

8 PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

- 8.1.1 The Integrated Children's System provides for the use of a 'child's plan' for all children in need who are not being looked after or leaving care. Children's Social Care is responsible for ensuring these plans are developed and implemented.
- 8.1.2 A child's plan should identify how the following will be addressed:
- Identified developmental needs of the child
 - Attributes which impact on the parents' / carers' capacities to respond to the child's needs
 - Wider family and environmental factors which may have an impact on the child and family
- 8.1.3 The plan should be specific about the actions to be taken, identifying who is responsible for them, services / resources required, planned outcomes and agreed time-scales.
- 8.1.4 An initial child's plan or a child's plan should be developed for those children in need where
- An initial / Core Assessment has identified the need for agency service provision
 - A child protection conference has decided not to implement a (or to discontinue the) child protection plan, but recommends that further support or intervention is provided
- 8.1.5 See the Children's Social Care Child in Need & Looked After Children procedures for information on initial and child's plans for those children in need who are not subject to a child protection plan.
- 8.1.6 When a child protection conference has been held and an outline child protection plan agreed for a child, a child protection plan must be implemented (see 8.3). The procedures for these are in this module.
- 8.1.7 A key worker (see 8.4) from Children's Social Care is appointed to co-ordinate and lead all aspects of the child protection plan and the forum to undertake this co-ordinated multi-agency work is the core group.
- 8.1.8 Family Group Conferences (FGCs) may be used both as part of a child in need plan and as part of a child protection plan (see 8.11).

8.2 CORE GROUP

Responsibilities

- 8.2.1 The multi-agency core group (whose membership will have been identified at the child protection conference) is responsible for the formulation and implementation of the detailed child protection plan, previously outlined at the conference.
- 8.2.2 **All members** of the core group are jointly responsible for:
- Collecting information to assist the key worker in compiling and completing the Core Assessment
 - Formulation and implementation of the child protection plan as a detailed working tool
 - Monitoring progress of the plan against specified objectives
 - Making recommendations to subsequent review conferences about the need for and content of any future protection plans
- 8.2.3 If any member of the core group is aware of difficulties implementing the protection plan due to changed or unforeseen circumstances, the key worker must be informed immediately and consideration given to recalling the core group meeting to re-consider the protection plan.
- 8.2.4 Circumstances, about which the key worker should be informed, include inability to gain access (for whatever reasons) to a child subject to a child protection plan.
- 8.2.5 If the difficulty in implementing the plan impacts on the child's safety the key worker and all core group members should consider:
- A s. 47 enquiry (if criteria are met due to a new incident or changed circumstances – see 6.3) and / or
 - Bringing forward the review child protection conference and / or
 - Immediate legal action
- 8.2.6 If members are concerned that there are difficulties implementing the protection plan arising from disagreement amongst professional agencies or a core group member not carrying out agreed responsibilities this must be addressed by:
- Firstly, discussion with core group members
 - Secondly, if required, refer to the Principal Officer who is chair of the Conference
- 8.2.7 See 8.8 for additional procedures to be followed for professional disagreement about implementation of a child protection plan.

Membership

- 8.2.8 Membership of the core group will have been identified at the child protection conference.
- 8.2.9 The key worker's team manager must chair the first core group and subsequent meetings will be chaired by the key-worker.
- 8.2.10 Membership will include parents / carers, child (if appropriate) and other relevant family members.
- 8.2.11 Professionals and foster carers in direct regular contact with the child should also be included.

Timing

- 8.2.12 The date of the first core group meeting must be within ten working days of the initial conference and the date arranged at the end of the initial conference. The conference should provide an indication of the required frequency of subsequent meetings.
- 8.2.13 Good practice would be for subsequent core group meetings to be held at least every six weeks. More regular meetings may be required according to the needs of the child.
- 8.2.14 Review conferences must set the date of the next core group meeting and subsequent required timescales.

8.3 FORMULATION OF CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.3.1 The overall aim of the child protection plan is to:
- Ensure the child is safe and prevent her / him from suffering further harm
 - Promote the child's health and development i.e. her / his welfare 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
- 8.3.2 Parents must be enabled to understand:
- Causes for concern which resulted in the decision to formulate a child protection plan
 - What needs to change in the future and
 - What is expected of them as part of the plan for safeguarding the child

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- 8.3.3 All parties must be clear about the respective roles and responsibilities of family members and different agencies in implementing the plan.
- 8.3.4 The core group will, as described above, regularly review and when necessary modify the child's protection plan which will constitute an agenda item at each review conference.
- 8.3.5 The child protection plan should be used to clarify expectations and assist in joint working towards shared goals. It can also be used as evidence, in any legal proceedings of the efforts made to work in partnership (this must be made clear to parents).

Outline child protection plan

- 8.3.6 An outline plan, for each child, must be drawn up at initial and review conferences, following any decision that a child should become or remain the subject of a child protection plan (see 7.9.17-19).
- 8.3.7 The aim of the outline plan is to assist the core group to form a clearer focus of work with the family and to explicitly define individual professional responsibilities.

Child protection plan

- 8.3.8 The core group is responsible for drawing up in more detail the child protection plan for each child, based on the outline plan agreed at the child protection conference. There should be no reduction in service level or significant change to the plan without child protection conference approval.
- 8.3.9 The plan should cover:
- The domains of the Core Assessment
 - Specific and achievable services or actions, including urgent actions designed to respond to the identified needs and risks
 - Start date, frequency and length of each input
 - Person / agency responsible, including family members
 - Roles and responsibilities of professionals in routine contact with family, including specialist resources
 - Explicit description of the nature (i.e. frequency, location, presence of parents) of contact with the child and parents / carers of **each core group member**
 - Planned outcomes of each intervention within specified timescales, including required progress to be achieved and how and when this will be judged
 - Frequency of reviews of the plan and the date of the next core group meeting

- 8.3.10 Planned interventions should additionally address:
- Ethnic / cultural / religious considerations - e.g. necessity for an interpreter, avoidance of appointments with family on significant religious festivals
 - Issues arising from any disability
 - Identification of risks to the child and means of protection
 - Identification of parenting strengths (consider all parents / carers)
 - Identification of what needs to change to reduce the risk of significant harm
 - Identification of actions to promote the child's health and development and actions to support the family and wider family members in promoting the welfare of the child
 - Identification of any further core and/or specialist assessments
 - Establishment of specific short and long term aims and objectives, with clear time scales
 - Identification of measurements for success (how will the family and professionals know there has been change?)
 - Method of monitoring and evaluating progress, including identifying professional/s responsible
 - Consideration of a contingency plan if circumstances change quickly, or if insufficient change occurs
- 8.3.11 If the plan's contents have not been discussed with any of the parties / agencies concerned, the reasons must be stated on the plan.
- 8.3.12 Any dissent about the plan, by family or professionals, must be recorded, with reasons.

Agreeing the plan with the child

- 8.3.13 The plan must consider the wishes and feelings of the child. The social worker must explain it to her/him (in accordance with age and development), using an interpreter if required.
- 8.3.14 The social worker should give the child a copy of the plan written at a level appropriate to her/his understanding and in her/his preferred language and s/he should be provided with the opportunity to record her/his comments, including areas of disagreement.

Agreeing the plan with the parent / carer

- 8.3.15 The plan must consider the views of the parents, insofar as they are consistent with the child's welfare. If family preferences are not accepted about how best to safeguard the child, the reasons should be explained.

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- 8.3.16 Family members should be clear about the evidence of significant harm, what needs to change and what is expected of them and professionals as part of the plan. The results of non – compliance with the plan should be made clear (see 9.15).
- 8.3.17 The family should be given a copy of the plan and where appropriate this should be in their preferred language.
- 8.3.18 The family must be told about its right to complain and the procedure for so doing.

Circulation of child protection plan to core group

- 8.3.19 The key worker must record the child protection plan and circulate it to all core group members, conference chair and team manager within ten working days of the meeting.

Use of written agreement

- 8.3.20 It is good practice to use a written agreement as part of the protection plan. This should involve family members and other core group members signing the plan and returning it to the key worker within five working days of receipt.

Agency & professional responsibility

- 8.3.21 **All agencies** are responsible for the implementation of the child protection plan and **all professionals** must ensure they are able to deliver their commitments, or if not possible, that these are re-negotiated.

8.4 KEY WORKER ROLE

- 8.4.1 At every initial or pre-birth conference, where a decision is made that a child should be the subject of a child protection plan, the conference record will identify the key worker, a qualified social worker.
- 8.4.2 The key worker should:
- Convene and chair second and subsequent core group meetings
 - Ensure the outline plan is developed, in conjunction with core group members into a detailed multi-agency protection plan
 - Clearly note and include in the written record any areas of disagreement
 - Ensure core group members, child (where appropriate) and family have the opportunity to sign the protection plan and that it is copied and circulated to all signatories and maintained on the child's social care record

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- Attend MAPPA and LRMP meetings as required and contribute to assessment and plan
- Obtain a full understanding of the family history (which must involve reading Children's Social Care records, including those relating to other children who have been part of any households including the current carers of the child – additional information should be obtained from relevant other agencies and local authorities)
- Complete the Core Assessment of the child and family (if not previously completed), securing contributions / information from core group members and any other agencies with relevant information
- Co-ordinate the contribution of family members and all agencies in putting the plan into action and reviewing the objectives stated in the plan
- Ensure the child/ren are seen at least every ten working days by the key worker or by another professional member of the core group
- Ensure the child/ren are seen at least every four weeks by the key worker
- Ensure that the key worker her/himself sees the child at home at least every third visit and/or in accordance with the requirements of the child protection plan
- Ensure that the child's bedroom is seen at least once between each conference or as defined in the child protection plan
- Ensure s/he sees the child alone (with parent's agreement) or babies awake at least every third visit (if parents refuse permission the Children's Social Care line manager must be informed)

8.4.3 The frequency of key worker and other professional contact above is the minimum standard and depending on the degree of concern, the child protection plan may provide for more frequent visiting and provide additional requirements e.g. unannounced visits, ensuring all rooms in house are seen.

8.4.4 In exceptional circumstances the Principal Officer chairing the conference may decide that the required contact level should be less frequent than that stated in 8.4.2. This should be clear in the outline plan agreed at the conference.

8.4.5 If the key worker has difficulty obtaining direct access to the child as described in 8.4.2 e.g. through non-compliance by parents / carers, the team manager must be informed, as well as other core group members. A report must be provided to the Children's Services Manager for a decision (see also 9.15 Non Compliance).

Routine written records

8.4.6 The key worker must maintain a complete and up-to-date signed record on the social care record, to include:

- Time and date of every home visit, stating who was present, confirmation that the key worker spoke with the child (including if alone), or providing a clear reason why not
- Any information gained or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child
- Circumstances of all family members
- Specific information about key subjects such as meals and sleeping arrangements (the key worker must observe the child's bedroom at least once between conferences)
- Factual reports of child's presentation and behaviour (these should be specific and avoid non-specific labels such as 'disturbed')
- Any new incidents or injuries, which must be subject to full enquiries using the s.47 forms
- A chronology on the front of the file / in the electronic record to include significant events in the child's life, including incidents, injuries, family changes etc.
- Date, time and content of any communication which relates to the child and family (distinguishing between fact and opinion)
- A clear plan for further action

Responsibility for convening conferences

8.4.7 Dates for review conferences are set at the previous conference. If the date has to be changed the Child Protection Unit must send letters to participants.

8.4.8 Consideration should be given to bringing forward the date of a review conference in the following circumstances:

- Following a new and significant incident relating to concerns about child protection, usually involving a s.47 enquiry
- When there is a significant change in the circumstances of the child or family
- When there are plans to return a looked after child home and this is inconsistent with the outline protection plan agreed at conference (see 9.13)
- When there are significant difficulties in implementing the child protection plan e.g. non compliance (see 9.15)

8.4.9 The decision to bring forward the date of a review conference should be made after discussion with the team manager and authorised by the Principal Officer.

Absence of the key worker

- 8.4.10 It is the responsibility of key worker, in liaison with her/his line manager to ensure clear cover arrangements when the key worker is absent on planned annual leave, training etc. For unplanned absence see 8.5.3-4.
- 8.4.11 Parents and child must be informed of planned absences, cover and contact arrangements.

8.5 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE TEAM MANAGER ROLE

- 8.5.1 The team manager has a vital role in managing the progress of the case and supporting the key worker.
- 8.5.2 The manager should:
- Read and countersign all significant recordings, assessments and decisions on the child's file / electronic record, including the chronology
 - Chair first core group meetings
 - Discuss the progress of the protection plan and any concerns in every supervision, including ensuring that there has been adequate direct contact with the child/ren
 - Ensure supervision and management case decisions are clearly visible and dated in the child's record
 - Read and countersign conferences reports and the protection plan
 - Review the plan with the key worker when unexpected developments or crises occur, and together make a decision whether to recommend that a review child protection conference date be brought forward
 - Attend all initial conferences and as many review conferences as possible
 - Confirm the visiting frequency of the key worker and the frequency of core group meetings

Absence of the key worker

- 8.5.3 The manager must arrange cover for the key worker in case of sickness and ensure arrangements are in place when the key worker is on annual leave and training, including the checking and any necessary action, resulting from post, e-mails and telephone contacts.
- 8.5.4 If the key worker is to be absent from work for an extended period her / his manager should consider reallocating the case.

8.6 FURTHER ASSESSMENT

- 8.6.1 The key worker and first line manager must, in every supervision session, consider the risks to the child and whether further core or specialist assessments should be undertaken.
- 8.6.2 Further assessments may be helpful in the following circumstances:
- On transfer of a case
 - Prior to consideration of discontinuing the child protection plan
 - When a child has been subject to a child protection plan for a year
 - When consideration is being given to the implementation of care proceedings
 - In particularly complex cases

8.7 INTERVENTION

- 8.7.1 Intervention must be provided to give the child and family the best opportunities of achieving the required changes, identifying and developing the strengths within the family.
- 8.7.2 If a child cannot be cared for safely at home, s/he will need to be placed elsewhere whilst work is undertaken with both child and family. In these circumstances, consideration must be given to identifying alternative safe placements in the child's family and community.
- 8.7.3 Intervention should address the child's needs and may involve action to promote her or his health, development and safety, particularly with regard to the need to develop a secure parent-child attachment.
- 8.7.4 Critically, decision making must consider if the child's developmental needs can be responded to within the family and **within timescales appropriate for that child**.
- 8.7.5 See Chapter 4 of the *Assessment Framework* (DH 2000) for guidance on decisions about interventions.

8.8 PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENT ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.8.1 Concern or disagreement may arise over another professional's decisions, actions or lack of actions in the implementation of the child protection plan, including core group meetings.
- 8.8.2 The line managers of the professionals involved should first address these concerns.

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- 8.8.3 If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between the above 'first line' managers, the issue must be referred without delay through the line management to the equivalent of Children's Service Manager / Detective Inspector / Head Teacher or other designated professional.
- 8.8.4 Alternatively, and more commonly in health services, input may be sought directly from designated doctor or nurse in preference to use of line management.
- 8.8.5 If professional disagreements remain unresolved, the matter must be referred to the heads of service for each agency involved. The chairperson of the LSCB may need to arbitrate in individual cases if agreement cannot be reached.
- 8.8.6 Any policy or practice issues which are raised by such disagreements should be reviewed by the 'Operational Board' with a view to providing further guidance if necessary.

8.9 UNALLOCATED CHILD PROTECTION CASES

PRIORITY STATUS

- 8.9.1 All child protection cases must be allocated to a named social worker and this should be awarded the highest priority.
- 8.9.2 Directors of Children's Services are professionally accountable for ensuring that there are sufficient human resources to provide the required services and for alerting the LSCB and elected Members to any systemic inability to allocate child protection cases.
- 8.9.3 Any period without a named social worker arising from staff vacancies or sick leave must be kept to a minimum and monitored for purposes of local management and formal returns to the DfES. This will be in the form of a monthly report to Heads of Social Care and Head of Child Protection.

SAFEGUARDS PENDING ALLOCATION

- 8.9.4 All professionals relevant to the 'outline' or 'agreed' protection plan, including previous conferences chairpersons, as well as family members must be informed in writing by a Children's Social Care team manager if there is no allocated social worker and advised of routine and emergency professional contact arrangements, pending allocation.

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- 8.9.5 Unallocated cases must be:
- Discussed at each allocation meeting
 - Reported to the child protection manager
 - Regularly monitored at management meetings
- 8.9.6 The Children's Social Care team manager remains accountable for:
- Ensuring that any statutory or explicit duties - e.g. looked after children reviews or child protection review conferences, are met, deploying duty staff as required
 - Resolving any immediate issues which arise in the case
 - Ensuring that her/his manager remains aware that a child protection case is unallocated
 - Ensuring that the family are kept updated
 - Ensuring that regular 'duty' visits are undertaken on unallocated child protection cases

8.10 DEATH OF CHILD SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.10.1 When a child who is subject to a child protection plan dies, from whatever cause, the key worker or her/his manager must immediately complete a "need to know" CSF 3645 and inform the Head of Child Protection who in turn will notify the chair and manager of the LSCB.
- 8.10.2 See [14.3](#) for details of notification arrangements of serious child care incidents and [14.4](#) for the criteria for serious case reviews.

8.11 FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES (FGCS)

- 8.11.1 At the time of writing these procedures, Family Group Conferences are not available in Hertfordshire. Further consideration will be given to their potential role within child protection and guidance provided on the LSCB web-site if and when the service is provided.