



Family Support and Children's Social Care Guidance

1. Introduction

This protocol sets out how the City wide Family Support service will work together with Children's Social Care to ensure that children and families receive a seamless service at the right level, as set out in 'Right Help Right Time'. The principles and standards contained within Birmingham Children's Trust 'Our Support to Children and Families' document should be applied to these more detailed step up and step down arrangements.

The criteria for a Family Support service, incorporates Birmingham's Think Family categories (Nationally DCLG 'Troubled Families') and applies to families who have additional needs (level 3) under 'Right Help Right Time' and who agree to work with family support. Family Support teams adopt a whole family integrated approach that includes: completion of an assessment (fCAF/Early Help Assessment), an Individual Support Plan (ISP) containing multi-agency activity co-ordinated by a dedicated lead worker, use of evidence based interventions, a focus on outcomes as set out in the Think Family Outcomes Plan.

The Service is available to families with one or more child under 18 where a child and their family have needs that require an intensive or substantial package of support, but the child and family needs and concerns can be managed without the need for statutory social work intervention.

Professionals can access this service through completing the *Think Family Request for Support Form*, which identifies the family problem areas. The form is sent to our triage arrangements in line with our Think Family procedures*.

2. Working Principles

- Family Support (FS) and Children's Social Care (CSC) will work together collaboratively and flexibly, seeking to support each other in their work with children and families.
- Family Support (FS) and Children's Social Care (CSC) are stand-alone services, both part of the Early Help and children's social care service.
- Family Support is a Level 3 service within Birmingham's 'Right Help Right Time' Framework
- Children's Social Care has a statutory responsibility to provide support to Children in Need (including children with disabilities), Children in Need of protection and children in care; this work is at Level 4 of RSRT.
- Family Support works in a holistic way with families with multiple difficulties whose needs do not require formal statutory (level 4) intervention. The aim is to support families to make positive changes in their lives to improve the well-being of children and other family members, and reduce the need for level 4 service from CSC or partners.



- Family Support also delivers Birmingham's Think Family Programme (National 'Troubled Families' programme), which attracts 'Payment by Results' funding and has extended its phase 1 criteria (criminal behaviour, school attendance and unemployment) in Phase 2 to families affected by domestic violence or abuse; parents and children with a range of health problems; and children who need help.
- Family Support will work with families who want help to improve their lives, including families who have already received support from children's social care and their level of need (and the associated risks) has reduced so they can now be supported with Level 3 provision. FS Teams will work with children and families who have "stepped-down" from Children In Need (CiN) plans in ASTI or Safeguarding, or Child Protection plans (after a 3 month period as CiN) from Safeguarding teams, or who have returned home from care and had 3 months on a CiN plan in CiC team.
- The aim of work with these families is to avoid a return to previous patterns of behaviour that would require a revolving-door response back to children's social care or other Level 4 services.
- In some cases, as part of a Child Protection Plan / Child in Need plan, Family Support may work alongside the child's social worker to deliver a time-limited and specific parenting intervention. In these cases, the social worker continues with case-holding responsibility for the child's plan.

3. **STEP UP and STEP DOWN between FAMILY SUPPORT and CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

All step up/step down arrangements should be by consensus between Team Managers

Step Up

It is important that there is very clear and open communication between Family Support and Children's Social Care so that children who require social work intervention, especially where there is a likelihood of significant harm, receive that without undue delay. Step Up processes will cover instances where children of families allocated to Family Support who need a child in need plan because of significantly impaired development or are likely to or are suffering significant harm.

It has been agreed in 'Our Support to Children and Families' document that all Step up arrangements will be through the nominated ASTI Team Manager and the Family Support Team Manager.

There will be regular weekly meetings in each Area between the nominated ASTI Manager/s and the Family Support Team Managers (or Practice Supervisors) to discuss any cases of concern that might need to be stepped up to CSC. The ASTI Team



Manager will satisfy themselves that a step up is required and agree which team will best meet the child's needs. This will include the case returning to the previous allocated social worker if it is within a month of step down.

The weekly meetings will be held at New Aston House, Lifford House and Sutton New Road. Each Area will agree nominated ASTI leads for these meetings.

The FS Team Manager can consult with the CSC team manager or ASTI Manager at any time between meetings to discuss any particular cases.

Where FS are working with a family and a serious child protection incident occurs or there is evidence of significant harm, the case should be discussed immediately between the Family Support Team Manager and the ASTI Team Manager. The ASTI Team Manager will take the lead in agreeing what action to take and by whom. Cases will pass to ASTI without delay whenever section 47 enquiries/ strategy meeting are required.

Where the decision is to step up a case, FS will close the case on the system and an A1 will be completed.

Where it is agreed that there are specific time-limited interventions that FS can deliver and FS have the capacity to do so, the ASTI or Safeguarding allocated social worker will continue to be the primary/key worker.

Step Down

The regular meeting between FS and ASTI Team Managers is also a forum to discuss cases allocated to Safeguarding, CiC or ASTI that can be 'Stepped Down', where families agree, to Family Support. However cases can be discussed between Managers and 'Stepped Down' outside these weekly meetings to prevent unnecessary journeys across the City.

It is important that cases are only stepped down where no further CSC involvement is needed or appropriate, the CiN plan has been completed along with a case closure/ transfer summary and the family has consented to the Family Support service.

Step-down is particularly useful for families in need of on-going holistic support such as after a child has returned home or after child protection issues have been addressed and significantly diminished and a subsequent child's CIN plan has finished.

Where cases are stepped down from CSC, they will normally be closed to CSC; however it is good practice to arrange a handover joint home visit beforehand.



The Family Support Team Manager will satisfy themselves that cases are appropriate for Step Down and the Birmingham Request for Support form (Think Family) should be used as a checklist for specifying the interventions required and to ensure the family is included in the Think Family programme. The Family Assessment and current/last CiN plan will be shared with FS staff, for information and to inform future work.

**The Think Family Request for Support documentation and process, and Think Family Support Offer document outlining services and interventions available across the Think Family Programme are both available on the Birmingham Childrens Safeguarding Board website.*