



# STEP UP & STEP DOWN GUIDANCE



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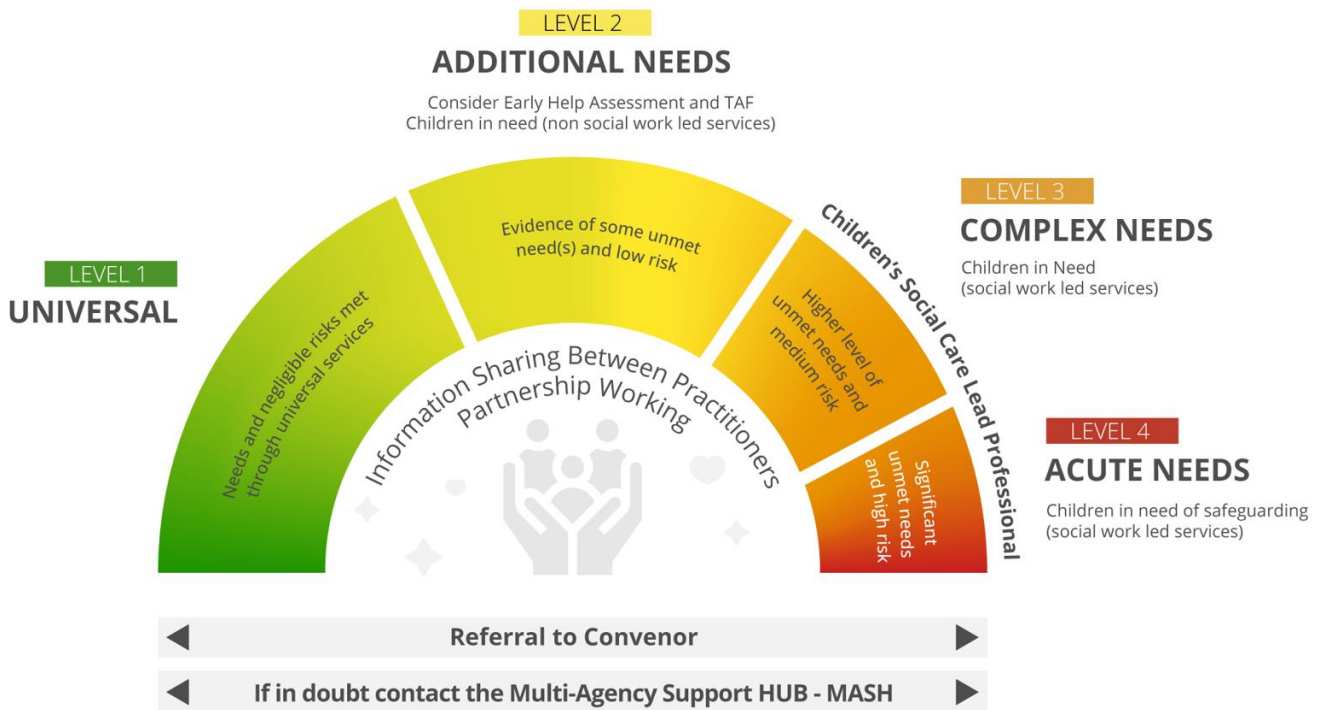
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## Threshold Framework

The process for step up and step down should be read in conjunction with the Islands Safeguarding Children Partnership Threshold Framework. The Threshold Framework sets out those circumstances in which Children & Family Community Services (C&FCS) will provide an intervention and those where other services and providers may provide advice and support where there is no need for social work involvement. The Threshold Framework explains how C&FCS and partner agencies apply thresholds to their referrals and ongoing work with children and families.

Families and professionals need to clearly understand the decision-making process about the pathways between different levels of support based upon need. The pathways between the Levels of Need, particularly the interface between Levels 2, 3 and 4 within the Threshold Framework, must be streamlined and seamless with roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability clearly defined.



## Integrated Front Door Approach to Early Help & Safeguarding

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The Bailiwick of Guernsey has an integrated front door approach to early help and safeguarding via the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH). This revised approach brings together multiple agencies' professionals and professionals from C&FCS with the aim to ensure children and young people receive the right support and interventions at the right time. The MASH will ensure that all enquiries and referrals are triaged upon receipt and directed to the appropriate services to support with providing a seamless process with children receiving support and services, proportionate to their needs in a timely way.

Access to the Integrated Front Door is via The Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF). The MARF will be screened in the MASH to identify a child's needs and those referrals meeting Level 1 or 2 Threshold needs will be directed to Family Support Services by the Early Help Coordinator and Team Around the Family Adviser. Where the level of need is not clear from the initial screening, or the concerns indicate Level 3 or Level 4 Threshold needs, the Duty Response Team based in the MASH will carry out some initial enquiries.

The Duty Response Social Worker will undertake these enquiries which could include further agency checks, social work visits, strategy meetings and child protection investigations, dependent on the level of risk and need. The MASH Manager or Deputy Manager will review the Duty Social Worker's recommendation and where appropriate the child will be discussed at the weekly allocations meeting with the Child in Need and Children's Safeguarding Teams. Where the enquiries identify Level 3 or 4 needs, the Child in Need Team or Children's Safeguarding Team may undertake further investigations and assessment in order to decide what action is needed to ensure the child receives adequate care, protection, guidance or control.

Having a dedicated triage hub within the MASH focusing on the enquiries and referrals at first point of contact will ensure processes are effective and efficient with services delivered that correspond to the level of need and provide better support to referrers. This revised approach brings Early Help Services in one place which facilitates better quality information sharing, analysis and decision making to ensure support needs are met and children are safeguarded.

## Definitions

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Our collective responsibility to help, support and safeguard children and their families are set out in the Children (Guernsey and Alderney) Law, 2008 (the Children Law). This differs from the Laws in the various parts of the UK and is unique to Guernsey and Alderney. A short guide to the Law can be accessed on the Islands Safeguarding Children Partnership [website](#).

The Children Law creates a duty to provide services and support to children to promote their upbringing within their family and to prevent, wherever possible, the child becoming at risk of compulsory intervention. The Threshold Framework ensures that children and their families are supported in a way that is proportionate to the needs and risks presented.

## Step Down

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Step Down is where the child's needs and any risks presented to or by the child can be managed at a lower level of the Threshold Framework than the one their needs are currently being managed at.

Step down enables professionals from C&FCS and multi-agency practitioners to support children and families as they move from requiring social work led services to coordinated Early Help support and on to universal services.

For example, step down may take place if progress is made on a Child Protection Plan and the risk of significant harm is removed. The plan may step down to a Child in Need Plan or, if there is no longer a need for social work led services, may step down to coordinated Early Help support if required or to close.

Professionals/practitioners from a range of services can offer coordinated Early Help and this is crucial to the step-down process as they offer continued support for families once social work led services step away. Step down has an important function to ensure children and families receive consistent support at the right time, from the appropriate services.

## Step Up

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Step up is when a child/family's needs are increasing, and outcomes are not being met, despite planned intervention from universal, or Early Help services at Level 2 of the Threshold Framework.

If at any point there is a child protection concern, professionals and members of the public must contact the MASH, the police or out of hours emergency duty service as appropriate. If professionals working with children and families at Level 2 of the threshold do not feel progress is being made, or there are other identified needs which have reached the indicators of need for the Level 3 or Level 4 threshold, then consideration should be given as to whether a step up is required.

## Step In & Step Out

### The Child Youth & Community Tribunal (the Tribunal)

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While our collective responsibility is to provide help and support to children and their families, there will be occasions where it will not be possible to achieve change without some form of compulsory intervention. Compulsory intervention means intervention in the family life of a child by a public authority irrespective of the consent of the child or the child's parents.

Step in and step out are used to refer to circumstances when a child may be in need of compulsory intervention and/or is subject to a legal order made either by the Court or the Tribunal.

The Bailiwick has a distinct and unique way in how it protects children from harm and promotes their health, welfare and development. There are two different forums that can make decisions about children when some form of compulsory intervention may be needed. While we have the more traditional route of the Court, we also have a Tribunal called the Child, Youth and Community Tribunal (CYCT). The Tribunal makes the majority of decisions relating to children when compulsory intervention is needed to ensure children receive adequate care, protection, guidance and control. The Court is reserved for decisions that have a more significant or long-lasting impact on the rights of children and their families for example decisions about permanency and secure accommodation.

Two key factors underpin the CYCT system. Firstly, concerns about a child's behaviour are dealt with in the same legal forum as concerns about a child's welfare recognising that the two are often frequently interrelated and both may result in the need for care, protection, guidance or control. Secondly, a child's needs can often best be determined by a relatively informal discussion with the child, their parents/carers and the professionals in a legal forum that is more relaxed than a court of law.

The Tribunal can make a legal order called a Care Requirement. The purpose of a Care Requirement is to protect the child from harm and promote their health, welfare and development, and to assist the parent, or person caring for the child, to provide adequate care, protection, guidance and control.



The Tribunal has wide discretion to attach conditions to a Care Requirement and these can include, for example, where a child should live and with whom they have contact and/or conditions that place restrictions on the child or require the child to attend a project to address offending behaviour. A Care Requirement can last for a maximum of one year, although it can be reviewed and extended beyond this when necessary.

### Step In - Referral to the Convenor

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Referral to the Children's Convenor can occur across all four levels of the Threshold when the question of compulsory intervention arises. The Convenor is the gatekeeper to the Tribunal and will carry out an independent investigation of the concerns to decide whether compulsory intervention may be needed.

The question of compulsory intervention arises where the conditions set out in section 35 of the Children Law are satisfied, and the referrer believes that compulsory intervention may be necessary to ensure the child receives adequate care, protection, guidance or control.

Referrers are required to consider the following prior to making a referral: -

1. Whether there is or appears to be, no one able and willing to exercise parental responsibility as to provide adequate care, protection, guidance or control to the child.

AND

2. whether the child:
  - a) Has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant impairment to health or development.
  - b) Has suffered, or likely to suffer, sexual abuse.
  - c) Has misused drugs or alcohol or inhaled a volatile substance.

- d) Is exposed, or likely to be exposed to moral danger.
- e) Has displayed violent or destructive behaviour and is likely to be a danger, to himself, or others, OR is otherwise beyond control.
- f) Is 12 years of age or more, has committed a criminal offence, or what would be a criminal offence if the child had the necessary capacity.
- g) The child (being under the upper limit of the compulsory school age) is failing to attend school without good reason.

Professionals working with children and their families across all levels of the Threshold Framework should consider at each meeting where the child's circumstances are being reviewed whether the criteria for compulsory intervention are present and whether compulsory intervention may be necessary and give consideration as to whether a referral to the Convenor is appropriate.

## Stepping Down from a Child Protection Plan to a Child in Need Plan

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When concerns affecting a child/family no longer indicate a likelihood of significant harm it is important that this progress is recognised and within the Child Protection Conference discussion takes place to decide what the next steps will be to ensure positive change can be sustained. If there are still needs which can only be met by provision via social work led services this may need to be a step down to a Child in Need Plan, but if there is no longer a role for social work led services, there should still be consideration of a coordinated early help response.

The Social Worker leading the Core Group Meetings will be required to identify the progress made and of any unmet needs remaining to inform the new Child in Need Plan, so work with the child/family continues immediately following the actions identified. The Social Worker will have already provided a report to the Child Protection Conference which is the updated assessment.

Once the decision to step down to a child in need plan has been made at the Review Child Protection Conference, the child's case will transfer to either a social worker or a social worker assistant in one of the social work led teams (Children's Safeguarding Team or Child in Need Team) with service manager oversight.

## Stepping Down from a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan to Early Help Services

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A child who is on a Child Protection Plan can be stepped down to Level 3 Threshold, Level 2 Threshold, or closed with no further action. Any decision to step down from a Child Protection Plan must be endorsed at a Child Protection Review Conference. Once the decision has been made to step down from a Child Protection Plan the child may be considered a 'child in need'. The child could remain subject to a Child in Need Plan within the social work led teams or receive voluntary support via Early Help Services.

When a child is open to the Child in Need Team or the Children's Safeguarding Team and the level of need reduces, social work intervention may no longer be required. Where this is the case, consideration must be given to whether continuing professional input will be beneficial to meet any identified need(s). Where relevant, if the family feels they would benefit from ongoing support at Level 2 of the Threshold, consideration should be given as to what support is necessary, and whether a child and their family would benefit from a Team Around the Family (TAF). This approach provides coordinated multi-agency support to meet any further identified needs which can be supported at Level 2 of the Threshold.

If a family steps down to Early Help services to access specific support via Family Support Services or would benefit from a Team Around the Family approach, then an Early Help Assessment is not usually required as either the Child in Need Review Meeting or Review Child Protection Case Conference Minutes will have highlighted any outstanding identified needs which may require support. However, prior to stepping down, consent from the child/family must be obtained.

**There are two 'step down' pathways to access Early Help support. These are:**

**Step down via Family Support Services:**

Where the plan is for case closure at Level 3 or Level 4 Threshold, and specific support via Family Support Services is needed, then the allocated Social Worker or Social Work Assistant will be required to complete a referral to Family Support Services to access a range of service provision, which includes access to consultation and advice from the Family Community Connector who works closely with Health Connections as part of a signposting directory service. Referrals to Family Support Services will be screened in the weekly allocation meetings. This referral must clearly specify what support is required and why this support is needed. To find out more about the support Family Support Services provide, please view the gov.gg website: <https://www.gov.gg/familysupport>

**Please be advised to step down to Team Around the Child (TAF) you must do so via the MASH.**

**Please see below.**

### **Step down to TAF via the MASH:**

Where the plan is for case closure at Level 3 or Level 4 Threshold, and further support via Team Around the Family (TAF) is required, then the allocated Social Worker or Social Work Assistant is required to complete an Eligibility for TAF Check Form prior to the last Child in Need Meeting or Review Child Protection Case Conference taking place. This form must then be sent to the MASH: [MultiAgencySupportHub@gov.gg](mailto:MultiAgencySupportHub@gov.gg) for the attention of the Early Help Coordinator & TAF Advisor. The completed Eligibility for TAF Check Form will be screened by the Early Help Coordinator & TAF Advisor alongside Family Support Services in their weekly allocation meetings.

Please note allocation meetings are held once per week, so please ensure the Eligibility Check Form is sent to the MASH two weeks or more prior to the last Child in Need Meeting or Review Child Protection Case Conference taking place.

If a Team Around the Family Approach is confirmed by the Early Help Coordinator & TAF Advisor to be appropriate, then the allocated Social Worker or Social Work Assistant must identify a relevant Lead Professional for the Team Around the Family meetings from an agency already involved with the child and family.

When stepping down to Team Around the Family, the Team Around the Family Action Plan must be created in the last Child in Need Review or Review Child Protection Conference, and this must be done with the family's input. These actions must be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and have clear time scales to prevent drift.

The Early Help Coordinator & TAF Advisor will be available to provide support and advice to the Lead Professional during the Team Around the Family process, and they will keep a log of families receiving support via Team Around the Family meetings.

The Lead Professionals are to email all records of Team Around the Family Meetings and Closure records to [MultiAgencySupportHub@gov.gg](mailto:MultiAgencySupportHub@gov.gg) and they will then be saved on Mosaic social care case management system.

**It is important to note cases must not be stepped down to Early Help merely so children can be 'monitored'. There must be identified need(s) that continue to require support through an Early Help response, which is a voluntary consenting process.**

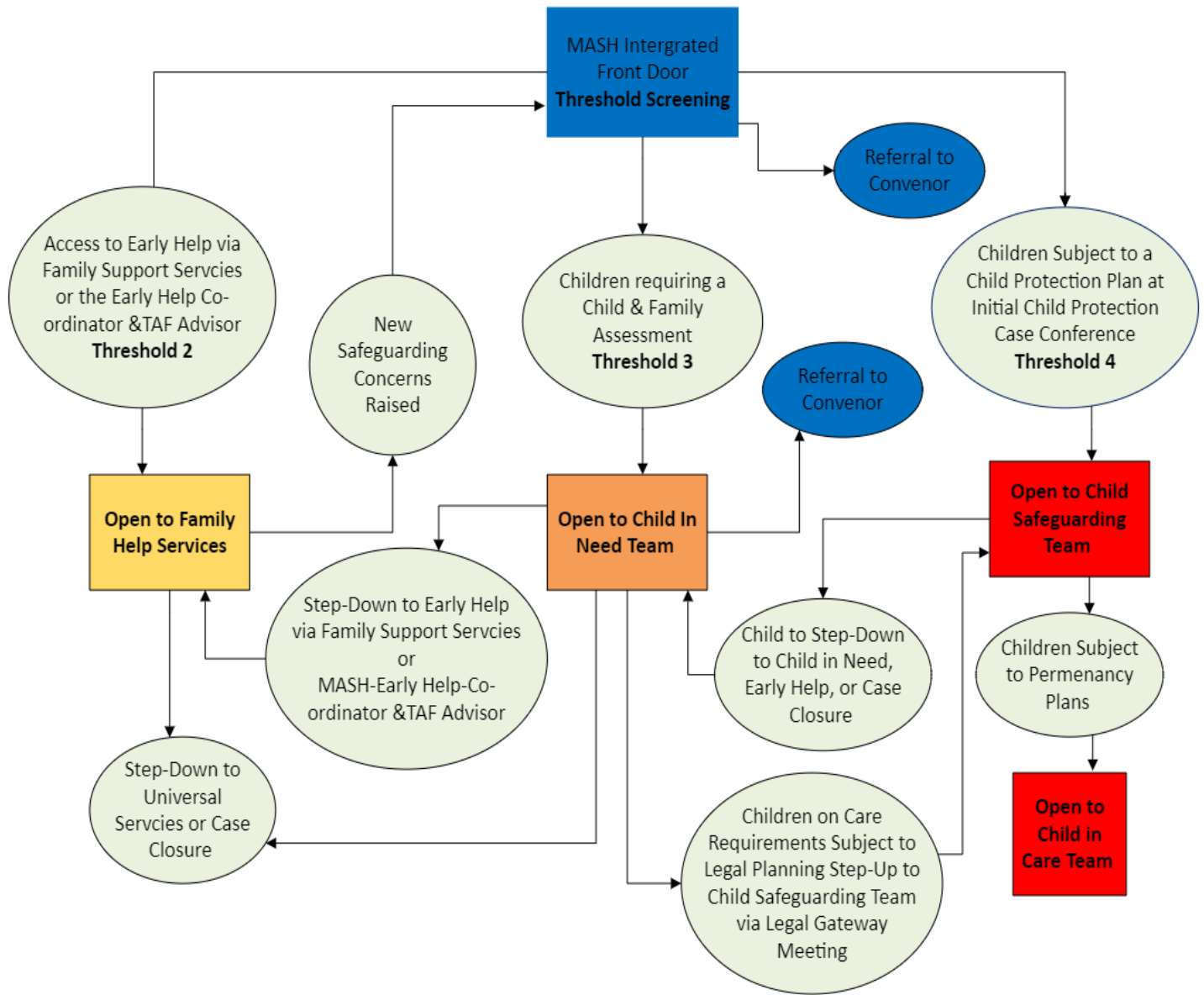
### **New Referrals & Step Down from the Child Development Service (CDS) Social Care Led Services (Level 3)**

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New referrals will be received and screened via the MASH. Eligibility criteria for the CDS Social Care Service is determined by a child's level of need, for example, these children require specialist services to achieve or maintain an adequate level of health or development and/or who are disabled. They may require long term intervention from specialist services. The professional referrer will be required to evidence how the child meets the eligibility criteria set.

The CDS Social Work Assistant will undertake an Early Help Assessment and co-ordinate new packages of care and support as per assessed need and once these are agreed and in place will be transferred to the (CDS) Short Breaks and Transition Social Work Assistant. If a sibling of a child is open to the CDS Social Work Assistant and requires support at Level 2 via an Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Family, the CDS Social Work Assistant will be allocated to complete this alongside the support they are already providing to the family. This is to ensure consistency for the family and reduce multiple professional involvement.

# Children & Family Community Services Pathways Flowchart



## Resolution of Professional Disagreement & Escalation Policy

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National and local Serious Case Reviews have highlighted the importance of professionals challenging decisions to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families.

Local Reviews have found concerns about decisions are often not challenged professionally. The ISCP has an 'Escalation Policy' in place to support you if you disagree with a decision made relating to a child.

The policy outlines the process when any professional has a concern or disagreement with an agency decision or action related to a child and should be followed if there is a difference of opinion between professionals about a step up, step down or, step in process. Its aim is to ensure the focus is kept on the child's safety and well-being through promoting a culture of professional challenge and providing framework for timely and effective resolutions. At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.

The escalation policy can be found here:

[Resolution of Professional Disagreements - Escalation Policy - Child Protection Guidelines \(iscp.gg\)](#)