Referral and management of cases protocol
Also known as step up / step downs between social care and locality teams

**Step up** is where the locality team assesses that there is a need for a social work intervention and social care allocates the case to a social work unit.

**Step downs** are cases that no longer have a role for a specialist social work service and the locality team agree to offer a new one-to-one intervention or continue to offer an existing 1:1 support after social care withdraw from the case.

This protocol needs to be considered alongside the following key documents:

- Working Together - guidance and definition of a Child in Need (2013)
- Child in Need Procedures (CCC)
- Threshold criteria for access to Social Care services in Cambridgeshire (CCC)
- Model of Staged Intervention (MOSI) and CAF procedures in Cambridgeshire (CCC)
- Protocol between Children’s Centres and social care (CCC)
- Step up / Step down process in Children in Need (CIN) procedures and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures (CCC)

The other ways in which cases pass between locality teams and social care are addressed through separate processes. These include:

- Cases referred via the Integrated Access Team (IAT) that do not meet the social care threshold are not defined as step down and should not be recorded as such.
- Cases that are jointly managed between social care and localities or other services such as the Family Intervention Project.
- Cases where there is no longer a role for a social work intervention and there is no transfer of case holding responsibility, but support is offered from a locality team through a range of activities, groups or programmes for children, young people, parents and families.
- Cases where the locality team continue to offer a service or offer a new service as part of the social work plan are not defined as step up.

**Notes**

- *Locality teams include Children’s Centres. The majority of Children Centre managers are managed by a locality manager. All requests for Locality support from social care for local authority managed centres must be made in the first place to the locality manager. For centres managed by a school or voluntary organisation, the locality manager should be replaced by the Children Centre manager, these include: March, Chatteris, Romsey Mill, Histon, Homerton, Huntingdon Town, Fawcett, and Fields Children’s Centres.*

- *When a locality team make a referral to the IAT, the CAF should not be closed until the IAT have made a threshold decision and the Access Unit have completed a home visit and considered the plan for the family, this should be within 10 working days. If the IAT or Access unit decide that the needs of the case do not require social care involvement, the CAF process should continue through the locality team. An Access unit will complete a Single Assessment and share with Locality. If the IAT and Access team decide that the case does meet social care thresholds then the case will transfer to a unit and the locality team will close the CAF once an ongoing role for social care is agreed. See differences between Access and CIN overleaf.*
What professionals and families can expect

- Step up and step downs will be considered on an individual case by case basis as to the most appropriate point of transfer. Cases should be referred when there is no longer a role for the service or the need/risk is beyond the remit of the service.

- The needs of the whole family will be the main priority throughout all of our work.

- Families should experience a smooth transition between services. The transfer process should not be disruptive to families and they should experience a similar understanding and approach to addressing their needs from the originating service to the receiving service.

- Maintaining high standards of service delivery and considering longer term planning and needs at all times is the responsibility of all staff.

- Changes of workers should be kept to a minimum and transfer of cases should not cause delay to intervention with families.

- When a case is being stepped down from social care, the social worker will make clear the reasons for step down and advise the locality team upon the level of risk, the tasks required and outcomes anticipated. This advice should include the circumstances when a re-referral should be considered.

Referral pathways

When a social work unit identifies a case to step down, the consultant social worker must detail the reasons for transfer to the locality team in writing using the standard template attached.

An initial discussion should then take place between the unit social worker and the locality manager to discuss the needs of the child and family and what support is required and agree that transfer to the locality team is appropriate.

The unit social workers will consult with the involved partner professionals to gain their views and inform them of the plan to step down.

- **Step down from Access and assessment units only:** Consultation can take place virtually or through a meeting of all the parties involved. Unit social workers will update the locality manager of any changes and agree a step down date which will be no more than 20 working days from the initial discussion held. A locality worker may also attend a unit meeting. There remains the option of a face to face meeting taking place if required.

- **Step down from CIN units:** The relevant locality team member will be invited to the final CIN meeting before closure to ensure an effective transfer of information and responsibilities. Locality staff must be notified at least 15 working days before the CIN meeting to ensure their attendance. At the final CIN meeting, case accountability will transfer to the locality team.

The case file will be fully up to date before step up/step down.

The social work plan will be updated and consent to sharing information with and commitment to working with the locality obtained from the young person and or parent/carer. The plan will inform the CAF Support Plan which will be reviewed and updated through the CAF planning and review process.

The Single assessment (SA) combined with written consent on the CAF consent page will form the CAF. The plan for the family will be outlined in the SA or family plan. For CIN written consent will be gained at the final CIN meeting. For Access verbal consent will be gained by the social worker and written consent obtained by the locality worker at the first meeting.

- **Locality teams** should refer cases, step up, that they assess as needing a social care service through the contact centre using the Social Care Referral form accompanied by a CAF if there is one. These referrals will be assessed by the IAT who will make a decision whether the needs of the family meets the thresholds of social care intervention. The IAT may carry out further checks including family visits to inform decision-making. Case accountability will pass from the locality team to the Access unit. Lead responsibility will transfer 10 working days after allocation in Access, the CAF can then be closed.

*Child protection telephone referrals can be made, but a completed Social care referral form must follow within 24 hours.*
**Shared understanding**

Area social care Group Managers will meet regularly with Locality Managers as a minimum on a quarterly basis. These meetings will focus on gaining a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of respective staff groups.

Locality managers will have a named Group Manager to discuss any issues arising and the senior social workers in five locality teams will have a key role to play in making these arrangements work.

Raising concerns; it is expected that most concerns will be resolved by discussions between the Locality Manager, Consultant social worker and/or Group Manager. If this is not possible then the concerns should be raised with Heads of Service.

A rolling programme of quarterly induction meetings for new social care and locality staff to be set up in each area.

**Review and compliance**

This document will be reviewed every two years. To monitor thresholds and adherence to the protocol, regular case audits will also include case examples which have been stepped up and stepped down.

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**Appendix 1:**

(Step Down between social care - Access units and locality teams)

1. Assessment, Plan and interventions: no further role for social care, new or existing locality services required. Social worker completes standard template requesting new or continuing 1:1 locality involvement (including verbal consent)

2. CSW instigates discussion with Locality Manager to discuss step down and agree transfer date (within 20 working days from date of discussion) Agreement reached as to whether a meeting is required

3. Unit informs partner agencies of transfer details


5. If agreement cannot be reached CSW to refer to Group Manager.
Appendix 2:
Step down process between Children’s Social Care CIN and localities

Unit determines there is no longer a role for ongoing social care services, however new or existing locality services are required. Social worker completes standard template requesting new or continuing 1:1 locality involvement (including verbal consent)

CSW instigates discussion with Locality Manager to discuss step down

Locality worker invited to final CIN meeting, giving 15 working days notice of date (where lead case accountability will transfer to the locality team)

Family assessment/ plan updated with written consent from young person, parents/carers on CAF consent page at meeting. Case file updated & transfer complete.

If agreement cannot be reached CSW to refer to Group Manager

Appendix 3:
Step up process from Locality Teams

Locality Team make assessment that social care services may be required, or social care threshold has been met

Locality Manager makes referral to Integrated Access Team (IAT) via Social Care Referral form accompanied by a CAF if there is one

IAT will make an assessment of need based on information provided and further checks if appropriate. Locality Team will continue working with the child/young person/family whilst the IAT assesses the need for social care involvement. The IAT will become case accountable during this period

Threshold met: Case responsibility will be transferred to a Social Care Access unit from IAT. The locality team will continue planned involvement in discussion with the unit until a decision is made about the next steps within 10 days after transfer

Threshold not met: Case will be closed / NFA / provision of advice by IAT. Locality Manager will make a decision about the next steps for the case