Step Up and Step Down Protocol
Early Help Services And Children’s Social Care
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Early help is our approach to providing support to potentially vulnerable children, young people and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

Early Help may occur at any point in a child or young person’s life, from childhood to adolescence and includes both interventions early in life as well as interventions early in the development of the problem.

It is about the way we can all work together, share information, and put the child and their family at the centre providing effective support to help them solve problems and find solutions at an early stage, so needs avoid becoming so great that specialist statutory interventions are required.

For some children, young people and families despite planned intervention from universal and early help services desired outcomes may not be achieved and needs can escalate meaning there is a requirement for specialist statutory interventions.

The purpose of this guidance is to support staff across the children’s partnership and children’s social care, in achieving effective and smooth step up and/or step down to arrangements for children, young people and families.

The desired outcome is that all interventions are proportionate to the family’s needs and at the optimum level to have the maximum impact in terms of supporting the family to achieve desired outcomes and sustained change. The child, young person and family should experience the process as seamless and the gains from both Early Help and/or Children Social Care intervention must be sustained. Key relationships should be maintained where this is in the child/young person’s best interest.
Step Up to Social Care

‘Step up’ is when a child or young person’s needs are escalating and outcomes are not being met, despite planned intervention from universal and targeted early help and, where children and young people are deemed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, leading to a requirement for intervention from statutory services.

Step up enables professionals from Early Help Services, Children’s Social Care and a range of other partners to support the child/family intervention and plan as they move from requiring universal and targeted early help services and interventions, to statutory, safeguarding and specialist support. Step up is an extremely important function to ensure that children and families receive consistent, seamless support, at the right time and from a range of professionals and partners across the borough.

When children/families have received early help support and go on to require statutory intervention, it is important that the children, young people and their families feel supported in the transition and do not feel that they are being passed from ‘service to service’. Early Help professionals from a range of services and sectors are crucial to the step up process.

Guidance

If you have general concerns about a child, in the first instance speak to your agency’s safeguarding lead.

Children’s Social Care are available to offer consultation/advice.

For children and young people deemed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, a referral must be made following Barnsley Safeguarding Children’s Partnership procedures:

If you are concerned about a child or unborn baby or worried they are being abused, you should make a referral to the Barnsley Children’s Social Care Assessment Service on (01226) 772423. If the child is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999 or (0114) 202020.

The Barnsley Thresholds for Intervention Guidance contains information to help you think through the most appropriate response to any concerns about children and young people.

More information on how to make a referral can be found in the procedure for Making a Referral to Social Care.

The Barnsley Children’s Social Care Record of Contact Form can be used to share information with Children’s Social Care (via secure email).

Alternatively if you are worried about a child or want further advice you can contact the NSPCC helpline – telephone: 0808 800 5000 or e-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

More information can be found by visiting the link below:

http://www.proceduresonline.com/barnsley/scb/index.html
Following the Outcome of a request for Statutory Social Care intervention:

Where the outcome is that it does not meet the threshold for statutory intervention:

You should continue to support the family through the provision of universal and targeted early help services following any advice and recommendations made by social care e.g. initiate and Early Help Assessment (EHA), make a referral to the Early Help Panel.

If you do not agree with the decision following your request for service to children’s social care, you should refer to the escalation procedures on the safeguarding children’s partnership website and make sure your concerns are escalated.

Where the outcome of the referral is assessment:

You must ensure that you continue to support the family working in accordance with any plans that are in place e.g. the EHA action plan unless otherwise directed by the allocated social worker. Where an early help assessment and intervention is open the most recent early help assessment, action plan, supporting case notes and any additional evidence should be shared with the allocated social worker for their consideration and a joint visit arranged and/or agreement to attend the next TAF meeting secured.

Where the outcome is that a statutory intervention will be instigated:

You must contribute to the planning process as appropriate and support the family in relation to their transition to the statutory intervention. The child, young person and family should experience the process as seamless and without delay. Key relationships should be maintained where this is in the child/young person’s best interest.

Where there is an open EHA, an early help assessment closure notification form must be completed indicating that the EHA is now closed due to step up to social care and emailed securely to earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk.
Step Down from Social Care

Step Down enables professionals from Children’s Social Care, Early Help Services and a range of other partners to support the child/family intervention and plan as they move from requiring statutory, safeguarding and specialist support to targeted and universal services and interventions. Early Help professionals from a range of services and sectors are crucial to the step down process as they enable continued targeted and universal support for identified cases once statutory services step out and close.

Step Down is an extremely important function to ensure that children and families receive consistent, seamless support, at the right time and from a range of professionals and partners across the borough. When children/families have received a statutory intervention and 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’.

Social Care Services should always aim to reduce their involvement as the child’s needs become met. If, when a decision has been made that a child is no longer a child ‘in need’, but an ongoing level of support is required, then Social Care Services and the existing team around the family should ensure that a clear step down to Early Help Service plan is in place. The social worker must ensure that the family have given explicit and informed consent to the support and to information being shared before the protocol can be implemented.

Guidance

The decision to ‘Step Down’ will be made by the Social Care Service Team Manager, in conjunction with the social worker. This may have been informed by a child ‘in need’ review meeting or CP Review Conference. Cases must not be stepped down so that children’s cases can be ‘monitored’ or in order to make an onward referral to another agency/service.

In all cases the allocated social worker must consult the family and obtain informed written consent to what information is being shared, via the signature page of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) UIN Request form. Where appropriate the consent of the child/young person should also be recorded. The allocated social worker will ensure that the Family Centre Development Team receive a copy of the signed consent and all minimum data to enable this to be logged as a new EHA episode.
Step down from an existing CIN/CP plan:

Where a case is being stepped down from an existing CIN/CP plan the social worker will identify an appropriate Lead Professional from the existing Team around the Family (TAF) or other appropriate service (with agreement) and convene a final CIN/Core Group meeting which will also serve as the initial EHA TAF meeting and should produce an EHA action plan. The social worker will inform the family and other professionals and complete the Early Help Assessment (EHA) UIN Request form to notify that this has been stepped down to Early Help and the EHA process instigated.

Where there is no identified lead professional within the existing team around the family or other suitable service and this role is required to be undertaken by Family Centre Family Support a request for targeted one to one support should be completed. The allocated social worker must also consult the family and obtain informed written consent to what information is being shared, via the signature page of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) UIN Request form. Where appropriate the consent of the child/young person should also be recorded. The allocated social worker will ensure that the Family Centre Development Team receive a copy of the signed consent and all minimum data to enable the request to be discussed at the Early Help Panel by emailing these to earlyhelp@barnsley.gov.uk.
Step down from an existing CIN/CP plan:

Step down cases referred for targeted one to one support from family centres will be reviewed at the Early Help panel, held weekly, where the outcome of Step Down requests will be agreed based on the information provided in each case.

Cases will 'step down' without delay and irrespective of capacity. Priority for allocation of 'stepped down’ cases will then be evaluated within the overall workload of the family centre and targeted youth support teams. Once notified of the allocated Lead Professional Family Support Worker the Social Worker will convene a final CIN/Core Group meeting which will also serve as the initial EHA TAF meeting and should produce an EHA action plan. The social worker will inform the family and other professionals and complete the Early Help Assessment (EHA) UIN Request form to notify that this has been stepped down to Early Help and the EHA process instigated.
Step down following assessment by the Social Care Front Door:

Where Step down to Early help is being made directly as an outcome of a single assessment via the Social Care front door, the social worker will identify an appropriate Lead Professional from the existing Team around the Family (TAF) or other appropriate service (with agreement). The identified EHA Lead professional will convene an initial TAF meeting, and will invite the parents/carers, child/young person where appropriate, and any agency currently involved or who may need to become involved. The social worker should be invited to attend to share information. The social worker should inform the family of likely contact from the EHA Lead Professional and the social worker will complete the Early Help Assessment (EHA) UIN Request form to notify that this has been stepped down to Early Help and the EHA process instigated. The initial TAF meeting will produce a new EHA Action Plan and set key dates should be prioritised by all agencies.

Step down from Social Care Front door following request for service/contact in where it is assessed the threshold for social care involvement is not met:

Where there has been a recommendation for early help it is the responsibility of the referrer to ensure that appropriate referrals are made as directed and Early Help processes adhered to i.e. where and Early Help Assessment is recommended it is instigated within 3 weeks.
The same step down processes to Early Help (Tier 2) apply to disabled children and disabled young people. However, there are two exceptions to this process:

1) When a disabled child or disabled young person is in receipt of a direct payment/individual budget they will remain open to one of the Family Support Workers in the Disabled Children’s Team at Tier 2, for them to monitor and review the direct payment/individual budget. The Family Support Worker will not act as lead professional for the disabled child/disabled young person, but will attend TAC/TAF meetings as invited. They will also attend the annual reviews of the EHC Plan.

2) When a disabled child/disabled young person is receiving support from the Children’s Community Learning Disability Nurses based with the Disabled Children’s Team as part of active Early Help work, they will be open and allocated at Tier 2 to one of the Children’s Community Learning Disability Nurses. Because of the time limited nature of their intervention, the Children’s Community Learning Disability Nurses will not act as lead professional. They will attend TAC/TAF meetings as invited. They will also attend the annual reviews of the EHC Plan. On closure the Children’s Community Learning Disability Nurses will inform the lead professional and family.
In all instances of step down the allocated social worker will provide the lead professional information that describes the family’s unmet needs within 7 days of allocation

This may include:

- A recent single assessment
- CIN plan and CIN chair’s report
- Decision & chair’s report from final CP review
- Specialist assessment or other relevant supporting information

See flow chart on next page:
Decision made to initiate Step Down

Stepping down as an outcome of single assessment (Social Care Front Door)

Consent gained from family by social worker and EHA Lead professional identified (social worker informs the family of likely contact from the EHA Lead Professional)

Yes

- Social Worker Closes on TED completing EHA UIN request and provides the lead professional information that describes the family’s unmet needs within 7 days
- EHA Lead professional will convene an initial TAF meeting inviting the parents/carers, child/young person where appropriate, and any agency currently or required to be involved as well as the social worker
- Initial TAF meeting held producing a new EHA Action Plan and setting key dates

No

- Request for targeted one to one support from Early Help Panel form completed to allocate lead professional with consent from the family

Stepping down from an existing CIN/CP Plan with an identified Lead professional

Consent for Early Help gained from family by social worker

Social worker completes EHA UIN Request and provides the lead professional information that describes the family’s unmet needs within 7 days

Social worker convenes a final CIN/Core Group meeting which also serves as the initial EHA TAF meeting and produces an EHA action plan setting key dates

Social Worker closes on TED

Stepping down from an existing CIN/CP Plan with no identified Lead professional

Consent for Early Help gained from family by social worker

Request for targeted one to one support from Early Help Panel completed to allocate lead professional with consent to request service from the family

Family Support Worker Allocated and social worker informed