

Cheshire East Consultation Service

Operational Procedures

Children in Need and Child Protection

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June 2017

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Policy Information Sheet

Service Area	Children in Need and Child Protection
Date effective from	1 st June 2017
Responsible Officer	Naomi Banks (Service Manager)
Date for Review	
Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory (all staff name must adhere to guidance) Optional (Procedures and practice can vary between teams) 	Mandatory
Target Audience	All Staff
Date of CSLT Decision	
Related Document(s)	Thresholds of Need document
Superseded Documents	ChECS Operational Procedures 2011
Equality Impact Assessment	
Approved by	

Type of Document	Policy		Standard Operating Procedure		Guideline	
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Document control

Version no	Type of change	Date	Description of change

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Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment			
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:	Yes /No	Comments
	Race	n	
	Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	n	
	Nationality	n	
	Gender	n	
	Culture	n	
	Religion or belief	n	
	Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	n	
	Age	y	Service is for children age 0-18
	Disability-learning disabilities, physical disability, sensory impairment and mental health problems	n	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?		No
	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?		
3	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?		No
a	If yes can the impact be avoided?		
b	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy / guidance without the impact?		
c	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action		

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the document is an up-date on the current Cheshire East Consultation Service procedures. It includes the principles of Cheshire East front door service and the process for cases that require no further action/ early help or a child social care assessment.

1. Introduction and Policy Context

- 1.1 Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) is the front door team based within a multi-agency hub. ChECS deal with the initial contact regarding all levels of need. Contact with ChECS maybe from partner agencies, the public or families themselves requesting support and advice. The service is staffed by qualified and experienced Social Workers and Practitioner Support Officers who give advice about cases across the levels of need.
- 1.2 ChECS has increased the support to all professionals working with children and families across Cheshire East ensuring that early help and support is available to children and families and that they receive the right help at the right time.
- 1.3 The procedures within this document reflect the guidance issued in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and 2015 alongside significant pieces of legislation and guidance including:
 - Children Act (1989) and Children Act (2004)
 - Education Act (1996, 2002)
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)
 - Disability Discrimination Act (1995, 2005)
 - Human Rights Act (2000)
 - Data Protection Act (2003)
 - Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and manager (2008)
- 1.4 This procedure should be used in conjunction with other Children and Families Policies and Procedures, LSCB procedures and the Liquid Logic system.

2. Principles

- 2.1 All children have the right to safe care and protection.

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- 2.2 ChECS can be the first point of call dealing with all levels of enquiry to partner agencies, the public or children and families themselves.
- 2.3 Multi-agency Referral Forms (MARF) should follow all consultations where the decision has been made to progress to a referral to the Early Help Brokerage or to the Child in Need/ Child Protection Teams.
- 2.4 There will be an expectation that partner agencies working with children and their families would have completed specific tools to inform decision making at the front door. For example the Child Sexual Exploitation Screening Tool, the Brookes traffic light tool, the Neglect screening tool or the Graded Care Profile (2).
- 2.5 Consultation needs to include clear agreement on the level of need, who is taking the case forward and any offer of assistance from Children and Family Services.
- 2.6 The professional who makes contact with ChECS is responsible for gaining consent of the family or advising them of the intention of making a referral.(exceptions to this are described under 3.6).
- 2.6 Decisions will be made expeditiously on issues at all levels of need; within 72 hours where a safeguarding issue is identified and one hour if a Child Protection investigation is necessary (s47).
- 2.7 Feedback on the outcome of consultations to the referrer is an integral part of multi-agency working together.
- 2.8 Children and families have a right to know that contact has been made with ChECs.

3. Information Sharing

- 3.1 Quality sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision.
- 3.2 Early sharing of information is the key to providing effective early help where there are emerging problems. At the other end of the continuum, sharing information can be essential to put in place child protection services.
- 3.3 Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. (Working Together 2013 and 2015)

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- 3.4 Detailed guidance for workers about sharing information can be found in: Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers (2008).
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the practitioner who is seeking a consultation to ensure that they have the consent of the child and family they are working with and to inform the child and family where necessary about the consultation.
- 3.6 There are exceptions to consent; when seeking consent may itself place a child at risk of significant harm, or on other legal grounds when the sharing of information is for the protection or welfare of a child. (Please see appendix 1 Legislative Powers) Examples where seeking consent may cause harm include:
- where sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed;
 - where Fabricated or Induced Illness is suspected
 - where there are fears for the safety of the child due to possible action by members of their family
 - where it is not possible to contact the person whose consent is required immediately and prompt action is required to establish or ensure the child's safety
- 3.7 Practitioners in the Integrated Team will share information with each other as per the LSCB information Sharing Protocol 2015, and the Privacy Notice information Leaflet for Professionals and Family members. This means that relevant information will be shared within the Integrated Team on cases that are open as contacts, or that may come through as a contact from the Police. In most circumstances parents will be aware of the contact, and consent will be sought to complete additional checks. Consent can be overridden where ChECS cannot make contact with the parents, and there are significant concerns, or where the concerns around the child's welfare are significant, and additional information is required to fully assess the risks.
- 3.8 CAFCASS / Probation and other checks are sent to the Unit Coordinator; on non-open cases these are completed by the Unit Coordinator with a Social Worker in ChECS having an overview of the issues. On open cases these are sent to the area team to complete and send back to the referring agency with the most up to date information.

4. Workflow

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- 4.1 All calls initially go through to the Unit Coordinator who will check Liquid Logic to ascertain whether it is an open case. In these circumstances the case will be transferred directly to the relevant team.
- 4.2 The Unit Coordinators will ask for key information such as name of the child, date of birth and the address if known including postcode as well as the concerns the caller may have.
- 4.3 If the call is about a child whose record is closed or who is not previously known then the Unit Coordinator will check Liquid Logic on both the LCM and EHM for any information to be passed to a Social Worker or Practitioner Support Officer within CHECS.
- 4.4 Where a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) has been sent the Unit Coordinator will check on Liquid Logic before passing to a Social Worker / Practitioner Support Officer (PSO).
- 4.5 Universal enquiries via the Family Information Service will be recorded in the Tribal system. If this enquiry is a professional who may need sign posting, this is recorded against the person making the enquiry and not normally against a specific child's name. If the professional indicates that there is a welfare concern about a child then they will be put through to a ChECS worker.
 - All open case information will be sent through to the allocated Social Worker and Team and will not be recorded as a contact via ChECS. These contacts could take the form of Police notifications, HMP notifications, other statutory requests for information, telephone contact etc. The receiving team must acknowledge receipt of the information.
 - Information on open cases should be recorded on a case note (not a Contact) by the Social Worker/team that is responsible for the case, for example actions arising from MAPPA / MARAC meetings.
 - If groups such as MARAC / MAPPA have concerns about a child, the same process around referrals should be followed by the appropriate professional.
 - Where notifications are received about adults who are a risk to children this will be loaded by the Unit Coordinator unless there is an indication that there are links to known children. In these cases, information will be passed to a Social Worker in ChECS. However, loading of prison moves is not required; release dates and community addresses should be loaded.

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5. Consultation and Referrals

The caller will be given certain options;

Option 1- School Admissions

Option 2- Social Worker already open to ChECS

Option 3- ChECS

Option 4- Family Information Service

- 5.1 Family Information Services (FIS) will provide a comprehensive front line service advising parents and carers on a diverse range of services and information available within Cheshire East on childcare, early education and funding. These services cover a wide range of needs including support services such as counselling and special needs, FIS will assist in signposting customers to the relevant contact to ensure all enquires are dealt with efficiently and effectively.
- 5.2 If the caller wishes to discuss CAFsupport or early help advice/ intervention the call will initially be taken by FIS. If the case is to sit at level 2/3 and requires early help intervention this will then be passed to a PSO in the Early Help Brokerage.
- 5.3 If the CHECS option is chosen indicating a Children's Social care referral is necessary, the Social Worker will require that a Multi- Agency Referral Form (MARF) is completed. This will need to be received within 48 hours or immediately if a S47 / Child protection concern is identified.
- 5.4 Social workers will clearly outline on the contact the actions they have taken including checks they have undertaken to inform decision making, the advice they have given and the recommendations for further action.
- 5.5 Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners will have oversight and sign off on all contacts and referrals to ensure that decision making is appropriate and timely. All decisions will be made and recorded within 24 hours of the consultation and within 1 hour if Child Protection / S47 Inquiry in line with Working Together 2013.

6. Escalation Process

- 6.1 If there is a disagreement at the conclusion of discussion between the referrer and the ChECS worker with regards to the proposed level of need and actions and recommendations, the professional requesting the advice must discuss this with his/her line manager and the ChECS worker will discuss with the

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Team Manager. Managers should then agree actions and by whom. The same escalation process also applies to EHB.

7. Early Help Brokerage (EHB)

- 7.1 EHB PSOs will review and triage those cases identified as at level 2/3. They will identify any Family Focus criteria met (Troubled Families), recording the same on Liquid Logic and pass to the most appropriate Early help services as appropriate. This will either be in house provision from Prevention and Support Services or from the early help commissioned services or universal provision. Support will be offered for the CAF process where appropriate.
- 7.2 The Police, Housing, Health and Adults social care are currently represented in the EHB supporting the pan Cheshire Complex Dependency Programme. They support the triage function and for some more complex cases a more in depth triage known as a 360 profile will take place. For these information is also gathered from other partners including Probation and CEDAH. Separate consent is sought for these from adults in each household. The comprehensive report is shared within 10 working days, with the Lead Professional to support their completion of the CAF process and the subsequent action plan.
- 7.3 Partners information is also made available where necessary from triage conducted by ChECS.

8. Performance Management / Audit

- 8.1 A structure has been put in place to ensure that there is robust performance management data which captures the range of activities that are undertaken by ChECS.
- 8.2 The Service Manager will dip sample a minimum of 10% of all NFA's contacts on a monthly basis to ensure that decision making is robust and appropriate.
- 8.3 All children who have had two or more contacts in a 12 month period will be reviewed and a referral to Children's Social care for assessment will be considered.
- 8.4 Team Managers within ChECS will file audit, using the Signs of Safety file audit templates, 2 cases per month as required by the Quality Assurance Safeguarding Team within Cheshire East.

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8.5 The Service Manager will file audit those cases that have gone over 5 days to process.

9. Guidance for Staff in CHECS and EHB re Police VPA's

- 9.1 The Police primarily use the Vulnerable Person's Assessment (VPA) as a Tool to provide some analysis and historical information related to children's cases where there has been an incident of concern. The VPA might be related to a child or an adult, but if there are children within the family, these are the VPA's that are considered by the PPU.
- 9.2 The Police Officer who completes such an assessment will grade the VPA from Low, to Medium, and to High Risk (with several areas in between ie; medium/high risk etc).
- 9.3 The Police in the Public Protection Unit (PPU) ensure that they prioritise VPA's which are classed as high risk. The Detective Sergeant within the PPU ensures that these are prioritised. Any VPA's waiting for an outcome will be lower level VPA's and the Police will ensure that all VPA's are screened, and high risk cases to medium passed to social care promptly (within 24 hours for most, and for Section 47 level cases immediately)
- 9.4 A police constable in the Unit has responsibility for triaging the standard VPA's every day. He will complete basic checks on the VPA, and consult the Niche and CAVA database where required.
- 9.5 This police Officer will also change the grading of the VPA either upwards, or downwards, depending on further information additions/checks, and will use specific Police risk assessment tools (eg 'National decision Making Model.')
- 9.6 This Police Officer will consult the Social Worker in ChECS who is working in Sharepoint around any cases that he/she is unsure about whether to send through to ChECS (cases where the level of need is assessed as very low); ChECS Duty Social Worker will make a decision whether to load these VPA's as contacts.
- 9.7 Auditing of these VPA's that do not get sent to ChECS will happen between ChECS and the Police to ensure consistency in decision making and ensure that all cases that require consideration at ChECS are being seen, and cases that are unnecessary are filtered out based on sound decision making on both sides.

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- 9.8 If the VPA is of significantly poor quality, the DS in the PPU will alert the Police Officer responsible and their sergeant to improve practice.
- 9.9 New workers to ChECS will complete an induction with the Police team. ChECS will offer police staff the same induction.

10. Cheshire East Consultation Service Structure

- 10.1 The structure of this team is outlined in Diagram 1 below. This structure will be subject to change as the service evolves and becomes more integrated and multi-agency approach.

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Diagram 1 – Cheshire East Consultation Service Structure

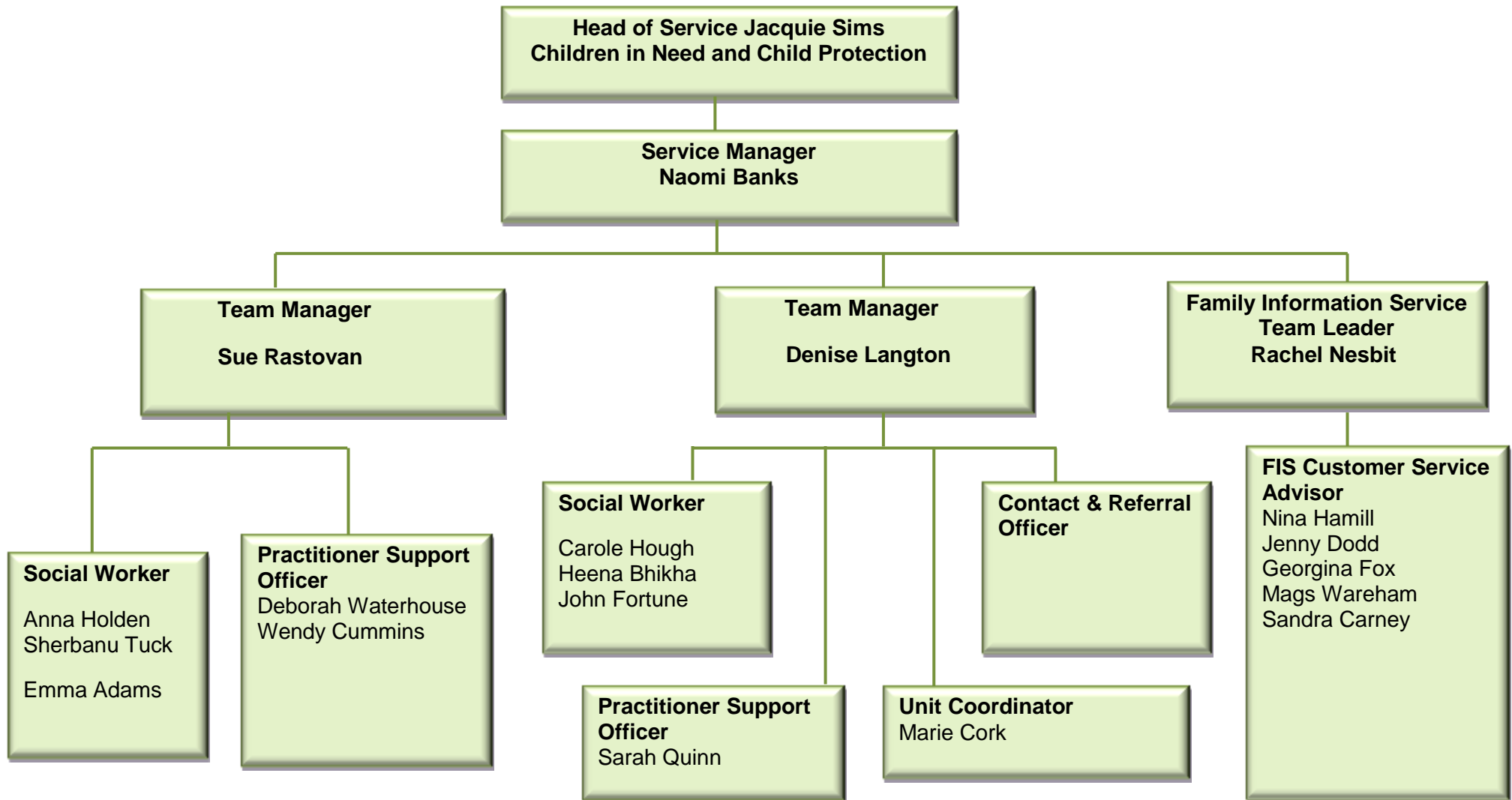
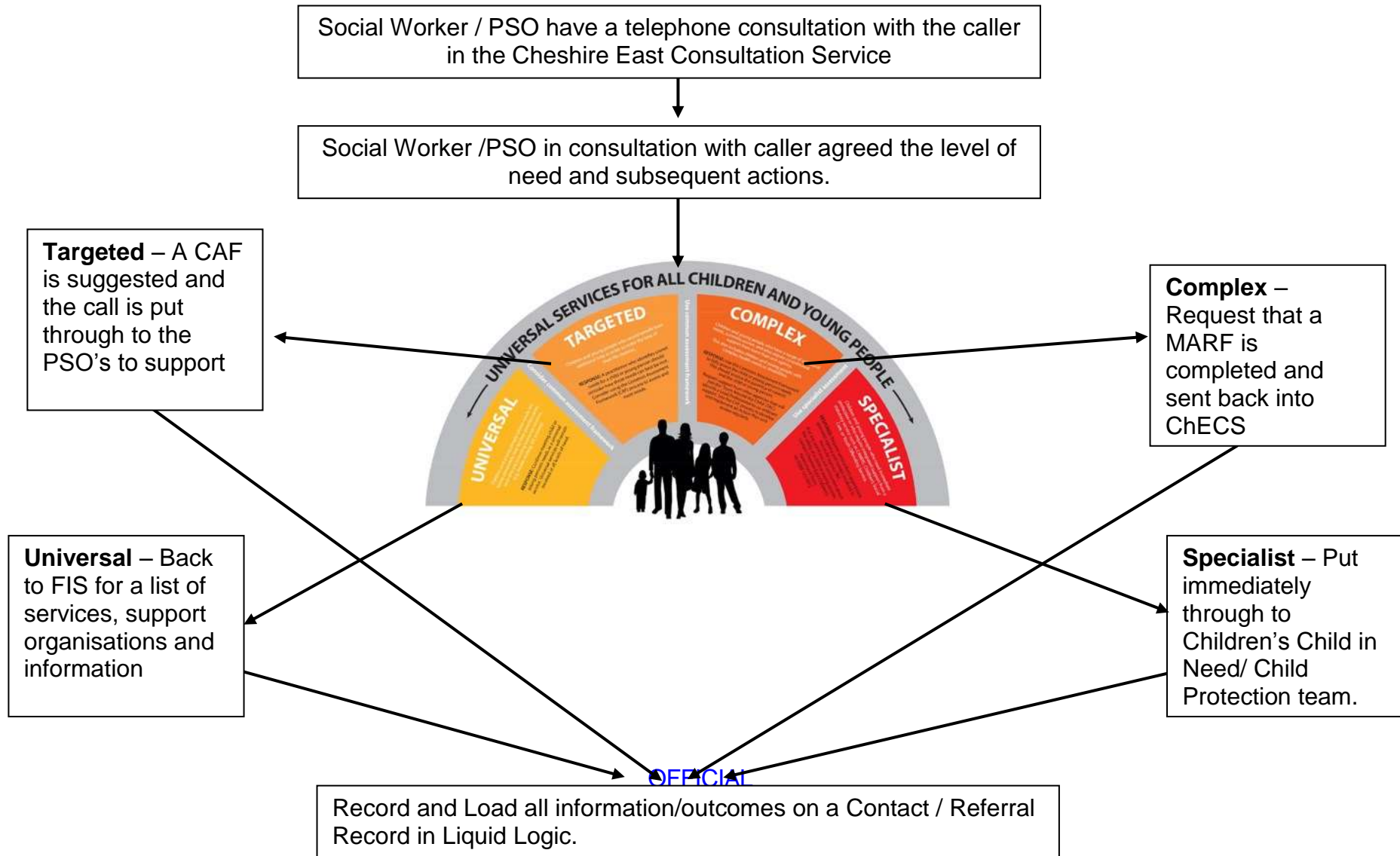


Diagram 2 – Calls to Cheshire East Consultation Service



Appendix 1
[legislative powers](#)

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Appendix 2

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