

**Warrington Borough Council**

# Case Transfer Policy

This procedure explains the processes relating to case transfer within Children's Social Care, or for stepping down to Early Help or transition to Adult Services

Approved by CMT May 2019 (reviewed and approved May 2021)

## **TRANSFER OF CASES WITHIN WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **1. Introduction**

All teams within Warrington Borough Council's Children's Social Care have the overall aim of providing quality services for children and young people that meet their assessed needs in a timely way. The focus of our work, and guiding principle regarding case allocation is based on the promotion of a consistent relationship between the allocated Social Workers, or family support worker and the child/family/carer. However it is recognised that different teams perform different functions within the practice system and it is important to understand the criteria of the teams in order to effectively manage the movement of work between them, where this is unavoidable and/or necessary.

### **2. Transfer of cases across teams**

#### **2.1 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub**

Social Workers in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will:

- Screen initial contacts and progress those that meet the threshold for Early Help to our Early Help Service for assessment or to Children's Social Care referral if appropriate
- If MASH screening concludes that the case does not require a Social Work response then they will refer to the Early Help Manager who is co-located in MASH who will then determine if an Early Help response is appropriate, e.g. allocation to Family Outreach, Youth Service and Children's Centre, etc. This will then be sent to the localities to be allocated to an Early Help Worker.
- Where a case already has an allocated Social Worker a contact will not be recorded, but a case note will be added to MOSAIC and alerted to the Social Worker and their Team Manager. The Social Worker in MASH is responsible for ensuring this information is picked up by the relevant Social Worker and they are expected to ring them to pass the information over
- If the case has been closed to Children's Social Care within the previous six months, the referral will be transferred to the Social Worker having previous responsibility for the case for allocation for assessment. This includes Section 47 enquiries.
- If a referral is received on a new child in a family where there is already social work involvement, e.g. a new child is born to the family or a new child joins the family, the referral will be transferred to the same Social Worker unless there are exceptional circumstances or there is significant difference with their plans. In such cases this will be agreed between the Team Managers.

- For new cases, where MASH screening indicates the case requires a Social Work assessment a referral will be generated and the child will be allocated to a Social Worker within 24 hours from one of our 6 Child in Need teams, Children with Disability Team or in cases of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (UASC), relinquished children or SGO/Adoption support cases to our Children in Care and Care Leavers service for assessment.
- The Child in Need teams pick up new referrals and assessments on a duty rota system once every 6 days, other children (e.g. UASC) will be allocated to a social worker from the relevant team as cases are screened within MASH
- Where there is disagreement between the MASH Team Manager and the Child in Need/Children with Disabilities or Children in Care and Care Leavers Team Manager regarding the need for Social Work assessment there should be a face to face discussion in aim of resolution. Where agreement cannot be met the Service Manager for MASH should review the case and make a decision regarding appropriate response. This will be the final decision.
- Children moving to Warrington from other areas who are subject to a child protection or Child in Need plan should follow the same process as for any other new referral - transfer will then be made to the relevant social work team for allocation to a Social Worker
- When a referral is received concerning a child with additional needs but is also a member of a sibling group then the case will be allocated to a Social Worker in the Children with Disabilities team. However if the sibling group is referred due to a safeguarding reason and where one child is registered disabled the Child in Need Team Social Worker will complete an assessment but a Children and Families Practitioner from the Children with Disabilities team can co-work to support with issues around the disabled child
- Where a child is already open to the Children with Disabilities team Social Worker for disability assessment and/or support, should a further safeguarding concern become apparent the case will remain in the Children with Disabilities team and the siblings be allocated also for assessment
- In cases of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children the case will transfer to our Children in Care and Care Leavers team who will allocate a Social Worker to complete an assessment, including where necessary an age assessment
- For SGO or Adoption support cases a worker from the SGO team or Adoption Service will be allocated to assess the child's needs and coordinate support

## **2.2 Children in Need Teams**

- Each team will be on 'duty' once every 6 days, this may vary in holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter

- Where a referral is progressed to assessment the allocated Social Worker will undertake a timely and proportionate Child and Family Assessment
- If the assessment concludes the child and family needs ongoing social work support the Social Worker will develop an initial plan to meet the assessed needs of the child working closely with partner agencies, which may be a Child in Need, Child Protection or a Child in Care Plan.
- If the assessment concludes that the child and family do not need ongoing Social Work intervention and it is identified that Early Help support is appropriate, the case will be stepped down to the Early Help service utilising the Step Down process
- If the assessment concludes that the child and family have needs at Level 4 of Warrington's Threshold of Needs the case will continue to be allocated, unless there are exceptional circumstances, to the same Social Worker ensuring continuity of relationship. The Social Worker will then implement the relevant plan and oversee all statutory social work duties on behalf of the Local Authority in respect of the child. This includes;
  - Developing and reviewing the Child in Need plan
  - Statutory visits to children
  - Court work – care proceedings, or private proceedings S37 and S7 reporting
  - Managing children in care under S20 or S31 of the Children Act 1989 until they have an agreed plan of permanency
  - Maintain responsibility for Children in Care who will be returning to live with family under Placement with Parent Regulations (for 12 months)
  - Undertake responsibilities in respect of privately fostered children
- Please note in general Family Support workers from our Families First team will offer support to the children who have a Child Protection Plan, offering interventions aligned to our edge of care offer.

### **2.3 Step down to Early Help**

- The Early help Division allocates cases direct from MASH as outlined above, or following a social work intervention ending. The Social Worker will refer the case, prior to closure, to the Early Help service who will allocate in a timely way and attend the last Child in need meeting to support a seamless transition with a clear plan. The Social Worker will step down to Early Help services by completing the Early Help Transfer form and submitting this to the Early Help inbox. If the Early Help worker has already supported the case at a Child in need level the same Support Worker will remain with the family and support the plan of work identified to allow for consistency and continuity of relationships.

## **2.4 Children with Disabilities Team**

- Where a referral is made for a disabled child the Children with Disabilities team will complete a Child and Family Assessment on new cases and take any actions that may result from that in the same way as the Children in Need teams
- If the assessment concludes the child and family have needs at Level 3 of Warrington's Threshold of Need then a Children and Families Practitioner in the Children with Disabilities Team will become the allocated worker if the issues relate to the child's disability.
- The Social Workers from the Children with Disabilities Team will be responsible for ongoing support and intervention in the same way as the Child in Need Social Work teams.
- When following a Child and Family assessment, the needs of the child(ren) do not meet the threshold to be open within the Children with Disabilities Team but still requires ongoing social work the case will transfer to Children in Need. The Team Manager from Children with Disabilities should discuss the case with a Service Manager in Children in Need, who will then consider which team is best placed to take the case.

## **2.5 Children in Care and Care Leavers Service**

Social Workers from the Children in Need service will keep children in care cases if:

- The child is returning home in which circumstance the case will revert to Child in Need status if the child was accommodated under Section 20 and the criteria for Child in Need cases will apply or the case may be closed, or will be supervised under the Placement of Children with Parent Regulations 1991 if the child is subject of an Interim or full Section 31 Care Order.
- There is a plan for a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order with a family member in which circumstance the case will revert to Child in Need status following the making of the order and the criteria for Child in Need cases will apply or the case may be closed if no further provision is required.
- The case will be supervised under the Placement of Children with Parent Regulations 1991. Although, Placement with Parent cases will be held on a time limited basis. The Children in Need service will keep the case for 12 months. At the 6 month point, the Children in Care service will allocate a social worker to co-work the case and support with the application process to discharge the care order. At 12 months there will be a review of the plan. If the application to discharge the care order is considered likely, the case will remain within the CIN team until discharge is complete. If at 12 months, the court are considered unlikely to discharge care order, the Children in Care service will take full responsibility of the case.
- All other Children in Care cases will transfer to the Permanence Team when:
  - The final Care Order is made and the child will be looked after in either foster or residential care

- A Plan for Permanence is established for those children accommodated under Section 20 and that plan is for permanent care by the local authority
- Direct from MASH in respect of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- The Social Workers from the Children in Care and Care Leavers Team will be responsible for ongoing support and intervention in the same way as the Child in Need Social Work teams
- A Personal Advisor (PA) will be allocated alongside the Social Worker from the child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. This will allow a meaningful relationship to be developed prior to transfer at 18 to the PA to oversee pathway planning alongside and with the care leaver
- A Placement with Parent case, at 12 months, if the court are considered unlikely to discharge care order.

## **2.6 Transfer to Adult Services**

- Planning for transition will commence early, and Preparation for Adulthood team Social Workers will be invited to all Children in Need, Core Group or Children in Care review meetings from the child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday onwards.

## **2.7 Adoption Social Workers**

The Adoption Social Workers are responsible for holding cases from the point of the Placement Order being made.

The Adoption Social Worker will become involved at an early stage, and the Child in Need Social Worker will liaise with the Service Manager for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure timely allocation. The Adoption Social Workers are experienced in adoption work and will support the Child in Need Social Worker:

- in completion of the Child's Permanence Report if required
- Undertake early family finding including support in respect of Foster to Adopt and Concurrency placements
- Provide advice on matching and adoption support considerations as required
- Provide support in the compilation of a Life Story book whilst the care proceedings are ongoing

Once the Placement Order is made the child will transfer to the Adoption Social Worker and the usual transfer of cases principles will be followed, including a handover joint visit the child and their carer.

Following the case transfer:

- Undertake statutory responsibilities in respect of children with a plan for and placed for adoption

Promote positive outcomes for children placed for adoption working closely with partner agencies, particularly Together for Adoption

- Ensure Life Story book and Later in Life Letter are provided to the adopters on a timely way
- Support the child through the adoption process.
- It is expected practice that a final multi agency Child in Need meeting will be held prior to formal step down, so the child and their family have a formal ending and the case will be reallocated following this meeting to the Early Help Family Support Worker

## **2.8 Transfer of cases out of hours**

- The Out of Hours Team will respond to new cases or emergencies that arise on known cases out of hours, in conjunction with other emergency agencies, and will then pass the case either to the responsible worker or to the MASH when day services resume operation. Out of Hours involvement ceases at this point.
- If Out of Hours receives information or has involvement with a case open to an allocated worker on one of the social work teams, a case note will be added to the individual child's record and a case note alert sent to the Social Worker and their manager.
- The Out of Hours Social Worker is responsible to ensure that any significant event or incident is passed on to the day time Social Worker or their team and is accountable until they are assured that the right people are aware of the incident and able to respond
- If Out of Hours receives information or has involvement with a case that has been closed during the previous six months, a referral will be completed as appropriate and the case will automatically return to the team which has most recently held the case.
- If any information/actions are passed to Out of Hours, Out of Hours must be provided with all relevant paperwork and an observation placed on the Mosaic system to record the transfer of information/responsibility for the action.

## **PART 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLE FOR TRANSFER OF CASES**

### **2.1 Case Transfer Standards**

The following tasks should be updated and/or completed prior to transfer:

- Chronology must be up to date;
- Case notes must be complete, up to date and finalised;
- Any open assessment should be completed;
- Record of case management decisions and supervisions;
- All tasks should be completed in Mosaic, bar those that are agreed as part of transfer to be passed to the newly allocated Social Worker;
- Before transferring, the case should be quality assured and signed off by the transferring team manager to ensure all outstanding work has been completed;

- A case transfer summary will always be completed, including a clear case summary and pen picture of the child;
- All non-Mosaic documents will be uploaded to CIVICA by the transferring Social Worker before the child is reallocated.

## **2.2 Transfer Meeting**

The following is expected good practice:

- When cases are transferring to Early Help the Social Worker should ensure, the referral to Early Help in advance of the case closing, with the newly allocated worker from Early Help attending the final Children in Need meeting before the case is stepped down.
- When a decision has been reached to reallocate a child or children to a new Social Worker, for sound case planning reasons or because the original Social Worker is leaving the service, or because a long term plan of care or adoption has been agreed or the child has reached 18 and is transferring to a Personal Advisor, then it is imperative that a handover meeting takes place with the current Social Worker and team manager and the newly allocated Social Worker and their team manager.
- This meeting should identify any outstanding work to be completed by the current Social Worker or passed on to the new Social Worker and be briefly recorded on the child's file on Mosaic;
- Where there is agreement to change Social Worker this must be planned carefully;
- There is an expectation that the current Social Worker will introduce the new Social Worker to the family during a home visit and have a period of transition concluding with a meeting where handover formally takes place (Children in Need meeting/core group/care planning meeting/pathway planning meeting). This will ensure a smooth transition;
- The previous Social Worker will be available to offer advice and support to the new Social Worker as needed.

## **2.3 Emergency Transfer Standards**

- When reallocation is required and none of the above planning can take place, the reallocating team manager should look to reallocate within their own team and ensure that there is a clear recording on the case file to indicate why no handover could take place and the remedial action that is planned or in place to ensure continuity of service provision and relationships. On occasions it may be in the child's best interest for early transfer to the Children in Care team at this point, the Service Managers will discuss these exception cases and make decisions regarding allocation that are in the child's best interest;

- Best practice for the team manager may be for them to call a Children in Need meeting, core group meeting etc. and attend/chair to hand over to the new Social Worker, or may arrange for a known member of the existing professional support network or family to introduce the new Social Worker;
- Sensitivity should always be applied when historic/existing relationships are fractured unexpectedly.