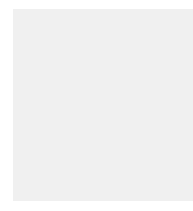


Step Up/Step Down Process Wirral Procedures



Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

2. STEP UP

2.1 Step up from level 1 Universal Services to Level 2

2.2 Step up from level 2 Support to Team Around the Family

2.3 Step up from level 3 TAF to Level 4 Social Work Assessment and CIN

2.4 Step up from level 4 Child in Need to Child Protection

3. STEP DOWN

3.1 Step down from Child Protection to Child in Need

3.2 Step down from level 4 Social Work Assessment of Need

3.3 Step down from level 4 Child in Need to Level 3 Team Around the Family

3.4 Step down from level 3 TAF to Level 2 Support

3.5 Step down from level 2 to Universal Services

1. Introduction

Wirral Children Safeguarding Board's Threshold Document clearly defines the four levels of need in the continuum. (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/multi-agency-thresholds/>) The step up/step down approach describes the way in which a family can be supported by different services and interventions depending on their level of need. At the lower end of the spectrum, needs and additional needs can be met by universal services (level 1) or by a single agency providing extra support (level 2). Where needs are more complex or support needs to be co-ordinated, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Family (TAF) intervention is delivered through a Lead Professional approach (level 3). If needs cannot be met at level 3, or there are immediate safeguarding concerns which meet level 4 of the Threshold guidance, the child will be supported by Children's Social Care (level 4). Interventions delivered by Children's Social Care are classed as either Child in Need or Child Protection, and both are level 4.

The child's journey is one that all agency partners wish to ensure is as smooth and time limited as possible. The aim is to ensure every child receives the right service at the right time that they need it. The Step Up/Step Down process is intended to support children to have their needs met through lower, less intrusive, levels of intervention. Described as 'early help', support provided at levels 2 and 3 should aim to identify and meet needs in an effective manner to prevent escalation, and, as importantly, to be available to support families to maintain positive change as levels of need de-escalate. Any Step Up to Children's Social Care is only agreed when

children's needs cannot be met at the lower level of the continuum. Child Protection processes are only invoked when a child is believed to have suffered, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm. Making a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is a very serious decision, and the child should only remain subject to that Plan whilst there is an active likelihood of significant harm occurring to him or her. In tightening the application of these criteria, it is necessary to ensure that families do not have very high levels of support withdrawn at too fast a pace. Planning for step down to TAF is an important task. Robust transition planning can enable children's needs to be maintained at lower levels of intervention.

Wirral Safeguarding Children Board provides a number of tools which support professionals to describe levels of need, monitor if and how levels of need change, and thus be able to identify the appropriate threshold level for safe and effective support. (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/tools-for-professionals/>)

2. STEP UP

2.1 Step Up from Level 1 Universal Services to Level 2

Universal (level 1) services are provided to all children. This includes services such as education, access to a GP and dentist, and many more provisions. Most of the population will be effectively supported by these services for the greater proportion of their childhood.

If a child requires additional support, as described at level 2 in the Threshold Guidance, this should be provided either by the agency identifying the need (through their own resource) or sourced from a secondary service which can provide the required resource or expertise. Help to identify or access support services can be provided by the Early Help & CAF Team or the locality-based Early Help Social Workers (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/page/2/?s=Early+Help+and+CAF+TEAM>)

2.2 Step Up from Level 2 Support to Team Around the Family

When there are multiple needs, or there is an increase in the complexity of need (as described in the Threshold Document) it may be necessary to step up to level 3. Level 3 interventions require a CAF assessment with support being delivered through a TAF intervention by a Lead Professional. Further information on CAF/TAF and undertaking the role of Lead Professional is available HERE (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/team-around-family-qa-tools/>).

Where appropriate professionals identifying the need for a level 3 intervention are able to undertake a CAF assessment and initiate a TAF intervention. Having completed the CAF assessment the Lead Professional should submit the document to the Early Help and CAF Team (<mailto:janeegan@wirral.gov.uk>) where the assessment will be quality assured by an Early Help Social Worker and stored securely for future reference.

If the professional identifying the level 3 need is not able, or not appropriately placed to undertake the CAF assessment, they should submit a Request for Service form (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/public/concerned-about-a-child/>) to the Integrated Front Door, indicating the need for a level 3 intervention. The Request for Service should always be discussed with the child, young person and family, with their consent clearly indicated on the form. The Early Help Social Worker within the Integrated Front Door Team will triage the Request for Services and facilitate identification of an appropriate Lead Professional. If identification of a Lead Professional is not possible at this stage, the Request for Services

will be forwarded to the weekly Allocation Meeting where a multi-disciplinary group will agree a Lead Professional and provide feedback to both the referrer and family. This is a weekly meeting and all referrals should have an identified Lead Professional within that time. The progress of the TAF intervention will be tracked by the Early Help & CAF Team.

Quality assurance of access to level 3 interventions is provided by the *Access to Early Help Quality Assurance Group*. Tools to support Lead Professionals to undertake CAF//TAF and apply quality assurance are available through Wirral Safeguarding Children Board <https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/team-around-family-qa-tools/>

2.3 Step Up from Level 3 TAF to Level 4 Social Work Assessment and CIN

Where TAF interventions are not progressing or needs are escalating, the case can be reviewed at the weekly Allocations Meeting. Lead Professionals should discuss their concerns/difficulties with a locality-based Early Help Social Worker and submit a Stuck Case Proforma to the Early Help & CAF Team. The case will be discussed at the next Allocation Meeting and where appropriate additional resource, support and advice will be provided to maintain the child and family at level 3. Where the multi-disciplinary group agrees that a referral to Children's Social Care is required, the Advanced Social Work Practitioner attending the Allocation Meeting will support the Lead Professional to submit the request for Services to MASH or District Children's Social Care Team, whichever is most appropriate. In all cases such as this consent should have been gained from the young person and family. Information from the TAF and Allocation Meeting will be provided to Children's Social Care to support their assessment of need. At any point during a CAF/TAF intervention, if concerning information about the safety of a child/young person is received, or where the family situation deteriorates such that there are child protection concerns, a referral should be made to the Integrated Front Door using the Request for Service form, clearly setting out the concerns and including the evidence for these. Additional information contained in the CAF and/or TAF plan/minutes would be helpful in providing context of the work carried out so far. It is the expectation that the family is aware of the referral, unless to do so would place the child or young person at immediate risk of harm. Wirral Safeguarding Children Board requires that referrals to Children's Social Care are accompanied by appropriate tools such as the Graded Care Profile, Brook Traffic Light Tool, etc.

[\(https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/tools-for-professionals/](https://www.wirral safeguarding.co.uk/tools-for-professionals/)

On receipt of the Request for Services form the IFD or MASH Team will triage the case and if it is clear that level 4 needs are met the case will be forwarded, as a referral to the appropriate Children's Social Care Team for either a S.47 enquiry or a Social Work Assessment of Need (SWAN). It is important that the relationship between the Lead Professional and TAF Group is maintained as this will support a smooth transition when the case is **ready to step down**.

2.4 Step Up from Child in Need to Child Protection (Level 4)

Open cases with a Child in Need plan should be regularly by the CIN review group. Where concerns for the child or risks are increasing or a specific incident raises extra concern for the child's safety; or progress is being made to improve outcomes, consideration should be given to the need to step up to child protection processes. The social worker should discuss with their Team Manager in the first instance and if concerns are raised with regard to significant harm, a multi-agency Strategy Meeting needs to be held without delay. This meeting will decide the next steps which may include a Section 47 investigation and a request for an Initial Child Protection Conference. The Team Manager will contact the Safeguarding Unit to consult with the Duty Independent Reviewing Officer to

book in the Conference which must be held within 15 days of the Strategy Meeting. The social worker needs to prepare a Report for the Conference which addresses the strengths, risks and concerns regarding the children and this report needs to be shared with the parents or carers and sent to the Safeguarding Unit for the Conference Chair three days before the Initial Conference is due to take place.

The social worker needs to consider how the child's views will be represented to Conference and if they are aged 8 years and over whether they want to attend the Conference or require an Advocate.

The plan for the child will be reviewed at regular intervals by the Core Group and at the full Review Child Protection Conference no less than every 6 months. Caution should be taken not to step down cases prematurely unless there is good evidence of sustained change in the family to reduce risks to the child. Child Protection plans should not normally continue beyond 12 months and need active review to ensure no drift and delay for the child. Consideration needs to be given by the Chair and the attendees of each Conference as to whether the plan should continue or should the case step up or step down to meet identified needs and improve outcomes for the child.

3. STEP DOWN

3.1 Step-Down from Child Protection Plan to Child in Need

All children will now Step Down from a Child Protection Plan to a Child in Need Plan for a period of three months. The final Child Protection Conference should support the parents (and children if they are able to participate) and professional group in amending the CP Plan to a CIN Plan, and roles and responsibilities of all involved should be carefully considered at the Child Protection Review Conference. All participants involved in the CIN Plan should receive a signed and dated copy of the plan. A CIN Written Agreement should also be created and signed by the parents. The initial CIN Plan should be reviewed within 8 weeks and a decision can be made at this time as to whether the CIN Plan can now be ended or needs to continue for a further period.

See Child in Need, Visits, Plans and Reviews Procedure. (ADD LINK). A child will usually have a service from Specialist and Safeguarding Services as a Child in Need for at least three months after the ceasing of his/her Child Protection Plan. It is then expected that these children will transfer to targeted services TAF but this should be considered on a case by case basis. There will always be exceptions to this general rule, and it may occasionally be appropriate to end specialist involvement as soon as a CP Plan is ended. In these scenarios, a Services Manager must authorise such a decision, evidencing a clear risk assessment, analysis and rationale under the Case Note Management Decision tab on LCS.

3.2 Step Down from a Social Work Assessment of Need (SWAN) (Level 4)

In case where the SWAN has been completed, and there are no **Child Protection** concerns (and therefore no further Safeguarding Services role), the Social Worker should contact the Early Help & CAF Team who will liaise with the Lead Professional to continue the TAF intervention. The social worker should consider what information from the assessments should be made available to the Early Help & CAF Team to support the TAF intervention, giving due consideration to issues of confidentiality.

3.3 Step Down from Child in Need (Level 4) to Team Around the Family

The decision to step down a case from Children's Social Care to TAF (level 3) should be a multi-agency decision, where relevant agencies agree that this is the most appropriate course of action. The Social Worker, having discussed the case with their line manager, should arrange a final Child in Need meeting. An Early Help Social Worker, or other professional from Targeted Services can attend this meeting if required, at the meeting the Social Worker should seek agreement of partners to close the case to Children's Social Care, identify a Lead Professional for the TAF intervention and secure consent of the family for the level 3 service. If the Social Worker is not been able to identify a Lead Professional this will be arranged with support from the Early Help & CAF Team.

The Social Worker will provide the Early Help & CAF Team with a completed Transfer Plan (ADD LINK?) which will be stored securely and made available to the Lead Professional. Once the Transfer Plan is received by the Early Help and CAF Team the step down will be completed within the Liquid Logic system within 5 working days.

In these cases the Lead Professional will not be required to complete a CAF Assessment but should use the Transfer Plan to inform their TAF plan and intervention.

3.4 Step Down from Level 3 to Level 2 support

The decision to step down a case from TAF (level 3) to single agency support (level 2) or universal support (level 1) should be a multi-agency decision, where relevant agencies agree that needs have been met and this is the most appropriate course of action.

The final TAF meeting should confirm agreement of all agencies to step down from TAF to level 2 or level 1 services. If stepping down to a single support service (level 2) a contact professional should be identified who will act as named worker for the child and family. The Lead Professional should complete and submit a TAF Closure form to the Early Help & CAF Team (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/team-around-family-qa-tools/>)

If the TAF Closure form indicates that needs have not been met through the TAF intervention, an Early Help Social Worker will contact the Lead Professional and/or family to discuss alternative support arrangements.

Quality assurance of access to level 3 interventions is provided by the *Access to Early Help Quality Assurance Group*. Tools to support Lead Professionals to undertake CAF//TAF and apply quality assurance are available through Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/team-around-family-qa-tools/>)

3.5 Step Down from Level 2 to Universal services

It is the responsibility of individual agencies to decide the appropriate timing of step down from additional support to universal services. This decision should be based on the child's needs having been met through the additional support service. Agencies should undertake their own quality assurance to ensure that the services provided have been effective.

Click here for Wirral [Children's Procedures Guidance](#).

End

Step Up / Step Down Flowchart

