.uk**

3.3 The CAF Team will contact the referrer and family to establish a CAF if consent has been given. (The CAF is an assessment tool and a voluntary process requiring the willingness/consent of the parent/ carer/ YP to engage. It should not be a conditional factor of closing a case or a recommended course of action to be undertaken by another agency. If the family do not wish to engage with the CAF and do not meet the threshold criteria for statutory intervention then this decision should be respected).

3.4 If the family requests support/further intervention through a CAF/TAC, CAF Team to Identify and agree a LP within the family's professional network of support (if possible) and take the CAF to the next available TAC meeting.

The CAF Team will offer support to the Lead Professional to complete the CAF or update the TAC.

4. Step Down (from Child in Need to CAF/TAC)

4.1 Criteria: Social Care Services should always aim to reduce their involvement as the child's needs become met. If, when a decision has been made that a child is no longer a child 'in need', but an on-going level of support is required *and the family have given explicit and informed consent to the support and to information being shared*, then Social Care Services should seek support from TAC via the 'step down' process.

4.2 Decision to initiate 'step down': The decision to refer for 'Step Down' will be made by the Social Care Service Team Manager, in conjunction with the social worker. This may have been informed by a child 'in need' review meeting. Cases must not be stepped down so that

children's cases can be 'monitored' or in order to make an onward referral to another agency.

4.3 The Lead Social Worker will identify a Lead Professional at the CIN meeting and this professional would complete the CAF and ensure that parental consent has been gained by the social worker using the consent form.

5. Step Down (from CP and Court Team to CIN to CAF)

5.1 **Please note that if a child has a child protection plan then they would step down to Child in Need for a minimum of 3 months before consideration to step down to a CAF.*

5.2 Prior to any agreement to step down from CIN to CAF following CP procedures, the Social Worker and Team Manager need to be clear that any unmet need can be managed under CAF or Universal services. The Social Worker will consult with the child/ family about whether they would like to be supported through the CAF process following the CIN Planning.

5.3 In the event that the family choose to be supported through the CAF process, the social worker will need to consult with the professionals working alongside the family and agree who could take the role of Lead Professional and gain consent for a CAF.

5.4 Social Worker to complete CAF information and email back to the CAF Team:
CAF.Team@Rochdale.gov.uk

5.5 The outcome of the CIN Review/TAC Meeting will be to close the case to Children's Social Care. Social Worker to then follow agency protocols for closing a case.

5.6 If continued CAF support, agencies follow the CAF/TAC process until the family decides they no longer need this support or there are no identified needs that cannot be managed via Universal services

5.7 If the family choose **not** to be supported via the CAF process and there are no other needs noted, Social Worker to record this on ICS and close the case. The identified Lead Professional should hold regular TAC meetings