



**THE PRE-BIRTH INTERVENTION SERVICE
REFERRAL CRITERIA AND PROCESS**

Purpose of the team

The Pre-Birth Intervention service was re-established in Durham's Families First (FF) Service in May 2018.

The model and ambition of the of the team is to enable babies to remain with their parents, or at least within the birth family where it is safe to do so. This is achieved by completing as much work as possible before the baby is born and by ensuring that the parents receive intensive support to help them to achieve sustainable change. Where this is not in the best interests of the child, then the ambition is to ensure that the baby is permanently placed with alternative carers as soon as is possible after birth and to reduce the number of carers the child experiences.

Social Workers work alongside Early Help Practitioners (EHP) from the One Point Service. Together they deliver intensive assessment and support, with the aim of enabling parents to safely care for their children or gather evidence to make timely decisions in relation to permanence plans.

A review of the criteria of the PBIS was undertaken at the end of 2019 which highlighted the complexity of the work; a large proportion of the team were working with parents who were resistant to the intensive 20-week pre-birth intervention programme and parents showed very little capacity for change. It was clear that the intervention had deviated from the original intention and referrals were accepted whether meaningful consent was given by parents or not. Further work has recently been undertaken to look at which vulnerable groups of parents would benefit from the intensive package of support on offer.

Criteria

The team will work with the following groups:

- Teenage mothers under 16 who are still in full time education;
- All care leavers up to the age of 25, who are currently permanently resident in Durham, and where the unborn meets the requirement for a statutory pre-birth assessment;
- Parents who have had a previous child removed through care proceedings, where there is evidence of some positive change of circumstances.

For a referral to be accepted into the team, the following additional criteria must apply:

- The referral must be made prior to 21 weeks gestation, and
- Meaningful consent must have been given by the parents.

The Referral Process

When a referral is received into First Contact and the receiving worker feels it meets the criteria for the pre-birth team they will have a conversation with the team manager or social work consultant to advise of this. If neither are available, then the operations manager is to be contacted.

If it meets the criteria it will be sent to the Liquid Logic Pre-Birth Team work tray. The team manager will allocate to a duty worker in the team who will make contact and visit within 5 days. This is because planned time is required to visit the family, evidence attempts made to engage them in the process and ensure that they are fully aware of what the pre-birth offer

involves. It will allow preparation time for background information building, developing the worker's best questions, exploring family networks and informed decision making, both on the part of the worker and the family.

The Proportionate Assessment

The pre-birth social worker will use their SOS mapping tool which incorporates their best questions. This will help to ensure that the family have meaningfully consented and are willing to fully engage in the intensive 20 week intervention programme on offer, as well as to establish that there has been some evidence of positive change, if the parents have had previous children who are not in their care. However there may be occasions during this process where it becomes clear that the family aren't engaging, or there hasn't been positive change, and that the unborn needs to be transferred to the Families First team. If this is the case, the proportionate assessment will be completed to provide robust evidence as to why the pre-birth intervention would not be appropriate, and dependent on the level of contact made with the family, and information provided, where possible it will identify a clear plan going forward for the receiving team.

This proportionate assessment will be completed in as timely a manner as possible and can take up to 25 days. The pre-birth team will always aim to complete the proportionate assessment before the 23rd week, where a decision will be made as to whether the case remains within the pre-birth team or whether it needs to transfer to Families First to allow the full pre-birth assessment to be started at 23 weeks. If a decision is made for the case to transfer then the team manager will contact the relevant Families First locality team manager to arrange case transfer.

If it is too late at this point to transfer (beyond the 23rd week) but there are real issues regarding a lack of engagement from the parents, the pre-birth team would keep the case but the full pre-birth intervention package would not continue to be offered and the case would be managed in a similar way to other Families First pre-birth cases.

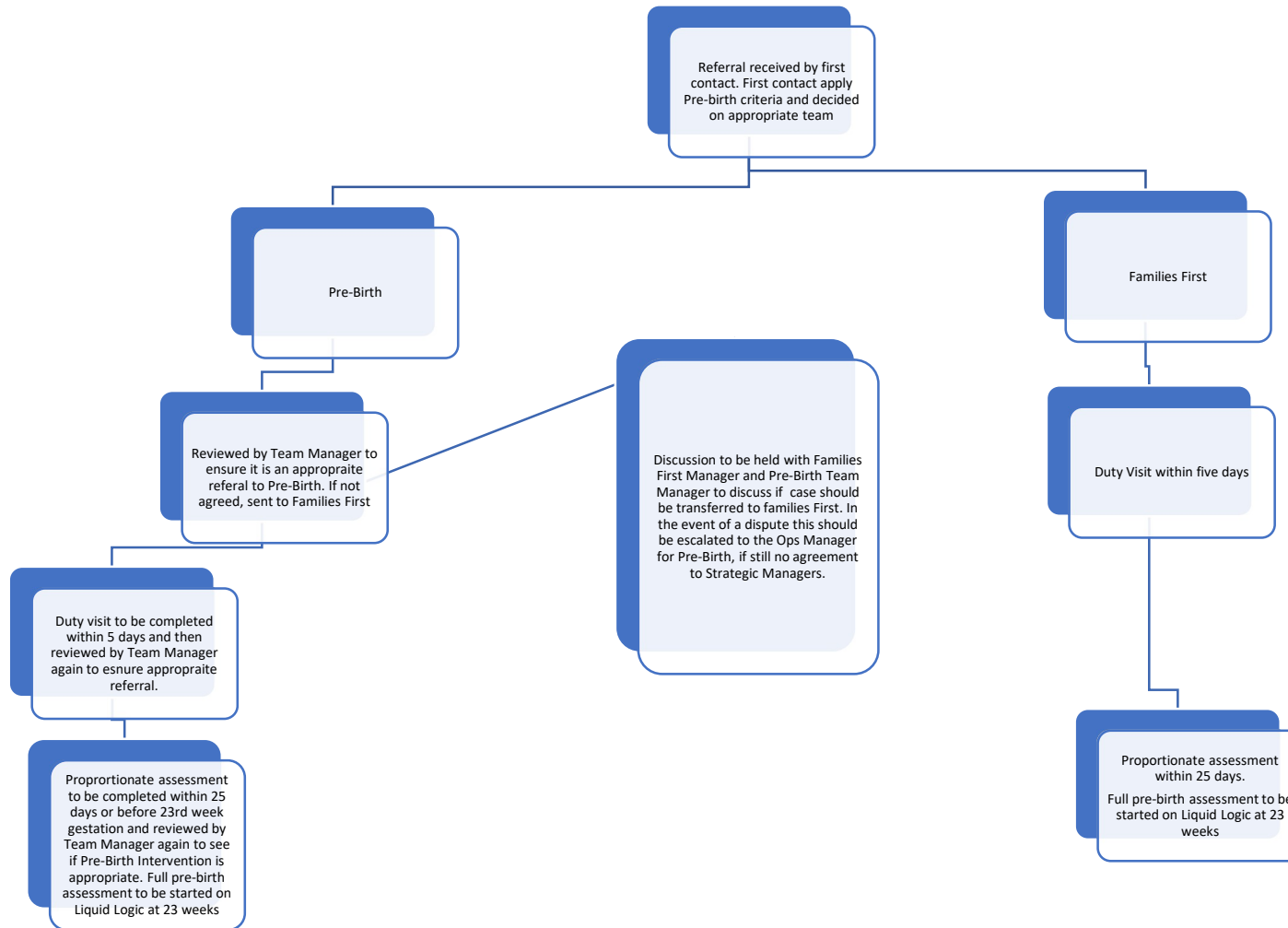
Resolution Process

If there is a disagreement between the Families First and Pre-Birth team managers in relation to a proposed transfer and they cannot reach agreement on where the case should sit, then in the first instance this should be escalated to the Operations Manager for the Pre-Birth team. If a resolution still cannot be reached then the 2 relevant strategic managers will discuss the case and come to an agreement about case responsibility.

Completed by Jo Levie, Operations Manager

March 2021

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