

What will happen if the family do not consent to continued support?

When a child's, young person's or family's case is closed by a social worker and they do not give consent, for information to be shared, or, to engage with early help services, the social worker will send a standard letter to the parents/carers advising them of the potential risks.

What support is available to me?

Early Help Coordinators (EHCOs) are available to support all early help cases, including those being stepped down from social care. If you need support, please contact an EHCO by telephoning 0300 126 1000 option 1, then option 2.

Also social work teams give EHCOs details of those cases which are stepping down. The EHCO will contact the new lead professional for an initial follow up within five days.

What should I do if I don't agree with the social worker and/or their decision?

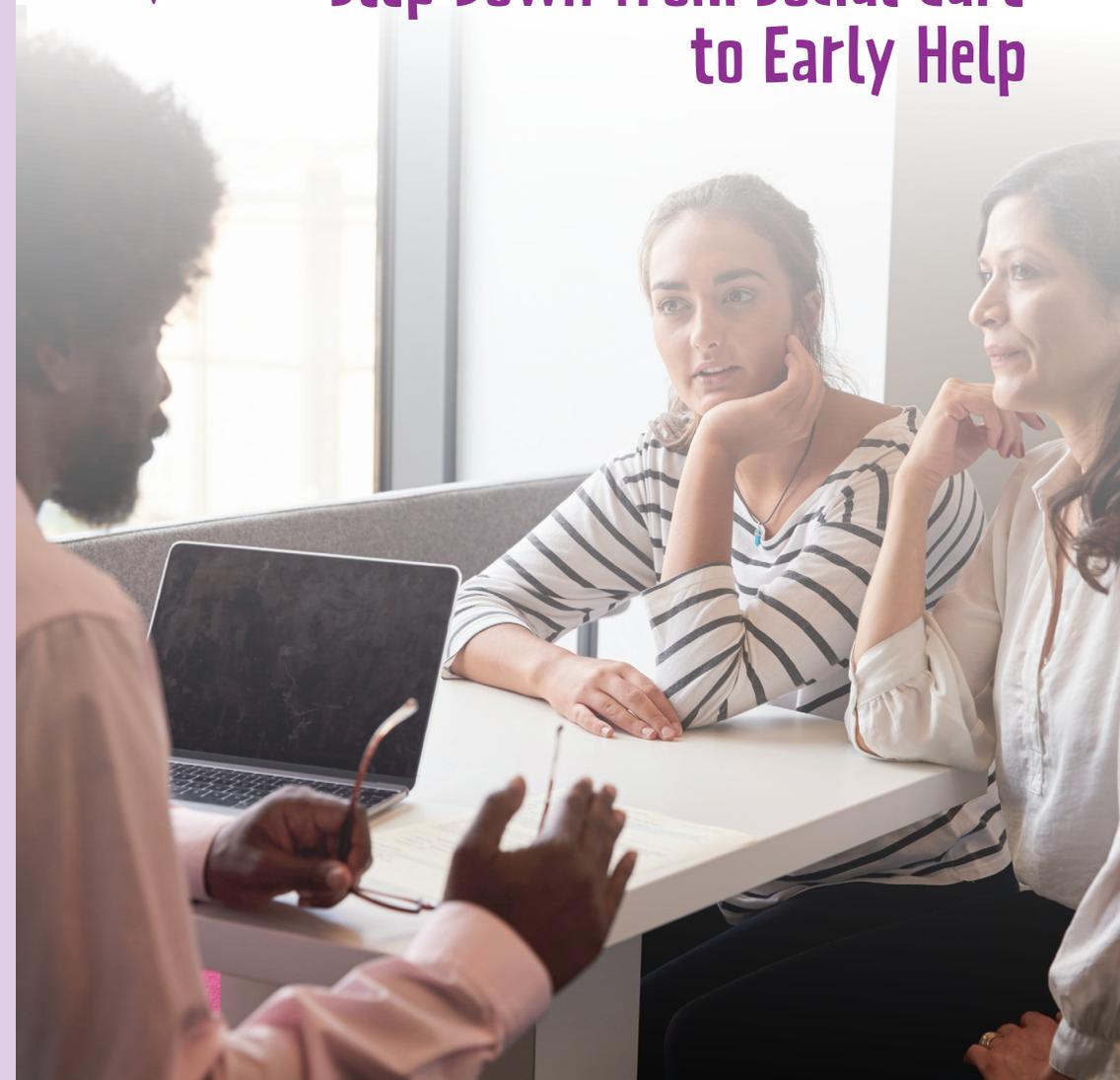
If you don't agree with the decision of a social worker please follow the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board's EHA Escalation Process, available at:

www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk

The advice in the process is:

- **Step 1:** Raise the issue directly with the practitioner concerned;
- **Step 2:** If this does not resolve the issue, contact the practitioner's manager;
- **Step 3:** If the issue is still not resolved you should contact the organisation's service manager and inform the local Early Help Coordinator of your actions;
- **Step 4:** If the issue is still unresolved, inform your local Early Help Coordinator who will ensure that the matter is raised with senior managers through partnership structures.

Step Down from Social Care to Early Help



www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/earlyhelp

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What is a step down?

For families who have been assessed or supported by a social worker, when a step down happens it means things in the family's life have improved so much that the social work team doesn't need to be involved anymore. Their time with a social worker is coming to an end but they may need some support, from somebody who can provide or arrange some early help.

The process for stepping down will differ depending on whether children, young people and families need continuing support and at what level.

Why is it important?

It is important that for children, young people and families there are no gaps in support between social care ending their involvement and early help beginning. We can all make sure that families' lives continue to improve and their needs do not increase again.

The role of the social worker at this time is to make sure there is a 'Warm handover' to a new lead professional (through early help, a targeted service or a universal service like a school or a health visitor) to lead on coordinating or providing continued support.

Who will make the decision to 'step down' a family and when will it be made?

The decision to 'step down' will be made by a child's social worker and their manager. Their decision will be helped by the discussions and decisions at a Child in Need (CiN) review meeting, a Child Protection Conference or through discussions as part of an assessment of risk/need.

A decision to end the involvement of a social work team will be made at the time when the child no longer needs their support and can happen during:

- A Single Assessment or Section 47 investigation
- A Child Protection Plan
- A Child in Need Plan

How will the social worker decide their involvement is no longer needed and which services need to continue to be provided?

Social workers and their managers regularly monitor the risks and needs in a child's life. When these risks and needs reduce to a point where they don't need a social worker, the case will be closed.

Social workers and their managers will use Thresholds and Pathways to help them to make this decision and to decide which services the family needs.

What will the family expect?

If you are contacted by a social worker to discuss a family which is stepping down from social care, it will be because they still need support from services. The family will expect us all to:

- Make sure they only have to tell their story once
- Share key information as appropriate
- Make sure there is no time when they do not receive the support they need
- Make sure they always know who their lead professional is and that this is someone they know will support them

What can I expect a social worker and their manager to do before a step down?

Before a family's case can be 'stepped down' the social worker will have asked for written consent from the family. The social worker will also talk with the family about who might be a lead professional and which services might be involved in supporting them.

For those cases with lower level needs (at level 2 in Thresholds and Pathways) the social worker will send these services a completed Early Help Assessment Action Plan.

For children and families with a higher level of need (at Level 3), the social worker will contact an Early Help Coordinator (EHCO) to consider whether a more intensive or specialist service is needed. The social worker, the new lead professional and the Level 3 service (which may also provide the new lead professional) will work together for a minimum of 6 weeks as part of a 'warm handover'.

For all families in this position, the case will not be formally closed by the social work team and taken on by the new lead professional until this handover is completed.

What will be expected of me if I take on a family stepping down from social care?

If you are contacted by a social worker to discuss a family stepping down from a social care team it will be because you have been identified as the best person to be a new lead professional or a member of the Team around the Family. You are very likely to already be working with, or aware of the child and the family. If you take on the role of lead professional you will be expected to attend the last Child In Need or Child Protection meeting and to plan together, with the social worker, how to keep this family getting stronger.