

SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Step-Up / Step-Down Process Guidance for Early Intervention and Statutory Children's Social Care
February 2026

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 service should be provided in a timely manner and any 'Step Up' to 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, Children and Families 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 service.

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 \(trix please link to: https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/673/right_help_at_right_time\)](https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/673/right_help_at_right_time)

Step Up From Early Intervention to Childrens Social Care.

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 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 needs support and protection at (S17) child in need, or (S47) child protection levels.

Where it is concluded that the child should be supported with a statutory assessment, any services provided by Early Intervention where a positive engagement has been established, should continue while the Social Work Assessment is being completed

The Lead Practitioner should request advice and guidance to inform the decision to make a Social Work service request with Children and Families, Contact Swindon's Duty Worker either by telephone 01793 464646 or Email contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk.

A Contact Form is then opened on Liquidlogic and where there is a clear rationale for social work intervention, the contact will proceed to a Referral. Duty Manager decision will be recorded through referral endorsement.

Consent should be sought from the family prior to a Social Care 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 consent for information to be shared with other agencies involved. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with a Children and Families, Contact Swindon Duty Manager and recorded.

Step Down from Social Care to Early Intervention

Children's Social Care teams should take the least interventionalist approach, therefore children and their families who would benefit from Early Intervention support will be identified by their Social Worker at the earliest opportunity.

On completion of a Social Work Assessment or Child in Need (CIN) Review, the Social Worker and wider partnership will decide if risk and need determines ongoing Social Work involvement or if Early Intervention support can be accessed with the consent of the family.

Step Down to Early Intervention is planned through the weekly Transfer Meeting, and at point of discussion we will have family consent in place and all Social Work records on Liquidlogic complete to aid transfer.

When stepping down to Early Intervention the Social Work closure record will detail 'Step Down to SBC Early Help'.

A handover between the Social Worker and the Early Intervention service should take place with the family reflecting the discussion held at case transfer meeting (family strengths, risk and need, help and outcomes achieved through Social Care and a proposed plan of support from Early Intervention). This handover is to take place within ten calendar days of the date of case transfer.

When a child transfers to Early Intervention the child is swiftly allocated to the Lead Practitioner to ensure seamless support for children and offer continuity of help and protection.