

First Access & Screening Team (FAST)

Multi-Agency Operational Protocol

June 2016



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1. Introduction

Children in need of help can come to attention of a range of services through a variety of referral pathways and once within a referral system can be passed from one service to another in the search for the 'right' service; this type of movement across statutory and non-statutory services becomes particularly apparent as needs or risk change. It is our view that by joining information sharing and professional screening activities we can improve referral pathways for children at risk or in need of additional support to better ensure that children and families are signposted to the right help at the right time.

This Protocol outlines the remit of the First Access & Screening Team (FAST) which has joined the data intelligence functions of the Partnership Triage with social work screening and referral activity of Children's Social Care First Response Team creating a single point of entry for children in need of additional support and/or protection.

2. Vision & Purpose

FAST acts as Hackney's local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and provides a delivery framework that enables partnership agencies to work together to support and safeguard children by sharing and analysing information that is held about them. The FAST provides a space in which agencies can access their client data systems, balancing the need for privacy with the need to share information safely. By doing this, FAST aims to identify need and risk by building a full picture of the child and their family.

The Hackney FAST intends to provide a proportionate, timely and coordinated approach to all children in need and/or at risk within the Borough through effective partnership working that places the child at the centre of decision making and better ensure that the right help is identified first time.

Screening activity in FAST is undertaken by Children & Young People's Services (CYPS) professionals and supported by co-located partners from police, probation and health services who work alongside CYPS to share information. Screening activity is further enhanced by the strong local interface with the Safer London Foundation and

Missing Children Social Worker. This joined up approach to information sharing enables proportionate and timely decisions to be made about the type and level of services children need. Additionally, it facilitates timely access to resources including the allocation mechanisms of the Children Centre Multi-Agency Team (MAT) meetings and the Children and Young People's Partnership Panel (CYPPP).

It is our intention to continue building on our partnership interface and develop close working links with the broad range of services delivered throughout the borough so that we are better able to identify, coordinate and cohesively respond to information relating to risk and harm.

3. Aims & Objectives

FAST aims to ensure that:

- All safeguarding referrals are dealt with in a timely and effective manner to ensure the immediate protection of children
- Decisions are sound and based on high quality multi-agency information sharing arrangements
- Children & families are referred to the right services first time and as early in the life of the problem as possible
- All agencies have the confidence to share information safely and securely
- Patterns of risk posed to children or need within the community are identified, monitored, analysed and shared in appropriate multi-agency forums for action
- Professional agencies working with children and their families have access to information that is proportionate and relevant to their involvement in a child's life
- Allocation of resources for children and families is coherent and transparent
- Professionals have rapid access to qualified and experienced social work professionals for safeguarding advice, information and resources
- Children & families have rapid access to social work professionals for advice, guidance and assistance when they need it.
- The service is well understood and accessible to those that need it

4. Status of this document

This Protocol has been agreed by the FAST Multi-Agency Steering Group, any changes to this document will be agreed by the partnership.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- MASH Information Sharing Guidance
- FAST Steering Group Terms of Reference dated June 2015

5. Confidentiality and information sharing

The key purpose of FAST is for the multi-agency partnership to share information about children and families in order to make safe and timely decisions about what needs to happen next. The Caldicott Principles and Golden Rules of Information sharing provide a framework for agencies to agree information sharing arrangements.

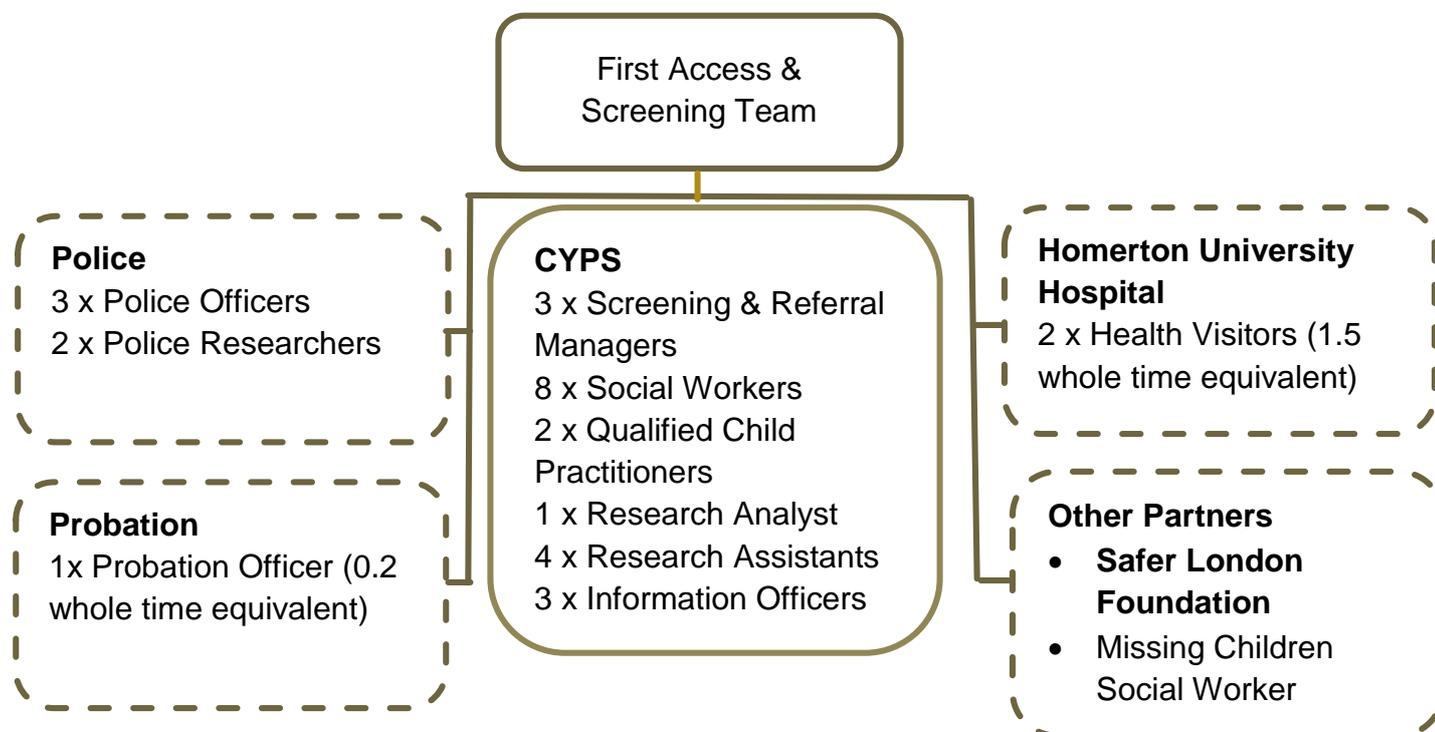
1. Everyone must understand his or her responsibilities whilst also remembering that the **Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information** but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. **Be open and honest** with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Share with consent where appropriate** and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case whilst understanding and complying with the law
4. **Seek advice** if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible
5. The duty to share information can be as important as the duty to protect confidentiality. In making decisions **consider safety and wellbeing** by basing information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and

up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely. Access to confidential information should be on a strict need-to-know basis

7. Justify the purpose(s) for using confidential information by **keeping a record of your decision and the reasons for it** – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.
8. When requesting information from another professional, **ensure that you provide the context for why this is needed**. Professionals will be unable to judge what is necessary, proportionate or relevant without knowing the nature of the concern you have for the child, young person or family.
9. Remember **international information sharing** restrictions may be different.

6. The Team

6.1 The FAST sits under the umbrella of services within Access, Assessment, Youth Justice & Family Support Services (structure chart at Appendix E) within Hackney's Children and Young People's Directorate. The team comprises of CYPS staff who are co-located with multi-agency colleagues.



7. How to Contact FAST

Phone: Members of the public or professionals can call FAST on **020 356 4844** any time Monday – Friday for advice, guidance or to make a referral. After 5pm and at weekends the Out of Hours social work service operates by phone on **020 8356 2710**

Email: Members of the public or professionals can e-mail FAST on FAST@hackney.gov.uk or secure e-mail on FAST@hackney.gov.uk.cjism.net.

Mail: Members of the public or professionals can post referrals or letters to FAST, address: Hackney Learning Trust, 1 Reading Lane, Hackney E8 1GQ

Fax: Members of the public or professionals can fax FAST on 020 356 5516/7

Walk-in: Children and families can ‘*walk in*’ to Hackney Service Centre and ask to see a duty children’s social worker any time Monday – Friday between 9am – 5pm.

8. How We Work

The FAST has five core functions:

- Screen and allocate child protection referrals (within 24 hours)
- Research & provide information ‘hand off’ reports to professionals working with children and young people as necessary
- Facilitate access to services for children and families that need them
- Provide advice and guidance to professionals and members of the public
- Operate a duty system for ‘walk in’ clients and home visiting

FAST is a single point of contact for professionals and members of the public seeking advice, information and/or who need to make a referral for a child/young person in need of help or protection. Our multi-agency team provide a rapid response service to child protection concerns ensuring swift decision making and allocation to Hackney’s Children’s Social Care Assessment Service as required. (Appendix B)

Unless there is a good reason to share information without consent i.e. child protection enquiry or public protection matter, consent to research and share information about children will always be sought from adults who hold parental responsibility for them. We ask our partners, where appropriate, to discuss intended referrals about children with adults who hold parental responsibility prior to making a referral. Our referral form asks professionals to confirm that this has been done.

FAST will undertake screening activities, including home visits where appropriate, to assist decision making for early help referrals where little is known about the child’s home life and where no immediate safeguarding concerns are evident. Such visits will be undertaken jointly with the Health Visitors located in FAST for children under 5

years of age where this is practicable. The purpose of such visits is to better understand the type and level of support needed to improve a child or family's outcomes.

Missing children notifications are processed through FAST, all notifications are screened and risk assessed for follow up action, the service works closely with the Missing Children's Social Worker and other professionals to assist in the coordination of information and response. (Appendix D)

Areas of risk including Child Sexual Exploitation, gang involvement, offending and anti-social behaviour are also tracked and monitored. Schools will be informed of serious incidents involving their students or specific community risks as necessary and advised of and linked to the allocated or lead professional working with the child, young person or their family.

FAST works seamlessly with the City & Hackney Children's Out of Hours Service, phones are switched to the Out of Hours Service at 5pm each weekday and throughout the weekend.

Out of Hours social workers do not have access to FAST multi-agency information; they can only access Children's Social Care databases outside of office hours. Professionals will be required to share information outside of working hours with the social worker on duty.

A manager must make a decision in relation to all child protection referrals within 24 hours of receipt. If a child protection enquiry is initiated, consent to obtain information is not required from the child's parent(s) if doing so would place the child at further risk of harm, interfere with a criminal investigation or cause undue delay.

In all cases where checks are undertaken without parental consent there will be a clearly recorded management decision on child's file explaining why this was appropriate.

In all cases where checks are undertaken, with or without consent, the context of the concern about the child, young person or family will be shared to enable professionals to make clear judgements about what information is necessary, proportionate and relevant to share. *(i.e. the FAST receive a referral about domestic violence in a household where there are children. When seeking information from other agencies, those agencies must be advised that domestic violence is the nature of the concern and this is the reason why information is being requested)*

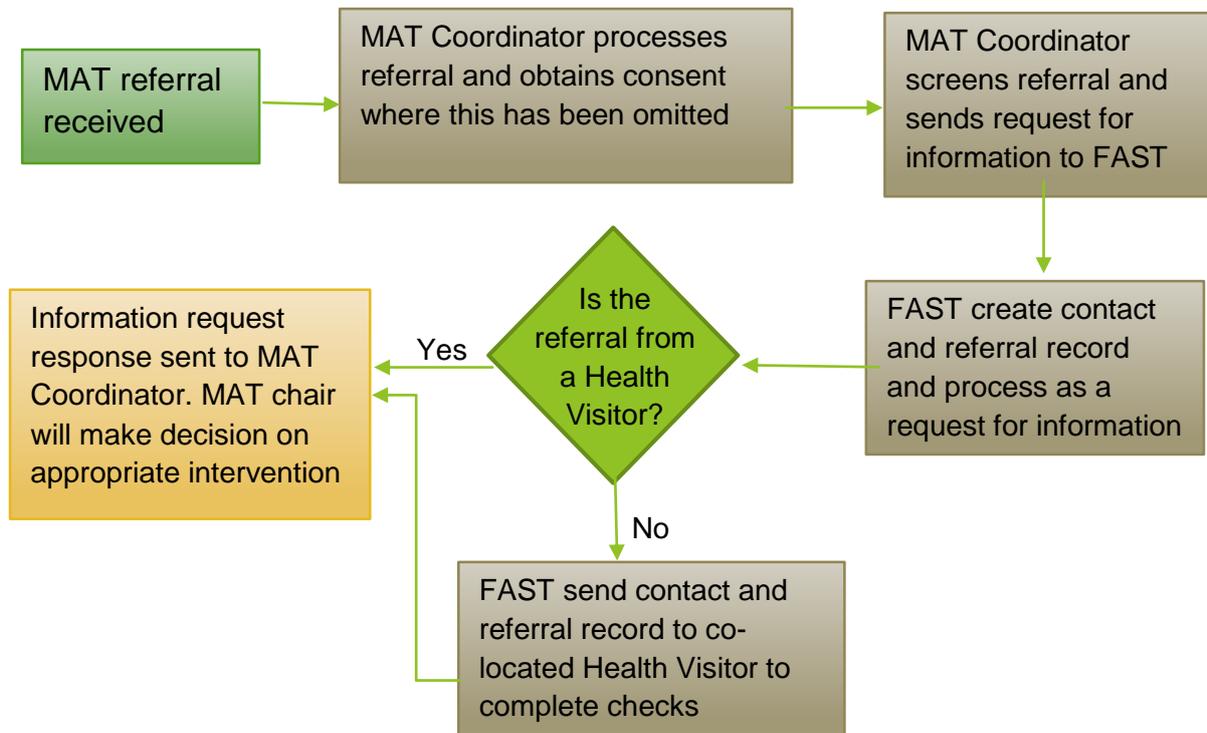
All non-urgent referrals are expected to have decisions made within three working days. In making decisions about non-urgent referrals, the team will always attempt to collaborate with families and professionals holding important information about a child or family's circumstances and will aim to achieve this within a timescale not exceeding 7 working days. The safety and well-being of children and young people will always be at the centre of decision making.

Agency Roles in FAST

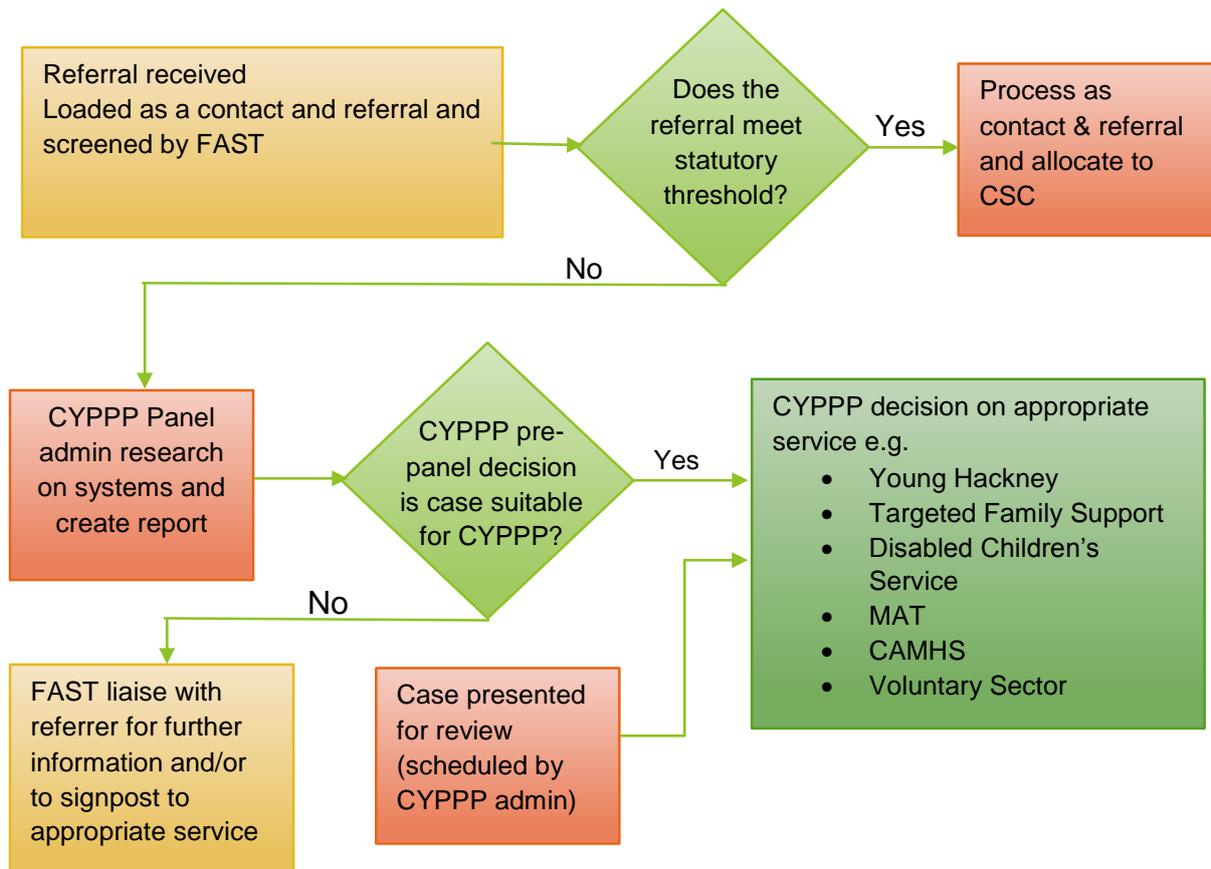


9. MAT

If CYPS is working with a family and a referral is made to MAT then MAT will communicate directly with the named worker/unit for further information. When referrals are made to MAT, the referrer will have sought written consent from the parent who has agreed that checks may be completed.



10.CYPPP



11. Timescales

On all new referrals where the threshold for Child Protection has been met FAST managers will immediately send the information to a social work unit in Hackney’s CSC Assessment Service. The Consultant Social Worker will be responsible for initiating a strategy discussion with the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) to determine whether a single or joint agency response is required.

FAST managers will alert co-located health representatives to any child protection incident that involves unborn children or children under the age of five so they may inform the allocated midwife or community health visitor; this will support the creation of a direct link to the allocated social work unit in the Assessment Service.

The service aims to process all other referrals to FAST within three working days or in readiness for relevant multi-agency panel’s i.e. fortnightly Children Centre MAT meetings or weekly CYPPIP meetings.

12. Resolving disagreements

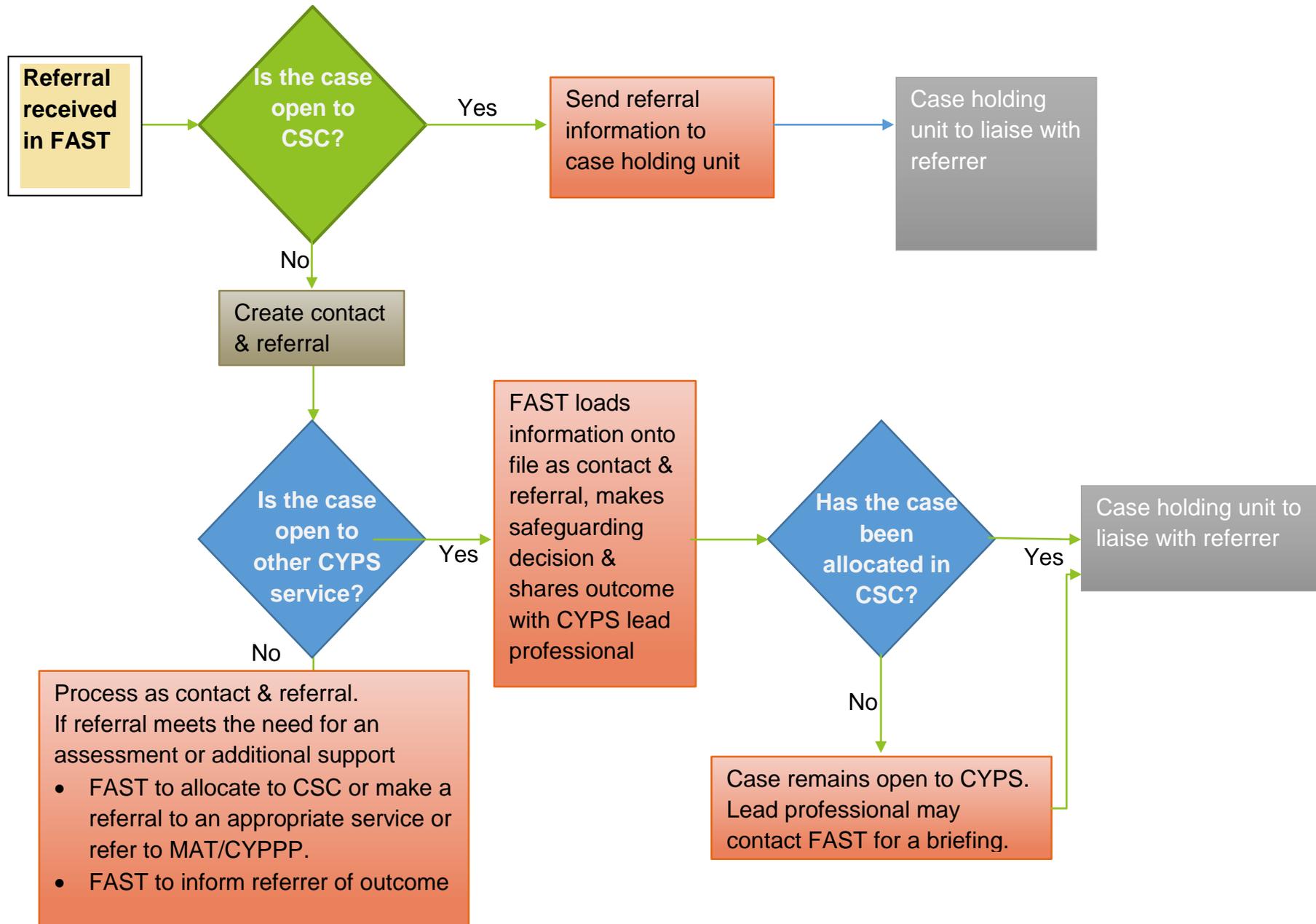
This protocol provides a framework for multi-agency information sharing that improves outcomes for children and families. In the event of any disagreements arising between partner agencies relating to FAST operations or decision-making, this will be dealt with, in the first instance, at local level through discussion with relevant partner team members.

Where a resolution cannot be found at this level within a reasonable timescale, the matter should be referred to the FAST Service Manager or Head of Service, alternatively please refer to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board Escalation Policy (2014) www.chscb.org.uk/professionals

Our services welcome feedback and opportunities to learn and improve, if you have some feedback to share with the service please send this to Tina McElligott, Head of Service tina.mcelligott@hackney.gov.uk

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Appendix B: First Access and Screening Team Referral & Decision Making Process



Appendix C: Missing Person's Process for Children Allocated in CSC

Social Work Unit notified that child is missing by: FAST / EDT / Foster Carer / Residential Home

Framework-I case note added (Missing child – notification) AND missing episode initiated

SWU to ensure all reasonable steps have been taken to locate the child and the missing episode has been reported to the police (where notification was not received via FAST). SWU must ensure those with parental responsibility (where appropriate) are informed.

Child returns within 24 hours

Child remains missing after 24 hours

'Missing child – notification of return' case note added AND missing episode ended
SWU to notify professionals 1 – 8 identified in the opposite box

SWU to notify:

1. Operational Head of Service
2. Head of Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting and Learning
3. Service Manager, Safeguarding and Reviewing service
4. Independent Chair (CP/ LAC)
5. Designated LAC Nurse (LAC)
6. Health Rep in FAST (CiN & CP)
7. Health Visitor or School Nurse (CiN & CP)
8. Integrated Gangs Unit/YOT

Yes

SWU to advise parents / carers of return interview service

Immediate Strategy agreed with the Police and Strategy Meeting/ Discussion with all key professionals within 3 days

SWU to offer child an independent return interview

Accepted
SWU shares information with Independent Return Home Interviewer/ Trusted Adult

Declined
SWU to clearly record child's reasons for declining the interview. Return interview conducted by SWU

Consider a referral to Safeguarding and Learning for circulation to other local authorities (local / regional / national)

Summary of return interview saved on child's file

Robust and regular monitoring of missing episode by SWU through liaison with police and review strategy meetings. Present to High Risk Forum if appropriate

Child returns from missing episode

SWU to ensure plans are in place to respond promptly once the child is found and determine if the placement remains appropriate (for LAC)

**Appendix D: Children's Social Care Process for Children Missing from Home
(not allocated to Children's Social Care)**

