

Child Protection Practice Standards

Good practice procedures
and outcomes



RBSCB



ROCHDALE BOROUGH
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Introduction

This document sets out key multi-agency standards and expectations in respect of the Child Protection Process, focussing on quality of practice to support and impact on the key outcomes for children and families.

This information has been developed with reference to

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 and 2018**
- **RBSCB Safeguarding Procedures**
- **Learning from Audits and Reviews**
- **Learning from escalations and disputes**

The document has been developed in consultation within Children's Services, Partner Agencies, Safeguarding Children Unit and Business Support colleagues.

It is proposed that this is reviewed on an annual basis and updated in line with changes in statutory guidance and regulations and learning from Quality Assurance Framework.

The Safeguarding Children Unit will maintain ownership of the document and where feedback or learning is received; it will be incorporated into the review of the document and re-issued via the Safeguarding Board.

CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE STANDARDS

Good Practice Produces Good Outcomes

The following information is separated into six sections throughout the document and provides advice and guidance to all agencies involved in the Child Protection Process.

The information has been collated in consultation with Children's Services, Partner Agencies, Safeguarding Children Unit and Business Support colleagues.

CHILD PROTECTION STANDARDS

1. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND EXPERIENCE

- Practitioners are suitably qualified and experienced to attend key Child Protection Meetings and are confident in respect of their role and responsibilities
- Practitioners attend Child Protection Meetings where appropriate to the plan and progression of it.
- Practitioners are well prepared and able to contribute fully to Child Protection Meetings
- Practitioners are accountable in respect of their involvement in Child Protection process
- Practitioners wear their agencies ID badge at all times when attending meetings

2. RECORDING AND INFORMATION SHARING

- Practitioners are responsible for recording accurately and maintaining their records.
- Professionals reports and records are clearly written, contain analysis and recommendations, avoiding jargon and abbreviations to ensure that they are easy to understand and follow
- Professionals reports consider all the children within the family
- Meetings are recorded, identifying key recommendations, allocated actions, contingency plans identified and minutes distributed in a timely manner
- Practitioners update colleagues throughout the Child Protection Process in respect of progress and significant issues or incidents

3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Practitioners work in partnership to ensure adherence to statutory time scales
- Child Protection Plans are SMART and led by the Core Group
- Child Protection Plans are reviewed at every meeting of the Core Group
- All agencies engaged in the Core Group work in partnership to agree recommendations to conference

4. ENGAGEMENT

- The child, parents and relevant individuals linked to the child are engaged in and able to contribute to the assessment / enquiry
- The active engagement and participation of children, parents and relevant individuals in Child Protection Planning is clearly recorded by Practitioners
- The child or young person has been supported to contribute to the Child Protection Process
- Practitioners use a range of child centred approaches to ensure that the voices of all children and young people, including the voices of very young children, are heard
- Children, young people and their family, whose first language is not English or communicate in different ways, are supported through the use of interpreters and communication tools to fully understand the content of reports and to engage in meetings
- The child or young person has an understanding (where age appropriate and in consideration of their development and additional needs) of the child protection process, concerns and is able to contribute and participate appropriately

5. ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

- The Child Protection Conference Chair will ensure all that all aspects of the child(ren)'s life and areas of risk and concern are addressed within the meeting
- Child Protection Processes are supported by a multi-agency assessment
- Practitioners ensure that the parents and child / young person (where appropriate), the Chair of the meeting and colleagues working with the family have had sight of the report prior to the date of the meeting
- Where child protection concerns are identified in respect of an unborn child, an assessment is undertaken pre-birth prior to escalating the matter to a Child Protection Conference, unless the time frame is such that the birth is imminent
- Where a Child Protection Plan ends, full consideration is given to step down to Child In Need and Early Help support for the child and family

6. SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

- Practitioners are able to access supervision and guidance from a Manager or Safeguarding Lead to discuss areas of concern and progress
- Practitioners use the GM Safeguarding Procedures: Resolving Professional Disagreements / Escalation Policy to address any issues or concerns raised

1. Professional Conduct and Experience

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Practitioners are suitably qualified and experienced to attend key Child Protection Meetings and are confident in respect of their role and responsibilities.</p> | <p>The right people are in attendance at the conference that have the training, experience, skills and have knowledge of the family to be able to contribute to the discussion and decision making. This is usually the allocated worker. Newly qualified workers may require line manager or experienced worker support.</p> |
| <p>Practitioners attend Child Protection Meetings where appropriate to the plan and progression of it.</p> | <p>Child Protection Conferences and Meetings relate to addressing and progressing the Child Protection Concerns or Plan and therefore should be deemed a priority for those Practitioners working with the child and family. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions when key Practitioners may not be able to attend and therefore should identify a suitable representative, provide written information via a report and advise the family and child (where appropriate). It is important that the person attending the child protection meeting is suitably qualified, experienced and status to be able to contribute fully and contribute to decision making on behalf of their agencies.</p> |

Practitioners are well prepared and able to contribute fully to Child Protection Meetings.

Practitioners will be asked to share information which is both factual and analytical at a Child Protection Meeting. They will therefore need to prepare this information and complete reports. This information also needs to be shared with others before a Child Protection Conference to allow all involved to be prepared for the meeting and be able to contribute fully. Practitioners should also consider how they should support and prepare the child and family in respect of attending and contributing to Child Protection Meetings and obtaining their wishes and feelings, views on what has been written etc.

Practitioners are accountable in respect of their involvement in Child Protection Process.

Each professional should recognise their individual contribution and responsibilities with regard to the Child Protection Process and ensure that they are evidencing how they are meeting these responsibilities.

Practitioners wear their agencies ID badge at all times when attending meetings.

Child Protection information is confidential therefore all those in attendance should evidence their role and right to attend the meeting. Anyone can be challenged on their identity in order to ensure that confidential information is not shared inappropriately therefore ID badges should be evident at all times for Practitioners and should clearly indicate the agency or organisation they are representing. Practitioners should also consider whether parents may find it easier if Practitioners had a name plate in front of them to denote their name and agency rather than wearing an ID badge.

2. Recording and Information Sharing

| | |
|---|--|
| Practitioners are responsible for recording accurately and maintaining their records. | The information surrounding the child should be clear, accurate and up to date at all times. Where there are changes this should be shared with others within the core group surrounding the child in child protection and records updated. Inaccuracies are checked within Conference Meeting Reports however it is good practice to identify and ensure that all the basic information relating to the child and their family / significant others is recorded and up to date at all times. |
| Professional's reports and records are clearly written, contain analysis and recommendations, avoiding jargon and abbreviations to ensure that they are easy to understand and follow. | As Practitioners we are occasionally guilty of using acronyms, abbreviations or jargon words which may not be clear to other Practitioners, the family or the child. It is important that records and reports are clear and easy to understand to ensure that there is no confusion or misunderstanding. Records and reports should be written in simple and clear language. |
| Professional's reports consider all the children within the family. | Where there is more than one child in the family, they would normally be included in the Child Protection Process however some children may live elsewhere with another parent or carer. The child subject to the Child Protection Process should be considered in respect of all family members and relationships and therefore all children should be considered when reporting to Core Groups or conferences to ensure that a holistic assessment is undertaken and the potential impact and outcomes for all children are considered given the concerns being expressed. |

Meetings are recorded, identifying key recommendations, allocated actions, contingency plans identified and minutes distributed in a timely manner.

Whilst Practitioners may take notes when attending meetings, it is important that they are able to contribute fully. It is important therefore that meetings are minuted or notes taken to support everyone's clear understanding of what was discussed and what was agreed, that is actions for the future. The meeting can agree who will take the notes. Remember it is not easy to chair a meeting, contribute and take the notes; it is helpful to share some of these roles between the core group of people involved. In order to ensure everyone is working to the same recommendations, actions, contingency and overall plan, the notes of the meeting should be distributed in a timely manner. This would usually be within 1 - 2 weeks maximum following the meeting. If the notes are taken and are legible they could be photocopied at the end of the meeting otherwise they should be written up and distributed at the earliest opportunity after the meeting.

Practitioners update colleagues throughout the Child Protection Process in respect of progress and significant issues or incidents.

Good communication and information sharing will support the progress of the Child Protection Plan. The team of Practitioners around the child will each have information which may be helpful to colleagues over a period of time. It is therefore important that Practitioners do not wait until the next Core Group or Conference to share information but do so in a timely manner. The Plan may identify key triggers which would require a Core Group taking place which would support the identification of key information to be shared however there may be positives or other elements of activity which would be helpful to share with colleagues to assist in their interaction with the family.

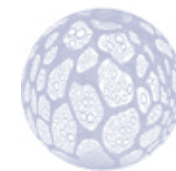
3. Partnership Working

| | |
|---|---|
| Practitioners work in partnership to ensure adherence to statutory timescales. | <p>There a number of statutory timescales which need to be considered when working with children and families under Child Protection Processes. Timescales ensure that work is completed in a timely manner and also provides the opportunity for arrangements to be put in place. Some statutory regulations and requirements arise following inquiries into key events or incidents, for example child deaths and are put in place as a preventative measure. Examples of the statutory timescales are 15 working days from the strategy meeting which agrees a S47 enquiry to ICPC, if this is the outcome agreed, visits to the child (6 weeks maximum) and review timescales, 3 months after the ICPC and then 6 monthly thereafter if the Plan continues. In order to ensure the plan is progressing effectively, it is important that all Practitioners involved with the child and family support the timely progress of intervention and planning.</p> |
| Child Protection Plans are SMART and led by the Core Group. | <p>The Core Group is responsible for developing the Child Protection Plan to ensure that it is addressing the issues and concerns identified which led to the Child Protection Plan. The plan should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. The focus of the plan is addressing the concerns for the child and family and to achieve a positive outcome, that is that the child is no longer at risk of actual or likelihood of significant harm. Whilst the Social Worker is the lead professional within the Child Protection Process it is for all the core group of Practitioners to contribute, undertake work, be responsible for actions and support the Plan.</p> |



| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Child Protection Plans are reviewed at every meeting of the Core Group.</p> | <p>The Core Group is a group of Practitioners involved with the children and family who can work together to agree and progress the Child Protection Plan. The Core Group should meet at a frequency agreed by those Practitioners to consider the actions identified, share information and ensure that matters are progressing. The Child Protection Conference Chair will ensure that there is an outline plan agreed from the Initial Child Protection Conference however it is the responsibility of the Core Group to develop the Child Protection Plan fully. This should build on the outline plan and address all risks and concerns identified in respect of the child or children. The meeting should use the Child Protection Plan as their focus and ensure that timescales are reviewed and consider whether the plan is progressing. The focus of the plan is to safeguard the child therefore as circumstances change, whether this is positively or deterioration is identified, the Core Group should ensure that the Plan is addressing the needs of the child and how the plan needs to change to meet those needs. The Child Protection Plan should therefore include contingency plans and where any member of the Core Group is concerned at the progress of the plan they should convene a Core Group meeting within 5 working days to ensure the issues are addressed.</p> |
| <p>All agencies engaged in the Core Group work in partnership to agree recommendations to conference.</p> | <p>Each professional involved in the core group identified at the Child Protection Conference has a key role as a result of their skills and experience. Practitioners have a key focus in terms of their roles, and only by coming together are they able to plan holistically for the child and family. Practitioners should collaborate effectively and take joint responsibility when making decision. The Core Group is responsible for developing, monitoring and progressing the Child Protection Plan. It is therefore the responsibility of the Core Group to identify the recommendation to Conference in respect of whether the child should continue to be subject to a Child Protection Plan and what that plan should include. This is a multi-agency responsibility. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions where there is a lack of consensus within the core group. This should be identified, discussed and where possible resolved, however if this is not possible this should be outlined within the Review Conference in order to assist in the discussion and decision making.</p> |

4. Engagement



| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The child or young person has an understanding (where age appropriate and in consideration of their development and additional needs) of the Child Protection Process, concerns and is able to contribute and participate appropriately.</p> | <p>Information sometimes comes from children and young people and they may be anxious about what happens next. Information sometimes comes from others and the child or young person may not know or understand what is happening. It is important that children and young people have an age appropriate understanding of the child protection process, who is involved and what will happen at meetings. The child or young person should have options available to them as to how they could contribute or participate for example consultation documents, use of advocates, written submission or the child or young person may wish to attend the meeting. Children and young may be anxious or upset and need to be supported to understand and prepare for any child protection meetings.</p> |
| <p>The child, parents and relevant individuals linked to the child are engaged in and able to contribute to the assessment/enquiry.</p> | <p>Children do not live in isolation; they live within a family and community who are important to them and support and form their identity. In order to make change, children and families need to understand the concerns, accept the need for change and this requires their engagement. The people surrounding the child/children should therefore be part of assessments, enquiries and plans in order to achieve a holistic picture of the child's life and lived experience. This will support the identification of strengths and areas of concern. Any person with Parental Responsibility must be involved and their views obtained, however it is important to identify and obtain the views of all those surrounding the child's life, inside and outside their family. If someone is important to that child, then they will be able to contribute and support the assessment and planning for that child. The use of consultation documents, direct work, and preparing children and families to ensure their understanding will enhance their contribution to assessments, enquiries and child protection meetings.</p> |

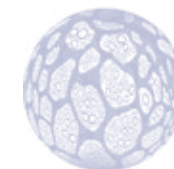


| | |
|--|---|
| <p>The active engagement and participation of children, parents and relevant individuals in Child Protection Planning is clearly recorded by Practitioners.</p> | <p>The voice of the child and those who are related or significant to the child form a holistic picture of that child's life and lived experience. It is important to evidence this within the records. Assessments, enquiries and plans should be evidenced based. Recording the engagement and participation of the child, parents and significant others evidences a holistic assessment and ensures that differing views are identified which will contribute to the analysis and planning.</p> |
| <p>The child or young person has been supported to contribute to the Child Protection Process.</p> | <p>The definition of a child is anyone up to the age of 17 years. Child protection also considers unborn children. It is therefore important that children are supported to contribute to the Child Protection Process in a manner which is appropriate to their age and circumstances. Some children will be too young to verbally contribute however their body language may indicate how they are feeling and how they interact with others. Older children may be able to verbalise their wishes and feelings however they may feel they are being disloyal to their family or a specific individual, therefore they need to be supported in this process. The child may feel more comfortable with one person over another. All Practitioners within the Core Group should ensure that they are engaging with the child or young person and including their wishes and feelings in their work and reports.</p> |
| <p>Practitioners use a range of child centred approaches to ensure that the voices of all children and young people, including the voices of very young children, are heard.</p> | <p>All children are different and therefore require different approaches to support them in engaging and contributing to the Child Protection Process. The Core Group should consider what tools and approaches would be appropriate to that child and to ensure that they share information on what the child feels more comfortable with or responds to.</p> |
| <p>Children, young people and their family, whose first language is not English or communicate in different ways, are supported through the use of interpreters and communication tools to fully understand the content of reports and to engage in meetings.</p> | <p>Rochdale Borough is a diverse authority and therefore it is important that all children and families are supported in engaging and contributing to the child protection process. In order to make change children and families need to engage and participate therefore it is vital that they are able to do this fully. Where a child or family member is unable to communicate in English, they should be supported by all those involved to do so in their first language.</p> |



5. Assessment and Planning

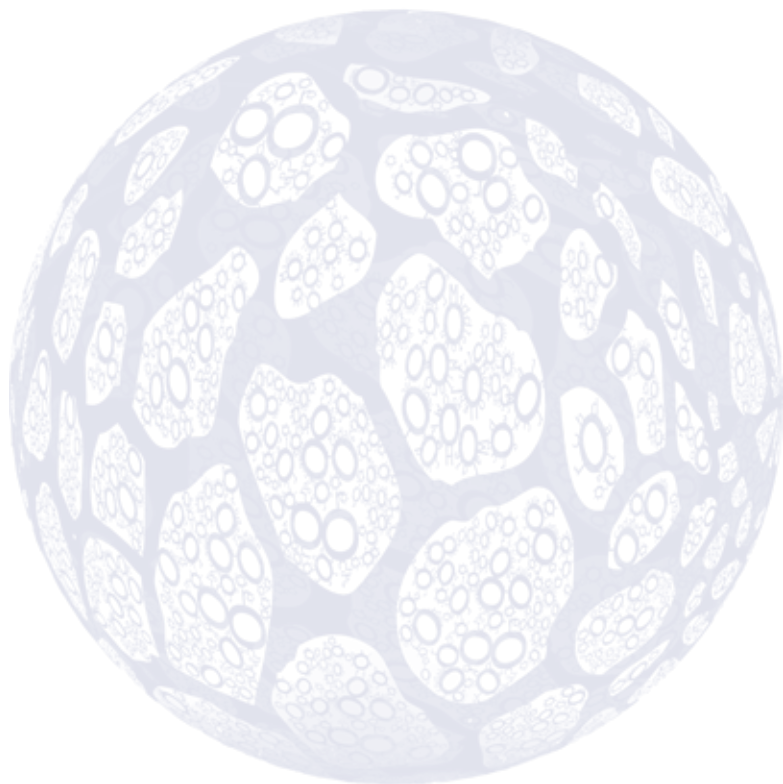
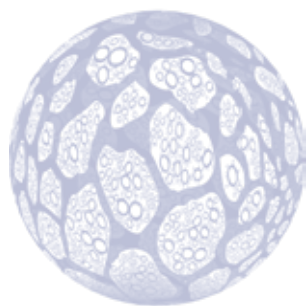
| | |
|---|--|
| <p>The Child Protection Conference Chair will ensure all that all aspects of the child(ren)'s life and areas of risk and concern are addressed within the meeting.</p> | <p>The Conference Chair is responsible for Chairing the Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences in a timely manner to ensure that the Child Protection Plan is progressing, is not drifting, that there are no unnecessary delays and that the child is being safeguarded. In order to do this the Chair will ensure that the Conference addresses the child in respect of all aspects of their life. They will review the plan and will identify where concerns remain and where progress has been made. It is therefore important that the Chair is able to review the information provided by the Core Group of Practitioners prior to the date of the conference so that they are able to ensure they have a full understanding of all issues prepare for the conference to cover all aspects of the child's life and risks remaining. The Chair also needs to ensure that there are no gaps within the information and that the reports and information provided will support effective decision making. Where the Chair does not feel there is sufficient detailed or quality information available to support decision making they may adjourn the meeting. Where the Chair identifies gaps in assessment or consideration of risk they may override the recommendation of the Core Group in respect of de-planning the child and escalate the matter to the relevant Manager. The Chair will also note dissent from any agency in respect of the recommendations and progress of the plan and will ensure that the Escalation process is utilised appropriately to support the safeguarding of the child and progress of the plan.</p> |
| <p>Child Protection Processes are supported by a multi-agency assessment.</p> | <p>Assessments inform our understanding of the child's life and experiences, changes in circumstances and help to inform planning. Assessments should be continuous however there may be key moments where a formal assessment is required to inform the child protection process. All assessments must be multi-agency focussed in order to ensure that all relevant information is considered to inform decision making.</p> |




| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Practitioners ensure that the parents and child / young person (where appropriate), the Chair of the meeting and colleagues working with the family have had sight of the report prior to the date of the meeting.</p> | <p>Meetings can be difficult for children and families and there is a lot of information being shared within a short period of time. At the initial conference there will be a lot of relatively new information to Practitioners working with the child and the Chair. For Review Conferences, the Core Group should have been sharing this information as part of the ongoing Child Protection Process however they should still be able to review the information being shared for a Child Protection Review before the meeting and with sufficient time to be able to review, consider and understand. There should also be sufficient time for someone to seek clarification or make challenge if required.</p> |
| <p>Where child protection concerns are identified in respect of an unborn child, an assessment is undertaken pre-birth prior to escalating the matter to a child.</p> | <p>An assessment should be undertaken as soon as possible to ensure that the issues and concerns are identified which enable the right support to be offered as early as possible. The sooner the issues are identified the sooner a multi-agency plan of support and intervention can be put in place. There are no timescales in respect of when to convene a pre-birth conference but the decision should be informed by the Assessment and S47 outcomes. It is unusual to convene a pre-birth conference in the first 3 months following conception. A Child In Need plan may be appropriate during the earlier stages of pregnancy whilst a full assessment is undertaken which takes into consideration the history of the family, older siblings, changes in circumstances etc. All Practitioners involved with the unborn child and their family should be included in and contribute to the assessment and plan.</p> |
| <p>Where a Child Protection Plan ends, full consideration is given to step down to Child In Need and Early Help support for the child and family.</p> | <p>The Core Group will have reviewed the plan and updated assessments to inform decision making and make a recommendation to the Review Child Protection Conference with regard to ending a Child Protection Plan. The Reports to Conference should clearly evidence that the risk has decreased and that the Child Protection Plan has been progressed with all actions completed, or if not why not. The support offered to the child and family should not end abruptly as this may impact on the ability of the family to sustain the changes they have made. Consideration should be given to whether the family need ongoing support for example via a Child In Need or Team Around the Child. Whilst these are voluntary arrangements it is important that the family are aware that this is seen as a gradual withdrawal and reduction in support to help them and that all agencies support the gradual step down approach.</p> |

6. Supervision and Management Oversight

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Practitioners are able to access supervision and guidance from a Manager or Safeguarding Lead to discuss areas of concern and progress.</p> | <p>Child protection issues can be complex and every child and family's circumstances will be different. Practitioners will recognise that Child Protection Work carries risk and they will be dealing with complex and difficult issues. Every child and family's circumstances will be different and Practitioners cannot use a 'one size fits all' approach to responding to risk. Whilst the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Procedures provide advice and guidance it is important that all Practitioners working within the Child Protection Process have access to and receive advice and guidance via supervision with their line manager or support from Safeguarding Leads to ensure that risks are managed and responded to appropriately and progressed in a safe and timely manner. Where practitioners are not satisfied that risks are being addressed appropriately within the multi-agency partnership they should escalate their concerns via their line manager and Safeguarding Lead and bring appropriate challenge.</p> |
| <p>Practitioners use the GM Safeguarding Procedures: Resolving Professional Disagreements / Escalation Policy to address any issues or concerns raised.</p> | <p>The Child Protection Process is multi-agency focussed. It is important to value, listen and consider everyone's views and perspectives however it is acknowledged that in all multi-agency working arrangements there may be disagreement or dissent. It is therefore important that all Practitioners are aware of the Greater Manchester Procedures: Resolving Professional Disagreements / Escalation Policy and be comfortable in raising concerns or issues. The focus of this policy is resolution and therefore the professional or agency should be able to explain why they are raising an escalation and what they wish to achieve. Professional disagreements must never undermine the safeguarding of a child. It is important that work is undertaken as quickly as possible and at the lowest level where disagreements arise. Where a resolution is not achieved at the lowest level this should then be escalated through the Management Structure until an agreement and resolution can be agreed. This should be clearly recorded to evidence the work and communication undertaken and to inform more senior managers and ultimately the Chair of the LSCB if the matter continues to be escalated.</p> |



 0300 303 0350

 RBSB.admin@rochdale.gov.uk

Safeguarding Children Unit

Floor 4

Number One Riverside

Smith Street

Rochdale

OL16 1XU

rochdale.gov.uk