

North West Children in Need Moving across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure

Introduction

1. This procedure is applicable, and the steps set out within should be taken, when the following circumstances exist in respect of a child:
 - i. the child is known to the Children's Social Care service of one local authority area,
and
 - ii. the child has moved to stay in another local authority area, whether on a permanent or temporary¹ basis, or
2. Where any other agency is notified of a Child in Need that moves in or out of their area, they must arrange for information to be shared with/received from the equivalent agency in the other area consistent with their agency's procedures.
3. This procedure is intended to apply to a child and their siblings, including unborn children. This document will refer to the 'child' with an understanding that there may be multiple children to which the procedure applies. Specific reference should be made to *North West Pre-Care and Care Proceedings Notification and Transfer across Local Authority Boundaries Procedure* where care proceedings are being considered.

Initial Steps

4. Notification of a Child in Need having moved/intending to move should be brought immediately to the attention of the receiving local authority 'front door', or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in the area into which the child has moved. Usually, this information will be transferred by using the receiving local authority's referral form (local authorities may agree to use the proforma attached as Annex A for reasons of consistency).
5. The Duty Manager in the receiving local authority area should consult records to see whether the child was previously known to services in their area.
6. The expectation is that agreement is sought from the family regarding the referral and provision of information. Where agreement cannot be reached and there are historic or current child protection concerns, the protection of the child is paramount, and the referral must be made. If there are any doubts, advice is to be sought from legal services or the Caldicott Guardian.

¹ Temporary is taken to mean where the child(ren) and their family move, or plan to move, to an address which is temporary, e.g. a refuge, supported housing provision, living with family members or other temporary accommodation.

7. The Duty Social Worker / Duty Manager should telephone the relevant Social Care office in the referring local authority area and discuss the case with the team manager to determine whether any immediate action is necessary.
8. If following this initial enquiry there is an indication that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, the relevant Child Protection procedures should be followed. Both the referring and receiving authority should be involved with this, with the receiving authority taking the lead, supported and guided by the knowledge that the referring authority has about the family.
9. If a child is not at immediate risk of significant harm the Duty Manager should request that the referring local authority provides a case transfer summary. This will be accompanied by copies of any existing/ previous Child Protection Plans or Child in Need Plans for the child and minutes of the most recent meetings. As a minimum, this will include:
 - i. Full details of the child – name, DOB, current and planned addresses, gender, ethnicity
 - ii. Details of any siblings– names, DOB, current and planned addresses, gender, ethnicity
 - iii. Details of parents and/or carers – names, DOB, current and planned addresses, gender, ethnicity
 - iv. Details of other adults who will be living at the planned address
 - v. Details of any other family networks, or wider support networks.
 - vi. Full details of the allocated Social Worker – their name, work address, telephone number and email address
 - vii. Team manager's name and contact information
 - viii. Background information relating to the case:-
 - a. Reason(s) for the Child in Need Plan
 - b. Information about the needs identified
 - c. Length of time the child has been the subject of a social work involvement
 - d. Overview of the historical involvement with the child and their family, including any history of previous CIN and/or Child Protection Plans, previous adoptions in the family, or previous periods of being a Looked After Child.
 - e. Assessment and intervention work undertaken, specifically including risk of and/or specialist multi-agency intervention pertaining to complex/contextual exploitation or children missing from home, care, or education.
 - f. Names/ contact details of organisations contributing to the plan
 - v. The planned outcomes for the child.
 - vi. Details of the previous social worker and professionals working with the family.
 - vii. A template is appended to this document that is recommended to be used.
10. This information should enable the receiving local authority to gain an up-to-date understanding of the case, and the referring authority must ensure that the information is current. Good quality information about the child and their circumstances will enable the receiving authority to be confident in their decision-making, ensuring there is no drift or

delay in achieving positive outcomes for the child. Where the assessment, plan, or minutes are unclear, the receiving local authority can request further clarity on information.

11. Any recent significant changes for the family should be captured, assessed, and analysed by the referring authority as part of its own case management process. This includes an expectation that the family's recent move to a new area has been assessed as part of the referring authority's work with the family.
12. An email confirming the case transfer summary request should be sent to the referring local authority within 2 working days. The request should state that the case transfer summary and copies of documents, as in paragraph 8, are required to allocate the case.
13. If the referring local authority does not provide the necessary written information about the child within the above timescales, a further email should be sent from the Service Manager (receiving local authority) to the Service Manager (referring local authority), requesting the information be supplied immediately. The steps outlined in the appended dispute resolution process should be followed. It is expected that drift for the child is avoided at all costs.
14. If the information is still not received, an assessment² of the family's circumstances should be carried out anyway by the receiving authority, to ascertain whether the child continues to be Children in Need and whether services are required. This should take place within 15 days of the initial referral being received.
15. The Duty Social Care team in the receiving local authority area should check with local agencies (at least the equivalent agencies to those engaged with the family in the referring local authority area) about whether the child is known to them.
16. Upon receipt of the case transfer summary, the Team Manager should allocate the case and an assessment should be carried out to ascertain the involvement required by the receiving authority. Consideration must be given to the possibility that the move to the new area could have increased any previously identified risks or introduced new ones.
17. Referring authorities must provide all the relevant information and documentation in a timely manner to ensure that transfer is accepted by the receiving authority. Failure to do so will result in a delay of transfer, resulting in increased risk or vulnerability for the child.

Prior to case transfer occurring

18. The child/ren and their parents should be kept informed of the progress of the case transfer.

² The term 'Assessment' is used throughout to ensure consistency with national recording practice including the Department for Education Children in Need Census. Local terminology such as 'Child and Family Assessment' 'Single Assessment' and 'Social Work Assessment' should all be taken to be synonymous – this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

19. A letter acknowledging the receipt of the transfer summary and informing the referring local authority of the decision as to whether the case will be allocated should be sent within 5 working days of receipt.
20. The receiving local authority has the responsibility, on receipt of the referral, to ensure a Child in Need (CiN) meeting is convened as soon as possible, after the first assessment review point (15 working days). This is in line with North West Social Work Planning and Assessment Model.
21. Until the first CiN Meeting, the child will remain subject of a CiN Plan in the referring local authority and the key/lead worker in the referring local authority area should negotiate monitoring arrangements with the duty team in the receiving area. This ensures that the plan for the child continues to be overseen until the receiving local authority confirms its decision on case management and/or that a revised plan is in place. Transfers of cases should never stop the referring local authority from continuing with appropriate planning for children.
22. This will include a requirement to visit the child in the receiving local authority area, subject to an assessment of the risk associated with the need.
23. However, if the receiving local authority decides that the referral requires an S47 (Children Act) assessment then this will be completed. Both the referring and receiving authority should be involved with this, with the referring authority taking the lead, supported by the information they hold and their knowledge of the family.
24. If a funded package of support is in place in the referring local authority area, this will continue until at least the first CiN meeting in the receiving local authority. If it is decided that this support will continue, the receiving local authority must fund the existing package, or identify and implement a new package of support.
25. Where the child is living in temporary accommodation³ responsibility will remain with the referring local authority, as they have knowledge and understanding of the needs of the family, until a discussion with the receiving authority has taken place.
26. Where the decision is made that the referring authority should retain responsibility of the care of the child, but significant distance from the referring authority to the child's temporary accommodations creates challenges, a meeting should be held with social care colleagues from the relevant offices of both the receiving and referring local authorities within 10 days of notification of the child moving across authority borders. This meeting should be used to consider a joint working approach with support for the referring authority in completing visits to the child.

³ Temporary is taken to mean where the child(ren) and their family move, or plan to move, to an address which is temporary, e.g. a refuge, supported housing provision, living with family members or other temporary accommodation.

27. 18. If after a period of three months the child and their family continue to live in temporary accommodation in the receiving local authority, a transfer-in conference must be arranged within 15 working days. This will be the responsibility of the Team Manager, Conference and Review, in line with the requirements.

Other Responsibilities (including for non-Social Care agencies)

28. Although much of the procedure set out above concerns the actions of the Children's Social Care teams, responding to Children in Need is a multi-agency responsibility and all agencies must be alert to the circumstances of a Child in Need.

29. Any agency, other than Social Care, that becomes aware of a child in their area who was/is a Child in Need from another area, should alert Social Care in the receiving area. This responsibility is intended to provide assurance and act as a safeguard within local partnerships. This may be necessary when other agencies become aware of a child where no referral has been made from Social Care in the previous area due to timescales of the move, or them not being informed as to the whereabouts of the family following a move.

30. If a Child in Need leaves for an unknown location, the originating local authority must consider issuing an alert, subject to risk assessment.

31. If two or more children in a family live in different areas, the planning should be as consistent as possible across both areas, subject to this being consistent with the best interests of the children.

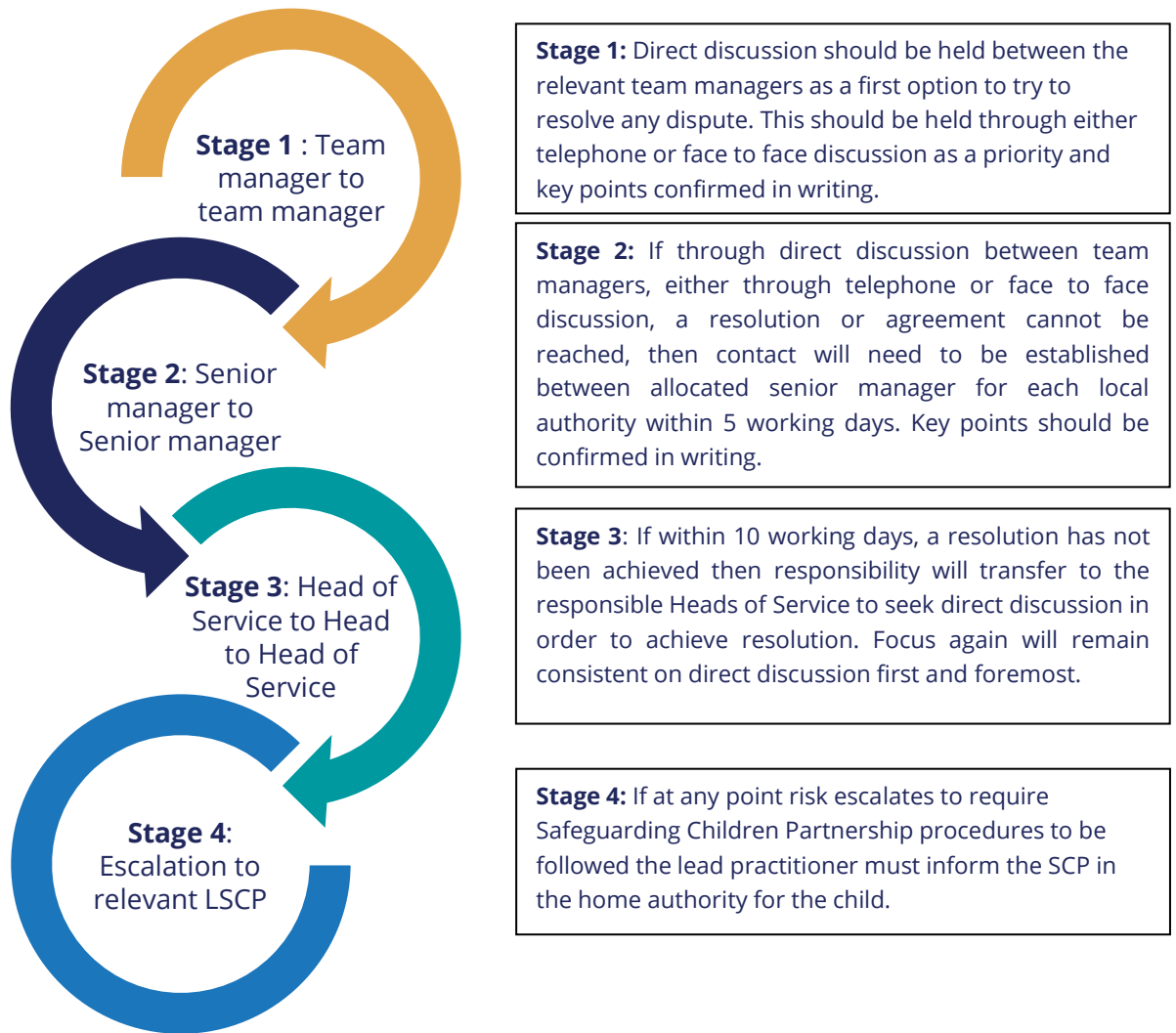
Action to be taken in cases where there is dispute or delay in case transfer.

32. Communication throughout any dispute remains key priority – ensuring that direct discussion is the primary remit of communication, and this is an understanding by all local authority representatives.

33. For clarity, agreed outcomes will be recorded and shared via email to ensure decision making captured on each local authority's electronic recording system.

34. Until dispute is resolved, case responsibility/oversight and decision-making for the child will remain with the referring local authority, including responding to any concern or safeguarding issue. A dispute resolution flowchart is included below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Dispute resolution



Stage 1: Direct discussion should be held between the relevant team managers as a first option to try to resolve any dispute. This should be held through either telephone or face to face discussion as a priority and key points confirmed in writing.

Stage 2: If through direct discussion between team managers, either through telephone or face to face discussion, a resolution or agreement cannot be reached, then contact will need to be established between allocated senior manager for each local authority within 5 working days. Key points should be confirmed in writing.

Stage 3: If within 10 working days, a resolution has not been achieved then responsibility will transfer to the responsible Heads of Service to seek direct discussion in order to achieve resolution. Focus again will remain consistent on direct discussion first and foremost.

Stage 4: If at any point risk escalates to require Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures to be followed the lead practitioner must inform the SCP in the home authority for the child.

Review

35. This procedure will be reviewed no later than **30 September 2025.**

Annex A

Child in Need Transfer Form to another Local Authority

Referring Local Authority	
Name of referrer	
Email Address	
Contact Number	

Please ensure that you have included electronic attachments for all relevant documents.

These should include:

- An up-to-date assessment,
- The Child in Need Plan,
- Minutes of the Child in Need meeting,
- Any information about previous Child Protection Plans and associated documents.
- Any other relevant assessments or information, including any Section 47 Child Protection Enquiry.

Name of child/children (including the names which they are known by)	Date of Birth	Gender	Ethnicity	First Language	Religion

Are any of the Children subject of a Child Protection Plan or have been the subject of conference? Yes No

Date _____ Outcome _____

Name of Parent/ significant adults/	Date of Birth	Gender	Ethnicity	First Language	Religion	Relationship with child

carers for the children						

Address of the Family (referring LA)	Address of the Family (receiving LA)

Reason for Referral - being clear about what action you have assessed is needed.	
<p>The family view of the current plan (including absent parents, parents living apart from child/ren, extended family, support network) Please include any family/network safety or support plan.</p>	
<p>Details of any other family networks, or wider support networks. Include any broader people who are meaningful/ important to a child.</p>	
<p>The voice and lived experience of the child/ren. Please include when this was obtained and impact on planning.</p>	

<p>Other organisations working with the child and/ or family See annex B. for more detail about partners providing support.</p>	
<p>The planned outcomes for the child Provide information about short- and long-term plans for the child/children</p>	
<p>Referring authority's social worker and team manager name and contact details</p>	

Further Action By Referring Authority

Task	Date Completed			
<p>Receiving Authority</p>				
<p>Duty Social Worker</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td> <p>Team Manager</p> </td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		<p>Team Manager</p>	
	<p>Team Manager</p>			

Confirmation of acceptance of referral sent		Date	
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Annex B.

Transfer of Child in Need or subject to Child Protection Plan Local Partners Contact Details

To be completed by referring authority

Child's name	
Referring Local Authority	
Name of referrer	
Email Address	
Contact Number	

Complete the following information, as relevant, for the child. Record more than one contact as appropriate. Where specific local partners/ services have not had involvement with the child, leave blank.

Health

Which health services are required?

This includes, but is not limited to, mental health/CAMHS, substance misuse, and sexual health services.

Please outline the child's needs:	
Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

Education

What are the child's educational requirements? Contacts may included, but are not limited to, Virtual School Head, Alternative Provision, Schools Lead.

Please outline the child's needs:	
Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

SEN and/or disability

Does the child have any specific educational or disability needs? Is there an EHC plan?

Please outline the child's needs:	
Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

Youth justice

Please indicate if the child is open to the youth justice team.

Please outline background and support currently in place:

Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

Police

Please indicate any current police involvement that the receiving authority should be made aware of.

Please outline the child's needs:

Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

Other services

Any other needs to be met by local services e.g., advocacy, mentoring, access to other activities within a local offer?

Please outline the child's needs:

Key contact information	
Name	
Title	
Email	
Telephone	

The following local authorities are party to this procedure by virtue of their membership of the North West Association of Directors of Children's Services. The procedure may be applied to by agreement with other Local Authorities outside the North West on a case-by-case basis, or by ongoing formal agreement.

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Blackpool Council
- Bolton Council
- Bury Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cumberland Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Knowsley Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Manchester City Council
- Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Salford City Council
- Sefton Council
- St Helens Council
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Trafford Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Westmorland and Furness Council
- Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
- Wirral Council