

12 CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

12.1 INTRODUCTION

- 12.1.1 Increasing numbers of families moving or being moved across local authority boundaries presents difficulties in terms of safe, reliable and consistent delivery of services.
- 12.1.2 Responsibility for delivery of the universal services offered by Health and Children's Services (Education) belongs to the area in which a child is living.
- 12.1.3 Arrangements for delivery of Children's Social Care are more complex, and this module seeks to make them explicit in defined circumstances.
- 12.1.4 Effective transfer of information between geographical areas and agencies is critical in the circumstances described.

12.2 SCOPE & DEFINITIONS

- 12.2.1 Pending operationalisation of the 'Information Sharing Index' ([see 2.6](#)) this module provides information about:
- Indicators of risk for children moving across boundaries
 - Best practice for information transmission
 - Attribution of Children's Social Care case responsibility and transfer of information
 - Case responsibility and arrangements when a child subject to a child protection plan moves between local authorities
 - Case responsibility and arrangements when an accommodated child moves to another local authority
 - Case responsibility and arrangements when a child subject to a statutory order in an originating authority moves to another
 - Attribution of responsibility for child protection enquiries
 - Procedures for hospital in-patients
 - A child arriving in Hertfordshire from overseas
- 12.2.2 For the purposes of these procedures, the term:
- 'Originating authority' refers to the authority in which the child previously lived, and
 - 'Receiving authority' to the authority to which s/he has moved

12.3 INDICATORS OF RISK

- 12.3.1 When families move frequently, it is more difficult for agencies to monitor a child's welfare and identify any risks.
- 12.3.2 Along with the indicators of risk in [module 3](#), the following circumstances associated with children and families moving across local authority boundaries are a cause for concern:
- A family not being registered with a GP
 - Children missing from a school roll or persistently not attending
 - Homelessness, in so far as it impacts on the welfare of the child
 - Information 'patch worked' across a network of agencies with no single agency holding the whole picture of a family history
 - A & E departments offering treatment to a child who appears not to be engaged with primary health groups
- 12.3.3 Without regard to specific role, staff in all agencies must be alert to the possibility that a child or family who comes to their attention may not be in receipt of universal services.
- 12.3.4 All agencies in contact with families who have moved, must establish basic information i.e. full names, dates of birth, previous address, registration with doctor and enrolment in school. The relevant agency must be notified if a child is not appropriately registered / enrolled.

BEST PRACTICE FOR INFORMATION TRANSMISSION

- 12.3.5 Particular care must be exercised by all agencies in contact with those moving across boundaries to collect accurate information on any child in need and share this with other agencies e.g.:
- Ensuring all forenames and surnames used by the family are provided, and clarification obtained about the correct spelling
 - Ensuring accurate dates of birth for all (if possible) household members
 - Obtaining full addresses (when possible with dates) within the last 2 years, including any where the child has lived abroad
 - Clarifying relationships between the child and other household members, if possible with documentary evidence
 - Asking child / family with which statutory or voluntary organisations they are in contact
- 12.3.6 All attendance of children at A&E departments, minor injury units and NHS walk-in centres should be communicated to community based staff via paediatric liaison services, or alternative systems.

CHILD IN NEED MOVES BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 12.3.7 This procedure clarifies the:
- Responsibilities of Hertfordshire CSF when a child, who is an open 'child in need' case, moves to another local authority
 - Process Hertfordshire should follow in making and responding to requests for case transfer
- 12.3.8 The procedure covers arrangements for a child in need, including one subject to a Family Assistance Order (FAO), but excludes any:
- Subject to a child protection plan (see [12.3.14 -12.3.44](#))
 - Accommodated under s.20 Children Act 1989 in the originating authority (see [12.4](#))
 - Subject to a full or interim Care or Supervision Order in her/his originating authority (see [12.5](#))

RESPONSIBILITIES & PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING AUTHORITY

- 12.3.9 When Hertfordshire Children's Social Care is notified by another authority that a child in need who is an open case has moved into its area, the relevant Children's Social Care team manager must:
- Ensure that details of the incoming family members are provided
 - Obtain full details of any previous assessments undertaken, including any financial responsibility exercised by the originating authority and
 - Seek written confirmation of the request for case transfer from the originating authority, including a summary of what action is said to be needed
 - Within fifteen days of first being notified of the move, inform the originating authority in writing, what action is proposed
- 12.3.10 The following conditions apply:
- Hertfordshire does not accept case responsibility if the move is a temporary and short term arrangement lasting for fewer than six weeks (or if the conditions in [12.3.8](#) or [12.4](#) apply) – but staff are expected to provide interim support if agreed with the originating authority as in the child's best interest
 - Hertfordshire does not accept financial responsibility where the move is a temporary one as described above and
 - Any acceptance of financial responsibility by Hertfordshire must be confirmed in writing by a 1st line manager

RESPONSIBILITIES & PROCEDURE FOR ORIGINATING AUTHORITY

- 12.3.11 When a child in need who is an open case has moved out of Hertfordshire, the following actions must be taken:
- The child's social worker must notify the receiving authority (notification may be initially by phone, but must be confirmed in writing within seven days and written notification must include a summary of what action is needed)
 - The written confirmation must state whether Hertfordshire proposes to retain case responsibility
 - Any relevant assessments, reviews and reports must also be sent with the initial letter - the file itself should not be sent, but a closing summary which details what action has been taken and who has agreed to take case responsibility must be recorded on the 'electronic care record' (ECR)
 - If the case is being closed, the CSF social worker must complete the ECR

DISPUTED ARRANGEMENTS

- 12.3.12 If there are any disputes about the acceptance or transfer of cases, these should be resolved at Children's Social Care team manager level, or exceptionally by service managers.
- 12.3.13 Procedures cannot cover all eventualities and decisions about case responsibility must ultimately be based on children's needs. In some cases e.g. where children of the same family may be living separately, discussion between managers should clarify which authority will take overall case responsibility, based on the long-term needs of the children concerned.

CHILD SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 12.3.14 When a family plan to move, it should be made aware information will be shared with Children's Social Care in the receiving authority.
- 12.3.15 If there are significant concerns about a child, the transfer to another authority should not deter Hertfordshire CSF from contemplating the initiation of care proceedings.

CASE RESPONSIBILITY

- 12.3.16 The responsibility for the child subject to a child protection plan remains with Hertfordshire until the receiving authority's transfer conference.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- 12.3.17 The designated child protection manager of the receiving authority should place the child on its database as subject of a child protection plan from the actual move, or when informed of it (if this is later).
- 12.3.18 Responsibility for the management of the case up to the transfer child protection conference should be negotiated between Children's Social Care team managers of the authorities and confirmed in writing. Where the receiving authority is some distance away from Hertfordshire, it can be asked to agree to implement the child protection plan, on behalf of the Hertfordshire CSF, from the date of the move. Any arrangement for another local authority to monitor a child for whom there is a child protection plan must be confirmed in writing and placed on file.
- 12.3.19 A transfer child protection conference should be convened by the receiving authority within fifteen working days of notification of a child subject to a child protection plan elsewhere having moved to its area (see 7.2.27 - 7.2.30)
- 12.3.20 The child must remain subject to a child protection plan in Hertfordshire until confirmation is received a conference has taken place and that the receiving authority has accepted case responsibility.
- 12.3.21 The child protection manager of the receiving authority should be asked to inform her/his equivalent in Hertfordshire in writing of the result of the conference and written confirmation of acceptance of case responsibility must be obtained and included on the case record.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN ORIGINATING AUTHORITY

- 12.3.22 If a worker from any agency discovers that a child who is the subject of a child protection plan is planning to move, or has moved out of/into the area s/he should inform the key worker / Children's Social Care immediately, and confirm this information in writing, whenever practicable on the same day.
- 12.3.23 The key worker must inform all other professionals involved in the case as well as the receiving Children's Social Care. If the move has occurred already the key worker should complete this task immediately. If the move is to be within the next fourteen days, the key worker should complete this task within five working days.
- 12.3.24 The key worker from Hertfordshire must inform the Head of Child Protection in Hertfordshire (by e-mail) of the move, and s/he in turn, must initiate a written request to the receiving authority to convene a transfer-in child protection conference within fifteen working days.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- 12.3.25 It is the responsibility of each agency in Hertfordshire to try to ascertain that the:
- Reciprocal agency in the receiving authority receives detailed information and is made aware of the need to fulfil its role in the protection plan
 - Key worker is informed of the name and details of staff in the receiving area
 - Key worker is notified of any factors affecting the protection plan
- 12.3.26 Hertfordshire's key worker must:
- Provide relevant documentation, including previous conference reports
 - Make contact with agencies in the receiving authority to ensure that the level and type of service being provided satisfies the requirements of the protection plan
 - Discuss any difficulties with her/his supervisor
 - Initiate use of any of the local authority's statutory powers made necessary by the move
 - Provide a report for (and attend) the transfer conference
- 12.3.27 When case responsibility is to be transferred, the key worker must inform all agencies in Hertfordshire of the arrangements, so that staff can transfer records, attend the conference and/or provide information to the receiving authority's transfer child protection conference.
- 12.3.28 If the key worker cannot attend the transfer conference, the Children's Social Care team manager should attend and ensure s/he is fully briefed.

RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN HERTFORDSHIRE IS RECEIVING AUTHORITY

- 12.3.29 When a planned transfer of responsibility for a case is being arranged, a Children's Social Care representative of the originating authority must be invited (in writing) to attend the transfer conference, along with any other significant contributors to the child protection plan.
- 12.3.30 CSF must ensure, prior to the transfer conference, that it has received sufficient relevant information from the originating authority to clarify details of the case, responsibility for the child and plans.
- 12.3.31 All incoming children subject to a child protection plan in the originating authority will require an Initial Assessment (IA) so as to assess the level of risk in the new situation.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- 12.3.32 Responsibility for arranging the conference lies with the CSF Assessment team associated with the child's new address (**but** see also 12.3.13). It is the responsibility of the Assessment team to notify the CP Unit of the need to arrange a 'receiving in conference' giving full details of the invitees on the required pro-forma
- 12.3.33 Such cases must be allocated within the Assessment team and the allocated worker must visit, if possible with the key worker from the originating authority and provide the completed IA to the conference chair forty eight hours in advance of that meeting.
- 12.3.34 Each of the receiving local agencies must ensure that the child protection conference has all the relevant information required to make fully informed decisions and develop a proper protection plan, including information from the originating authority's agencies.
- 12.3.35 If all the background information is not received prior to the transfer conference, the conference should be cancelled at the discretion of the chair (in consultation with the Head of Child Protection) and the originating authority retain responsibility. The Head of Child Protection should write to her/his counterpoint in the originating authority to state that case responsibility has not transferred, provide a new conference date and formally request the background documents.

JOINT WORK

- 12.3.36 In all cases joint 'handover' visits should have occurred or be arranged at the conference.
- 12.3.37 The transfer child protection conference may recommend that although case responsibility is transferred to Hertfordshire, joint work continues for a time limited period with staff from agencies in the originating authority.

EXCEPTIONAL RETENTION OF CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSIBILITIES BY ORIGINATING AUTHORITY

- 12.3.38 When the child protection plan specifies a move out of an authority for a defined and time limited period, the originating authority should retain case responsibility, but may require the assistance of the receiving authority to carry out the protection plan.
- 12.3.39 Examples of these circumstances are where a:
- Child temporarily stays with friends/ family in another authority
 - Mother together with baby is provided with a time limited placement in a mother and baby unit / residential drug rehabilitation in another authority

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- Parent will be supported for a time limited period to live with a specified person – e.g. relative or friend in another authority
 - Temporary move into bed & breakfast / homeless accommodation is made
- 12.3.40 Another exception, which may justify individual arrangements, is when a family constantly moves and no one authority is able to adequately monitor the welfare of the child.
- 12.3.41 Whenever any of the above circumstances apply, the key worker must:
- Agree with her/his Children’s Social Care team manager that the originating authority should, in the best interests of the child, retain case responsibility
 - Inform the Heads of Child Protection of both authorities and ask that the child is placed on the database of the receiving authority as being subject of a child protection plan
 - Provide the receiving authority with written information on child and protection plan and level of participation required of the receiving Children’s Social Care in implementing the plan
 - Make contact with agencies in the receiving authority to ensure that the level and type of service being/to be provided satisfies the requirements of the protection plan
- 12.3.42 Both Children’s Social Care team managers must:
- Confirm in writing their agreement to case responsibility being retained by the originating authority for a specified period
 - Ensure arrangements satisfy requirements of the protection plan
- 12.3.43 The Head of Child Protection in the receiving authority should place the child’s name on the authority’s database as being subject to a child protection plan.
- 12.3.44 If Children’s Social Care team managers are unable to immediately agree case responsibility, they must refer to their respective Heads of Child Protection who should determine case responsibility. If those officers are unable to reach agreement, the receiving authority has case responsibility fifteen days following notification of the move and must convene a transfer conference. However, if the originating authority fails to provide background documents [see 12.3.36](#)

12.4 CHILD ACCOMMODATED BY ORIGINATING AUTHORITY

Attribution of Children's Social Care responsibility

- 12.4.1 An 'accommodated' child remains the responsibility of the originating authority until:
- S/he is discharged from accommodation or
 - Agreement is reached, and confirmed in writing by its Children's Social Care team manager, that the receiving authority will accommodate child/ren

Responsibility to provide / obtain information

- 12.4.2 The social worker in the originating authority must, prior to the child's move (and in addition to informing relevant agencies in the originating authority), inform the receiving authority's Children's Social Care of the child's placement and ensure that relevant agencies in the receiving authority are aware of the child's needs.
- 12.4.3 It is the responsibility of health and education agencies in the originating authority, prior to the child's move, to provide information to their colleagues in the receiving authority.
- 12.4.4 Where this has not arrived by the time the child moves, it is the responsibility of the receiving agencies to request the information.

12.5 CHILD SUBJECT TO STATUTORY ORDER IN ORIGINATING AUTHORITY

Attribution of Children's Social Care responsibility

- 12.5.1 Children subject to a full or an interim Care Order remain the responsibility of the originating authority until the order is discharged or expires.
- 12.5.2 Where a Care Order is in force, the receiving authority may, (and this must be confirmed in writing by its first line manager or above) agree to provide required services on behalf of the originating authority, but the legal responsibility remains with the originating authority.

Responsibility to provide / obtain information

- 12.5.3 In cases where Children's Social Care is aware in advance of a child's move, the social worker in the originating authority must, prior to the child's move inform relevant agencies within the originating authority and the receiving authority's Children's Social Care of the child's placement.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MOVING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- 12.5.4 The social worker must also ensure that appropriate agencies in the receiving authority are aware of the child's needs.
- 12.5.5 It is the responsibility of health and education agencies in the originating authority, prior to the child's move, to provide information to their colleagues in the receiving authority.
- 12.5.6 If this information has not arrived by the time the child moves, it is the responsibility of the receiving agencies (once they become aware of the child's arrival) to request the information.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILD PROTECTION ENQUIRIES

- 12.5.7 A local authority has a lawful responsibility to conduct s.47 enquiries regarding suspected or actual significant harm to a child who lives, or is found in its area.
- 12.5.8 The term 'home authority' refers to the authority holding case responsibility, or if the child is not known to Children's Social Care, the authority where the child is living (this could be either an 'originating' or 'receiving' authority).
- 12.5.9 The term 'host authority' refers to the authority where a child may be found, is visiting for a short break or in receipt of specified services e.g. education (this could be either a receiving authority without case responsibility or an entirely different authority).
- 12.5.10 In situations where the child is found, staying in or receiving a service from a 'host' authority other than her/his 'home' authority where s/he usually lives, it is not always clear which authority is responsible for protecting the child and conducting enquiries.
- 12.5.11 The following are examples of these circumstances:
- A child found in one authority but subject to a child protection plan in another authority
 - A child looked after in another local authority
 - A child attending a boarding school in another area
 - A family currently receiving services from another local authority
 - A child staying temporarily in the area but whose family remain in the 'home' authority
 - A family who have moved into the area, but where another authority retains case responsibility temporarily
 - A child suspected of being abused – e.g. by a person identified as presenting a risk in the host authority

ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENQUIRIES

12.5.12 When more than one authority is involved with a child, Children's Social Care responsibility for child protection enquiries will depend on whether the allegations or concerns arise in relation to the child's circumstances within her/his 'home' or within the 'host' authority.

Principles

12.5.13 The following principles must be applied:

- Negotiation about responsibility must not cause delay in urgent situations
- There must be immediate and full consultation and co-operation between both host and home authorities, with both involved in the planning and undertaking of enquiries
- Case responsibility for the child lies with the home authority
- Any emergency action required should be taken by the host authority unless agreement is reached between authorities for the home authority to take alternative action – e.g. if geographically close
- When allegations arise in relation to the child's home circumstances, the home Police CAIU and Children's Social Care should lead the enquiry, involving the host authority where the child is placed
- When allegations arise in relation to the child's circumstances within the host local authority - e.g. abuse in school or placement, the host Children's Social Care and Police CAIU have responsibility to lead the enquiry liaising closely with the home authority and its Police CAIU (it may be agreed, if in the child's interest's, for the home authority and /or CAIU to undertake the enquiry)
- When emergencies and enquiries are dealt with by the host authority, responsibility for the child will usually revert to the home authority, following negotiations

PROCEDURE

12.5.14 There must be immediate contact between home and host authorities, initiated by the authority that receives the referral and the home and host authority should agree initially:

- Any need for urgent action
- Responsibility for any urgent action and enquiries in accordance with the above principles
- Responsibility and plans for a strategy discussion
- Responsibility for liaison with other agencies

- 12.5.15 The following must be told, and sent written confirmation, of the referral (subject to the information sharing and confidentiality procedures set out in [module 2](#)):
- The social worker for the child/ren or the relevant manager where there is no allocated social worker
 - The Heads of Child Protection for both home and host authorities
 - (Where relevant) the placement officers of both authorities
 - Other local authorities using the service or placement
 - (Where relevant) the regulatory authority
 - The local authority where an alleged abuser lives and/or works subject to the guidance set out in module 11

If agreement cannot be reached within the working day, Children's Social Care where the child is found has the responsibility to undertake the enquiry and take any protective action necessary (see also procedures for organised & complex abuse in [9.16](#) and about allegations against carers in [module 10](#)).

Strategy discussions

- 12.5.16 Strategy discussions must be held within usual time scales ([see 6.7](#)) and be convened, administered and chaired by the responsible Children's Social Care as defined above.
- 12.5.17 Attendance at the discussion must include:
- (If relevant) a managerial representative of the service provider (unless suspected of involvement in the child protection concerns)
 - Home authority Children's Social Care responsible for the child/ren
 - Host authority Children's Social Care
 - Representatives of other agencies and authorities as decided by the responsible Children's Social Care (in consultation with the other authority)
- 12.5.18 Information provided to the strategy discussion will depend on the source of the concern, but must include basic details of the child/ren and family as well as relevant information about:
- Family and (where applicable) placement history of the child
 - Basic details about alleged abuser (where applicable) employment history for staff member/ foster carer/ volunteer etc
 - Registration history for the establishment or service
- 12.5.19 Notes of the strategy discussion must include decisions, actions, responsibility for actions, time scales and review and closure process.

Outcome of enquiries

- 12.5.20 The outcome must be conveyed in writing by the social worker (in accordance with the safeguards in [module 10](#)) to:
- All local authorities with children affected
 - All local authorities using the same service or placement
 - All agencies involved
 - The child/ren where appropriate
 - Parents, carers and any others with parental responsibility
 - The employee, foster carer, volunteer or other worker involved in the concerns
 - The appropriate regulatory authority
 - The DH or DfES as appropriate

Families moving whilst s.47 enquiries being conducted

- 12.5.21 In the event a family moves whilst s.47 enquiries are being made – e.g. to a refuge in another authority, the originating authority should convene a strategy discussion within 72 hours which includes the receiving authority.
- 12.5.22 The originating authority retains responsibility until the completion of enquiries unless an alternative is agreed. If a conference is required it should be convened in the receiving authority.
- 12.5.23 Where there are significant concerns about a child, the transfer to another authority should not deter the originating authority from considering initiation of care proceedings.

Role of officers responsible for placements

- 12.5.24 If allegations or concerns about a placement are subject of enquiries, officers responsible for placements in host and home authorities must:
- Consider the implications for other children and must pass relevant information to other placing social workers
 - Halt new placements until enquiries are concluded and outcomes evaluated
 - Inform the regulatory authority (CSCI) of the placement
 - Having considered the outcome of the enquiry, decide implications for future placement and confirm in writing to establishment / carer the outcome and implications for future use of the placement
 - Follow up any other matters as appropriate in relation to the establishment or its management, staffing or registration

HOSPITAL IN-PATIENTS

- 12.5.25 Hospital admissions (including rehabilitation / mother and baby units) should not be regarded as a 'move of home'.
- 12.5.26 The responsible authority remains that within which the patient's home is located except with regard to arrangements for child protection enquiries ([see 12.5](#)).
- 12.5.27 Where the patient no longer has a home address e.g. if the family was homeless or gave up a tenancy at the time of, or since admission, the responsible authority becomes that within which the hospital is located.