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SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Step-up / Step-down Protocol for Universal, Targeted and Intensive Early Help and Statutory Services.

STEP UP AND STEP DOWN ARRANGEMENTS

Introduction

This guidance covers a variety of step up and step down processes that deliver Early Help and Statutory Services for children and their families in Swindon.

The 'Step Down' process is intended to maintain children within universal and targeted provision. As much as possible early intervention should be provided in a timely manner, and any 'Step Up' to statutory social care is only agreed when children's needs cannot be met through universal, targeted or intensive support (Early Help).

Early Help provided by Swindon Borough Council is referred to as the Family Intervention and Support Services (FISS) (*Inclusive of Family Service, Youth Engagement, Parenting Hub*).

For the purposes of this guidance FISS is level 3 intensive support (Right Help at the Right time), where support is identified to be required beyond that of universal and targeted Services (*Health Visiting, Schools, Early Years*).

The Early Help Hub is Swindon Borough Council's service for coordinating support for families with Level 3 unmet Early Help needs (*and gateway to SBC commissioned services and other relevant agencies*).

Further information on Early Help provision can be found within the Right Help at the Right Time (RHRT) threshold document:

https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/673/right_help_at_right_time

There is guidance and good practice examples on the Swindon Local Offer for the Early Help Assessment and planning process.

[Swindon Local Offer - Early help assessment \(record\) and plan](#)

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1. Step Up from Early Help (Universal & Targeted) services to MASH on s.47 & s.17

Any **'STEP UP' process requires:** A service request is made to Children's Social Care via the MASH (RF1) for a child currently supported via an Early Help Service.

A child / young person who has been assessed via an Early Help Assessment (EHA) may need a service from a Social Care Team. This could be because the child's needs have changed or escalation of concern.

If there is a s.47 (Child Protection) concern the service must contact MASH by phone, 01793 466903, to make them aware of an urgent referral to MASH Duty manager.

Prior to the completion of an RF1, if the family is open to any Swindon Borough Council Service. The practitioner speaks with their line manager to agree that a RF1 should be submitted.

- If the line manager agrees threshold is met, the line manager will record the decision and rationale on care director.
- The RF1 is completed and sent securely to Swindonmash@swindon.gov.uk. The RF1 should be informed by the Right Help at the Right Time Threshold Guidance.
- For all Step Up requests, the RF1 should be sent with the up-to-date EHA and Team Around the Family (TAF) Plan.
- Consent should be sought by the referring agency from the family prior to a step up request, unless seeking consent would place the child at increased risk of harm. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with a MASH Manager.

2. Step up to ACP from Level 3 Intensive FISS Services s.17

Where children and families are working with SBC FISS services at intensive early help ACP are able to provide consultation by an ACP TM.

Should Level 3 intensive FISS services identify limited change during their intervention, resulting in evident impact of harm on the child/ren a case summary inclusive of family strengths and concerns is to be shared with ACP TMs by **Thursday PM** each week.

TMs will review the case summary and history held on Care Director.

Reflective case discussion will be held at the end of Transfer meeting (recorded transfer tracker) each **Tuesday pm.**

- The case discussion will consider threshold for intervention and whether the case needs to 'Step Up' to ACP for Statutory Assessment or whether further intervention is required via FISS.
- A summary of the discussion will be recorded under Case Notes, Person Record on CD and tracked on the EH Transfer list.

If Step up Agreed

- Family's consent to be sought by relevant FISS service.
- The summary of discussion/threshold for assessment will be emailed into Swindonmash@swindon.gov.uk, who will create the contact then progressed to the duty Assistant Team Manager (ATM) in ACP.
- Any services provided by FISS professionals should continue while the Assessment is being completed.
- If consent is not given Threshold for Child Protection Procedures will be considered.

3. Step Down from ACP to Early Help:

On completion of a Statutory Assessment, if the social worker has assessed a need for Early Help support and intervention,

The Assessment analysis will set out the needs identified and how the identified Early Help service is able to meet that need.

- If planned to step down to **Universal Services** (*Health Visiting, Schools, Early Years*) ACP to Select Assessment Outcome - "TAF Lead Professional Identified / Refer to Other service".
- If planned to step down to the **EHH SBC commissioned services and other relevant agencies** (*refer to EHH for available services*). ACP to select Assessment Outcome - "Refer to EHH Service".
- If planned to step down to **SBC Intensive Early Help** (*Family Service, Youth Engagement, Parenting Hub, Family Group Conference*) ACP to select Assessment Outcome - "Refer to FISS Service"

The social worker should seek agreement from the parents/carers regarding the recommendations made and consent to make the identified Early Help support and to share the statutory assessment.

ACP update the EH transfer list (recorded transfer tracker), by Thursday 4pm each week:

- FISS provide an update on the outcome of the transfer at the EH Transfer meeting, Tuesday 4pm each week. Attended by FISS and ACP TMs.
- ACP will only close when the identified EH worker is named to enable handover discussion and planned attendance at introductory visit or first TAF. If there is a delay waiting for FISS intervention timescales will be discussed and agreed during the EH transfer meeting.
- If it is recommended that the child/ren have an on-going TAF Plan, the ACP Assessing SW will attend the initial meeting and support in building the plan.
- ACP select lead service/professional within the social care closure record.

Where ACP are stepping down to universal or targeted early help they will follow the same procedure as long term teams when stepping down after assessment.

4. Step Down to Universal and Targeted Early Help from Long Term Social Work Teams (FST, DCT, SWIS):

‘STEP DOWN’: A request for service is made to the Early Help agencies for a child currently supported by Children’s Social Care (an open case).

Children’s Social Care should always aim to reduce their involvement as the children / family’s needs reduce. Families, children and young people who would benefit from Step Down/Early Help Support will be identified at the earliest opportunity through consideration within case supervision.

Step Down from Statutory Assessment (FST, DCT, SWIS, ACP)

At the completion of a Statutory Assessment, if the social worker has assessed a need for Early Help level intervention in line with the RHRT guidance;

The assessment will be reviewed and signed off by a manager who includes agreement and rationale for the recommendations made.

The social worker should seek consent from the parents or carers for the recommendation and outline specific agreement for the recommended Early Help services to be referred to.

With consent, the SW will then make relevant referrals to Early Help services and case note this on Care Director. Consent should also be obtained to share a copy of the statutory assessment with the early help professionals and school if appropriate.

In the event that more than one service will be involved, the social worker shall identify a Lead Professional, responsible for co-ordinating the Team Around the Family Plan and ensure that these details are reflected in the social care Closure Record.

It is best practice for the initial TAF Plan details also to be reflected in the social care closure record.

- If planned to step down to **Universal Services** (*Health Visiting, Schools, Early Years*) ACP to Select Assessment Outcome - "TAF Lead Professional Identified / Refer to Other service".
- If planned to step down to the **EHH SBC commissioned services and other relevant agencies** (*refer to EHH for available services*). ACP to select Assessment Outcome - "Refer to EHH Service".

The first TAF review meeting should be convened within 6 weeks of the closure being completed. Minutes of the TAF Meeting should be sent securely to ehhub@swindon.gov.uk

Step Down from Child in Need Plan

Within supervision a decision is reached that the child/family no longer meet the threshold for S17 Child in Need services. The discussion is recorded within the supervision notes.

A final Child in Need Plan Review meeting will be convened; which will also serve as the step down Meeting.

If a role for Early Help intervention to support sustained change is identified, the SW will liaise with the family and obtain consent for any referrals required.

With consent, a copy of the Plan/Review minutes and most recent statutory assessment will be included with the referral.

At the final Child in Need Meeting, the Social Worker, the Early Help practitioner/s (if already involved) and the family will develop a TAF Plan.

The plan should be SMART, have clear goals, actions, timescales and responsibilities. The plan should include a coherent contingency plan, agreed with the family for use should new risks emerge or progress not be sustained.

Within this meeting; a lead professional will be identified and details of the initial TAF review meeting will be confirmed.

If the family are to be supported by a single service no TAF meeting is required but reviews of the EH plan must still be completed and submitted to the EHH (see local offer guidance) ehhub@swindon.gov.uk

The Social Worker will complete the minutes of the meeting within 10 working days of the final CiN review / Step down meeting and share this with the family and Early Help practitioner/s.

In the event that a further review of threshold, a large or complex meeting is anticipated, a manager may support to attend or chair the final meeting.