

Hertfordshire Multi – Agency Protocol for Working with Vulnerable Adolescents

Introduction

All young people are likely to be vulnerable at some point in their adolescent years, however many of them will have protective factors and support networks in place that will help to minimise the chance of them having poor outcomes.

However there will be a number of young people with complex behaviours that will present particularly difficult challenges as a result of risk taking behaviours and at times their unwillingness to engage with services.

This document articulates Hertfordshire's commitment to improve the life chances of those young people who are most vulnerable, do not have adequate protective factors or support and who are most at risk of poor outcomes. It outlines how services will work with these young people and their families and how support can be accessed.

Many vulnerable young people have complex and multiple needs which can best be addressed through services that are joined up and support offered is co-ordinated on a range of levels. Protocols are in place for agencies to work together, to share information and in some cases, to pool resources.

Analysis has been undertaken to identify the cohort of young people who are most vulnerable and require targeted interventions. The following risk factors have been identified from this analysis and from National Research.

Vulnerability factors

Young people in need of early intervention and targeted support are likely to be at high risk due to one or more factors that affect either them or their parents/carers:

- Missing from home or care
- Domestic Abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Family instability/ problems in the family
- Poor family support or poor parenting

- Poor mental health
- Learning difficulties or disability
- Family or friends involved in anti-social or criminal behaviours
- Not being in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Homelessness
- Deprivation or poverty
- Physical & sexual abuse, chronic neglect.
- Substance Misuse
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Where these factors are prevalent they may become apparent through the following symptoms and behaviours:

- Behavioural problems/High risk behaviours
- Sexual health issues/Young parents/teenage pregnancy
- Poor emotional, social or coping skills
- Truancy or school exclusion
- Low aspirations or low self esteem
- Exploring sexuality
- Offending Behaviour
- Bullying or being bullied
- Involvement in gangs
- Drugs or alcohol
- Sexually harmful behaviours

The Hertfordshire Approach

In Hertfordshire, agencies work together to identify needs and provide a continuum of support that begins with identifying early the signs of vulnerability. Early intervention can only operate in a meaningful way when there is an agreed inter-agency commitment, where professionals work together to assess and manage the response to this high risk group and to support young people to remain with their family and in their community.

It is important to clearly identify the young people in need of targeted support as early as possible by identifying the warning signs. Often this will be through school based staff or parents and the use of the CAF to share information in a team around the family.

There is an increasing recognition that the child protection system that is conceptualised primarily around preventing harm and maltreatment among younger children, who may be most at risk within their own family, is not well placed to serve the needs of adolescents.

In Hertfordshire, Children's Services provide assessment and support services to vulnerable adolescents predominantly via the multi-disciplinary TYSS teams. We recognise that parents of young people who go missing and or are at risk of child sexual exploitation are usually trying their best to access appropriate specialist support from Police, CAMHS and Children's Services to safeguard

their child. Young people who are exploited by gangs, organised crime/drug dealers or sole predatory adults may need intensive support and interventions that the Child Protection processes were not designed to address.

We believe parents and young people should be able to access the services they need through our adolescent risk management panels and via our multi agency SEARCH panels, without the need for parents to be stigmatised via the child protection processes, when their recognition of the problems and willingness to accept help is not in question.

In addition research shows that outcomes for late entrants to the care system are often poor. Care solutions are often not an effective response to the distinctive risks that adolescents face.

(Please refer to Pathways for guidance on how to access services)

The Relationship Based Approach and motivational interviewing

Some young people are very unwilling to engage with services or will 'get by' but they are likely to come into services late when their needs have escalated into crisis.

Hertfordshire Children's Services recognises that relationship based working is the key to helping the children and families we work with. We need to build meaningful, trusting relationships that allow for an honest discussion about what change is needed and what support is required. Most of the children and many of the parents we work with have had difficult and challenging events in their lives and need guidance to understand how these have impacted on their view of themselves and how they relate to others. As a result all interventions are carefully tailored to the individual needs of the young person and family and are produced in order to recognise strengths within the family and to build on these, but also to collaborate in identifying what needs to change for the child to develop within a safe environment.

In order to make changes for young people and their families we have to work closely with the family and professional networks to understand how best to help. As adults we need to take responsibility for doing things differently so that the young person can learn healthy strategies to manage their anxieties and emotions. This requires us to recognise individual strengths; understand the need for self-determination and the freedom to make choices. 'Motivational interviewing' is used with individual young people or with family members who are often difficult to engage and is used to explore and strengthen their motivation for change. Through our programmes we aim to help children and families recognise and meet the needs that lie behind disruptive behaviour so that the young person and their parents can develop different and more positive relationships and a safe environment for the young person.

Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Children and Young People in Hertfordshire

The 'Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Children and Young People in Hertfordshire' document identifies thresholds for accessing targeted support, children's social work and other specialist services. This is now embedded into practice and thresholds are applied consistently across our partners.

Formal 'step up / step down' processes have been established which further strengthen the continuum of support.

Risk Management Framework

In order to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people we aim to ensure that they are receiving the right responses from the right professionals at the right time. This includes a shared risk management approach for those young people who find themselves involved in high risk behaviours to reduce the proportion of young people subject to child protection plans and the length of time in our care. Equally we support those young people who find it difficult to engage with services as often these are our most vulnerable young people. The Hertfordshire Relationship Based approach and motivational interviewing techniques will support this.

The presence of risk factors does not necessarily result in poor outcomes for young people; risk factors can be mediated by protective factors such as the development of resilience and a robust multi agency risk management plan.

Risks may relate to:

- the young person –personal characteristics
- the young person's family or home life
- the community or environment in which the young person lives
- the young person's educational and school experience

Managing risks

Sharing information is vital for early intervention to ensure that young people with additional needs receive the services they require when there are emerging problems. It is also essential to protect children from suffering significant harm. Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for identification, assessment and service provision.

- All organisations should have arrangements in place which set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information between each other, with other professionals and with the HSCB; and

- No professional should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a professional has concerns about a child's welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should share the information in line with Data Protection Act principles and HSCB procedures.
- It is essential to gain informed consent to share information, preferably in writing. A young person aged 16 or 17 who has the capacity to understand and make their own decisions, may give (or refuse) consent to sharing.

Hertfordshire Risk Management Framework and Manual provides guidance and risk assessment tools and outlines processes for Managers and practitioners in managing risk in their work with children, young people and families in order to deliver statutory and voluntary interventions which are effective and of high standard.

Further, the framework aims to ensure our risk management systems are robust by supporting and assisting practitioners at all levels to approach the task of risk management with more confidence and competence and to clearly articulate their concerns to the appropriate forum.

Risk Management is everybody's responsibility. There is benefit to be gained from a common approach across services, including a robust risk management approach and shared resources to achieve greater integration, good communication and efficiency. It must be embedded in the normal management processes of services.

There should be a single risk management plan in place for a young person and each agency involved will be accountable for the shared decision making and ownership of the plan. Risk management panel administrators (SEARCH or TYSS Risk Management Panel) will be able to advise practitioners if a plan is already in place.

Assessing risks

When a young person faces multiple risk factors, it is difficult to know where to start. It may be appropriate to assess which risks can be targeted most efficiently and effectively to make some progress. The risk factors in each young person's life may change over time and it is important to assess the intensity and duration of each risk and its potential to result in poor outcomes. A comprehensive needs and risk assessment and risk analysis can assist a practitioner to identify a young person's immediate needs, to determine the appropriate intervention and ensure a programme is tailored to the young

person's specific circumstances. The outcomes should be clearly articulated in the young person's care plan.

E-CAF Co-ordinators are available to provide support to schools and other front-line professionals working across universal services when the need for a CAF or team around the family is first identified.

How we work with vulnerable adolescents

In Hertfordshire, there is a range of provision to meet the needs of vulnerable adolescents.

Targeted Youth Support Service and Youth Connexions

The Targeted Youth Support Service takes the lead in working with vulnerable adolescents. Referrals are received through the Targeted Advice Service or as step down from specialist social care teams and utilises a proactive keyworker approach to help and support young people experiencing one or more of a range of risks.

The service works with adolescents categorised as 'children in need'.

A young person's caseworker will work with the young person to understand their view of the situation and to develop a holistic package of support.

TYSS teams are multi-disciplinary. With therapeutic support for young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health issues through Counselling, Brief Therapy and Mentoring Services, drug and alcohol treatment support through A-DASH, youth offending specialist workers such as health and Police. Planning and support is managed and co-ordinated by the caseworker, who brings in the specialists for advice and co-work when required. In this way, the relationship between the young person and their keyworker is developed and harnessed as the central driver of change. Keyworkers focus on young people's strengths and work with the young person to find opportunities to develop these.

The service is able to provide cost effective and comprehensive packages of support by utilising all the resources of the broader Services for Young People portfolio and its partners, which leads to better outcomes for young people.

Youth Connexions provides youth work, careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) and work related learning (WRL) for 13-19 year olds (up to 25 for young people with LDD). Through the provision of youth projects across the county including youth councils and forums, National Citizen Service and One Stop Shops (OSS). IAG and WRL is delivered in schools and the community including OSS to support young peoples' progression into employment, training or further education.. Please see www.youthconnexions.org or email youth.connexions@hertfordshire.gov.uk

ARC services

The Lakes Adolescent Resource Centre and The Springs are countywide services that provide intensive support to young people aged 12-18, whose needs are proving to be beyond the resources of existing services. In addition to a core ARC Team delivering therapeutic interventions, a multi-agency approach brings health, social care and education together under one management, coordinating care across the agencies for the benefit of the young person and their family/carers.

Thriving Families

The Thriving Families Programme works in partnership with a range of stakeholders and partner agencies, to identify and support families with multiple and complex needs, helping them to turn their lives around and achieve sustainable improvements.

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

Mental ill Health is one of the issues highlighted for this vulnerable group of young people and their families.

It is more than just an absence of mental illness. An important element of working with vulnerable young people with emotional health issues is ensuring that there is a continuum of support for them that can enable them to access confidential quality assured provision rapidly and at the lowest possible level of intervention in a venue in which they feel safe.

CAMHS has developed a targeted Service for children and young people who have social work involvement and are Children Looked After, children with Child protection plans, or children who have been identified as at risk of falling into one of these groups if preventative steps are not taken. In order to access the CAMHS services these children must have some indication of a mental health difficulty which is measured by a score on SDQs, (strength and difficulties questionnaires) of >15. (See Tools for Social Workers for more information regarding the referral process)

CAMHS aims to work in close partnership with other agencies to develop plans and interventions to prevent escalation of concerns. The targeted team is able to work on an outreach basis and offers consultation slots to social workers at the locations of the teams. This team also is able to offer direct work as a targeted intervention in partnership with the work of other social care teams.

Higher levels of mental health concerns can also be referred to the CAMHS tier 3 specialist clinics and also the CAMHS crisis team (CCAT) who will respond to crisis situations.

All referrals to CAMHS are through the Single Point of Access (SPA) for HPFT and decisions about where the referral should be directed will be made by SPA. Social workers who are unsure about whether to refer can access the consultation clinics within the teams to discuss this more informally.

Self-harm and suicidal behaviour among children and young people has increased dramatically over the past twenty years. The Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board has recognised that young people who self-harm are doing so as a coping mechanism, and that telling them to stop does not work. It has developed guidance to support staff in working with young people to reduce the potential harm self-harm can cause to both the young person's physical body and to their mental well-being, e.g. self-esteem. The self-harm and suicide care pathway is included in the Pathways attached below.

'Tools for Social Workers', has further information about the referral process and also case examples to indicate where referral to CAMHS might be helpful.

Working with Schools

Local Schools Partnerships offer support to families through school family workers (SFWs). SFWs support families across each partnership to enable young people at risk of poor outcomes to overcome their barriers to learning. An electronic Common Assessment Framework (eCAF) system has been rolled out across Hertfordshire and will soon be underpinned by a case management system. The eCAF is available to support Lead Professionals across all key agencies.

The Appointment of eCAF coordinators, each covering a 'Double District' area, will further support and enable cross agency working based upon the team around the family approach.

Sexually Harmful Behaviours

Due to their own experiences a small but significant number of adolescents can develop sexually harmful or sexually disturbed behaviours. The impact of these behaviours on other children, families and carers as well as the adolescent themselves can be profound and often causes families and professionals to feel overwhelmed. In the majority of cases psychosocial education and support from the network around the child is sufficient to achieve change. For a small number a more intensive service is required; in order to identify those for whom this is necessary an AIM assessment may be undertaken. AIM assessments

are research and evidenced based tools that are accepted by the criminal justice system as well as Local Authorities, as effective in classifying and qualifying the risks posed by individuals. From these assessments support and intervention plans can be drawn up to help the adolescent and their family or carers. Currently workers in TYSS (including the Youth Justice Service) and ARC Services are trained to administer these assessments; depending on the level of need highlighted services will be offered through internal resources, sister agencies or specialist services.

Young People Missing from Home or Care

The Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) maintains strategic governance of multi-agency activity to tackle children and young people who go missing or are vulnerable to CSE through the Vulnerable Adolescent Risk Management Strategic Sub- Group. The Police led HALO team was established in response to our analysis of children and young people who were regularly going missing and the associated risks.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The HALO team is a reactive investigative team who use a range of intelligence tools to respond to concerns and risk of Child Sexual Exploitation within Hertfordshire. The team uses approaches such as harbouring notices, technological solutions as part of the risk management plan.

The Sexual Exploitation and Runaway Children (SEARCH) Panel

For high risk young people who regularly go missing, are at risk of or experiencing child sexual exploitation, practitioners are expected to refer the cases to the Hertfordshire SEARCH Panel. SEARCH is the multi-agency risk management panel that shares information and concerns about individual missing young people or those at risk of CSE to ensure multi-agency risk management planning is in place to prevent future missing episodes and reduction of risk. **Risk management plans are reviewed and cases are only discharged when risks have been reduced and cases can be managed through normal management processes.**

Conclusion

It is vital that agencies work together to provide early support and to protect vulnerable young people in order that they achieve their full potential as young adults.

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board endorses the approach laid out in this Protocol as our partnership approach to working with vulnerable adolescents, through its Improving Outcomes Group. This protocol will be reviewed in line with changes to statutory guidance or at least bi- annually by the Partnership via HSCB.

Children’s Services **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

Police **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

HPFT **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

**CAMHS
Commissioning** **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

Public Health **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

HCSB **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

**East & North
Herts NHS Trust** **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

**Hertfordshire
Probation** **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

Education/Schools **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

**Community
Protection Unit** **Signature** _____ **Designation** _____

APPENDIX LINKS

CAMHS:

This website contains information on specialist mental health services for adolescents.
<http://www.hpft.nhs.uk/our-services/community-services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services/>

How To Thrive:

This website contains information on developing skills and habits to support wellbeing with links to the Penn resilience programme, healthy minds and more.
<http://howtothrive.org/>

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board

This website contains Hertfordshire's child protection procedures as well as links to various other sites such as Child Exploitation & Online Protection centre and NSPCC. This site also contains useful information and links for young people & parents/carers.
<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/healthsoc/childfam/childprotection/hertssafboard/>

Missing People:

This is a dedicated website to missing people with lists of information for those people who are missing or thinking of running away as well as information on research and statistics.
<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>

Domestic Violence

This website contains information on Domestic Violence for victims, perpetrators, young people & professionals. The site contains various links including links to relevant news and events, sexual health advice, reporting procedures and local & national organisations.
<http://www.hertssunflower.org/>

Spectrum

CRI is a social care and health charity working with individuals, families and communities across England and Wales that are affected by drugs, alcohol, crime, homelessness, domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour. This site contains information about Spectrum, who runs recovery services across Hertfordshire. Details of the services offered as well as locations across Hertfordshire are available within this site.
www.cri.org.uk

Meeting the needs

Hertfordshire's Meeting the Needs Threshold Document sets clear thresholds for the different levels of intervention that children and families may require. The guidance will assist families, practitioners and managers in: determining presenting levels of need, considering the appropriate response, and ensuring that the right response is given, by the right services, at the right time.
http://www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/m/MTN_2014.pdf

MIND-ED

this website offers bite-sized chunks of e-learning designed to give you the confidence to identify a mental health issue and act swiftly, improving outcomes for the child or young person involved. There are a wide range of topics to explore all delivered in an easy to use format.

<https://www.minded.org.uk/>

LINKS TO PROTOCOLS/TOOLS

Children and Young People's Risk Assessment Tool & Management Plan:

The Risk Assessment Manual contains guidance on assessing and managing risk, a number of risk assessment tools including the Children and Young People Risk Assessment and Multi –agency risk management plan which will be used to support the management of risk for vulnerable young people. The risk assessment will also be used as the referral document for the SEARCH Panel.

Link to follow

Thriving Families: Criteria for Referral

The Thriving Families partnership works across Hertfordshire to support families with multiple and complex needs, helping them turn their lives around and achieve sustainable improvements. This website contains referral criteria for Thriving Families as well as contact details.

<http://compass.hertscc.gov.uk/area/hcc/csf/thrivingfamilies/>

Tool for Social Workers

This link contains various tools for social workers to gain the knowledge and understanding in order to support children and young people's mental health. The tools include assessment tools such as the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire and CRAFFT as well as details for numerous support agencies across Hertfordshire.

Link to follow

Tools for Schools

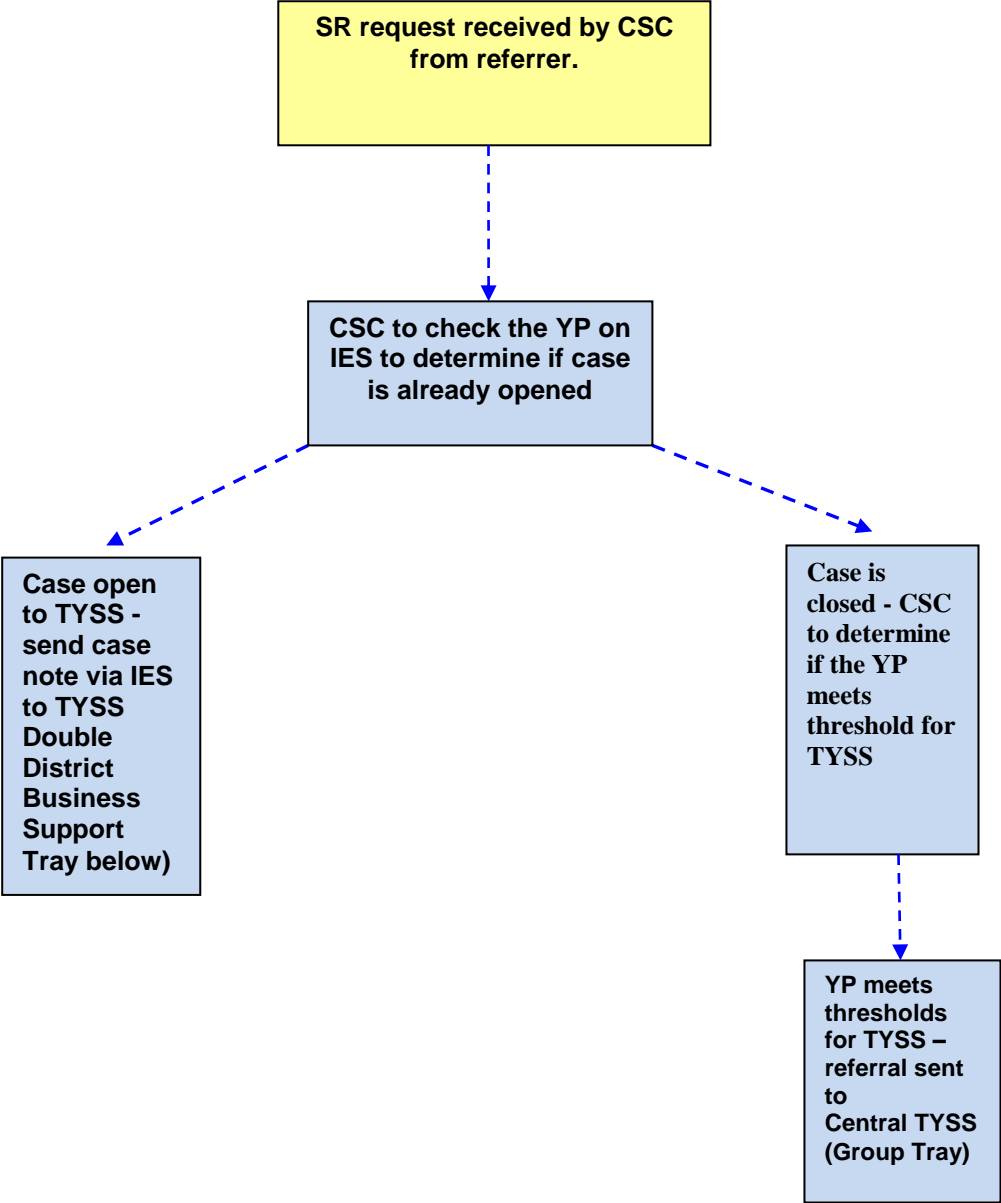
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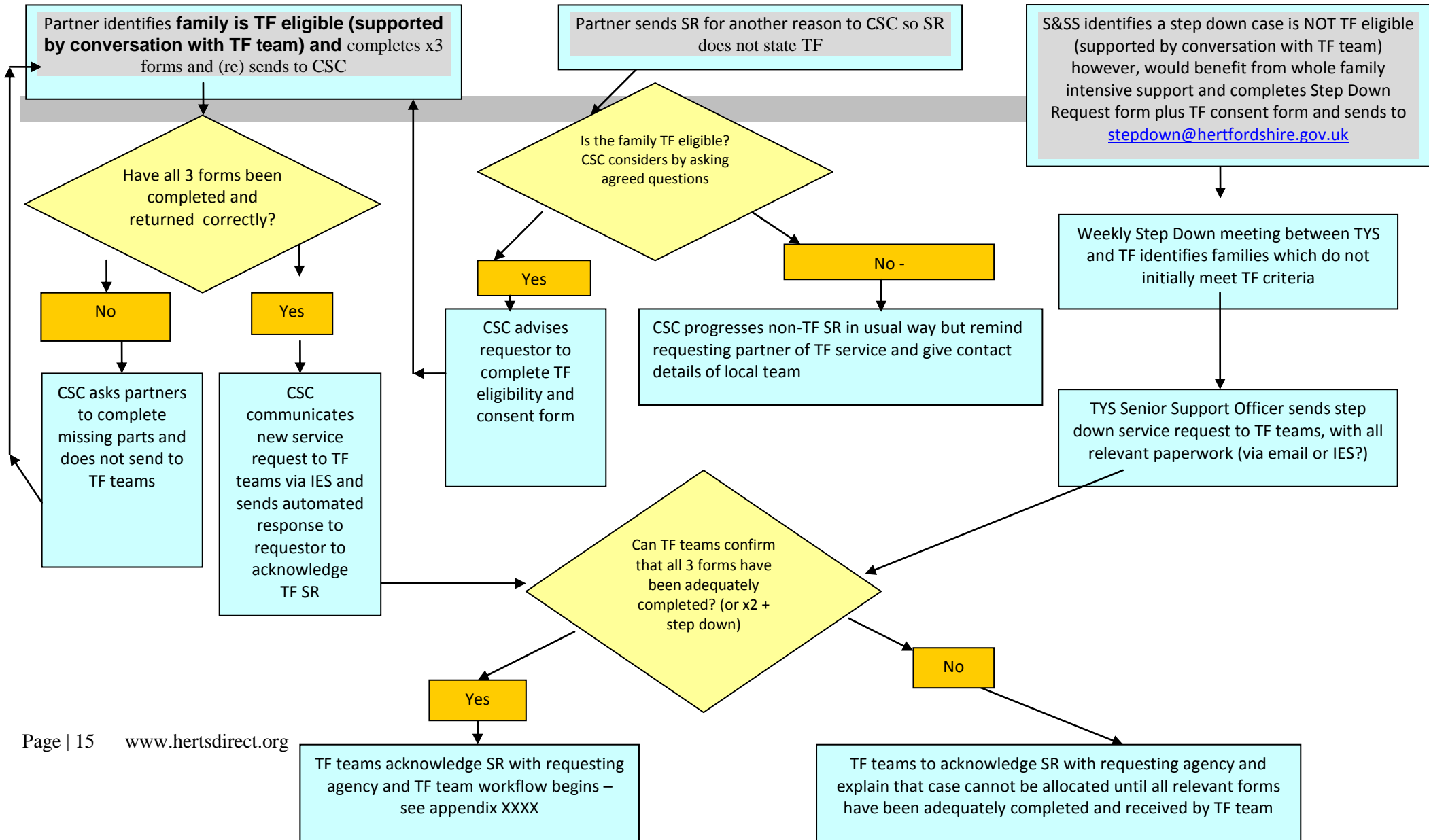
http://www.intra.thegrid.org.uk/learning/hwb/ewb/documents/Tools_for_school_%20final.pdf

PATHWAYS

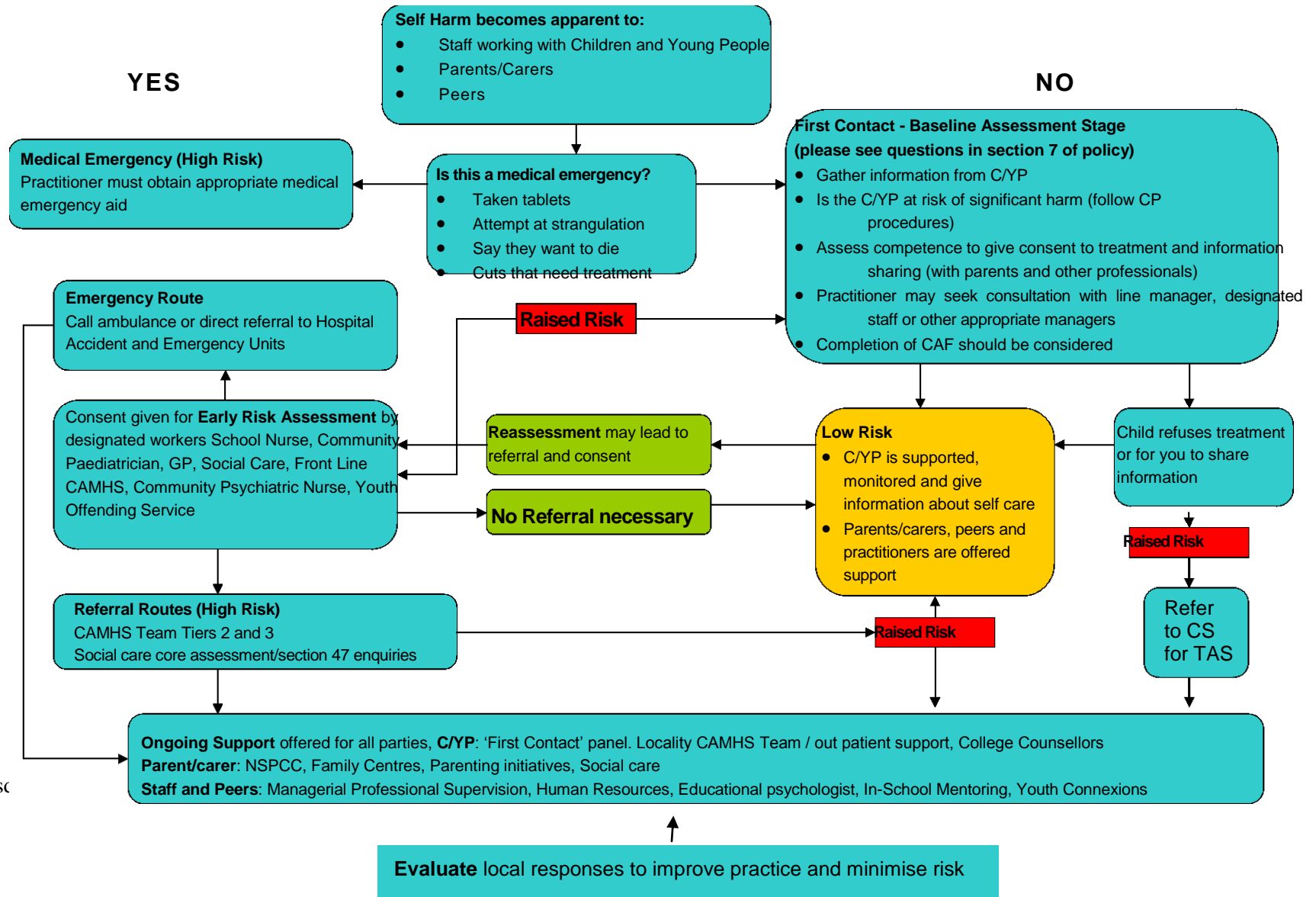
TYSS Service Request – Workflow



Thriving Families Service Request Pathway

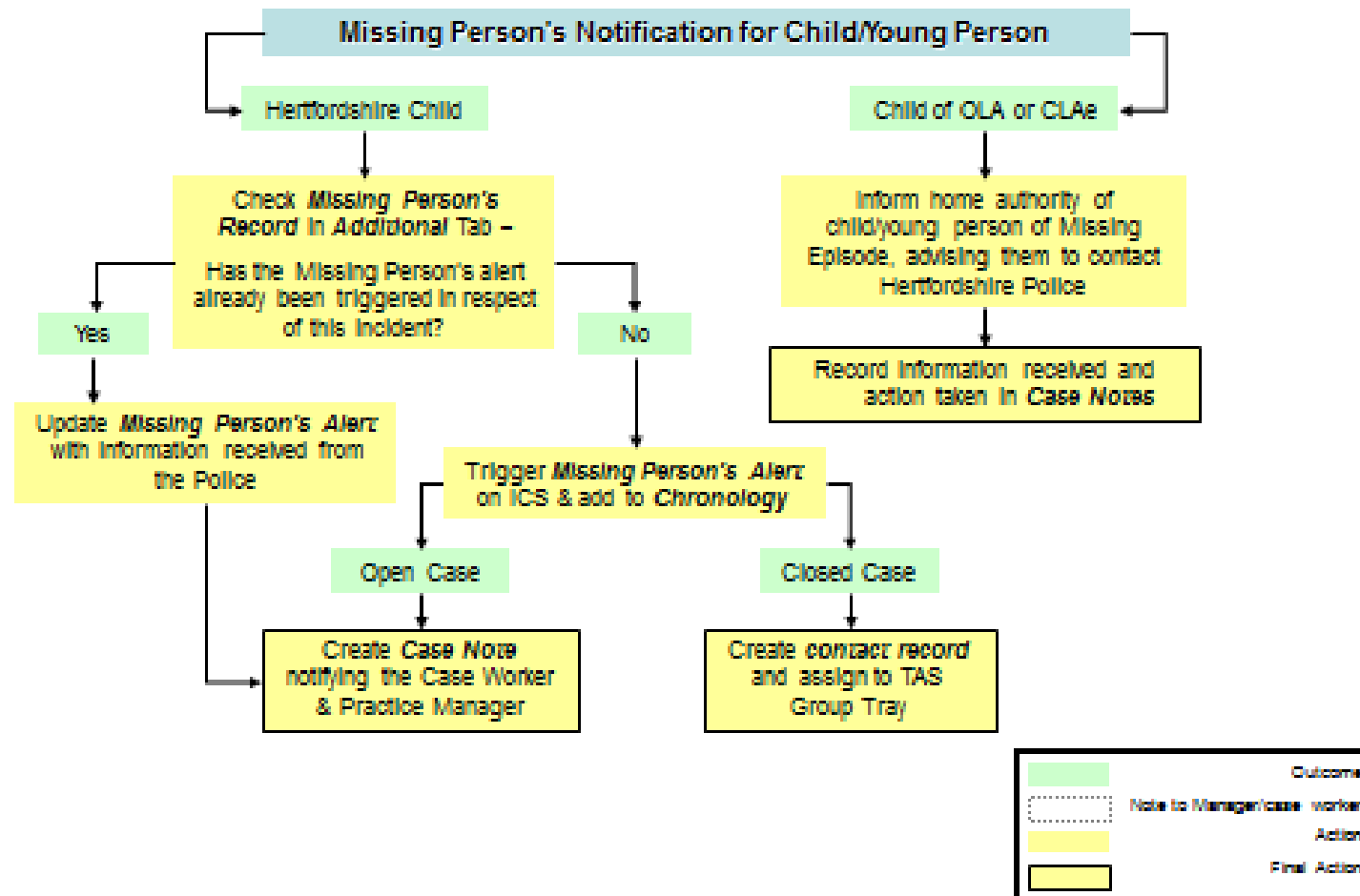


SELF HARM AND SUICIDE CARE PATHWAY – February 2014



Missing Children Referral Pathway Proposal

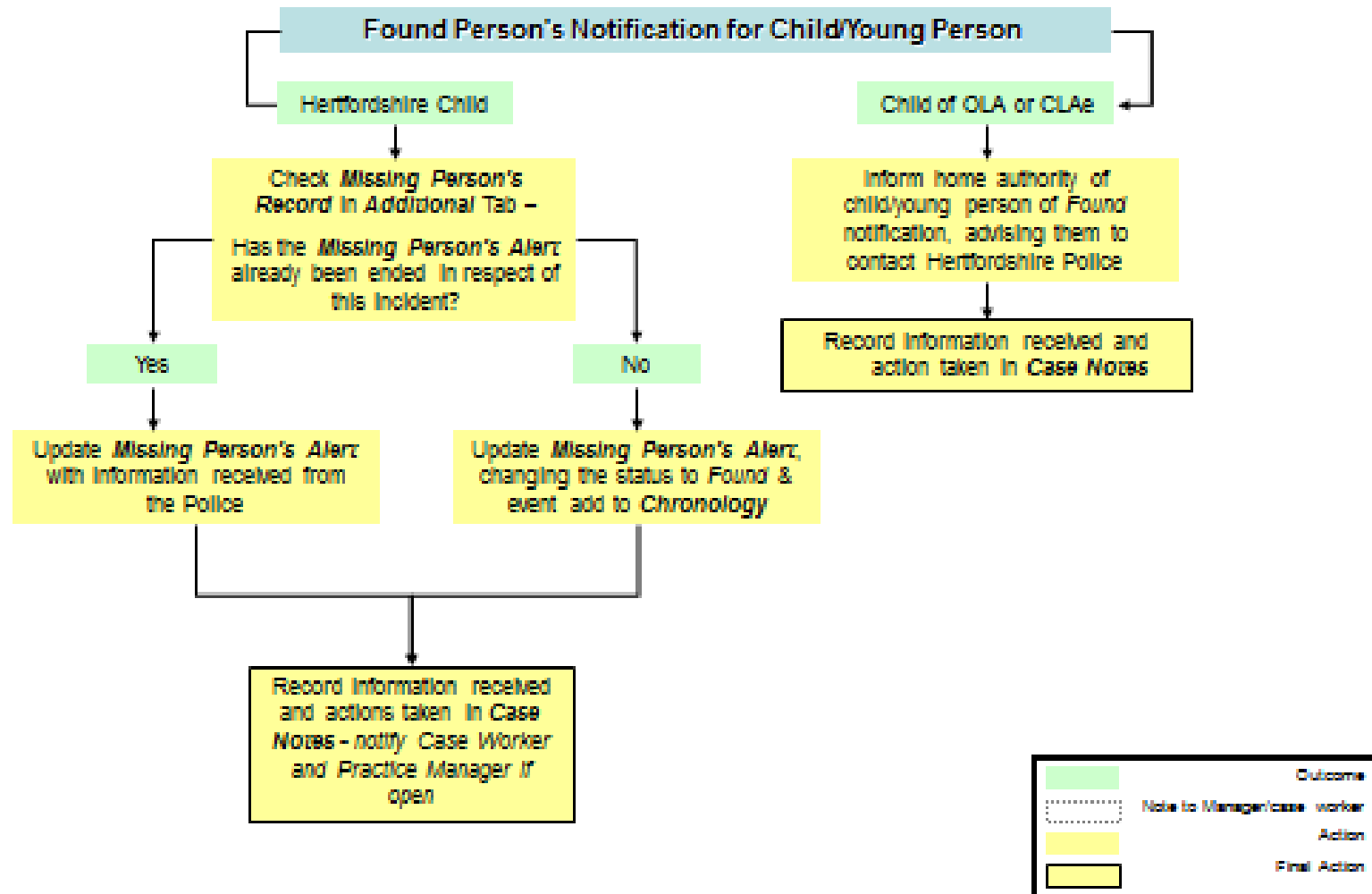
ALL CLOSED CASES TO BE ESCALATED TO TAS





Missing Children Referral Pathway Proposal

ALL CLOSED CASES TO BE ESCALATED TO TAS



Accessing Brief Therapy

Who can refer:

Schools

A Professional

Young Person

Who to contact:

Specialist Services
Office

Brief Therapist-
(South/West)

Brief Therapist
(North/East)

How to refer:

Single Service
Request Form (SSR)

Email:
brieftherapymailbox@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Contact Brief
Therapist directly

Accessing the Counselling in Schools Service

Who can refer:



Who to contact:



How to refer:



Accessing the Mentoring Programme

Who can refer:

A Professional

Who to contact:

Mentoring Co-Ordinator

How to refer:

Phone call with Mentoring
Co-Ordinator

Completion of referral form
with young person

Task & Finish Group Membership

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:
Services for Young People
Residential Services
ARC Services
Assessment Service

CAMHS

A-DASH

Police