

**Rochdale Borough Council
Children's Services
Resource Allocation Panel**

**Intervening as early as possible with children
edging towards care; edging towards placement
breakdown; edging towards reunification**

DRAFT

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Version : 0.3

Date : March 2020

Change History

Version	Date	Change by	Reason for Change
0.1	17.10.18	Julia Hassall	Following meeting of planning group
0.2			
0.3			
1.0			
2.0			

Panel members

Role	Name	Designation and contact details
Chair	Ian Godfrey	Head of Provider Services
Panel Members	Mike Blower	Youth Offending Service
	Nick Callaghan	Family Group Conference Service Adult Social Care
	Christopher Tyler	Virtual Head Teacher Healthy Young Minds Early Break
	Sarah Tonge	Commissioning Manager
	Darryl Lawrence/Ian Jolley	Housing / Homelessness Team
	Mark Ford	Our Place Hub Manager
	Rachel Cannon	Fostering Practice Manager SEND Manager Representative
	Liz Stenton	First Response
Lead co-ordinating Manager		
Administration Support		Business Support on rotation and as nominated

CONTEXT

Children's Service's aim to make a real difference to children's lives by: **doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way.** To do this, we work with children and their families in partnership with other services in the council and with organisations across Rochdale such as Police, health services, schools, voluntary and community sector partners. We must place the needs of children and their families' at the heart of all we do. (*Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework*)

The Ofsted inspection in late January / early February 2018 highlighted that: "the quality of practice that children and families experience remains inconsistent".

In this context and in order to strengthen our understanding and oversight of how we support children as early as possible in their childhood and / or the life of a problem, a key element of the Ofsted Action Plan is to review how we allocate resources consistently, to make the biggest impact on outcomes for children and their families. Central to our thinking and planning is a focus on the child's lived experience and the context of our plans and the provision of resources is a whole family approach. In achieving this planning for permanence at the earliest opportunity must be a core component of the work we undertake across the spectrum of children's services

As part of our ongoing work during 2019/20 Rochdale Council will be adopting and adapting the No Wrong Door model for children aged 9 years and over. This is seen as a cornerstone of our permanence strategy for older children and young people. The No Wrong Door model will support the achievement of permanence for these children by:

- Using a series of provocations and shared principles to challenge ourselves to work differently based on a better understanding of the lived experience of children and a shared approach to parenting.
- Supporting children on the edge of care either to remain at home, or to ensure that their time in care is only as short as necessary to facilitate reunification where this is appropriate
- Enhance placement stability for those children already in care where there is a significant risk of placement breakdown.

The No Wrong Door provocations that inform our planning with children include:

- Would this be good enough for my child?
- What kind of adult do we want them to be when they are 20? 35? 50?
- Are we managing risk for the organisation or risk to the young person?
- Is there a shared approach to parenting the young person from across partner agencies?

This document provides a framework for delivering a single Joint Resource Allocation Panel across the children's services continuum to ensure those children at critical junctures in their lives receive the right resources to ensure they are safe and live well, and achieve timely permanence in their living situation.

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AIM

The aim of this Panel is to ensure that services provided to children and families in Rochdale are targeted to support children as early as possible in their childhood and as early as possible in the life of a problem in order to make the biggest difference in improving children and young people's outcomes. Services might be those provided directly by the council, commissioned by the council, health and other commissioning bodies and provided by partner agencies. Collectively these agencies supporting children and families work together within the multiagency framework of the Rochdale Safeguarding Children Board and Children and Young People's Partnership to provide support and intervention to children and their families in accordance with the Continuum of Need and Response Framework.

The aim is to provide a single resource allocation panel in future to ensure a focus on intervening as early as possible with children who without the right support would be *edging towards care, edging towards a disruption in the placement or edging towards reunification*, so that the right people are around the table, across Children's Services to determine where increasingly finite resources are allocated. The focus on children's needs, not service requests will ensure, overtime only those services which are proven to make the biggest impact are provided and that need needs led services are developed and delivered which make the biggest difference.

Objectives

- To increase the opportunity for more children to remain living in the community with their families where it is safe and feasible to do so, and / or to remain in secure and enduring placements where this is meeting their needs;
- To ensure that resources for vulnerable children are allocated consistently dependent on their need, and that the service response is in accordance with the needs and response framework
- To promote greater flexibility and creativity in service response through focusing on a needs led approach to meeting children's needs
- To create a forum where healthy challenge to conventional approaches is accepted in the pursuit of meeting children's needs
- To use data intelligently in order to track improving outcomes for children and to understand which resources are making the biggest impact in improving outcomes
- To inform commissioning intentions by understanding what works, so that limited public resources are deployed effectively to meet children and family's needs
- To ensure a relational approach underpins our work, so that how practitioners from every discipline works with children and young people and their families is consistently understood to be a key ingredient in achieving improving outcome,
- To use the No Wrong Door provocations as a vehicle to drive change in relation to care planning
- To evidence through the impact on improving outcomes, more stability and consistently met needs for the children we are working with
- To evidence over time a reduction in budget pressures through using resources wisely, to secure the greatest impact
- To support more children in their local communities, maximising their opportunity to access universal services, with additional support in their home, their community where this is appropriate to meeting their needs.

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- To recognise, celebrate and build on what is proven to work, regardless of who is providing the service.

Scope

It is recognised that responding to meet children's needs appropriately is a shared responsibility and requires collective endeavour of all partners, and as a consequence there are a number of interdependencies and related activities and governance arrangements, including:

- The role of the RSCB
- The role of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- The role and function of the Corporate Parenting Board
- The role of the Family Service Model governance arrangements and Transformation Board
- The role of the Legal Gateway Panel
- The role of the Complex Needs Panel
- The Local Authority Performance Arrangements
- Quality of Practice Group

This meeting is not intended to replicate or duplicate existing forums and governance arrangements functions, but it is intended to add value through consistently considering children's emerging needs to allocate resources to prevent their needs escalating and to increase children's wellbeing and placement stability.

Working Principles

- We will listen to and respond to children's needs; collectively identifying what needs to be provided in order for children to be safe and live well.
- We will expect a consistent focus on identifying children's needs and conduct the meetings in a manner which is needs led and respectful, as if children and families were present
- We understand that effectively meeting children's needs is a team endeavour, doing what works will require us to think creatively and try out new solutions
- By focusing on the child's needs we will frequently challenge ourselves to transcend traditional service boundaries
- It is expected that if a case requires consideration at Panel to determine how a child and family's needs will be met, the practitioner will attend to present child's circumstances and that their Manager will have authorised the paperwork prior to submission
- All other cases where allocation of a resource does not require multiagency discussion and consideration, the required form will still be submitted by the deadline, with manager authorisation, and the request will be considered through a pre-meeting filtering process (do we need and Appendix 1 to explain how this will work?)
- Where children need intervention to prevent them from edging towards care, a placement breakdown or reunification we expect them to be presented to panel as early as possible, to that there is the greatest opportunity to prevent a continuing downward spiral, or to support them in the next step of their journey

- It is expected that all resources to enable children to remain with their families in the community are exhausted before a legal remedy is sought.
- The Panel is not a fora for care planning; the Panel will scrutinise needs assessments for children and where there needs to be further work to demonstrate transparent working out, we will refer the child back for further care planning, so that the thinking and decision making is clear
- The Panel will act as a gateway to services delivered by “Our Place”
- All cases where there is a request for Section 20 accommodation must be presented to Panel before admission to care unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise. Where admission to care occurs before panel approval, a retrospective request must be submitted to the next available panel
- All members of the Panel are of sufficient seniority in their organisation to determine how their organisations resources are deployed
- Where placements are identified as at risk of breakdown, or where a placement is likely to end, Panel will advise on the appropriateness of a Placement Stability Meeting or Disruption Meeting.
- We will use data and information about qualitative outcomes to track the effectiveness of the Panel and to support continuous improvement in outcomes for children
- We are committed to taking action and responding where areas for improvement are identified.
- We will celebrate success and achievements.

* There is overlap here with LGW. In most cases it will be appropriate for proposals to accommodate a child under S.20 to be heard at resource panel before, or instead of, LGW.

* If Permanence Panel deals with a proposal to accommodate a child under s.20, and does not intend to refer the matter to LGW, it will agree only a short period of S.20 and the starting point will always be that the accommodated child will be rehabilitated to a parents' (or other holder of PR) care within 12 weeks. The matter will be booked back on to LGW or Permanence Panel for review within that time frame.

Exceptions

In some cases it will not be necessary to bring children to resources Panel if LGW has made a decision to initiate care proceedings and to seek interim removal of a child from their parents or current carers.

Communication, Engagement and Learning

- All members of the panel are responsible for reading paperwork about children and families in advance of each meeting, contributing both from an individual agency perspective and in response to overall discussions to ensure an appropriate response to the child is provided
- Evidence of learning from the allocation of resources which are proven to impact on improved outcomes for children will be used to inform the commissioning of future services

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- The allocation of resources will evidence best value and prudent use of finite resources.
- The effectiveness of the Panel will be reviewed every three months, as a minimum, but all members must raise suggestions for improvement on an ongoing basis

Meeting frequency and timing

- Meetings will be held weekly, each Wednesday afternoon from 1 – 4pm
- In order to maximise the effective utilisation of resources to meet children’s needs this meeting is to be prioritised by all members.

Chairperson

Meetings will usually be chaired by the Head of Provider Services or another Head of Service in their absence

Papers

- The Chairperson will be responsible for confirming the agenda, which will be produced in draft for them to consider by the Business Support lead;
- Children’s assessed needs will be submitted to the Business Support officer for the Panel on the agreed paperwork by no later than 11am on the day of meeting.
- A decision record will be produced at the meeting and sent to the presenting practitioner and their Manager
- Minutes in bullet point format will be circulated with the papers for the following week’s meeting;
- The agenda for the quarterly review meeting will be agreed with all participating Panel members and circulated in advance of the review meeting;
- Decision records and minutes in respect of children where there is an in principle decision to progress to consideration at the Legal Gateway Panel will be prioritised

Support

- Heads of Service across Children’s Services are the lead Managers with responsibility for the effective working of the Panel.
- The Practice Improvement Team will have a key role in ensuring the meetings are effectively administered, with agenda’s and minutes produced and tracking systems are in place.
- Data to support evidence of impact will be provided by the Practice Improvement Team

How will success be measured

- There will be more children receiving the right service, at the right time and in the right way; the effectiveness of intervening earlier will be evidenced by more children having their needs met earlier, with fewer children experiencing referrals or repeat referrals to children' social care
- There will be a reduction in numbers of children becoming cared for, fewer children experiencing placement disruptions and more children reunified with their families;
- There will be an increasing number of children with positive stories of how services have intervened in a creative and flexible way to meet their needs
- Children and family's needs will be met earlier, resulting in a reduction in budget pressures.

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