Step-down from Child Protection Plan – Guidance for IROs

The primary purpose of a Review Child Protection Conference is to consider the progress of the Plan and whether the criteria to cease the plan are met (see pan Lancashire guidance on cessation of a Child Protection Plan). In the majority of cases where a CP Plan is ceased there will be continuing needs that fall outside of significant harm criteria that are met through continued multi-agency working. As part of the wider quality assurance function the Conference Chair should seek to promote clarity within the review process about the nature of the ongoing needs and how these should be met, taking into account the practice guidance below. Conference Chairs in Lancashire have the power to overrule a decision to cease a CP Plan where they judge it necessary to safeguard a child. That scenario sits outside of the focus of this guidance in relation to cases where the question is one of post-plan support.

Before the Review Conference

Where cessation of the CP Plan is proposed by the Final Core Group, or is the agreed recommendation of the CSC key worker (even if not endorsed by the Core Group) the analysis of the progress of the Plan and risk of harm should include what multi-agency support is proposed after the CP Plan. Where it is judged that this support can be provided at Level 3 of the Continuum of Need **it is expected that a referral and case discussion with Children and Family Wellbeing Service should be undertaken before the Review Child Protection Conference.** The outcome of this referral should be available to the Review Conference, either via the key Social Worker or a representative from CFW.

At the Review Conference

As stated above the focus is on whether the child(ren) remains at risk of significant harm and therefore in need of a Child Protection Plan. When a step-down from CPP is agreed the minutes of the Conference should specifically reflect a summary of the threshold decision making and the headline needs identified for further support and how this will be provided (at what level of the Continuum of Need). This discussion should reflect the perspective and voice of the parent(s) and child. Where it is judged that a relapse in family circumstances indicates a risk of further harm to children this should be reflected in the plan, with a focus on contingency planning, prevention and resilience building. Where a lack of consent to non-statutory support is a factor in post CPP planning this should be explicitly acknowledged in terms of how universal services will support the family. **A CP Plan ending by step-down at the first review** (so typically approx. 8 weeks after the creation of the plan) should be unusual and should be subject to specific scrutiny of the assessment evidence supporting a conclusion that the risk of harm is reduced beneath significant harm threshold (or reflection on the evidence that suggested the child was at risk of harm at the ICPC stage?). We do not mandate Child in Need support after a period of CPP (as some authorities do), nor do we proscribe the cessation of a CP Plan at the first review. Nonetheless it is within the quality assurance role of the Conference Chair to consider the quality and appropriateness of post-plan support.

<u>Quality Assurance and Escalation</u>

Whilst a recommendation / decision to step-down is a multi-agency position the lead social worker component of this should be supported by recorded management oversight and analysis. If the Conference Chair has concerns about the quality or clarity of post-CPP support, beyond the discussion at the Conference, these should be addressed and recorded through established routes of dialogue and where necessary formal escalation to Children's Social Care Managers. It should be a last resort to adjourn a Conference on the basis of issues of post CPP support as this can be addressed prior to, and outside of the Conference if necessary. Any identified themes and trends in respect of the timing of trajectory of step-downs from CPP should be discussed within the relevant PIMS Meeting.