

# **CASE TRANSFER PROTOCOL ACROSS SWINDON CHILDRENS SERVICES**

**September 2018**

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## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this Protocol is to ensure the effective and efficient transfer of cases between Swindon Children Services Teams. Transfers should be timely; ensuring that children / families receive support with no gap in service provision, supported by the principle of 'no delay'.

Its purpose is also to ensure that:

1. There are no delays for families in receiving services
2. There are no unallocated cases across the services
3. Appropriate decision-making and plans are in place to support the transfer of cases to ensure children and families receive the appropriate level of service delivery, based on threshold and the level of identified need
4. Services / Partner Agencies are clear about where and when cases are transferred in accordance with consistent levels of threshold

This Protocol is supported and driven by the Weekly Transfer Meeting, chaired by a Service Manager.

## **2. Aims**

The main drive is to ensure that children and families are on the right plan and transferred to the right service to progress care planning and achieve improved outcomes for children. This will also reduce delays in planning for children at risk of significant harm or in need of permanency. This is a whole service protocol to ensure that services are provided at the right level; from early help to planning for permanency.

## **3. Transfer of Cases from MASH to the Assessment and Child Protection Team (ACP)**

The MASH team is responsible for the triage of cases and making threshold decisions about the next steps for a case within one working day.

The MASH Manager can make the decision that a case sits at level 3/4 and requires statutory social work intervention.

The case will be transferred to the Assessment and Child Protection Team (ACP). The case is transferred at the point that the MASH Manager progresses the case from contact to referral and the referral will be given an outcome of Statutory Assessment or strategy discussion. From this point, the ACP assume responsibility for the case.

Any strategy meetings will be chaired by an ACP Manager and they will decide if threshold is reached for a section 47 Children Act (s47) enquiry and whether or not it will be joint or single enquiry. If threshold is not reached for a s47 enquiry, the ACP Manager will determine the next steps.

Where a case reaches Level 4 threshold and it has been closed by the ACP team for less than thirteen weeks the case will be allocated back to the Team/Manager that closed the case by MASH.

Where a case reaches Level 4 threshold and has been closed to the Safeguarding Team for less than 13 weeks it will be allocated back to the team that closed the case. On all cases that are re-referred within the 13 week period it is the responsibility of the receiving manager to organise and plan the strategy discussion.

The Team Manager from MASH will consider the referral and determine the level of need. If the matter is considered Child in Need (CIN) / Child Protection (CP) then it will be referred directly to the relevant manager.

Where there are any disagreements in relation to threshold decisions, in the first instance the receiving Team Manager should discuss with the MASH Manager. If the difference cannot be resolved then cases should be escalated for a discussion to take place between Managers and finally Service Managers.

The Manager from MASH will record a clear rationale on cases where there has been challenge made to the original threshold decision that results in a threshold being changed.

#### **4. Transfer of Children in Need or Child Protection from the Assessment and Child Protection Team**

Cases appropriate to transfer from the Assessment and Child Protection Team to the relevant Locality Team will be as follows:

- Children who become subject to a Child Protection Plan at the Initial Child Protection Conference
- Children who are not made subject to a Child Protection Plan at the Initial Child Protection Conference but require services under a Child in Need Plan
- Children requiring ongoing support following a Section 47 Enquiry, that did not go to an Initial Child Protection Conference (e.g. where there is parental agreement) and the threshold for a Child in Need plan is met
- Children where a Statutory Assessment has been completed and recommends further social care intervention at Level 3 of the Swindon Threshold of Need document The Right Help at the Right Time, as the children will be facing complex and/or multiple needs which will require an integrated and co-ordinated response

#### **Child in Need Section 17 Cases**

If, as a result of a Statutory Assessment, the Assessment and Child Protection Team identifies an ongoing need for statutory social work intervention under a Child in Need Plan (S17 Children Act) in accordance with the Swindon Threshold Document (2018), this will be provided by the relevant Locality Teams.

The Assessment and Child Protection Team will include the case details on the Weekly Transfer Meeting spreadsheet prior to the meeting; with a synopsis of the case that is considered 'Transfer Ready'. A date for the first CIN meeting will be arranged and detailed on the spreadsheet. A Transfer checklist for the case must be completed and signed off by the relevant Manager.

The case will be discussed at the Weekly Transfer Meeting and the case accepted by the relevant Locality Team. The name of the receiving social worker will be provided by the Locality Team Manager at the meeting.

The case transfer will be undertaken at the first CIN meeting that will be arranged and chaired by the ACP Team and attended by the newly allocated Locality Team social worker. All professionals who are deemed necessary to support the transferring plan must be invited to attend the initial Child in Need Meeting by the Assessment and Child Protection Social Worker.

The minutes will be taken by the Assessment and Child Protection Team and written up, along with the plan, within 24 hours of the meeting.

The case will then be transferred on the system once the CIN meeting minutes have been completed and uploaded on the system. The aim is for this to take place 24 hours after the meeting has taken place.

## **Child Subject of a Child in Need Plan Transferring to Swindon from another Local Authority**

Where a child subject to a Child in Need Plan in another authority moves to Swindon, the referral will initially go to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The referral from the other local authority must include:

- Copies of an up to date assessment of each of the children in the family which clearly identifies the assessed need and any risk / areas of concern(s) to each child
- Copies of the minutes of all of the Child in Need Meetings and Child in Need Plans relating to the period for which the children have been subject to the plan
- Chronology / Genogram
- An up-to-date case summary setting out both the current situation and all relevant background information about the children

In the absence of any of the above paperwork, the MASH team must not accept the case responsibility.

If the case is considered to meet the Threshold Level 3 in accordance with the Swindon Threshold Document supported by all the requested documentation, MASH will alert the Manager of the relevant Locality Team for the identified geographical area.

## **Child Protection Cases**

If, as a result of a Section 47 Investigation /Statutory Assessment, the Assessment and Child Protection Team identifies an ongoing need for statutory social work intervention under a Child Protection Plan this will be provided by the Locality Teams from the ICPC.

The Assessment and Child Protection Team will include the case details on the Weekly Transfer Meeting spreadsheet prior to the meeting; with a synopsis of the case, providing notice (Flag up) to the relevant Locality Team that the Initial Child Protection Case Conference (ICPC) is due and the case is being prepared for transfer at that Conference.

A date for the ICPC will be arranged, in consultation with the Quality Assurance Business Support Team and detailed on the spreadsheet.

The Locality Team will consider allocation of the case at its next Weekly Allocations Meeting and the Locality Team Manager will provide the name of the new Social Worker at the next Weekly Transfer Meeting. A Transfer checklist for the case must be completed and signed off by the relevant ACP Manager before the day of the Conference.

The Assessment and Child Protection Team Social Worker will produce a report for the Initial Conference and ensure this is shared with the parents in advance and Chair of the Conference two days before the Conference.

If the name of the Locality Team Social Worker cannot be provided before the Conference, a Manager from the Locality Team will attend the Conference and accept transfer of the case on behalf of the Locality Team.

The case transfer will be undertaken at the Initial Child Protection Case Conference organised by the Assessment and Child Protection Team. This meeting will be chaired by an Independent Child Protection Chair and minutes taken by the Quality Assurance Business Support Team.

The case will then be transferred on the system to the Locality Team within 24 hours of the meeting having taken place.

If the Initial Conference is deferred, the Assessment and Child Protection Team will hold the case until the Conference can be reconvened.

If the decision from the Initial Child Protection Case Conference is that the child is not made subject to child protection plan then a SMART Child in Need Plan will be agreed at that point in the meeting. The Child Protection

Chair will ensure that an initial Child in Need Plan is made at the meeting. It is also expected that a date for the Child In Need Meeting will also be arranged within 10 days of the meeting and recorded in the plan / minutes.

### **Transfer 'In' Child Protection Conference**

When a family with children subject to a Child Protection Plan moves to Swindon, the originating authority should notify the MASH at the earliest opportunity. The MASH team will put the contact on the system and then progress to referral. The originating authority should provide MASH with the following documentation:

- Copies of an up-to-date assessment of each of the children in the family which clearly identifies the assessed need and any risk / areas of concern(s) for each child
- Copies of the minutes of all of the Child Protection Conferences relating to the period for which the children have been subject to the Child Protection Plan
- A copy of the Child Protection Plan and the most recent Core Group minutes (if available)
- Chronology / Genogram
- An up-to-date case summary, setting out both the current situation and all relevant background information about the children

MASH should notify the Quality Assurance Team immediately on receipt of the above information.

Within 15 working days of receiving a request for a Transfer In Case Conference and in receipt of the documentation referred to above, the Quality Assurance Business Support Officer should arrange a Transfer Child Protection Conference. Once this date is confirmed the information should be shared with the ACP Business Support Officers so that the case can be detailed on the transfer spreadsheet for the forthcoming meeting and early notification is made available to the Locality teams to assist with the allocation of the case.

At that Case Conference, Swindon Children's Services will formally accept case responsibility.

### **Transfer 'Out' Child Protection Conference**

Where a child on a Child Protection Plan moves out of Swindon, the above process should be followed and progressed by Swindon Children's Services as the originating authority.

## **5. Court Proceedings Transfer**

### **Court Proceedings Transfer**

If, following presentation of the case to the Care Panel, a decision is made that threshold has been met to escalate to Public Law Outline or care proceedings the following needs to take place:

- **Agreed Public Law Outline - Pre-Proceedings**

The case will remain with the allocated Social Worker until the Pre-Proceedings meeting, when the case will then transfer over to the appropriate Locality Team. These cases will be flagged to the relevant Locality team at the Weekly Transfer Meeting

The relevant Manager will chair the Pre-Proceedings Meeting, arranging the date for this meeting in consultation with the relevant legal and children's social care professionals.

The allocated Social Worker will complete the pre-Proceedings letter and ensure, overseen by the relevant Manager, that it is shared with the parent(s) within the agreed timescale; providing sufficient notice for parent(s) to seek legal advice.

If the meeting does not take place for whatever circumstances then the allocated social work team will continue to hold the case until the meeting can be reconvened.

- **Agreement to Initiate Care Proceedings**

If the Care Panel agrees that care proceedings should be initiated then if the case is being held by the Assessment and Child Protection Team the relevant locality team will be invited to the Legal Planning meeting and the case will transfer to the Locality team at the initial court hearing providing that the case is ready for transfer.

These cases will be flagged to the relevant Locality team at the Weekly Transfer Meeting

Social Workers from the transferring and receiving teams will need to attend court. Team Managers will attend as appropriate;

## **6. Unborn children**

The MASH will accept referrals in respect of the unborn child as early as the first booking appointment should concerns arise. If a professional working with the mother has concerns for the unborn child and /or the mother, a referral should be made for additional support at any point during pregnancy.

All referrals made to MASH beyond the first 12 weeks of pregnancy or those 'stepped up' from Early Help Intervention, where there is a risk that the unborn child's safety and welfare may be compromised upon arrival, will be accepted by MASH.

Upon receipt of a referral, the MASH will decide on and record the next steps of action within one working day. This will include making a decision on whether or not to share/ gather information with/from other agencies. MASH will undertake a risk assessment at this point

Decisions will take account of referral information, information held in existing records, discussions with the family (where possible and appropriate) and information provided by other professionals or services as deemed necessary.

The MASH Team Manager will review the information and decide what further action is needed.

MASH will accept cases at 12 weeks of pregnancy where there are concerns which identify potential risk to the unborn. These cases will be referred across to the Assessment and Child Protection Team for a Statutory Assessment which should be completed within a maximum of 15 days. If a decision from the assessment is to progress to a Pre-birth Assessment the case will transfer to the Locality Team to complete the assessment.

On completion of the Pre-birth Social Work Assessment one of the following options can be applied:

- No further action
- Step down to the Early Help Services
- Provision of Child in Need Services
- Convening of an Initial Child Protection Conference
- Recommendation to present to the Care Panel with a view to initiate PLO or Care Proceedings. This may warrant seeking removal from the birth parent(s)

The completion of the Pre-birth Social Work Assessment will inform the ongoing level of intervention of the case in accordance with assessed threshold of need and any presenting risks.

## **7. Emergency and Police Protection Orders**

The Assessment and Child Protection Team / Locality Team Social Worker will take the lead in respect of work around Police Protection (PPO's) and Emergency Protection Orders (EPO's).

In emergency situations (EPO) the allocated Social Worker will complete the necessary paperwork and work with the legal team to present the case to the Court. The case must be presented to the Weekly Transfer Meeting at the earliest opportunity to enable a decision to be made as to the appropriate team for transfer and at the appropriate time. If the case is to progress to an Interim Care Order then a Social Worker from the Locality Team will be available to attend the Initial Court Hearing for the transfer to take place.

## **8. Section 7 and Section 37 Court Reports and Transfer of Supervision Order cases**

Notifications from the Court for Section 7 and 37 Reports should be transferred from the MASH to the relevant Locality Team for allocation of a social worker to complete the report. Transfer of Supervision Order cases should transfer from the MASH to the relevant Locality team

## **9. Alleged Relinquished Children**

All cases involving the 'alleged' relinquishing of a child will transfer from MASH to the relevant Locality team for an assessment to be completed and appropriate action taken to ensure that there is minimum delay for the child

## **10. No Recourse to Public Funds Families**

Cases will initially be screened by the MASH Service and, if deemed to meet the duty of the Local Authority in accordance with the Practice Guidance for Local Authorities 'Assessing *and Supporting Children and Families with No Resource to Public Funds*', the case will be transferred over to the Assessment and Child Protection Team for a social worker to undertake the necessary assessment.

If the assessment identifies safeguarding concerns in respect of the care / parenting provided to the child(ren), then the case will be presented to the Weekly Transfer Meeting and transfer agreed to the relevant Locality Team, determined by the outcome of the assessment and the assessed needs.

## **11. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Trafficked Children**

Cases will initially be screened by the MASH Team and will process all UASC Referrals within 1 working day. The outcome of UASC Referrals will be:

- Classified as UASC
- Social Work Assessment

If UASC is **under** 18 years old the case will be allocated to the Assessment and Child protection Team for a Social Work Assessment. The case will be progressed and transferred at the Weekly Transfer Meeting in accordance with the outcome of the assessment; (*Locality Team; Leaving Care Team*).

## **12. Private Fostering Notifications**

These cases will be referred into MASH, screened and transferred across to Assessment and Child Protection Team to complete a Single Assessment in respect of the child and the presenting family situation.

If there are no identified safeguarding concerns or risks raised that meet threshold for further statutory intervention; Level 3 / 4 in accordance with the Threshold Document, then the case will be transferred over to the Private Fostering Lead at the Weekly Transfer Panel on completion of the Single Assessment.

If the assessment identifies safeguarding concerns at Level 4 of the Threshold Document, which is considered to require further intervention from social care under a Child Protection Plan, then the Assessment Child Protection Team will complete the Strategy Discussion, undertake the Section 47 Enquiry and present the case to the convened Initial Child protection Conference, at which point it will transfer across the appropriate Locality Team.

If the assessment identifies multiple or complex needs considered to meet level 3 of the Threshold Document and the recommendation is for services to be provided under Child in Need Procedures (Section 17), the case will be transferred over to the appropriate Locality Team at the Weekly Transfer Meeting.

When the identified concerns / risks have reduced and the child is considered no longer in need of statutory intervention, the case will be closed to the Locality Team and transferred across to the Private Fostering Lead to hold the case and continue to deliver a service in accordance with the Private Fostering Regulations.

## **13. Children Looked After**

If a child becomes a child in care when allocated within the Assessment and Child Protection Team the case should be transferred to the relevant Locality Team at the first Children Looked After Review.

The case must be presented to the Weekly Transfer Meeting supported by a completed Transfer Checklist to ensure the case is 'Ready for Transfer'. This must be signed off by the relevant Manager and a copy placed on the child's record.

Good practice should be supported by a joint handover visit by the transferring and receiving Social Worker to support the transition plan and ensure the child is included in the planning.

The receiving Locality Manager will accept the case at the appropriate point of transfer take responsibility to remove the transferring team involvement on the child's file and place a Manager's entry onto the case notes detailing that transfer has taken place.

## **14. Early Help Step Up and Step Down Process**

### **Social Care Step Up / Step Down Process**

**'STEP UP'**: A service request is made to Children Social Care via the MASH for a child currently supported under an Early Help Record and Plan (EHRP).

A child / young person who has been assessed via an EHRP and is being supported by the Early Intervention may need a service from a Social Care Team. This could be because the child's needs have changed or escalated

If a concern is identified that raises the threshold to Level 3 or 4 a MASH referral should be completed. Being clear about thresholds will avoid unnecessary requests or assessments (please refer to the Right Help at the Right time

document January 2018) saving time and resources in both services. It also avoids subjecting children and families to these processes unnecessarily.

Consent should be sought by referring agencies from the family prior to a step up request, unless it is not possible to obtain consent and delay would be detrimental, or unless seeking consent would place the child at increased risk of significant harm. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with the MASH Manager.

For all Step Up requests, the MASH referral form RF1 should be completed and sent with an up-to-date EHRP action plan, and any relevant TAC minutes to the MASH team.

If the case is allocated for a Statutory Assessment in the Assessment and Child Protection Team, a social worker will contact the family and partner agencies already involved with the child. Any services provided by Early Help professionals should continue while the Assessment is carried out;

If the outcome of the assessment is that a S47 Enquiry should be conducted the outcome of this will determine future action which could be:-

- Threshold for an Initial Child Protection Case Conference is met from the 'Step Up' then Assessment and Child Protection Team will invite the relevant Early Help professionals to the Conference.
- The child is assessed to be 'in need' and statutory services need to be provided, the allocated Social Worker in the Assessment and Child Protection Team will bring the case to the Weekly Transfer Meeting

**'STEP DOWN'**: A service request is made to wider Early Help for a child currently supported by Children's Social Care (an open case).

Children's social care should always aim to reduce their involvement as the children / family's needs become met. Families, children and young people identified by Children Social Care for potential step down to early help will be identified at the earliest opportunity as part of ongoing case reviews.

Social workers will consider all options for step down, including universal service providers. Step downs will only be accepted into early help where the level of need has been reduced to meet the criteria as set out in the Swindon LSCB Right Help at the Right Time Guide 2018.

Once a decision to step down a family, child or young person has been made, consent of the family to work with Early Help Service must be sought by the allocated Social Worker.

***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.***

The allocated Social Worker will ensure the case is 'Transfer Ready' and provide the Early Help Lead professional with information that describes the family's needs. This should include:

- A recent / updated assessment
- CIN plan
- Decision & Chair's report from final CP review (if appropriate)
- Specialist assessment or other relevant supporting information

Where a case is being stepped down from an existing Child in Need Plan, the Social Worker will convene a final Child in Need Meeting which will also serve as the step down Meeting. The Social Worker will inform the family and other professionals. This meeting should identify a new lead professional and produce the basis of an Early Help Plan.

## 15. Children with Disabilities

A referral will be received by the MASH.

The Children with Disabilities Team will work with disabled children as defined by the Equality Act (2010) definition of disability:

'A physical or mental impairment which has a **substantial** and **long term** adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

**Substantial** – means considerable or significant factors that are life changing or limiting, and might include risks associated with the disability or dependency.

**Long Term** - means a disability that is existing indefinitely and diagnosed, the condition is not likely to improve. However the Children with Disabilities Team will ensure sufficient flexibility to take into account intermittent or episodic conditions.

This can be family support under S17, safeguarding under S47 and children looked after under S20 or S31.

If considered to meet the Criteria for the Children with Disabilities Team then this case would pass to the Children with Disabilities Team for allocation.

If an allocated child within the Children with Disabilities Team is considered at risk of significant harm and threshold met to convene a Strategy Discussion or convene a Section 47 investigation then this will be progressed by the child's allocated social worker within the team and progressed in accordance with child protection procedures based on assessed risk and the priority to safeguard the child.

If a referral is received from MASH in respect of a child that meets the eligibility criteria and is an unallocated case then the MASH team is responsible for making threshold decisions about the next steps within one working day.

The MASH Manager will make the decision that a case sits at level 4 and requires statutory social work intervention.

The case is transferred to the Children with Disabilities Team at the point that the MASH Manager progresses the case from contact to referral. The referral will be given an outcome of Single Assessment or strategy discussion. From this point, the Children with Disabilities Team will assume responsibility for the case.

Any strategy meetings will be chaired by a Team Manager in the Children with Disabilities Team and they will decide if threshold is reached for a section 47 enquiry and whether or not it will be joint or single enquiry. If threshold is not reached for a section 47 enquiry, the Children with Disabilities Team Manager will determine the next steps.

Where a case reaches Level 4 threshold and it has been closed by the Children with Disabilities team for less than three calendar months, then MASH will allocate the case back to the Team that closed the case.

If the primary reason for allocation is the disability of one child then his / her siblings would also be worked within the Children with Disabilities Team. The principle is that all children in one family wherever possible should be held by the same Social Worker or, if this is not possible, within the same team.

## 16. Leaving Care

The relevant Locality Team will inform the Care Leavers Team of all young people aged 15 ½ years olds to ensure that the Care Leavers Team are aware of young people who will be transferring to them. The allocated social worker will complete all of the documentation needed as per the Transfer standards detailed in section 19 below. The Locality team manager will quality assure the case to ensure that it complies with the practice standards

The Locality social worker will complete the young person's Needs Assessment and forward to the Care Leavers Team Manager who will allocate a social worker and personal advisor to work with the locality social worker to work on the Pathway Plan with the young person.

There will be a Hand over meeting held with young person which will include the transferring social worker and the workers allocated within the Care Leavers Team. The agreed transfer point for young people to transfer to the Care Leavers Team is the Child Looked After review after the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Prior to the young person transferring to the Care Leavers Team the transferring social worker will notify all involved professionals of the case transfer

## **17. Closed Cases that are re-referred**

Any case re-referred to MASH less than 13 weeks from closure (the date of closure recorded on ICS) will be transferred to the last team that was allocated for a decision regarding future action needed. If a case is re-referred over 13 weeks from closure this will be processed by MASH and a decision made as to what further action is needed.

## **18. Escalation Process**

In the event of disagreement between services and teams within Children's Social Care in relation to the transfer of cases, discussion should be informed, documented and focused on the safety, development and best interest of the child or young person; This process should be held at team manager level initially but if the issue cannot be resolved it should be escalated to the Service Managers.

## **19. Case Transfer Standards Handover**

**It is good practice for there to be a joint visit by the transferring social worker and the new social worker**

To enable an effective transfer of a case, the allocated social worker and their line manager must ensure that the following actions have been undertaken:-

- A **transfer summary** should be produced setting out the updated case information and highlighting the key issues and actions needed including a management analysis. This should be on ICS at the time of case transfer.
- All case recording is up to date
- All Contact details for the family and involved professionals should be correct at time of transfer
- Supervision records are up to date
- Any financial agreements should be up to date and recorded within the transfer summary
- An updated and analytical **chronology**.
- A **genogram**
- An up to date and completed **assessment** signed off by the transferring Team's Manager and all relevant children in the family and feedback provided to the family and referrer as appropriate.
- A completed and relevant Plan detailing what needs to happen and setting out clear desired outcomes.
- If a child protection situation a clear and SMART safety plan should be recorded
- A copy of all current **Legal Orders** should be included on the file. In the case of a looked after child a copy of their birth certificate.
- All documentation should be signed off by the transferring social worker and their line manager prior to transfer.

### **Looked after children cases**

The case file should include the following:-

- A statutory assessment
- Placement Plan

- Care Plan/Pathway Plan (where appropriate)
- Review of Arrangements
- Contact Arrangements
- Medical Consent
- Date of Health review
- Date of Personal Education Plan
- Delegated Authority information

Prior to case transfer the case should be quality assured by the supervising manager to ensure that the case record complies with the practice standards listed above

It is the responsibility of the transferring team to ensure that all actively involved agencies, professionals and family members are notified of the case transfer and the name and contact details of the newly allocated worker and team.