

## Rochdale Children's Services: Transfer, Step Up and Step Down Procedure

### Introduction

The process of case transfer, including step up and step down is an important function in a child and their family's journey through Children's Services. **The aim of case transfer and step up and step down is to ensure that children and families receive consistent, seamless support, from the right range of professionals, at the right time.** Therefore, the use of the threshold and levels of need are key indicators in decision making, therefore, this procedure must be read in conjunction with the [Rochdale Borough Children's Needs and Response Framework](#)

This procedure is relevant to children who have varying levels of need and should be applied by all agencies who provide support to families across the continuum of need, whether universal, early help or social work involvement are required. This procedure recognises that children and families can move up and down the continuum of need and services must work together to ensure continuity of service delivery and good practice that improves the lived experience of children and families.

### Purpose

The purpose of the procedure to ensure that that children and families receive continuous needs based support, at the right level of intervention, delivered by the appropriate service. Therefore, the **aim is to provide clear guidance to services, managers and practitioners to manage case transfer, step up and step down effectively.** The principles and checklist applies to;

- Universal Services
- Early Help and Partners, including Health and Education.
- Duty and Assessment Service
- Complex Safeguarding Service
- Family Support and Protection Service
- Children with Disability Service
- Youth Justice Service
- Cared for Children Services

### Definition of Transfer

Transfer describes the process of **transferring a case to another service area**, where they would be able to provide the appropriate service to meet the child and family's needs. The majority of transfers will be from the Duty and Assessment team, as they complete the initial assessment and transfer to the appropriate service.

### Definition of Step Down

Step down is the process that occurs when the level of need has moved down the continuum of need, as the **child's and family's identified needs have reduced** or are being met by the support plan in place to meet these. The assessment of level of need when a case is being considered for step down and the processes followed are essential to prevent the re escalation of need.

An example of step down from an Early Help episode may involve circumstances where a team around the family plan has been in place (TAF) and **when all aspects of the plan has been achieved**. In such circumstances it may be concluded that support can be offered by universal services at level 1 or by additional support from a single agency, but without the need for an Early Help episode.

Stepdown can also occur within statutory frameworks. An example of this is when a **child and their family's needs have been met under sec 47 by a Child Protection** Plan and risk has diminished as the child and family have made positive progress. In this situation the Child Protection Review would conclude that the case can Step Down. In such circumstances the case would continue be managed by a Social Worker in the Family Support and Protection Team under sec 17 CIN plan.

This procedure support and guides professionals to step down effectively. Where there is no clear handover to a lead professional, the Social Workers will be able to attend the **Early Help Panel for support to Step Down to Early Help services**.

### Definition of Step Up

Step Up is the process that occurs when the levels of need escalates and moved up the continuum of needs, as the **needs have increased and/or there is concern about harm**. This may be required at an Early Help or Children's Social Care level and will be demonstrated in an increase on the continuum of need.

An example being when it is identified that a **child in receipt of Universal Services is not having all their needs met and additional support is required**. In such circumstances the professional identifying this need will consider the Levels of Need document, if the needs can be met by additional Early Help support they will use the step-up process and trigger an Early Help episode to complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA). In this situation the child's needs have stepped up from Level 1 to Level 2 on the continuum of need.

The pace at which a case steps up is determined by the child's needs and where these fall on the continuum of need. **It is possible in circumstances where a safeguarding concern is identified that the child's level of need will step up directly from Level 1 to Level 4 of continuum of need.**

## Practice Principles

**“The child's wellbeing and safety are paramount and safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children is everyone's responsibility. The focus of our attention must always be the needs of the child, and who is best placed to support them”.**

### Consent:

Before considering a transfer to other services, it is **important that children families are part of the decision making and have provided consent to share information**, with the exception in which doing so would place a child at risk. It is also important to ensure that other professionals involved with the family are aware of a transfer to another service and views are also considered as part of the decision making, to support the multi-agency team transition to a new lead professional where necessary.

### Multi-Agency Decision Making and Thresholds

Multi-Agency decision making in relation to case transfer, step up and down must make reference to the level of need and threshold document to support evidencing the level of need required to meet the needs of children and families. It is important we get this right, to reduce unnecessary transfer of children and families in and out of different services.

### Practitioner Practice Standards

The following practice and recording requirements are **non-negotiable and must** be met by the by the lead practitioner during transfer, to ensure the receiving service has the information required to support the child/family. There is also an expectation for these to be met during step and step down processes, where applicable. The guidance should be read in conjunction with Rochdale's specific [Practice Standards](#).

- Assessment; completion and updated as a minimum once every 6 months for CP and CIN 12 months for Cared for Children, or in cases where there is a significant event, for example a child becomes Cared For by the Local Authority.
- Relevant Service Plan (i.e., Child in Need, Child Protection, Team around the Family, Cared For Child Plan and Pathway Plan)
- Chronology
- Last visit recording
- Case Summary
- TAF/CIN or core group meeting minutes.
- Up to date supervision (case management oversight/supervision).
- Up to date Genogram

**Good practice** would also include the following, and will form part of the audit.

- Where possible, attempts must be made to undertake a joint visit to facilitate the introduction of the new practitioner to the child and family and to support the ending of the relationship with the existing practitioner.

## Decision Making and Managerial Oversight

### Managerial Oversight and Decision Making

Prior to transfer the Practice Manager will undertake an audit to ensure case readiness, following which the transfer form on Liquid Logic/forms must be completed by the social worker or lead professional. Decisions for transfer and allocations should be undertaken within a timely manner and should be not delayed unnecessarily. Where there are weekly transfer meetings in place, they will be used to support transfer, otherwise, there will be a Practice Manager to Practice Manager conversation arranged to agree transfer. To ensure children are transferred in a way that ensures continuity and holding during the transition period, clear communication (ideally face to face or virtually) between Practice Managers is critical.

**If the receiving Practice Manager identifies non-negotiable practice standards during the transfer process, this will prevent transfer.** The Practice Manager will ensure identified practice standards are recording requirements are completed within 3 working days. If the actions aren't completed following the 3 working days, this will be escalated to the Head of Service.

Where the referral is from Universal or services out of the Local Authority **OR** step down into Early Help or Universal services, Social Workers or Practice Managers will communicate with lead professionals. **The capacity of the receiving service will not prevent or delay transfer.**

### Process: Step Up from Universal to Early Help services

In the first instance if needs are unmet this should be discussed with parent/s/carer/s and if age appropriate, the child. **Consent must be obtained from the parent/s** when undertaking this conversation to discuss at to begin an Early Help Episode or make a referral to the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH). Any referral to the EHASH needs to include all the children in the family, as both an Early Help Assessment or a Children and Family Social Work Assessment are holistic family assessments. Referrals to EHASH can be made via email [ehash@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:ehash@rochdale.gov.uk)

A recommendation of an Early Help Assessment (EHA) may be recommended by the Early Help Hub and either the Early Help Engagement Team (EHET) will commence the assessment, or if appropriate an Early Help lead professional in the wider partnership. The EHET will start some EHA where a timely response is required to prevent the family's needs escalating in. When discussions with parent/s are undertaken it needs to be clearly explained what an EHA is, what it will involve, and consent needs to be obtained.

- Parent/s need to be aware that during the EHA a professional will need to speak to the child, other than in circumstances where this would not be age appropriate.
- Parents need to be informed about what they are consenting to, and they should be aware that an EHA will involve gathering information from other professionals.
- Parent/s need to be aware that should safeguarding concerns arise during an EHA this information may need to be shared with social care.

Professionals from other agencies will be asked to contribute to the EHA and the lead professional may delegate information requests. It is expected that these will be completed in a timely fashion. **The Early Help Assessment must be completed in 4 weeks.**

### Transfer Point: Step Up to Early Help Service

**Transfer Early Help and Engagement Team to Early Help Professional:** The EHET team will work with the child/family for 4 weeks following a contact being created in EHASH. During this time start the Early Help Assessment before arranging a TAF meeting to transfer to an identified lead professional.

**Transfer from EHASH contact to Early Help lead professional:** Where appropriate, EHASH social workers, will liaise with a proposed lead professional in the Early Help services to complete an Early Help Assessment. Where a lead professional cannot be identified, the neighbourhood team will support.

### Process: Step Up Children's Social Care and Care Proceedings

**The route which a case can be stepped up to social care is via a referral to EHASH.** Prior to making a referral to EHASH best practice would be to complete an EHA to ensure support is provided at the earliest opportunity and to prevent the family's needs escalating.

Referrals to EHASH can be made via email [ehash@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:ehash@rochdale.gov.uk) professionals and they should use this method of referral unless a safeguarding concern is requiring an urgent response. In this case a referral will still be required however a telephone call to **EHASH on 0300 303 0440 should be made as soon as the urgent safeguarding concern is identified.**

Referrals can be made to the EHASH by parents, members of the public or any professionals where there are concerns about a child. Concerns should be discussed with the parent and consent obtained prior to making a referral to social care. Only in cases where this poses a risk to the child should this not be the case.

When completing a referral, the professionals will be asked to select a level of need. This informs how this case will be prioritised. Following the receipt of the referral, a decision will be made By an EHASH Practice Manager, Advanced Practitioner on the level of need and whether this will be triaged by an Early Help worker or Social Worker in EHASH. Following which a **decision will be made by the EHASH Practice Manager within 24 hours** as to what is the level of need and appropriate response, this may include a social work led child and family assessment, early assessment or single agency response.

Where partners are in disagreement in regards to decision making about threshold, please refer to the escalation policy in Rochdale Borough Children's Needs and Response Framework

#### Step up from Universal/Early Help to Sec 17: Child In Need

Following the step up to statutory social care processes a child will be in receipt of "Child in Need" support delivered under sec 17 Children Act 1989 unless during the EHASH or Duty and Assessment enquiries immediate Child Protection concerns have arisen which would warrant section 47 enquiries. The first process in the delivery of sec 17 services is the undertaking of a Children and Family Assessment by a Duty and Assessment Social Worker which assesses the level of need and informs the support plan. The Child in Need Plan must be completed by day 15.

### Step up to Sec 47 Child Protection

Step up to Child Protection Procedures Sec 47 of the Children Act 1989 can occur at any point if;

**“There is reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives in or is found in, a local authority area is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm in the form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, or neglect”.**

Any referral received by the EHASH which either immediately or during the process of triage identifies a section 47 concern this will be allocated to the Duty and Assessment team to convince a multi-agency strategy discussion. **The Multi-Agency Strategy meeting will take place within 24 hours to establish risk of harm and whether the threshold for section 47 enquiries have been met.** Section 47 enquiries must be completed by day 5 and the **Initial Child Protection Conference will be convened and take place in 15 working days of the strategy discussion taking place.**

The Initial Child Protection Conference will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer and a multi-agency decision will be made, as to **whether the child/ children should be made the subject of the Child Protection Plan.**

### Step Up to Public Law Outline and Care Proceedings

In cases where the Legal Gateway threshold has been met, pre-proceedings are initiated and parents and those with PR should be notified in writing. The letter will include an invitation to a **PLO Pre-proceedings Meeting and the Pre-Proceedings Meeting should be held within maximum three weeks of the LPM.** Where threshold has been met to initiate care proceedings, papers will be completed for court within 2 weeks, the parents will be served papers by the court within 2 weeks of submitting.

### Transfer: Across Children’s Social Care and ‘Transfer in’ from Other Local Authorities/Partners

**Transfer from Duty and Assessment to Family Support and Protection:** Upon completion of the Child and Family Assessment, the case will transfer to the Family Support and Protection service area via the transfer meetings and the allocated social worker will attend either the initial Child in Need meeting or the Initial Child Protection Conference as part of the transfer process.

**Transfer from Children’s Social Care Teams to Specialist Social Work Teams:** Where there is a child with a disability or complex health needs the Practice Manager from the Duty and Assessment, Family Support or Protection or the Cared for Children team will discuss with the Child with Disabilities Practice Manager to confirm they meet the criteria for the team. Where there is a sibling group and one child has a disability or complex health needs agreement will be sought about whether the case will be jointly managed. This also applies where there are concerns and/or evidence of extra familial harm, the Practice Manager from the Duty and Assessment Team will discuss with the Practice Manager of the Complex Safeguarding Team to confirm that they meet the criteria for co allocation with Family Support and Protection team. However, in some cases the social worker from the Children with Disability or Complex Safeguarding service will be the lead practitioner.

**Transfer in, Across Local Authority Boundaries child subject to Child in Need:** Notification of a Child in Need having moved/intending to move should be brought immediately to the attention of the receiving Local Authority Front Door, EHASH in Rochdale. Usually this information will be transferred by using the referral form, the Practice Manager in EHASH will liaise with the team manager in the referring Local Authority to gather information to inform decision making. *Please see NW Procedure for more info.*

**Transfer in, across Local Authority Boundaries Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan:** The EHASH Team should load the contact and then share this with the Safeguarding Unit and the Family Support and Protection team who will respond to the request for a transfer-in conference. The 15 working day timescale for convening the transfer- in conference will commence upon receipt of the information. (See NW procedure for more details, link at the bottom of this procedure).

**Transfer in, across Local Authority Boundaries Pre- Care Proceedings** Notification of a child subject to PLO, pre- care or care proceedings having moved/intending to move should be brought immediately to the attention of the receiving Local Authority Front Door, or EHASH in Rochdale. The receiving LA should be invited to the legal meeting, where it is clear that steps have been taken by the family to become ordinarily resident in the receiving LA area. Legal advice should be sought about ordinary residence and ongoing proceedings.

**Transfer In, Request for Section 7, or Section 37** In cases where the court request a section 37 or CAFCASS request a section 7 be completed, the EHASH Practice Manager there will be a conversation between the Practice Manager in the Duty and Assessment and Family Support and Protection will take place, and a decision will be made on a case by case basis, with a focus on drawing on existing relationships within the services.

### Step Up: Cared for Children

The level of need for a child to become care for by the Local Authority where parental responsibility is shared for a child (sec 20 and sec 31 Children Act) requires the Local Authority to meet threshold criteria that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm attributable to the care being given to the child, or likely to be given if an Order were not made.

**Any decision for a child to become cared for requires that the granting of an order by the court** or for an interim period the agreement of the parent under Sec 20 of the Children Act 1989.



### Transfer: Cared for Children

**Duty and Assessment to Cared For Children Team** Where Duty and Assessment have identified through the assessment and permanence plan a transfer meeting will be arranged between the Practice Managers. A care planning meeting will be arranged which the Cared For Children Practice social worker will attend and the case will transfer.

**Family Support and Protection Team to Cared for Child and Post Order and Permanence Team:** On conclusion of care proceedings where the permanence plan is endorsed the Family Support and Protection Practice Manager will arrange a transfer meeting with the Cared for Children Practice Manager. A care planning meeting and/or Cared for Child review will take place, with the Cared for Child social worker will attend and the case will transfer

**Children's Social Care Teams to Step Ahead Service** Cared for children under s.20 arrangements or full care orders are allocated a personal advisor following their 16th birthday. The personal advisor will work alongside the allocated social worker until the child turns 18 at which point they will transfer to the Step Ahead Service.

**Transfer in, across Local Authority Boundaries:** Where a Child Looked After moves into Rochdale Local Authority, the EHAH team will liaise with the Team Manager from the transferring Local Authority following receipt of the notification form. **Rochdale Children's Services will be responsible for any Section 47 enquiries where children are found or reside in the Rochdale Local Authority.** (See NWADCS procedure for more detail).

### Process: Step Down

When children and families have received a statutory intervention, and the family have progressed positively, it is important that the progress made is sustained and that children and families do not feel that they are being passed from 'service to service.'

The Step Down process enables relevant professionals from Children's Social care and a range of other services to support the intervention plan for a child appropriately whether the step down is within the arena of early help or social care. Ensuring that an appropriate support plan is in place following the de-escalation of need is essential, to prevent the situation deteriorating following stepdown and a child's need ceasing to be met.



### Process: Step down from Care Order or Interim Care Order

Decisions to step down from an Interim Care order or Care Order granted by a court can only be discharged with the agreement of the court 5.1.1 Decision to Look After and Care Planning. Prior to any application to court to discharge a care order the Local Authorities care plan for the child must have been considered at the child's statutory review and endorsed as the appropriate care plan for the child.

A cared for child under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 is a voluntary arrangement between the parent/s or legal guardian for a child. 5.1.1 Decision to Look After and Care Planning. A parent can withdraw agreement for a child to be cared for at any time in which event the case will be stepped down their previous legal status or the Local Authority will need to make an application for a care order to the Court. The Local Authority can discharge Section 20 at any point that it is not required, and the threshold is no longer met. Where a child is over 16 the decision to end a section 20 arrangement must be endorsed by the Assistant Director.

The Local Authority's plan following the discharge of any order will be dependent on the level of need. **The step-down plan following the discharge of care proceedings will be informed by the discharge plan directed by the Court and the relevant procedures will be followed to implement any of these processes, i.e. CP/CIN or TAF.**

### Process: Step down from Child Protection Plan

A Child Protection Plan is subject to ongoing review via Core Group Meeting and Child Protection Conference reviews. At each review, the conference members will assess the child/children's level of need and decide whether these continue to require a Child Protection Plan.

If the level of need has reduced the Conference will recommend that the Child Protection Plan is discharged. The allocated social worker from the Family Support and Protection team will remain leading, via the Child in Need plan and a date for the **Child in Need meeting will be arranged during the Child Protection Review and will take place within 4 weeks of the Child Protection Plan being discharged.** The Conference Chair will ensure that minutes of the final Child Protection Conference are distributed to the parents and other professional.

#### Process: Step down from Child in Need Plan to Early Help

A decision that the level of need has reduced and no longer requires a Child in Need plan led by Social Worker will be made by the Social Worker in conjunction with other professionals and parents who are part of the Multi Agency Child In Need team. A case cannot be stepped down to a Child in Need plan led by Early Help / universal services without the consent of the parents being given. The Child in Need meeting and a Stepdown TAF meeting would be convened. During this meeting, a lead professional will be identified who will be responsible for the future Early Help Assessment and Plan. The Social Worker will complete the minutes of the step down meeting and a step-down plan will be agreed. This plan should include what actions should take place should professionals or parent/s or carer/s should concerns appear to be re escalating. The lead professional provides minutes of the meeting and a copy of the plan to the parents and all parties who attend the meeting, who do not have access to Liquid Logic. The Social Worker will complete a closure summary.

In cases where further support is needed to ensure a robust transition to Early Help services, for example the Social Worker, is unable to identify a lead professional, they may refer the case to the **Early Help Panel**. The assessment should be completed within 30 working days of the step down and the TAC/TAF plan reviewed and recorded within the early help episode on Liquid Logic.

#### Process: Step down from Children's Social Care to Universal Services

Any assessment that the level of need has reduced and no longer requires a CIN plan, and these can be met by Universal Services will be made by the Social Worker in conjunction with other professionals and parents who are part of the multi-agency CIN team. Should the multi-agency CIN team and the parents agree that the level of needs of the child would be best met by universal Services this decision will be made at a CIN meeting. During the final CIN meeting it needs to be discussed whether the child/children would benefit from any additional single agency or whether the support already in place from individual services should continue following the closure of the case.

A plan should be agreed of what will happen in the future if professional or the parent/s or carer/s believe that the Level of Need has increased so that supports can be put in place quickly to prevent the concerns escalating. The Lead professional provide minutes of the meeting to the parents and all parties.

### Process: Step down from Early Help Services to Universal Services

The assessment that the level of need has reduced and no longer requires a TAF plan will be made by the multi-agency Team Around the Family in conjunction with the parent/s of the child/children.

If this plan is agreed a Stepdown TAF meeting will be convened. The stepdown TAF meeting should consider the ongoing support needs of the child and whether additional single agency support or supports which form part of the TAF plan should continue to be offered to the child and their family after the Early help Episode is closed. The Lead professional provide minutes of the meeting to the parents and all parties, who do not have access to Liquid Logic.

### Transfer: Across Local Authority Boundaries

There are North West regional procedures in relation to the transfer of;

- North West Children in Need Moving across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure
- North West Notification and Transfer of Children Subject of Child Protection Plans across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure
- North West Pre- Care and Care Proceedings Notification and Transfer across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure
- North West Safeguarding Children and Young People Placed across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure.

The procedures can be found on the NWADCS website under Key Resources:

<https://www.nwadcs.org.uk/>

### Contact Details

Name

Email:

### Review Date