

Implementation of the Child Protection Plan - Lead Social Worker and Core Group Responsibilities

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1. The Child Protection Plan

Each child considered to have suffered or be at risk of suffering [Significant Harm](#) and where there is likely to be continuing risk should have a [Child Protection Plan](#), which is recorded on the agreed pro forma.

The details of the plan will then be developed in the Core Group - see **Section 6, The Core Group**.

The overall aims of the Child Protection Plan are:

- To ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent him or her from suffering further harm by supporting the strengths, addressing the vulnerabilities and risk factors and helping meet the child's unmet needs;
- To promote the child's welfare, health and development; and
- Provided it is in the best interests of the child, to support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child.

If the Child Protection Plan is not successful in achieving these objectives, an early [Child Protection Review Conference](#) must be convened.

The [Child Protection Plan](#) must make clear to the child, family, and all relevant professionals the exact nature of the concerns which resulted in the child requiring the plan. Clear timeframes and responsibility must be recorded against all objectives/outcomes in the Plan.

The Child Protection Plan should set out what work needs to be done, why, when and by whom. The Plan should:

- When and in what situations the child will be seen by the child's [Lead Social Worker](#), both alone and with other family members or caregivers present;
- Describe the identified developmental needs of the child, and what therapeutic services are required;
- Identify what are the causes for concern that have resulted in a decision that a child needs a child protection plan;
- Identify what needs to change;
- Identify what is expected of those involved as part of the plan for safeguarding the child;
- Include a Contingency Plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action;
- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of professionals and family members, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members;
- Lay down points at which progress will be reviewed, and the means by which progress will be judged; and
- Set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of those professionals with routine contact with the child - e.g. health visitors, GP's and teachers - as well as those professionals providing specialist or targeted support to the child and family.

2. Intervention

It is important that services are provided to give the child and family the best chance of achieving the required changes. If a child cannot be cared for safely by his or her parent(s), he or she will have to be placed elsewhere whilst work is being undertaken with the child and family.

Irrespective of where the child is living, interventions should specifically address:

- The developmental needs of the child;
- The child's understanding of what has happened to him or her;
- The abusing parent/child relationship and the parental capacity to respond to the child's need;
- Family relationships; and
- Possible changes to the families social and environmental circumstances.

Interventions may have a number of inter-related components:

- Action to make a child safe;
- Action to help promote a child's health and development;
- Action to help a parent in safeguarding a child and promoting his or her welfare;
- Therapy for an abused child; and
- Support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse.

The Child Protection Plan can be used as evidence in any legal proceedings of the efforts which have been made to work in partnership with the child and family and to reduce the level of risk.

3. Explaining the Child Protection Plan to the Child and Parents

The child (depending on his or her age and understanding) and the parents should be clear about the evidence of [Significant Harm](#), which resulted in the child becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan, what needs to change and what is expected of them as part of the plan for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare. This should be the subject of continuing discussion with the [Lead Social Worker](#) and other professionals involved.

The lead social worker should give consideration to ensuring the parents are clear about the content of the plan. This may mean a written copy in the family's preferred language; it may mean using an interpreter to explain the plan. The child's copy should be written in a way appropriate to the child's age and understanding.

4. Role of the Lead Social Worker

The Lead Social Worker will always be a suitably qualified and experienced social worker from within the Children's Social Care Services.

Each child with a Child Protection Plan must have a Lead Social Worker.

The Lead Social Worker is the lead professional in co-ordinating the multi-agency work under the [Child Protection Plan](#).

The Lead Social Worker must take a pro-active role in ensuring that:

- The outline Child Protection Plan is developed into a more detailed inter-agency plan and to circulate to relevant professionals (and family where appropriate);
- Evidence is considered and appropriate legal action, if any, is taken where a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, [Significant Harm](#);

- The assessment is completed and that appropriate contributions are made by Core Group members and others as necessary;
- The safety of the child is monitored;
- The child's wishes and feelings are ascertained and that direct work is undertaken with the child and family in accordance with the Child Protection Plan, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings and the views of the parents in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare;
- The plan is explained to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding and that the plan is agreed with the child;
- Risks are kept under regular review;
- Any specialist contribution to the required assessment is commissioned on behalf of the [Core Group](#).

It is important that the role of the Lead Social Worker is fully explained at the **Initial Child Protection Conference** and at the Core Group.

The specific responsibilities of the Lead Social Worker are:

1. To promote good communication between agencies and with the family, ensuring:
 - a. Parents and, where appropriate, children, are clear about the role and responsibility of the Core Group and that they are properly involved in developing the [Child Protection Plan](#);
 - b. Any parent who has been excluded from the Core Group is informed of discussions and outcomes as appropriate to the child's welfare and safety;
 - c. Core Group members are aware of significant events in the families life and consulted about proposed changes to the Child Protection Plan;
 - d. All Core Group meetings are recorded on the Core Group pro forma and copies are sent to all involved including the Conference Chair at the Safeguarding Unit;
 - e. The Lead Social Worker's manager and the Safeguarding Unit are consulted about and/or informed of any changes in circumstances as appropriate
2. To draft the practical and detailed proposals for the Child Protection Plan in line with the recommendations of the preceding Conference, as the basis for

discussion at the initial Core Group meeting.

3. The frequency of contact will be stipulated in the Child Protection Plan but must never exceed intervals of more than 4 weeks. This must include seeing the child alone or a baby when awake at least every 4 weeks between each Child Protection Conference.

If contact with the child is refused or avoided and the child remains unseen, this must be viewed as a serious breach of the Child Protection Plan. Immediate discussion with the Lead Social Worker's line manager may deem it appropriate to seek legal advice about statutory protective action. There must also be discussion with the Core Group members and with the Conference Chair about the need for urgent action including consideration of an urgent **Child Protection Review Conference**.

In exceptional circumstances, responsibility for personal contact with the child may have to be delegated. If so, this must be agreed and recorded under an explicit, written agreement, agreed by the manager of the Lead Social Worker and the worker to whom the contact is delegated, and must be monitored by the Lead Social Worker.

Contact with the child should be recorded on the child's file and the record should include:

- a. The time and date of every home visit, stating who was present, confirmation that the Lead Social Worker spoke with the child (including if alone), or providing a clear reason why not;
 - b. Any information gathered or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child;
 - c. Specific information about key subjects such as meals and sleeping arrangements;
 - d. Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour (these should be specific and avoid non-specific labels such as 'disturbed');
 - e. Any new incidents or injuries.
4. To take lead responsibility for monitoring the progress of the Child Protection Plan and alert their manager where the Plan cannot be progressed and it is necessary to consider alternative action. This includes following up agreed actions with Core Group members.

5. To convene, co-ordinate and record the [Core Group](#) meetings after the initial meeting following on from the Conference.
6. To ensure Core Group meetings are held at the agreed frequency.
7. To invite additional members to the Core Group as needed
8. To ensure that all members of the Core Group are aware of the next Conference date.
9. To circulate the record of Core Group meetings and the Child Protection Plan to members of the Core Group, including parents and the child (depending on his or her age and understanding), and the Conference Chair - see **Section 6.5, Recording Core Group Meetings**.
10. In most cases where a child who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan becomes looked after it will no longer be necessary to maintain the Child Protection Plan. There should be a single planning and reviewing process, led by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), leading to the development of a single plan.

N.B The three local authorities have a dedicated procedure in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Children's Social Care manual regarding the role and responsibilities of IROs. The IRO should coordinate reviews of progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan, updating as required.
11. To take lead responsibility for ensuring that the child's assessment is completed and that any specialist assessment identified as necessary is commissioned.
12. To prepare the assessment report of the Core Group for the Child Protection Review Conference

5. Role of the Lead Social Worker's Manager

The first line manager has a vital role in managing the progress of the case and supporting the Lead Social Worker.

The manager should:

- Read and authorise assessments and take an overview of the case;
- Where possible, chair the first Core Group Meeting and subsequent meetings as required;

- Discuss the progress of the Child Protection Plan and any concerns in supervision, including the need for any further risk assessment;
- Read and authorise Conference Reports;
- Review the Child Protection Plan with the Lead Social Worker when unexpected developments or crises occur, and together make a decision whether to recommend that a Child Protection Review Conference date be brought forward;
- Attend all Child Protection Conferences where possible;
- Confirm the visiting frequency of the Lead Social Worker and the frequency of Core Group meetings;
- Arrange cover for the Lead Social Worker in case of sickness and ensure arrangements are in place when the Lead Social Worker is on annual leave and training.

6. The Core Group

6.1 Purpose of Core Group

The Core Groups task through the Child Protection Plan is to reduce the risks, or prevent the occurrence of further [Significant Harm](#) to the child, and safeguard the child's well being to the point where the child no longer requires a Child Protection Plan.

The Core Group achieves this by:

- Producing an agreed, detailed Child Protection Plan;
- Completing an assessment of the family;
- Meeting regularly to monitor progress;
- Providing a report for the Child Protection Review Conference;
- Requesting the review conference is reconvened earlier if the Child Protection Plan is not safeguarding the child or there has been a further incident of harm.

6.2 Membership of the Core Group

Membership should include the Lead Social Worker, who leads the Core Group, the child if appropriate, family members, carers and **all** professionals who have direct contact with the child / carers / family.

In the absence of the lead social worker, an alternative professional may be sought to chair and record the Core Group.

6.3 The first Core Group Meeting

The Children's Social Care Team manager of the [Lead Social Worker](#) will chair the first meeting of the Core Group, where possible, on the date set at the initial Child Protection Conference. This will be within 10 working days of the Conference.

Using either the record of the [Child Protection Conference](#) or a copy of the decisions and recommendations, the Chair of the [Core Group](#) must help the group complete the detail of the [Child Protection Plan](#). The Core Group must also consider what steps need to be taken to complete the Assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare if this has not already been done.

The detailed Child Protection Plan, together with any other decisions made and actions agreed at the Core Group should be written up on the available pro forma and circulated by the [Lead Social Worker](#).

6.4 Subsequent Core Group Meetings

The Core Group should meet sufficiently regularly to facilitate working together, monitor actions and outcomes against the Child Protection Plan, and make any necessary alterations as circumstances change.

The second Core Group meeting will usually be held within 6 weeks of the first meeting, unless the conference decides that meetings should be more frequent.

Meetings will usually be held every 6 weeks after the first Child Protection Review Conference, although the needs of the child may require more frequent meetings.

Core Group Meetings will usually continue to be chaired by the Lead Social Worker or his/her manager.

6.5 Recording Core Group Meetings

Decisions and actions agreed at Core Group meetings should be recorded, as well as the written views of those who were not able to attend.

Copies of the notes and written agreement must be circulated to Core Group members as soon as possible.

The Lead Social Worker should ensure that the Child Protection Plan is updated/reviewed as necessary, the updated/reviewed Plan is attached to the child's record and a copy is sent to the Conference Chair.

6.6 Agreement of Detailed Child Protection Plan

Core Group members must agree a plan which adds detail to the outline Child Protection Plan agreed at the **Initial Child Protection Conference**.

The Core Group should not alter any of the specified outcomes agreed at the conference although they can agree additional outcomes if required. The Plan will have active intervention by members of the Core Group, agreed monitoring through visits to the home and in cases where relevant areas have not been covered sufficiently in the assessment, it will identify further assessments that enable the family to gain insight so that they and the professionals involved can build on their strengths and reduce any risk to the children of future [Significant Harm](#).

6.7 The Roles and Responsibilities of Core Group Members

[Child Protection Plans](#) should be formulated with the specific roles of the Core Group members in mind so that everyone is clear about the individual and shared responsibilities.

Although the Lead Social Worker has the lead role, all members of the Core Group are jointly responsible for the formulation and implementation of the Child Protection Plan, refining the plan as needed, and monitoring progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan.

Supervision and/or managerial and professional support to individual Core Group members remain with their agency. However, the Conference Chair may provide advice to the Core Group on any remaining inter-agency problems which the Core Group is unable to resolve. For more information see **Resolving Practitioner Disagreements and Escalation of Concerns Procedure**.

The specific responsibilities of individual Core Group members are to:

1. Accept that the child's needs remain paramount and maintain a child-centred focus;
2. Contribute to the multi-agency assessments;
3. Make suggestions or approaches, if appropriate, for the involvement of other specifically skilled professional or agency seen as relevant to its completion;
4. Attend and participate in Core Group meetings or other relevant meetings. Core Group members must give adequate notice if unable to attend Core Group meetings or arrange a substitute colleague to attend if possible. If not, then along with their apologies, they must provide a summary of their involvement with the family since the last Core Group meeting;
5. Carry out agreed tasks in accordance with their own agency functions: if this is not possible the Lead Social Worker must be consulted before any plans regarding the child or family are altered;
6. Provide specialist advice which will inform the Child Protection Plan;
7. Provide the Lead Social Worker with written reports as requested;

8. Communicate regularly with the Lead Social Worker about the progress of their part of the agreed Child Protection Plan;
9. Inform the Lead Social Worker of any change in circumstances relevant to the Child Protection Plan;
10. Inform the Lead Social Worker of any changes and request either a Core Group or an earlier [Review Conference](#).

6.8 Delays

Any delays in implementing the Child Protection Plan should be monitored and appropriate action taken by the Lead Social Worker, their manager, and at Core Group meetings.

6.9 Failure to Achieve the Desired Outcomes of the Plan

There will always be the possibility that intervention, monitoring or further assessment will conclude that the situation is not safe and this may lead to legal planning in order to safeguard the child.

In these circumstances, and/or where there is a failure to obtain or retain the cooperation of the parents) or child in working on the plan or changed or unforeseen circumstances, this must be brought immediately to the attention of the Lead Social Worker.

The Lead Social Worker must inform his or her manager and, in consultation with other agencies, a decision will be made as to the need for any immediate protective action and/or a [Section 47 Enquiry](#) and/or reconvened Child Protection Conference to be considered.

Where there are concerns that a child or family are missing, for guidance see **Children and Families who go Missing Procedure**.

If there are concerns that there are difficulties implementing the Plan as a result of disagreement among professionals or a Core Group member not carrying out his or her responsibilities, this must be addressed by discussion between Core Group members and, if required, the involvement of relevant managers and/or designated professionals within agencies. Where necessary, see **Resolving Practitioner Disagreements and Escalation of Concerns Procedure**.