



Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Step Up / Step Down Policy

Children's Social Care and
Early Help and Prevention

June 2021



Policy Information Sheet	
Service Area	Children's Social Care and Early Help and Prevention
Date effective from	June 2021
Responsible Officer	Service Managers CiN/CP and Service Manager CEFS
Date for Review	June 2022
Status	Mandatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (all staff name must adhere to guidance) • Optional (Procedures and practice can vary between teams) 	
Target Audience	All children and families' staff All partner agencies
Related Document(s)	Pan Cheshire Multi Agency Escalation Policy – see CESCP website
Superseded Documents	Step Up to Children's Social Care/Step Down to Early Help March 2016 Step Up/Step Down Policy 2019 Step Up/Step Down Policy June 2020
Equality Impact Assessment	Checklist completed – see over
Date of Approval	

Type of Document	Policy	X	Standard Operating Procedure		Guideline	
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Document control

Version no	Type of change	Date	Description of change

If you have any comments or views on this document, please contact us at childrensdevelopmentandpartnerships@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) must be completed whenever you plan, change, or remove a service, policy or function. They should be an **integral** part of continuous service planning and policy development. For further details and guidance on completing EIAs please see [here](#).

EIA Checklist

Equality Impact Assessment			
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:	Yes /No	Comments
	Race	NO	
	Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	NO	
	Nationality	NO	
	Gender	NO	
	Culture	NO	
	Religion or belief	NO	
	Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	NO	
	Age	YES	Service is for children age 0-18 (18-25 for SEND)
	Disability-learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	NO	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	NO	
	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	YES	
3	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	NO	
a	If yes can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
b	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy / guidance without the impact?	N/A	
c	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action	N/A	

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Signs of Safety

In Cheshire East, we use Signs of Safety as our way of working with families. This model of practice is based on therapeutic thinking that encourages working with children, young people and families to build on their strengths, empowering them to better manage the risks and challenges they may face now and in the future. The Signs of Safety approach underpins this policy and how we work in Cheshire East.

Executive Summary

This policy outlines the process for stepping cases up to Children's Social Care (CSC) and for stepping cases down to the wider Early Help services and partnerships.

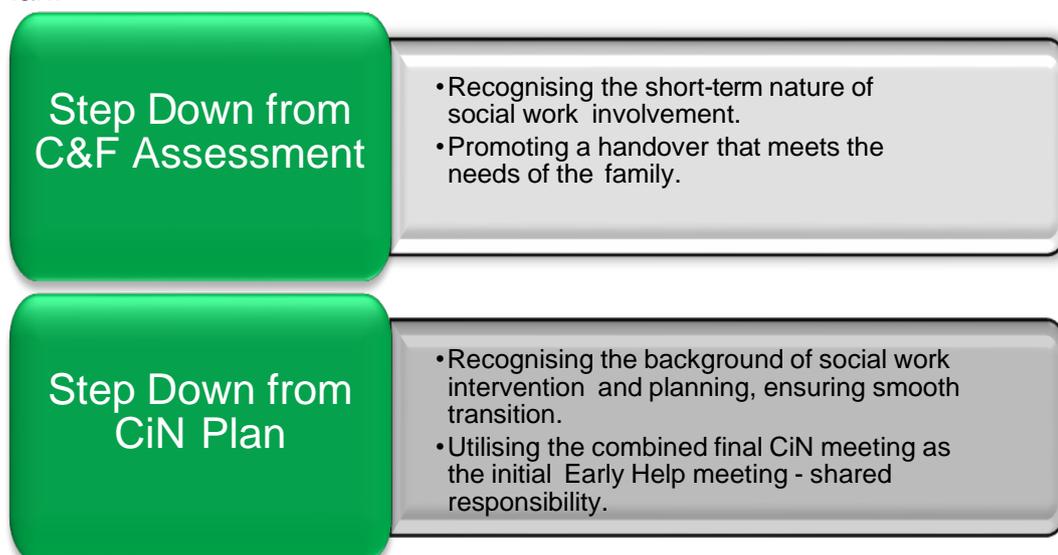
1. Purpose, Scope, Aims and Vision

- 1.1 The interface between Early Help Services and Children's Social Care is an essential component of a robust service for children and families ensuring they receive the right help at the right time. The pathways between these two approaches are key to ensuring all children are safe, wherever they are within Cheshire East's levels of need.
- 1.2 The pathways between the Levels of Need, particularly the interface between Levels 3 and 4 on the [Cheshire East Levels Of Need Framework](#), must be simple and seamless with roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability explicit and clear management oversight.
- 1.3 This policy details what is required of staff within the Children's Social Care and the Early Help multi-agency workforce. It includes the whole of Children's Services and all partners who may be involved in Early Help at the Targeted/Complex level of need.
- 1.4 Decision-making should always be child and family focused. The child's needs should be kept paramount and the policy should be used as guidance for decision-making.
- 1.5 Safeguarding procedures will always remain paramount. If a child was at risk, or believed to be at risk, individual safeguarding procedures must be followed and ChECS (Cheshire East Consultation Service) must be contacted in the usual way:
 - Contact ChECS on 0300 123 5012.
 - Out of office hours call our Emergency Duty Team on 0300 123 5022.
- 1.6 The relevant screening tool needs to be completed to inform decision-making, whether the case is stepping up or stepping down. Please refer to the [Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership \(CESCP\) Online Procedures](#) for further details.

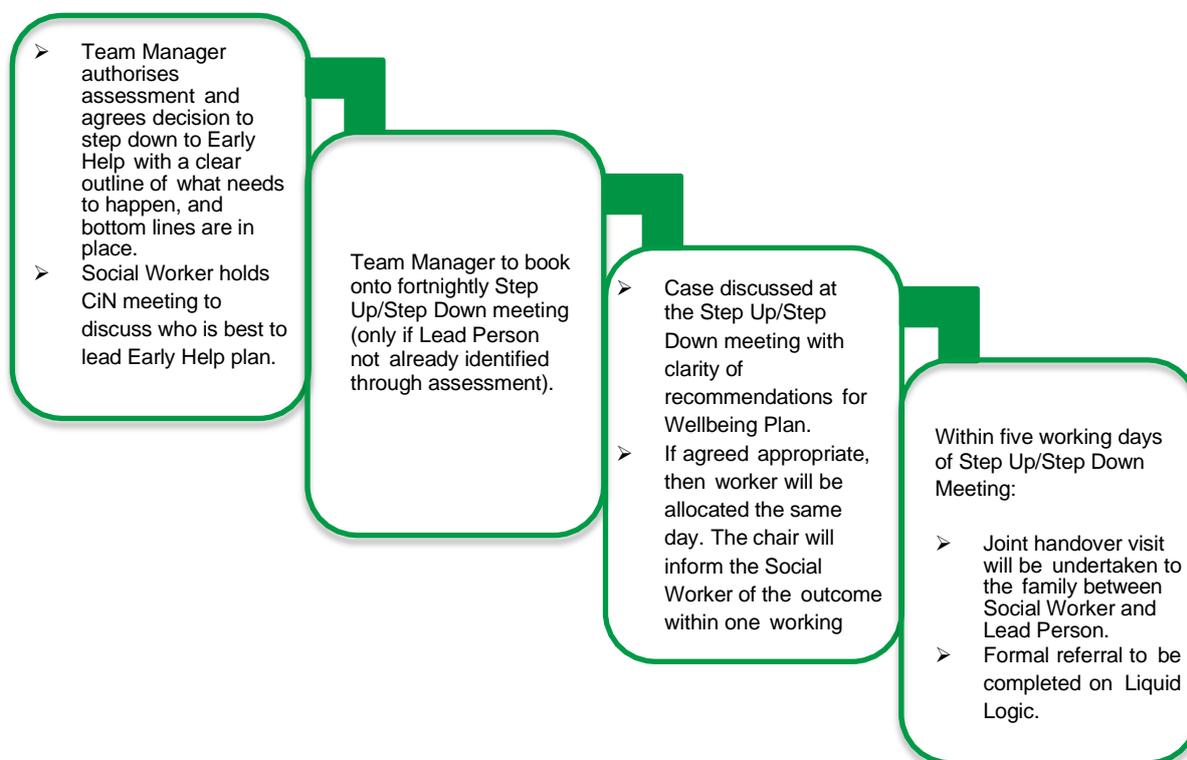
- 1.7 The Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit has been developed to support practitioners to undertake effective assessments that enable them to accurately identify appropriate cases in need of early help or onward referral to Children's Social Care. The tools included should also be used to review the effectiveness of the support plans that are in place and the outcomes for the child/ren.
- 1.8 Using the assessments early in intervention will hopefully support positive outcomes for children, meaning onward referral may not be required. However, should a case need referral, professionals will be expected to evidence why a threshold has been met despite appropriate intervention. The assessments included in the toolkit will provide a record of evidence for this purpose.

2. Children's Social Care to Early Help and Prevention Step Down Pathways

- 2.1 The Step Down Pathways from Children's Social Care to Early Help have been developed to promote both a consistency and clarity of practice across the continuum. In particular, they seek to recognise that children and families are more likely to engage and respond to intervention, working with professionals to improve outcomes, where they have a positive relationship with the professional and understand the worries held.
- 2.2 The Step Down Pathways seek to enable practitioners across Children's Social Care and Early Help to work together to reduce families receiving statutory intervention and to promote early support in order to work with families to improve outcomes, ensuring families do not remain open to statutory intervention longer than necessary.
- 2.3 The Step Down Pathways have been split into two specific sections to reflect key differences for step down from Children's Social Care to an Early Help professional where families will benefit from continued support via a Wellbeing Plan.



a) Step Down from Children and Families (C&F) Assessment



Principles and Practice Expectations

2.4 C&F Assessment completed, decision in supervision to step down, with family's consent:

- Allocated Social Worker completes C&F Assessment and final supervision records decision to step down to Early Help.
- Assessment analysis should make clear recommendations regarding 'wellbeing' plan for Early Help Lead and why they are the most appropriate person to take on the plan.
- Allocated Social Worker will hold a Child in Need (CiN) meeting and try to identify the most appropriate person to lead the Early Help Plan. Support can be requested from the Locality Support Officer (LSO).
- If there is no agreement regarding identifying the lead for the plan from those professionals involved in the assessment, then the [Escalation Policy](#) should be followed as necessary.

2.5 If no Lead Person is identified through assessment, the case is to be booked onto a Step Up/Step Down meeting, allocated Social Worker remains case manager.

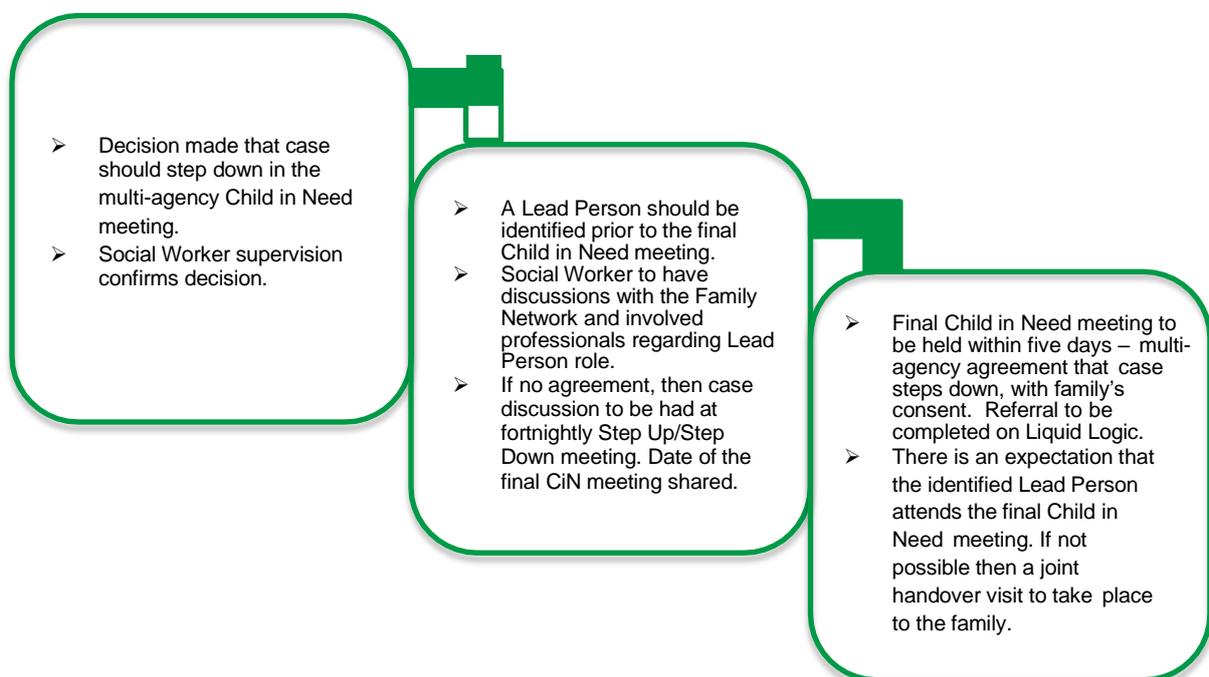
2.6 Case discussed at the Step Up/Step Down meeting where there will be clarity of recommendations for the Wellbeing Plan, if agreed appropriate, the Early

Help worker will be allocated the same day. The record of the meeting will be distributed within 48 hours.

2.7 Handover from CSC to Early Help and formal transfer of case responsibility:

- Within five working days of the Step Up/Step Down meeting a joint visit between the Social Worker and newly allocated Early Help worker should take place to the family. This visit should also ensure the sharing of the C&F Assessment, recommendations for the Wellbeing Plan and family feedback.
- Formal referral to then be completed on Liquid Logic.

b) Step Down from CiN Plan



Principles and Practice Expectations

2.8 CiN meeting confirms plan for step down with families consent at the next meeting:

- Team Manager confirms decision to step down in supervision.

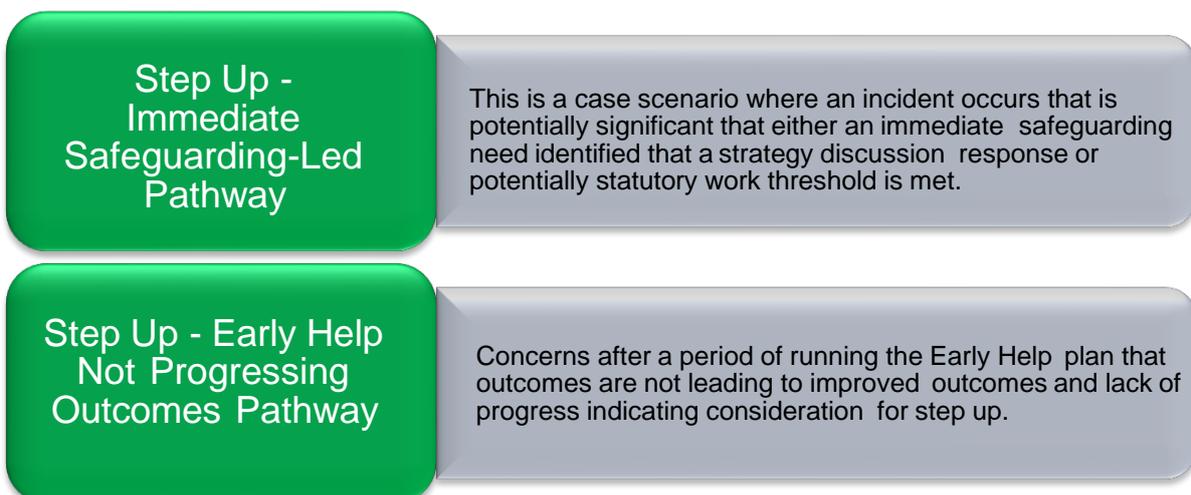
2.9 Prior to the final CiN meeting a Lead Person should be identified from professionals already involved in the current CiN Plan:

- The Social Worker is expected to have discussions with the family network and involved professionals regarding the Lead Person role.

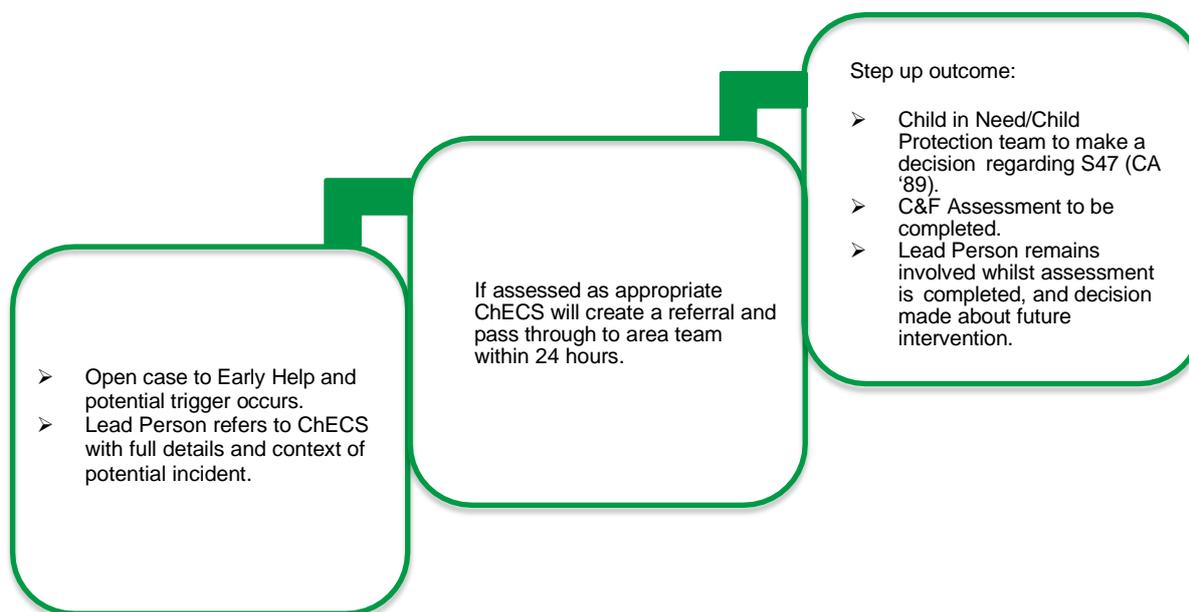
- If there is no agreement regarding a Lead Person from within the current membership of the CiN Plan, the case needs to be discussed at the Step Up/Step Down meeting.
- 2.10 Case discussed at the Step Up/Step Down meeting. Date of the final CiN meeting shared.
- If agreed appropriate, then a worker will be assigned the same day.
- 2.11 Final CiN meeting to be held within five working days.
- Multi-agency agreement that the case steps down, with the families consent and clear tasks identified.
 - There is an expectation that the identified Lead Person attends the final CiN meeting. If not possible then a final handover visit is to take place to the family between the Social Worker and the Lead Person.
 - Referral to be completed on Liquid Logic.

3. Step Up Pathways

- 3.1 The Step Up Pathways from Early Help to Children’s Social Care have been developed to promote both a consistency and clarity of practice across the continuum. In particular, they seek to recognise that children and families are more likely to engage and respond to intervention, working with professionals to improve outcomes, where they have a positive relationship with the professional and understand the concerns held.
- 3.2 The Step Up Pathways seek to enable practitioners across Children’s Social Care and Early Help providers to work closely together to reduce families receiving statutory intervention and to promote early support in order to work with families to improve outcomes.
- 3.3 The Step Up Pathways have been split into two sections to reflect key triggers for step up from Early Help case management to Children’s Social Care:



a) Step Up – Immediate Safeguarding-Led Pathway



Principles and Practice Expectations

3.4 Open case to Early Help and potential trigger incident occurs.

- The trigger incident could relate to a child or a parent, for example a child presenting with a potential unexplained injury or a significant incident of domestic abuse.
- Allocated Lead Person clarifies details and context of potential incident, considering the significance of the incident, the impact upon the child, and the impact upon the capacity of the parent.
- Any allegation of injury to a child should have clarification as to whether this is accompanied by a disclosure.

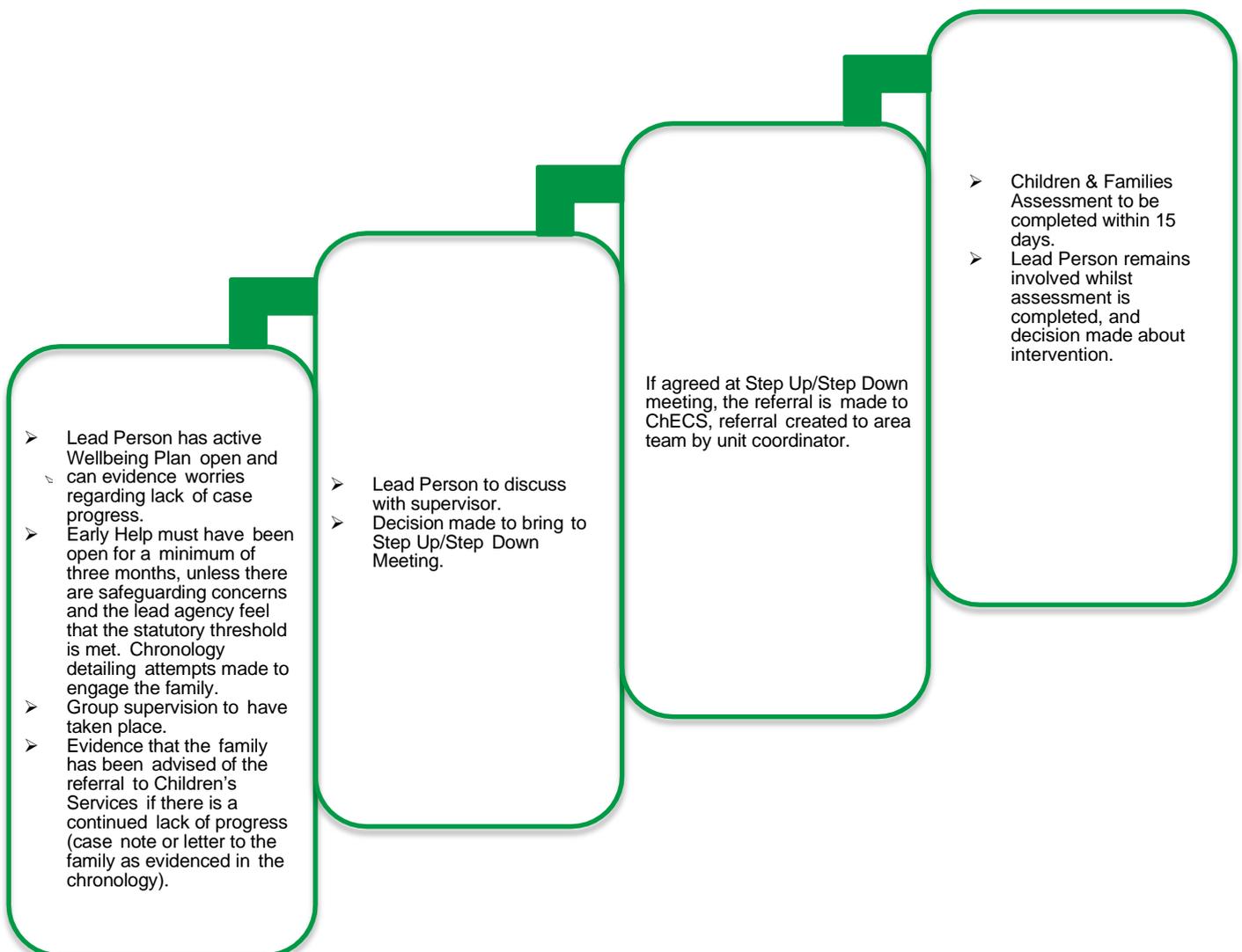
3.5 Where the significant incident or disclosure is made to somebody who is not the Lead Professional, it could be appropriate for that professional to report straight to ChECS. Ideally, it should be the Lead Professional in order to be able to provide full context of the involvement, however, it is acknowledged that there are occasions where this could build in delay. If this is the case the professional would also ensure the lead of the Early Help Plan is notified.

- If assessed as appropriate, ChECS will create a referral and pass through to the area team within one hour. In this scenario the case would not go to the Step Up/Step Down meeting.

3.6 The Child in Need/Child Protection team will make a decision regarding an S17 or S47 response.

- CSC Duty Team Manager to decide whether an urgent Strategy Discussion is required or if an initial joint CSE/Early Help visit is the immediate next step; this should take place the same day.
- CSC Duty Team Manager to allocate Duty Social Worker to complete the joint response.
- C&F Assessment to be completed.
- Expectation that the Lead Person remains involved for a maximum of four weeks whilst the assessment is completed, and a decision made about future intervention.

b) Step Up – Early Help Not Progressing Outcomes Pathway



Principles and Practice Expectations

- 3.7 Open case to Early Help and evidence worries regarding Wellbeing Plan not progressing:
- The Lead Person should discuss worries regarding outcomes not progressing, where there has been Early Help intervention for a minimum of three months, during supervision, and there will be clear management oversight.
 - The professional looking to step a case up should have completed a screening tool or a GCP where appropriate.
 - There should be a chronology detailing attempts made to engage the family, evidence-based assessment tool utilised and what impact this failure to progress has upon the child.
 - There is an expectation that group supervision should have taken place.
 - Evidence that the family has been advised of the referral to Children's Services if there is a continued lack of progress (case note or letter to the family as evidence in the chronology)
 - Specific 'worry statements' 'wellbeing goals' and 'scaling' is needed.
 - Where there are safeguarding concerns and the lead agency feels that the statutory threshold is met, a discussion has taken place with ChECS and advice is to take the case to a Step Up/Step Down meeting because there are no immediate safeguarding issues.
- 3.8 Lead Person to discuss with their supervisor. The supervision casenote should detail the rationale for worries about future progress.
- A decision is made to discuss case at the Step Up/Step Down meeting.
- 3.9 If agreed at Step Up/Step Down meeting the referral will be loaded by the Unit Coordinator within 24 hours.
- 3.10 Children and Families Assessment to be completed.
- The C&F Assessment should be completed within an agreed time (not to exceed 45 days) necessary in supervision and recorded on the child's records.
 - The Lead Person remains involved (for up to a maximum of four weeks) whilst the assessment is completed, and a decision is made about future intervention.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Step Up/Step Down Flow Chart

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Step Up/Step Down

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Step Down From C&F Assessment.

Team Manager authorises assessment and agrees decision to step down to Early Help with a clear outline of 'what needs to happen'.

Team Manager to look onto fortnightly Step Up / Step Down meeting (only if Lead Person not already identified through assessment).

Case discussed at the Step Up / Step Down meeting with clarity of recommendations for well-being plan.

If agreed appropriate then a worker will be allocated the same day. The chair will inform the Social Worker of the outcome within 1 working day.

Within 5 working days of Step Up / Step Down meeting:

- Joint handover visit will be undertaken to the family between Social Worker and Lead Person.
- Formal referral to be completed on Liquid Logic.

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Step Down From CIN Plan.

Decision made that case should step down in the multi-agency Child in Need meeting.

Social Worker supervision confirms decision.

A Lead Person should be identified prior to the final Child in Need meeting.

Social Worker to have discussions with the Family Network and involved professionals regarding Lead Person title.

If no agreement then case discussion to be had at fortnightly Step Up / Step Down meeting. Date of the final CIN meeting shared.

Final Child in Need meeting to be held within 5 days – multi agency agreement that case steps down, with families consent. Referral to be completed on Liquid Logic.

There is an expectation that the identified Lead Person attends the final Child in Need meeting. If not possible then a joint handover visit to take place to the family.

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Step Up – Immediate Safeguarding-Led Pathway

Open case to Early Help and potential trigger occurs.

Lead Professional refers to ChECS with full details and context of potential incident.

If assessed as appropriate ChECS will create a referral and pass through to area team within 1 hour.

Step up outcome:

- Child in Need/Child Protection team to make a decision regarding S47 (CA 1989).
- CAF assessment to be completed.
- Lead Person remains involved whilst assessment is completed and decision made about future intervention.

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Step Up – Early Help Not Progressing Outcomes Pathway

Lead Person has active well-being plan open and can evidence worries regarding lack of case progress.

Early help must have been open for a minimum of 3 months.

Chronology detailing attempts made to engage the family.

Group supervision to have taken place.

Evidence that the family have been advised of the referral to Children's Services if there is a continued lack of progress (see note or letter to the family as evidenced in the chronology).

Need specific 'worry statements' wellbeing goals 'scaling'.

Lead Person to discuss with supervisor.

Decision made to bring to fortnightly Step Up / Step Down Meeting.

If agreed at Step Up / Step Down meeting the referral is made to ChECS, referral created to area team within 24 hours.

Children & Family assessment to be completed within 15 days.

Lead Person remains involved whilst assessment is completed and decision made about intervention.

OFFICIAL

Terms of Reference	
Meeting	Step Up Step Down Meeting
Responsible for:	Protecting children and families with timely support across levels of need. The step up / step down meeting will be a multi-agency decision making interface to consider cases that need to escalate to Children's Social care and cases that are being to stay down to early help services. To ensure that no cases are allowed to fall through gaps in services.
Function:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure a smooth transition between levels of need. Ensuring that children and families are clear throughout who is the Lead Person. Consistency of multi-agency planning across levels of need, using to ensure the right support at the right time by the right person. To promote partnership engagement and ownership. Opportunity for professional challenges as appropriate. Timely responses for children and families. The meeting discussion and information sharing will be brief and focused based on the information previously circulated. Individual case discussions should last no longer than 15 minutes, but will be dependent on the information available. Family member and carer consent issue within the step up and step down process to reduce number of re-referrals.
Accountable to:	Safeguarding Partnership.
Chair and Membership	<p>Membership of the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Manager Chair Team Manager ChECS (Deputy chair) Team Manager CINCP Cheshire East Family Service Manager Health Representative Education / EYS / SCES Representative ICG chair role <p>As necessary an expanded membership can be invited to discuss families with particular needs.</p>
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting will take place in the North and South. The group will meet on a fortnightly basis in each of the two localities (North and South). The meeting in the South will take place in Durham House. The meeting in the North will take place in Maccofield Town Hall. The meeting will take place on a Wednesday at 2pm. Documentation required for the meeting to be sent to CINCP admin by 4pm on the Wednesday prior to the meeting the following week. Send documentation to stepupstepdown@cheshireeast.gov.uk for cases open to ChECS or stepupstepdown@cheshireeast.gov.uk for cases open to Maccofield CINCP. The agenda will be circulated via email by 12 noon on the Friday prior to the next meeting for each respective locality. Apologies must be sent to the chair ASAP although, where actions were identified within the minutes, written feedback will be required. The chair will open a summary of the discussion to that outcome based on their rationale. The chair will document the outcome so that there is a record of the decisions made on the child's record. Business support will circulate the outcomes to members within 12 working days of the meeting. Members will filter outcomes to appropriate workloads within their service. Any disagreements regarding a decision made by the group should be reported to the chair and escalated through each services management structure until a resolution is agreed upon.
Performance Measures	Feedback to be sought from children and families about their experience of intervention across levels of need. Expectation that there will be a reduction in the re-referral rates. 3 monthly reports will be provided considering effectiveness and impact.
Date of last review of TOR _____	
Signed _____ Date _____	

Please see the flowchart on the CESC website:
<http://www.cescp.org.uk/professionals/step-down.aspx>

Appendix 2 - Step Up/Step Down Referral Form

This form should be completed for every case which will be presented to the Step Up/Step Down meeting. Meetings will be held on a Wednesday and this form should be completed by the Lead Person/relevant worker by 4pm on the Wednesday prior to the meeting the following week, to enable the agenda to be sent out to all relevant attendees by 12pm on the Monday. Send completed forms to AdminCreweCiN&CP@cheshireeast.gov.uk for cases open to Crewe CiN/CP or MacclesfieldCIN&CPAdmin@cheshireeast.gov.uk for cases open to Macclesfield CiN/CP. Rationale to be completed by the chair/minute taker of the meeting.

Bottom lines for ANY case to be considered at Step Up Step Down Meeting:

- Authorised C&F Assessment.
- Visit to family recorded within the last 4 weeks.
- Plan (if there has been one since assessment) within the last 4 weeks.
- Record that the family have been spoken to and agree with support from Early Help / Social Care.

Step up please tick		Step down please tick	Please evidence here what discussions have been held with the professionals already involved and the reasons the case has now required presentation at SUSD?
Child's Name		DOB	
Date of meeting		Liquid Logic number	
Childs school /setting			
Current worker and team			
Contact details Phone & email			
Chronology attached			
Date of referral			
Date of completion of C&F			
Date of Last CIN meeting			

CIN meeting members agree to step down include summary of their views.	
EH cases Group supervision held on	
Summary of Reasons for Step up/Step down and intervention so far.	
Wellbeing Statement & Safety Goals	
Members of the network	
Practitioners signature & date	
Line Managers signature & date	
Accepted Yes/No & Rationale Completed by Chair of Meeting	<p>What's working well</p> <p>What are we worried about</p> <p>What needs to happen</p>

What if... Is there a need for a contingency plan if parents with draw consent	
Chairs signature & date	

V4 – 15.4.21