



## **Children and Learning Department**

### **Step-Up and Step-Down Procedure.**

#### **Background**

The purpose of this procedure is to support staff to achieve progression through the levels of support available to children and their families. The desired outcome is that all interventions are proportionate to the child's needs and at the optimum level to have the maximum impact and benefit for the child and their family, using resources in the most efficient manner. The child and family should experience the process as seamless and without delay. Key relationships should be maintained where this is in the child's best interest.

This document describes the transition arrangements that should be followed when a child's needs move from Universal Services to Early Help Services to Tier 4 statutory services, and vice versa. It should be read in conjunction with:

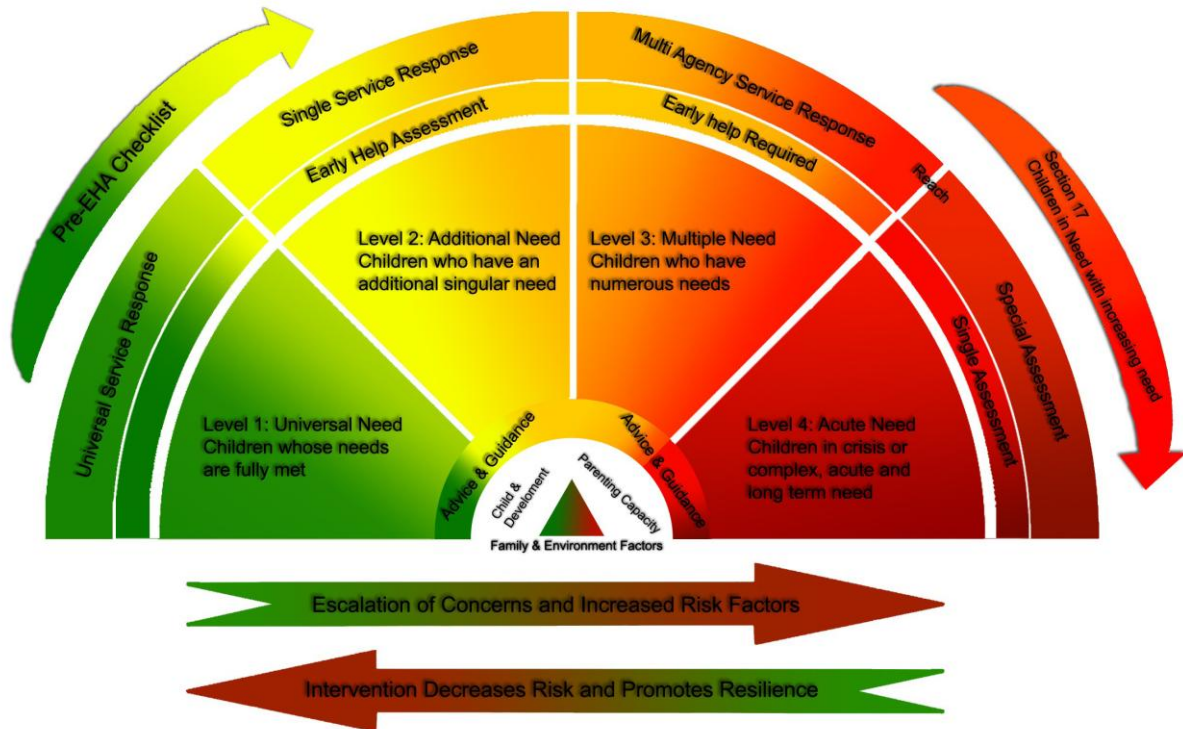
- The Thresholds Framework - Meeting the needs of Children, Young People and Their Families in Luton.
- Escalation Procedures (to resolve professional disagreements relating to the safeguarding of children and the escalation of professional concerns)

This procedure was originally devised by a multi-agency workshop and was introduced to the manual of procedures in January 2014. It was reviewed and updated at a subsequent workshop in October 2015.

#### **Introduction.**

Services for children and families should be provided on a continuum of help and support, which allows professionals to be flexible and respond to different levels of need for different children and families. Along the continuum of help and support from universal to specialist, services become increasingly targeted and specialised according to the level of need.

Children's needs are not static, and they may experience different needs, at different points on the continuum, throughout their childhood years. Step up / Step down processes can help improve outcomes for children by ensuring families experience a seamless transition from one level of service intervention to another.



This is the way in which a child and their family can move to and from a service provided by:

- *Universal Needs* provided by Universal Services.
- *Additional Needs/Multiple Additional Needs* provided by Prevention and Early Intervention Early Help Services, including the Early Help Assessment.
- *Specialist Needs and Safeguarding* provided by statutory (Tier 4) Services, including Child Protection (CP) and Children in Need (CIN).

This transition practice is referred to as the 'step-up' and 'step-down' procedure.

### **Step Up to Early Help from Universal Services.**

Initially, a Pre-Early Help Assessment can be completed by a single agency <http://intranet/Departments/ChildrenLearning/Knowledge%20hub/Early%20Help%20Strategy%202014-2017.docx> to identify if the child and their family have additional unmet needs. This brief assessment helps practitioners decide whether a full Early Help Assessment is necessary or if some other course of action (e.g. a Child Protection referral) is needed. It is an aid memoire for the practitioner and does not need to be shared with the child or their family.

In many cases a single need can be met within Universal Services. However, where there are additional needs, it is essential that a holistic Early Help Assessment (EHA) is carried out at the earliest opportunity so that different services are clear about the identified needs and clear how each service contributes to addressing these. The EHA is a tool for integrated multi-agency working. It is a holistic early help assessment of a child strengths and needs. It is completed with the child and their family to agree what the family and services can do jointly to address the child's needs.

The EHA provides a common method of assessment across children's services and other local services. It facilitates early identification of needs, leading to co-ordinated provision of services, involving a lead professional where appropriate, and sharing information to avoid the duplication of assessments.

### **When can a full Early Help Assessment be used?**

The Early Help Assessment

<http://intranet/Departments/ChildrenLearning/Knowledge%20hub/Early%20Help%20Strategy%202014-2017.docx> should be used when any single agency cannot meet the child's additional needs and:

- The child is not making the progress you would expect for their stage of development.
- There are concerns about how well the child is progressing in terms of their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of well-being.
- The child's needs are unclear or broader than a single agency can address.

### **What is an additional unmet need?**

Any need that cannot be met by a single agency universal service (e.g. school, GP, health visitor, midwife, early education, childcare).

### **What do I do with the assessment once it has been undertaken?**

Send it to the Early Help Assessment Team in Luton Borough Council Children and Learning Department.

### **Points to consider?**

When undertaking an EHA, practitioners need to be aware that it is an entirely voluntary process and should be only undertaken with the full consent of the child and their family. Practitioners also need to take into account that any information contained within the EHA is restricted to information that the family has consented to sharing and may therefore, not fully represent the family's circumstances.

An EHA does not replace a specialist assessment. If an EHA exists, the information in it can inform, contribute to and enhance a specialist assessment.

It is the expectation that an EHA approach will be taken to assess needs unless the child's presenting needs are so urgent or serious that they are at risk of significant harm then Luton's Child Protection Safeguarding procedures should be followed.

### **Step Up to Tier 4 Statutory Services from Early Help Services.**

*Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2015) sets out a clear expectation that local agencies will work together to identify children with additional needs and provide support as soon as a problem emerges. The provision of Early Help is known to be an effective tool in promoting the welfare of children and keeping them safe. This can prevent the need for more specialist services and address issues such as neglect at an earlier stage, thus allowing better outcomes for children. However,

professionals need to be clear about thresholds, and know what action to take, when they may need to escalate or step up any concerns. Professionals should refer to the *Thresholds Framework - Meeting the needs of Children, Young People and Their Families in Luton*.

There will be occasions, however, when it is not possible to respond to a child's needs through Early Help Prevention and Early Intervention Services e.g. when they are considered to be at risk of significant harm.

It is impossible to provide a definitive list of cases that should be stepped up and the professional judgement of those involved in the case will need to be used. However, these are the things to think about:

- **Who** can step things up? Professionals working with children and families.
- **What** information they should provide? Any assessment including an EHA or other specialist assessment.
- **Where** they should make the referral? All Step Up referrals should be directed to the Rapid Intervention and Assessment Team (RIAT) who will screen the referral and either deal with it, refer it on to a specialist service. The RIAT may decide that the referral does not meet their criteria for Children and Family Social Work Services in which case they will respond to the referrer and recommend what to do next.
- **When and why** they should step things up? When their analysis of the situation, including new, recurring or cumulative factors mean that the current support arrangements are no longer sufficient to meet the child's needs.

The Step Up process is detailed further at the end of this document.

### **Step Down to Early Help from Children and Families Social Work Services**

There will be times when intervention through Tier 4 statutory services is no longer considered necessary. However, support to address a child's additional needs may still be required and this is best achieved through the Early Help Service.

When children no longer need the support from the Children and Families Social Work Service, step down support should be put in place by the Early Help Service to ensure that the child and their family continue to receive the help that they need.

- **Who** can step things down from Tier 4 statutory services? Professionals working with children and families.
- **What can be stepped down?** Plans and assessments that indicate a need to move out of statutory interventions such as child protection or child in need interventions.
- **Where?** All Step Down referrals should be directed to the Early Help Team who will allocate it. The Early Help Team may decide that the referral does not meet their criteria for Early Help Services in which case they will respond to the referrer and recommend what to do next.
- **When and Why?** Cases will be stepped down to Early help at times when the child's need for specialist services has been resolved but help at a different point on the continuum of

need is still present. An example of this could include children who are no longer in need of a Child Protection Plan but who still need a service.

The Step Down process is detailed further at the end of this document.

### **Step-Up and Step-Down Principles.**

It is vital that at these points of transition, the child and family are offered a streamlined service that avoids duplication of assessment or services. This procedure aims to assist children and families whose needs move within the continuum of help and support and it aims to:

- Help families to have to tell their story once by avoiding duplication
- Ensure that key information and assessment conclusions and analyses are transferrable across services, including intervention plans.
- Have a timely transfer process with a prompt response- we are aiming for a seamless service
- Have clarity about who is the Lead Professional and to whom children and families can relate.

### **Resolving Professional Disagreements (Escalation).**

Luton has clear procedures to govern the processes to be followed when professionals disagree in relation to the safeguarding of children and the escalation of concerns. Disagreements are most likely to arise as a result of differing views of thresholds, lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities and the need for more effective communication.

Principles:

- The safety of individual children must be the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement.
- Disagreements should be resolved quickly and openly.
- The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner level between agencies, if necessary with the involvement of their managers.
- Attempts at resolution must be within a timeframe which clearly protects the children.
- Until any disagreement is resolved the case will remain with the worker currently allocated, and they will continue to work with the children and their family.

If professionals disagree in relation to step up or step down processes the Escalation Procedures (to resolve professional disagreements relating to the safeguarding of children and the escalation of professional concerns) should be followed.

Service Managers in Luton undertake case audits to establish whether the Step-Up and Step-Down arrangements are working in the way that is intended, ensuring a smooth transition between services and recognising the importance of cases being managed within the right team. These audits are reported as part of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance procedures.

**'Step Up' Process.**

1. All Early Help cases will be recorded within the Early Help module on Liquid logic .
2. An initial discussion between Team Managers/Deputy Team Managers in the Rapid Intervention Assessment Team and Prevention and Early intervention Early Help Team agree that the case meets the threshold and that tier 4 statutory support is needed for the family.
3. A detailed discussion takes place at the weekly Transfer Meeting and the final transfer decision is made. This decision will be clearly recorded on the child's case record as a "manager decision".
4. The Early Help Assessment is emailed to RIAT at [InitialAssessment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:InitialAssessment@luton.gov.uk)
5. Alternatively, if an urgent 'step up' is required a telephone call should take place between RIAT and Early Help Managers followed by the completion of a Multi-Agency Referral Form, <http://lutonlscb.org.uk/how.html> which should then be emailed to RIAT at [InitialAssessment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:InitialAssessment@luton.gov.uk) The appropriate Early Help staff will be invited to any subsequent Strategy Meeting.
6. At the transfer between services a joint visit, to include the Early Help and RIAT worker, will be organised by the Early Help worker currently holding the case.
7. If the assessment concludes that the case is to be 'stepped up' to Children and Families Social Work Services the Early Help Team will close the case after the 10 day assessment has been completed by RIAT. The case will be co-worked by both teams during this 10 day period.
8. If the assessment concludes the case is to be 'stepped down' again, this will be confirmed in a discussion between Team Managers/Deputy Team Managers in RIAT and Early Help within the 10 day period. The case will then be 'stepped down' and the updated Single Assessment emailed to Early Help.

### **'Step Down' Process**

1. RIAT will advise any referrer at contact if the case clearly doesn't meet thresholds for level 4 specialist services support and advise them to complete an Early Help Assessment.
2. All RIAT and Neighbourhood Team cases are recorded on Liquid logic.
3. The Single Assessment completed by RIAT should be emailed to Early Help at [EHA@luton.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:EHA@luton.gcsx.gov.uk) recommending 'step down'. This must include signed consent and agreement from the family to work with Early Help Services.
4. The Child In Need Plan, Care Plan completed by the statutory Neighbourhood Team should be emailed to Early Help at [EHA@luton.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:EHA@luton.gcsx.gov.uk) recommending 'step down'. This must include signed consent and agreement from the family to work with Early Help Services.
5. Early Help will email RIAT or the Neighbourhood Team administrators to confirm that the case has been received and allocated. If there are any concerns these will be discussed between Team Managers/Deputy Team Managers in Neighbourhood Team/RIAT and PEI Early Help.
6. If 'step down' is agreed the Neighbourhood/RIAT Manager will authorise the Assessment and start the Tier 4 case closure process.
7. At the transfer between services a joint visit, to include the Early Help Team and Neighbourhood Team/RIAT worker, will be organised by the Neighbourhood Team/RIAT worker currently holding the case.
8. When a Children and Families Social Work Neighbourhood Team transfer a case to the Early Help Service and within three months there is a re-emergence of the previous safeguarding concerns the case will return to the Children and Families Social Work team that made the original referral. If it is longer than three months, the 'step up' will be made to RIAT.