Children’s Services

The Right Response, from the Right Service, at the Right Time

STEP DOWN

PRACTITIONER GUIDANCE
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Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that children receive continuous needs-based support which is led and delivered by the appropriate part of children’s services.

The level of need for families can change and improvements made in their circumstances following intervention by specialist services. The step down approach describes the way in which a family can continue receiving a service once the role of Safeguarding and Specialist Services is coming to a successful end. The Step Down approach is to ensure that the transfer of support provided from different parts of the service is seamless and family focused. Step Down support could be from targeted or universal services and the following guidance aims to clarify the professional judgement to be used when stepping down to other services.

Keeping the family at the centre of decision making and consent to share information

Before considering a step down to other services, it is essential that families are part of the decision making and give consent to share information. It is also important to ensure that other professionals involved with the family are aware of a step down to another service. A general consent form is included with this guidance, as well as a specific consent form when referring to Thriving Families.

Step down to Universal Services

Safeguarding & Specialist Services need to consider stepping down to universal services where the needs are appropriate. If it is felt that some monitoring support is needed (e.g. someone being available as and when the family need it), then a discussion with professionals involved with the family would suffice. If it is felt a Family CAF and Team Around the Family meetings would address the needs, it is the responsibility of the social worker to speak with professionals involved with the family and direct them to the Common Assessment Framework guidance.

http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/advben/resprof/integrated/

Step down to Targeted Services

For the purposes of this guidance, the targeted services are Thriving Families and Targeted Youth Support Service. When considering a step down to these services, please consider their criteria as summarised below:
Thriving Families

There are two sets of criteria to consider when stepping down to Thriving Families. One has been defined by government as part of the Troubled Families work (shown below in bold), some additional criteria has been defined locally, also shown below.

The criteria for Thriving Families: either the family meet all 3 of the criteria (shown below in bold), or they meet 2 of the criteria in bold, plus at least 1 of the non-bold criteria.

Government defined Criteria:
• Under 18 crime / Any family member with ASB
• Unauthorised school absence over 15%
• Worklessness

Locally defined Criteria:
• Domestic abuse
• Adult learning difficulty or disability
• Eligible for early years entitlement but not taking it up
• Risk of homelessness
• Drug/alcohol misuse
• Mental health issues

Further detail about the Thriving Families criteria is attached to this guidance.

Step Down to Thriving Families

If it is clear that the needs meet Thriving Families criteria, Safeguarding and Specialist Services should speak with their relevant district TF manager (contact details are attached to this guidance) so that a direct referral into the service can happen and this will avoid any delay.

If it is unclear whether the family meets the criteria for Thriving Families, S&SS need to complete a Request for Targeted Service Form (attached to this guidance) and send to stepdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk. The S&SS allocated worker needs to keep the case open on ICS until they have received acknowledgement that Thriving Families will be working with the family and discussion has taken place around how the transfer of services will happen for the family.

Whichever referral route is taken, a Thriving Families consent form is required, along with a completed TF criteria checklist. Completing and sending these forms will prevent delay in receiving a TF service.
Targeted Youth Support

The age focus of Targeted Youth Support (TYS) is 13-19 years. There will be some flexibility in the age range in particular circumstances; e.g. where young people are care leavers or have learning disabilities or difficulties where TYS will work with them up to the age of 25 years. A range of services are provided by TYS as a result of new referrals.

In relation to Step Down however, the criteria for Targeted Youth Support (TYS):

- Risk of family breakdown unless targeted support is in place
- Risky behaviours of young person – risk of harm to self or others
- Young person becoming involved in offending behaviour

Step Down to Targeted Youth Support

If it is clear that the needs meet TYS, Safeguarding and Specialist Services should speak with their relevant district TYS Practice Manager so that a direct referral into the service can happen and this will avoid any delay.

If it is unclear whether the family meets the criteria for TYS, S&SS need to complete a Request Form (attached to this guidance) and send to stepdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk. The S&SS allocated worker needs to keep the case open on ICS until they have received acknowledgement that TYS will be working with the family and discussion has taken place around how the transfer of services will happen for the family.

It is the expectation that consent has been gained from the family before a referral to TYS has been made (Consent Form attached to this guidance).

Stepping Down from Assessment or Child in Need plans

Some step down’s might be as a result of recommendations from an assessment; some step down’s might follow on from a Child in Need plan. If there is a need for ongoing support from Thriving Families or Targeted Youth Support Service, the following arrangements have been agreed for S&SS Assessment, Locality and CLA Teams:
Step Down to TYS or TF from Assessment Teams

Assessment Team

S & SS: Meets need for assessment

- Assessed and requires Initial Child Protection Conference
  - ICPC and Review Conferences held
  - Not subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan at ICPC.
  - Group Manager to review and decide next steps

- Assessed and does not require S&SS Service
  - CAF required
  - Liaise with Universal Services
  - S&SS liaise with family and professionals Consent gained from family.

- Assessed and requires a CIN Plan or a Targeted Service
  - Meets TF or TYS criteria
  - S&SS to contact referrer to check re: family consent for Children’s Services
  - Step Down Request Form to Targeted Services via stepdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk

S & SS threshold not met – not assessed

- Meets TF or TYS criteria
  - Liaise with Universal Services
  - Close.

CAF required

- Close.
Step Down to TF or TYS from Locality Teams

Child In Need (CIN) cases.

Child Protection (CP) Review Conference.

No longer subject to CP Plan.

Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).

CP concerns continue or increase – remains with Specialist & Safeguarding Services (S&SS).

Child In Need (CIN) Plan in place for a minimum of 12 weeks.

At 4 weeks:
Step-down request to Targeted Services via stepdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Using Request for Targeted Services Form

S&SS Social Worker will be notified who to liaise with in either TYS or TF

At 6 weeks:
Review of CIN plan.
S&SS and identified TYS or TF workers to be part of Review

At 12 week review, case handed over to TF or TYS.

Locality Practice Manager to send closure letter

Children’s Services - Step Down Guidance – Final – Sep 2013
Step Down to TYS or TF from Child Looked After (CLA) Teams

Child Looked After (CLA) Team.

CLA review

Child transferred to Child In Need (CIN) Plan.

Child In Need (CIN) Plan in place for a minimum of 12 weeks.

S&SS Social Worker will be notified who to liaise with in Targeted Services

At 4 weeks:
Step-down request to Targeted Services via stepdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Using Request for Targeted Services Form

At 6 weeks:
Review of CIN plan. Identified Targeted Worker to be part of the Review

At 12 week review, case is handed over to Targeted Services

CLA Practice Manager to send closure letter.
Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Children’s Services

CONSENT FORM

HCC Children’s Services staff work closely with different professionals, such as teachers, health visitors and GP’s as well as other Hertfordshire County Council services. This helps our services to meet the needs of individual children, young people and their families.

As we work with other agencies and services we will need to share information about you and your family and also ask for information from professionals that will assist us to understand the situation.

We need your consent before we contact professionals outside of HCC or provide information to them. If you are in agreement we would ask that you sign this form.

Your agreement will be valid for information sharing for one year. If we continue to offer a service after this time, we will ask for your continued written consent.

You may withdraw consent to information sharing at any time by informing us in writing you wish to withdraw consent. You may also ask for the information shared to be conditional, for instance if there is someone you don’t want us to share your information with or obtain information from.

Any details of the services we provide or information about you or your family will be stored and used in strict accordance with our registration under the Data Protection Act 1998.

You do not have to consent to information sharing but this may make it difficult to provide the services that you or your family need. You should also know that we have a legal duty to share information with other agencies if we believe it will protect you, prevent harm to someone else or prevent/detect a crime.

If we use your information for other reasons, for example to plan our services or do research, then we will make sure that you cannot be identified.

We will not use your information for staff training without asking you for specific consent at the time.

DECLARATION

I confirm that I have parental responsibility (PR) for my child(ren) YES / NO (delete as appropriate) and understand the information I provide to Children’s Services may be used for the above purposes and shared with other agencies external to HCC and services within HCC where appropriate.

I, .................................................. agree that information about me may be shared with other agencies and HCC services.

I, .................................................. disagree that information about me is shared with other agencies and HCC services.

Signed: ............................................. Date: ............................

Signed (by member of staff): .................................. Date: .............................

Please tick if you do not consent to our sharing your contact details ONLY, with an Independent Children Advocacy Service NAYAS who will make contact with you once our involvement is finished to discuss our service to you.
Thriving Families Programme
Consent Form

Family address including postcode: .............................................................
..................................................................................................................
Names and dates of birth for all members of the family:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

By signing this statement you are giving Hertfordshire County Council (the organisation responsible for
the Thriving Families Programme) your permission to gather and record information about you and your
family to understand and identify the right support. This will mean sharing your information securely with
other agencies that can help you and your family. It may also mean we use information about your family
(but without your name or full address) to help us see how well we are supporting families across the
county, and to plan how we support other families in the future. The information we gather will be held
securely on computer and paper systems. This is in line with the Data Protection Act 1984 & 1998. You
can withdraw your agreement to engage with this programme by contacting your Family Support Worker

Yes, I would like to receive support from the Thriving Families Programme

No, at this time, I would not like to receive support from the Thriving Families
Programme

Signature:

Full name (in capitals): Date:

If you do not want support from the Thriving Families Programme at this time, you can change
your mind, so please do talk to your support worker to discuss the opportunity again. If you
have any questions or worries about being part of the Thriving Families programme please speak
to your Family Support Worker. If you don’t feel happy speaking to them you can ask to speak to
your local Team Manager. If you need to make a formal complaint you can visit
www.hertsdirect.org/complaints to find out how to make a complaint, and to understand what will
happen next.

To be completed by the professional requesting the service:

Your full name:
Job Title: Organisation:
Email: Tel:
Signature: Date:
Any additional notes:

If you are also completing a service request for this family, please attach a copy of this
form with the service request and send to:
protectedreferrals.cs@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Thriving Families Programme

Criteria Checklist

This section to be completed by the professional seeking support for the family from Thriving Families:

Full Name of family member providing consent on behalf of the family
Family address including postcode: .................................................................
..........................................................................................................................

Please indicate if there is a CAF assessment in place ..................... Yes / No

Thriving Families Criteria met by the family (must meet all 3 criteria shown in bold, or 2 of the bold criteria and at least 1 of the non-bold criteria). Please tick relevant boxes:

☐ Under 18 crime / Any family member with ASB
☐ Unauthorised school absence over 15%
☐ Worklessness
☐ Domestic abuse
☐ Adult learning difficulty or disability
☐ Eligible for early years entitlement but not taking it up
☐ Risk of homelessness
☐ Drug/alcohol misuse
☐ Mental health issues

Crime / ASB: Households where at least one of the following applies:
  • One or more under 18-year-old has a proven offence in the last 12 months
  • One or more family member of any age has an anti-social behaviour order, anti-social behaviour injunction, anti-social behaviour contract
  • The family has been subject to a housing-related anti-social behaviour intervention in the last 12 months (e.g. notice of seeking possession on anti-social behaviour grounds, a housing-related injunction, a demotion order, eviction from social housing on anti-social behaviour grounds).

Non-attendance at school: Where at least one child meets one or more of the following:
  • Subject to permanent exclusion or three or more fixed exclusions across the last three consecutive terms
  • In a Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision because they have previously been excluded
  • Not on a school roll
  • Has had 15% or more unauthorised absences from school across the last three consecutive terms, or has been identified by the head teacher as having a significant pattern of unauthorised absence.

Worklessness: Where at least one adult is on Department for Work and Pensions out of work benefits (Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Carer’s Allowance, Income Support and/or Jobseekers Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance).
**TF & TYS Team Contact Details**

**Dacorum & St. Albans**

Thriving Families Team, Ground Floor, Apsley Two, Brindley Way, Hemel Hempstead HP3 9BF
Email: ThrivingFamilies.Dacorum&StAlbans@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support, Greenhills, Tenzing Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP2 4HS
Email: tyst.dacorumstalbans@hertscc.gov.uk

**Watford & Three Rivers**

Thriving Families Team, Otley Family Centre, Otley Way, Watford WD19 7TB
Email: ThrivingFamilies.Watford&ThreeRivers@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support, First Floor, Apsley Two, Brindley Way, Hemel Hempstead
Email: tyst.w3rreferrals@hertscc.gov.uk

**East Herts & Broxbourne**

Thriving Families Team, Crossbrook Family Centre, 126 Crossbrook Street, Cheshunt EN8 8JH
Email: ThrivingFamilies.EH&Broxbourne@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support, Ground Floor, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford. SG13 8DQ
Email: tys.broxbourneeastherts@hertscc.gov.uk

**Stevenage & North Herts**

Thriving Families Team, Swingate House, 2nd Floor, Swingate, Stevenage SG1 1AF
Email: ThrivingFamilies.Stevenage&NH@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support, Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2FQ, SFAR 116
Email: tysteam.stevenage&northherts@hertscc.gov.uk

**Welwyn Hatfield & Hertsmere**

Thriving Families Team, Farnham House, 1st Floor, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2FQ
Email: ThrivingFamilies.WelwynHatfield&Hertsmere@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Targeted Youth Support, Mundells, Ground Floor, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1FT.
Email: tyst.whhreferrals@hertscc.gov.uk
# Step-Down Request to Targeted Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names, D.O.B, and ICS number for each child.</th>
<th>Key dates including last and/or next CIN Plan review meeting, where appropriate:</th>
<th>Other agencies or professionals involved:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District where family reside:</td>
<td>Team making this request:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why has S&SS been involved with the family? (Referral Reason)

What actions were recommended from assessment/CP Plan or CIN Plan (Please attach most recent assessment or CIN Plan)

What actions have been completed/what is the current situation?

Manager’s Decision (to include reason why S&SS is no longer required – why no longer safeguarding concerns or ceasing of specialist service?)

What work are you asking from targeted services? (please consider TYS and TF criteria in Practitioner Guidance)

In what way have the family consented to working with Targeted Services? (signed form? Face to face? Telephone?)

If the family refuses to work with targeted services (and case then closed), would you have concerns regarding risk of significant harm?
Dear ,

I would like to thank you for spending time talking to me, what you have told me has helped me understand what is important to you and your family and what you would like to change, so that wherever we can we will try to offer you the right support.

I am writing to you to let you know what is going to happen next. I have made a referral to the Targeted Youth Service/Thriving Families (Delete as appropriate*) this is a team who also work with children and their families and offer support and to help families make positive changes, they will I am sure explain what they do when you meet with them.

They should be in touch with your family in the next 10 days.

Children’s Services really value what children and their families tell us, we very much appreciate your views. Please complete the form included with this letter if you wish to tell us more about how we can make our service better.

Yours Sincerely
Closing Letter Template to Child

Dear (child’s name),

My name is ............. I am the social worker who has been meeting with you and your family. One of my most important jobs is to talk to children about your worries and what makes you happy.

As I told you last time I saw you, I will not be visiting you any more, but I have asked some other people to come and spend time with you and your family, to help you all, they are called the ..................team and they will be visiting soon.

I have really enjoyed getting to know you and I am very happy that I was able to help you and your family. If you have any ideas about how I can help other children like you, please contact me on.............or complete the form I have added to this letter and pop it in the post box.

Yours Sincerely
Dear

Re:

Following our work with you and your family, I am writing to enclose a copy of the completed Assessment/Recommended Plan for further support.

We are recommending no further involvement from this team and it is therefore our intention to close the case, and as discussed with you we have requested support from Targeted Services who will be in touch with you soon.

Your views and feedback regarding the service we have provided is welcomed and will be valued by the team and there is the facility for these to be electronically added to our records, even after closure. If there is anything you wish to have added or any queries, please write to us or contact us by telephone.

Yours sincerely

Children’s Services
Dear

Re:

Thank you for the referral you made to this department. This team will now be closing their involvement and have requested further support for the family from (add service).

Children’s Services does not have/no longer has a role in protecting ................. from harm for the following reasons:

(add reasons for ceasing involvement)

Children’s Safeguarding Services assessed ...............needs, and identified that they would benefit from support in the following areas:

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Children’s Services