

SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Step-up / Step-down Process Guidance for Early Intervention and Statutory Children's Social Care

October 2025

STEP-UP AND STEP-DOWN PROCESSES

Introduction

This guidance covers the step-up and step-down processes, which are the routes to refer children in and out of children's social care. Transfers of children between social work teams will be covered in the Children's Transfer Protocol.

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 early intervention services, which are delivered through the three locality areas in Swindon, North, South and West. The diagram on Page 3 shows the routes that may be taken for children and families who do not need a social care response, but are referred into the integrated front door, Contact Swindon.

The 'Step-Down' process is intended to support children within either early intervention services, or universal services.

For the purposes of this guidance 'early intervention' is where support is identified to be required beyond that of targeted or universal services

Further information on early intervention provision can be found within the Right Help at the Right Time (RHRT) threshold document, which can be found on the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership website here [The Right Help at Right Time Guidance - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#)

Step-Up from Early Intervention (Intensive, Targeted and Universal) Services to Children's Social Care via Children and Families, Contact Swindon

To step up a child

A request is made to Children and Families, Contact Swindon.

Children and Families, Contact Swindon will provide a single point of access to help and support for children, or to report safeguarding concerns.

A child / young person who has been supported via a service in the community may need a service from a social care team. This could be because the child's needs have changed or there is an escalation of concern, and the child is in need of support and protection at (S17) child in need, or (S47) child protection levels.

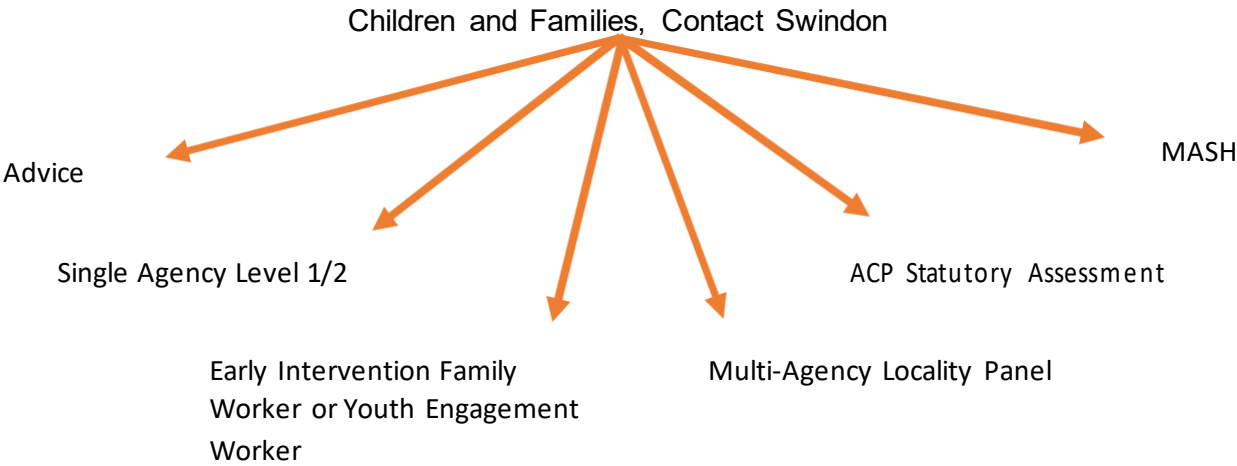
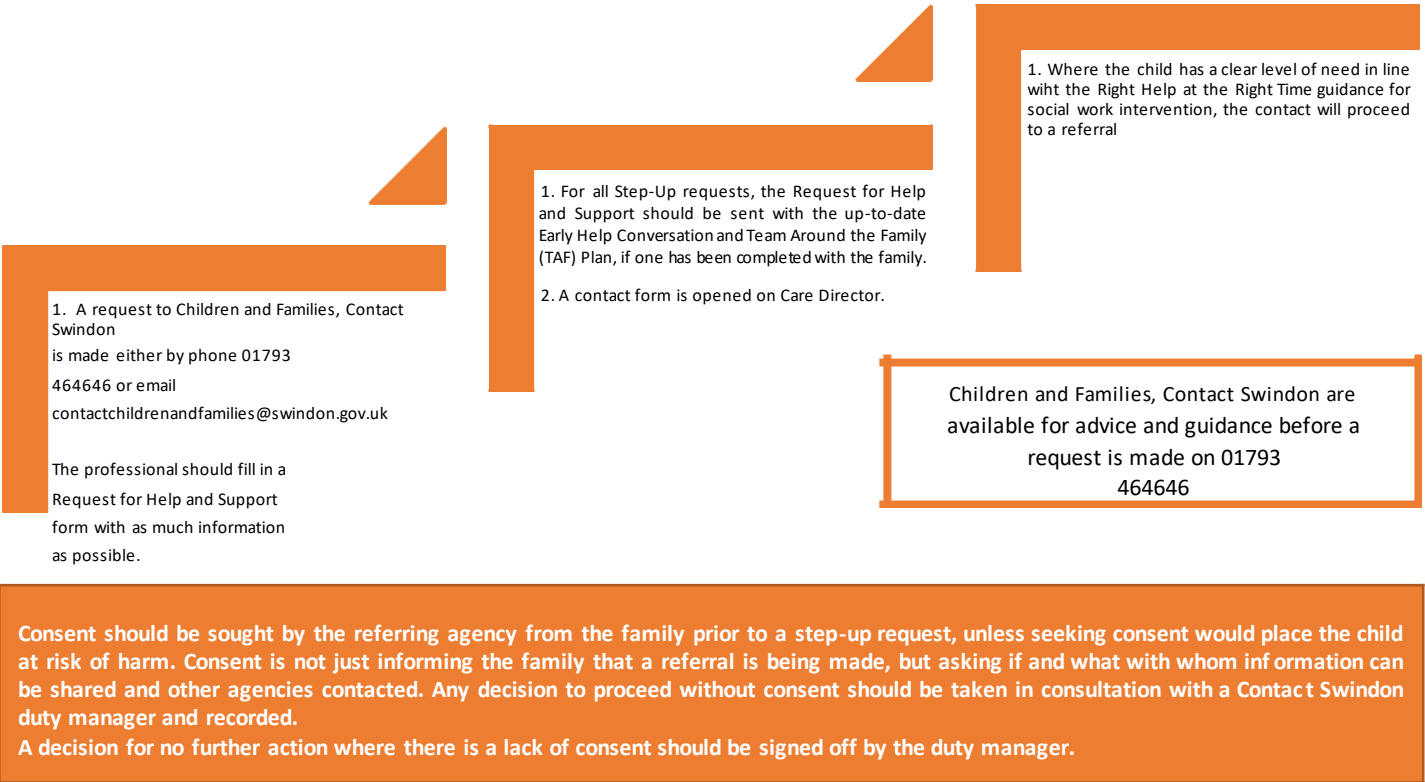
Where it is concluded that the child should be the subject of a statutory assessment, any services provided by Early Intervention where a positive engagement has been established, should continue while the assessment is being completed.

The worker who knows the child/family should make the request to Children and Families, Contact Swindon either by phone 01793 464646 or email contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk

- The professional should fill in a Request for Help and Support form with as much information as possible.
- Contact Swindon are available for advice and guidance before a request is made on 01793 464646
- The Request for Help and Support is completed and sent securely to contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk

- The Request for Help and Support should be informed by the Right Help at the Right Time Threshold Guidance.
- For all Step-Up requests, the Request for Help and Support should be sent with the up-to-date Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family (TAF) Plan, if one has been completed with the family.
- A contact form is opened on Care Director
- Where there is a clear rationale for social work intervention, the contact will proceed to a referral
- 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 risk of harm. Consent is not just informing the family that a referral is being made, but asking if and what with whom information can be shared and other agencies contacted. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with a Children and Families, Contact Swindon duty manager and recorded.
- A decision for no further action where there is a lack of consent should be signed off by the duty manager.

Step Up to Social Care Flow Chart



Step Down from Social Care to Early Intervention

Children’s social care teams should always aim to reduce their involvement as the child / family’s needs are met or reduce through the completion of actions in their plan. Children, young people and their families who would benefit from Step-Down / Early Intervention support will be identified by their social worker at the earliest opportunity, with agreement from their line manager.

On completion of a statutory assessment / or Child in Need (CIN) Review, if the social worker has assessed a need for early intervention support, the assessment analysis or minutes of the review meeting and plan should set out the needs identified. The CIN review meeting should be chaired by the line manager to establish that this is the right path to progress, in partnership with the parents/carers and other involved agencies.

Social work teams (Assessment and Child Protection/Family Safeguarding/Disabled Children’s Team) can step down to Early Intervention using the weekly transfer meeting.

Social workers will need to complete the transfer spreadsheet: All the headings on the spreadsheet should be completed. This document is on SharePoint and should be updated two days prior to the transfer meeting.

Managers will attend the transfer meeting, to discuss the step down. The decision will be made at this meeting that this is the right course of action for the child

A handover between the social worker and the early intervention service (family worker or youth engagement worker) should take place, after seeking consent from the family. Good practice would be a joint visit to the family.

The social worker will ask the parents to consent to make a referral to the early intervention locality panel and to share the analysis of need and recommendations from the Statutory Assessment or Child in Need Plan.

The Early Intervention Family Coordinators will look at the transfer spreadsheet following the transfer meeting and if the plan is for panel, decide which early intervention locality panel the child/family needs to go to, and add their name to the panel agenda for the next panel meeting.

The social worker will attend the locality panel to detail the needs of the child/family, and the panel members will decide which other services should be supporting the child.

Once the child has been to the transfer meeting and the locality panel if required the closure record on Care Director should be filled in.

Step Down to Early Intervention Flow Chart



Appendix 1

The following outcomes will be selected within the Closure Record. This will be signed off by a manager.

If a child/family is closing to Family Safeguarding or the CIN team, the following reasons will be selected within the Closure Record. This will be signed off by a manager.

Please see Appendix 1 for full details.

- If planned to step-down to Universal Services (Schools, Early Years, College), Social Care to Select 'Reason for Closure of Case' as "Stepped down to Early Years/ School/ Further Education (please select school type in 'Lead Service/ Professional' below)" Once this is selected the 'Lead Service/ Professional' box will appear.
In here please select the type of school being stepped down to (college, pre-school/ nursery, primary school, secondary school, special school). A further box will then appear for you to select the specific school.
- If planned to step-down to Early Intervention, Youth and Community Services - Social Worker to select 'Reason for Closure of Case' as "Stepped down to SBC Early Help (please select service in Lead Service/ Professional below)". Once this is selected the 'Lead Service/ Professional' box will appear. In here please select the SBC service you are referring to.
- Social workers can use the step down to refer to a programme or alongside their intervention as appropriate – it is important to identify what service support they are stepping down to.

If a child is stepping down after a statutory assessment, the following recommendations will be selected within the Statutory Assessment. This will be signed off by a manager.

- If planned to step-down to Universal / Targeted Services (Health Visiting, Schools, Early Years, etc.), Social Care to Select 'Practitioner's recommended decision based on analysis' as "Stepped down to Early Years/ School/ Further Education (please select school type in 'Lead Service/ Professional' below)" Once this is selected the 'Lead Service/ Professional' box will appear. In here please select the type of school being stepped down to (college, pre-school/ nursery, primary school, secondary school, special school). A further box will then appear for you to select the specific school.
- If planned to step-down to the Early Intervention, Youth and Community Services (Family Service, Youth Engagement,) Social Worker to select 'Practitioner's recommended decision based on analysis' as "Stepped down to SBC Early Help (please select service in Lead Service/ Professional below)". Once this is selected the 'Lead Service/ Professional' box will appear. In here please select the SBC service you are referring to.