

# **Children's Services Step Down Practice Guidance**

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This document outlines the practice guidance and process for changing the support we provide to children when their needs reduce. This could mean changing teams within social care or from social care to early help

**Version 1.2**  
**November 2023**

## SCOPE

The purpose of this practice guidance is to support staff when children's needs reduce, and they are considering changing the level of support from:

- a) Child Protection Plan to a Child in Need Plan.
- b) Child in Need Plan to Early Help.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This practice guidance sets out the best approach for the way in which a family should 'step down' from a child protection plan to receiving support through a Child in Need plan or from a Child in Need plan to an early help plan.
- 1.2 These approaches will help ensure that children and their families receive consistent, seamless support, and that professionals' judgements are evidence-based.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 'Step Down' may be considered appropriate if the risks to a child or young person are assessed as having reduced due to the family making positive progress. Before a decision is made to change the level of support provided to a family, the child's allocated social worker must carry out an assessment and the findings of the assessment should be presented to and agreed at the relevant conference/meeting.

## Practice Guidance

The child's allocated social worker should consider:

- Can the positive progress made by the family be sustained once support to the family has been reduced?
- What is the impact on the child?
- What support will be put in place for the child and family once the plan ceases?
- What are the views of the other professionals involved?
- What are the views of the children and young people?
- What are the views of the parents and carers?

### **3.0 Children moving from a Child Protection Plan to a Child in Need Plan**

- 3.1 No children will 'step down' straight from child protection planning to early help.
- 3.2 All children who no longer need a child protection plan must be supported under a Child in Need (CIN) plan for a minimum of 3 months before being supported by early help services, or involvement ending.
- 3.3 Children moving from child protection to CIN support should have had an assessment completed within the last 6 months.

### **4.0 Children moving from a Child in Need plan to early help**

- 4.1 The provision of early help enables children and families to continue to receive coordinated support once they are no longer in need of support from Children's Social Care.
- 4.2 The decision to change the level of support provided to children will be made by the social care team manager, in conjunction with the social worker. Children must not be transferred to early help services merely so that they can be 'monitored'. They must have an identified need or needs that continue to require support through an early help response.
- 4.3 The social worker must ensure that parents or carers have given their informed consent to receive early help support. Consent information should be shared with early help services prior to them commencing involvement. The social worker should also obtain the consent of young people where appropriate for their age and level of understanding.

### **5.0 Process for moving a child from a Child in Need Plan to Early help**

- 5.1 Children stepping down from Child in Need to early help planning must have had their needs assessed within the last 6 months.
- 5.2 When the plan is to move a child or young person to early help from an existing Child in Need plan, the team manager should email the consultant social worker in the relevant Hub with the children's ID number/s, advise them of the transfer request and inform them of the date of the final CIN meeting. The consultant social worker will review the information and confirm within 24 hours whether they will be able to

provide support for the child. They will identify an appropriate Lead Professional from within the Hub staff who will attend the final CIN Meeting. This is to ensure that the identified Lead Professional understands the reasons why continued support is required. It also provides an opportunity for the Lead Professional to meet the family and other professionals who are involved in supporting them and confirm that the family consents to the early help intervention.

## 6.0 Recording on Liquid Logic System

6.1 Before the child transfers to a different level of support, the manager of the team who are currently supporting the family, must ensure that all key information has been updated on the Liquid Logic case management system. This includes the name of the identified Lead Professional and the relevant Hub. The process requires completion of the *Step Down to Early Help* form, with an up-to-date plan and the single assessment (with consent) attached.

## 7.0 'Step down' process from single assessment to early help

7.1 Where a single assessment recommends that a child's needs can be met through early help, the team manager, will arrange a Teams call with the relevant Hub Consultant Social Worker (CSW). The Hub CSW must review the information about the child's circumstances and facilitate this call within one working day. When it is agreed to provide early help services to the child, the Hub CSW will identify a Lead Professional from within the Hub staff and on receipt of the step-down request form, a worker will be allocated to support the child and family within one working day.

## 8.0 Recording on Liquid Logic System

8.1 Once the Lead Professional has been identified from within the Hub, the team manager must ensure that all key information has been completed in the *Step Down* form. This includes the name of the identified Lead Professional and the relevant Hub. The step-down process requires completion of the *Step Down to Early Help* form, with an up-to-date plan and the single assessment (with consent) attached.

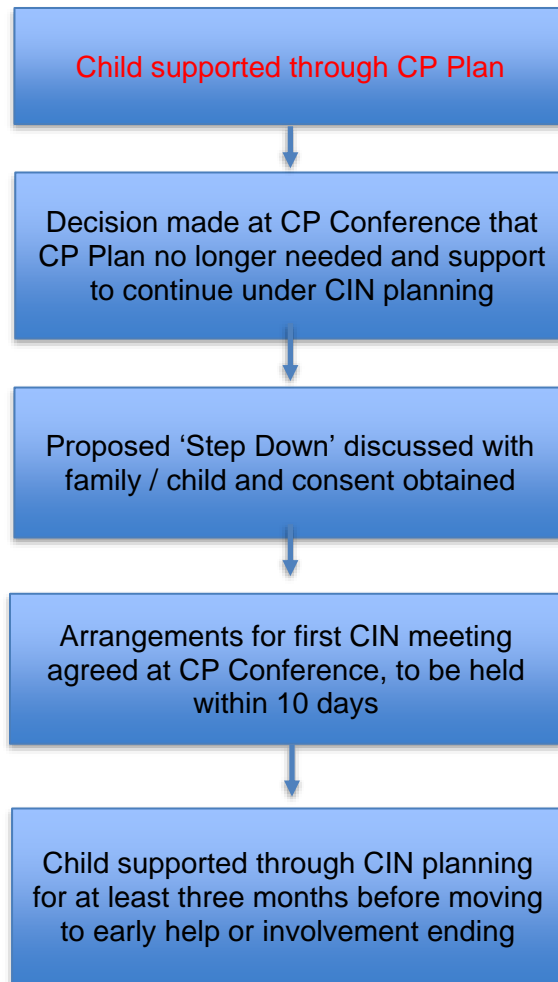
## 9.0 Escalation

- 9.1 Where there is a difference of opinion relating to a 'step down', the situation will be escalated to the Head of Service for early help and the relevant Head of Service for social care. It is likely that the pathway for most children will be resolved at this point, however if this is not the case, the matter can be escalated to the Director for Early Help and the Director of Social Care. The child's circumstances should be reviewed, and a decision made within 24 hours.

## Step down from a Child Protection Plan to Child in Need Plan

### Process Map

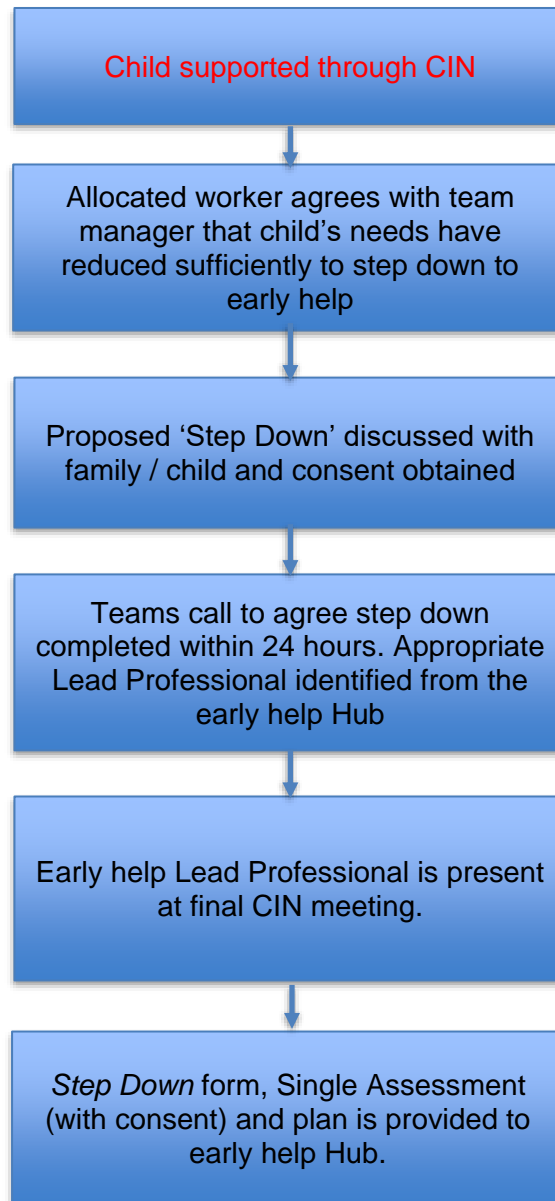
#### Operational Process



## Step down from a CIN Plan to early help

### Process Map

#### Operational Process



## Step down from a Single Assessment to early help

### Process Map

#### Operational Process

