The purpose of this guidance is to support staff in Integrated Services, including Integrated Teams, Social Care Teams and other agencies, in achieving progression both upwards and downwards through the levels of support available to children and their families. The desired outcome is that all interventions are proportionate to the child’s needs and at the optimum level to have the maximum impact and benefit for the child/family, using resources in the most efficient manner. The child and family should experience the process as seamless and without delay. Key relationships should be maintained where this is in the child’s best interest.

To be reviewed November 2011

Index number: 3.2.303
‘STEP UP’: A service request is made to Social Care Services for a child currently supported within the Team Around the Child (TAC) /Integrated Service.

‘STEP DOWN’: A service request is made to TAC/Integrated Team provision for a child currently supported by Social Care Services (an open case)

1. Step Up

1.1 A child who has been assessed via the Common Assessment Framework and is being supported by a Team Around the Child (or by a member of an Integrated Team) may need a service from a Social Care Team. This could be because the child’s needs have changed or escalated. The child may require a different service to that offered by the TAC/Integrated Team, or may require a specialist service in addition to that offered by the TAC/Integrated Team.

1.2 The TAC (or any individual member) may at any point conclude that a specialist intervention is necessary. If a child protection concern is identified, a referral should be made without delay via Customer First. Other concerns should first be discussed with the Integrated Team Manager. The guiding document in relation to thresholds: ‘Meeting the Needs of Children and Families in Suffolk’, is available on the Referral and Assessment section of the Good Practice Guide. (www.suffolk.gov.uk/meetingtheneeds) Where it is not clear that a referral is required, please consult the threshold guidance, or seek your manager’s advice. Being clear about thresholds will avoid unnecessary requests or assessments, saving time and resources in both services. It also avoids subjecting children and families to these processes unnecessarily.

1.3 Consent should be sought from the family prior to a step up request, unless it is not possible to obtain consent and delay would be detrimental, or unless seeking consent would place the child at increased risk of significant harm. Any decision to proceed without consent should be taken in consultation with the Integrated Team Manager. Guidance on information sharing and informed consent can be found at: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0072915/information-sharing

1.4 For all step up requests, complete a Multi-Agency Referral form and send this with the Common Assessment (CAF), the TAC delivery plan, and record of the last TAC meeting to Customer First (indicating in Section C that this is a ‘Step Up’).

1.5 If the service request to Social Care Services is not accepted by the Access Team as meeting the ‘child in need’ threshold, the TAC/Integrated Team service should continue as before, although a further request should be made if concerns escalate in future. The CAF/TAC Co-ordinator and the referrer/Lead Professional should be informed of the decision.
1.6 If the case is allocated for an Initial Assessment within Social Care Services, a social worker will contact the family and partner agencies already involved with the child. Any service provided by TAC or an Integrated Team should continue while the Initial Assessment or S47 enquiry is carried out. Communication must take place between the Social Care Team and the Integrated Team/TAC Lead Professional to ensure service provision is maintained.

1.7 If, following initial assessment, the child is assessed to be ‘in need’ and Social Care Services provide a service, the allocated social worker will assume the lead professional/keyworker role and will convene a Child in Need meeting or Child Protection Conference as appropriate. Those professionals already involved should be invited to these meetings.

1.8 Social Care Services will convene regular reviews of the CIN/CP plan, and will aim to reduce the need for Social Care involvement. The Step Down process may be used to ensure support through the TAC/Integrated Teams, or the case may be closed.

2. Accessing Integrated Services as an outcome of an Initial Assessment

2.1 Following an Initial Assessment, the child may not be considered a Child In Need and support from Integrated Teams or TAC identified and agreed with the family. The social worker should ensure that this decision is communicated to the referrer and CAF/TAC Co-ordinator by secure email or letter, and the TAC/Integrated team service should commence /continue to work with the child and should be provided with a copy of the initial assessment (where there is recorded parental consent).

2.2 The CAF/TAC Co-ordinator in each Integrated Team/Locality, will ensure that CAF administration receive a copy of the signed consent and all minimum data to enable this to be logged as new CAF episode. The CAF/TAC Co-ordinator will convene an initial TAC meeting, and will invite the parents/carers, child/young person where appropriate, and any agency currently involved. The initial TAC meeting will produce a CAF/TAC Delivery Plan, identify a lead professional, and set key dates.

3. Step Down (from Child in Need to CAF/TAC/Integrated Teams)

3.1 Criteria: Social Care Services should always aim to reduce their involvement as the child’s needs become met. If, when a decision has been made that a child is no longer a child ‘in need’, but an ongoing level of support is required and the family have given explicit and informed consent to the support and to information being shared, then Social Care Services should seek support from TAC/Integrated Team (or other agencies or universal services) via the ‘step down’ process.
3.2 Decision to initiate ‘step down’: The decision to refer for ‘Step Down’ will be made by the Social Care Service Team Manager, in conjunction with the social worker. This may have been informed by a child ‘in need’ review meeting or CP Review Conference. Cases must not be stepped down so that children’s cases can be ‘monitored’ or in order to make an onward referral to another agency.

3.3 Step down cases will be reviewed at a meeting, to be held no less than fortnightly, between Integrated Team/Social Care Services Team Managers who will agree the outcome of step Up/Step Down requests based on the information provided in each case.

3.4 Cases that are agreed between the Team Manager and the Integrated Team Manager as suitable will ‘step down’ without delay and irrespective of capacity. Priority for allocation of ‘stepped down’ cases will then be evaluated within the overall workload of the Integrated Team.

3.5 The allocated social worker must consult the family and obtain informed written consent to what information is being shared, via the signature page of the CAF assessment form. Where appropriate the consent of the young person should also be recorded.

The completed documents must then be sent to the Integrated Team/Locaity CAF/TAC Co-ordinator. The co-ordinator will ensure that CAF administration receive a copy of the signed consent and all minimum data to enable this to be logged as new CAF episode.

3.6 The allocated social worker will provide the TAC/Integrated Team with information that describes the family’s unmet needs. This may include:
- a recent initial or core assessment
- CIN plan and CIN chair’s report
- Decision & chair’s report from final CP review
- Specialist assessment or other relevant supporting information.

3.7 Where referral to CAF/TAC is being made directly as an outcome of an initial assessment, the CAF/TAC Co-ordinator will convene an initial TAC meeting, and will invite the parents/carers, child/young person where appropriate, and any agency currently involved. The social worker may be invited to attend to share information. The social worker should inform the family of likely contact from the CAF/TAC Co-ordinator. The initial TAC meeting will produce a new CAF/TAC Delivery Plan, identify a new lead professional, and set key dates. The initial TAC meeting should be prioritised by all agencies.

3.8 Where a case is being stepped down from an existing CIN plan the social worker will convene a final CIN meeting which will also serve as the initial CAF/TAC meeting. The social worker will inform the family and other professionals. This meeting should identify a new lead professional and produce a CAF/TAC delivery plan.
4. Recording

4.1 Cases open to Social Care Services are recorded on the Carefirst system. This will include all information from the point of a referral into Social Care Services, until the case is closed to that service. The recording may also include information provided by the family or any agencies that predate Social Care Services involvement, where this informs assessment and planning. Management decisions to close the case and recommendation to ‘step down’ to an Integrated Team/TAC service should be clearly recorded on Carefirst.

4.2 Where a family is receiving support via TAC, an Integrated Team, or any other agency, then the recording procedures of that agency will be used.

4. The CAF/TAC Co-ordinator within the locality should be informed about all cases subject to Step Up and Step Down process with all the required information.

5. Escalation

In the event of Team Managers not agreeing on a decision to ‘step down’, this should be escalated to the Social Care Service Manager and Integrated Service Manager who will ensure resolution within 7 days. It is envisaged that this step will be required in a very few cases.

6. Contact Details

Customer First/Emergency Duty Service
Tel: 0808 800 4005 (Public)
     0845 606 6167 (Professionals)
Fax: 01449 723127
Post: PO Box 771, Needham Market, IP6 8WB
Email: customerfirst@suffolk.gov.uk
Emergency Duty Service: 0808 800 4005 (Out of Office Hours Emergencies only)

Access Team
Tel: 01473 584848
Fax: 01473 583450
Post: St Edmund House, Rope Walk, Ipswich IP4 1NF
Email: accesscyp@suffolk.gov.uk

Web: www.suffolk.gov.uk/caf