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# Implementation of the Child Protection Plan - Lead Social Worker \_ Lead Practitioner and Core Group Responsibilities

## 1. The Child Protection Plan

Each child considered to have suffered or be at risk of suffering Significant Harm must 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 - seeSection 6, The Core Group.

See Section 6, The Core Group

The overall aims of the Child Protection Plan are:

* To ensure the child is safe and prevent him or her from suffering further harmby 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.

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 / Lead Practitioner, both alone and with other family members or caregivers present;
* Describe the identified developmental needs of the child, and what therapeutic services are required;
* Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child;
* Include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes;
* 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 their parent(s), they 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 suffering 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 / Lead Practitioner and other professionals involved.

The child (depending on his or her age and understanding) and the parents should receive a written copy of the plan in their preferred language so that they are clear about their own role and responsibilities as well as the roles and responsibilities of others, and the planned outcomes for the child. The child's copy should be written in a way appropriate to the child's age and understanding.

## 4. Role of Lead Social Worker / Lead Practitioner

One of the primary tasks of the Conference Chair will be to identify a Lead Social Worker / Practitioner.

The Lead Social Worker / Practitioner 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 / Practitioner.

The Lead Social Worker/ Practitioner is the lead professional in co-ordinating the multi-agency work under the Child Protection Plan.

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

* A detailed Child Protection Plan is developed;
* The Social Work 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;
* The child is kept up to date with the Child Protection Plan and any changes or developments;
* 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 / Practitioner is fully explained at the Initial Child Protection Conference and at the Core Group.

The specific responsibilities of the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner are:

1. To promote good communication between agencies and with the family, ensuring: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;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;Core Group members are aware of significant events in the families life and consulted about proposed changes to the Child Protection Plan;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;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 2 weeks. This must include seeing the child alone or a baby when awake at least every 2 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 /Practitioners 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 by the manager of the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner and the worker to whom the contact is delegated, and must be monitored by the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner.Contact with the child should be recorded on the child's file and the record should include:The time and date of every home visit, stating who was present, confirmation that the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner spoke with the child (including if alone), or providing a clear reason why not;Any information gathered or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child;Specific information about key subjects such as meals and sleeping arrangements;Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour (these should be specific and avoid non-specific labels such as 'disturbed');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;
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 of every 4 weeks;
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 - seeSection 6.5, Recording Core Group Meetings;
10. To ensure that where a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is also subject to statutory reviews as a Looked After Child, active consideration is given by the Lead Social Worker's / Practitioner's line manager and in discussion with the Conference Chair to coordinating the meetings wherever possible or appropriate;
11. To take lead responsibility for ensuring that the child's Social Work Assessment is completed and that any specialist assessment identified is undertaken;
12. To prepare the assessment report of the Core Group for the Child Protection Review Conference.
13. 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;
14. 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;
15. Core Group members are aware of significant events in the families life and consulted about proposed changes to the Child Protection Plan;
16. 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;
17. The Lead Social Worker's manager and the Safeguarding Unit are consulted about and/or informed of any changes in circumstances as appropriate.
18. The time and date of every home visit, stating who was present, confirmation that the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner spoke with the child (including if alone), or providing a clear reason why not;
19. Any information gathered or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risks to the child;
20. Specific information about key subjects such as meals and sleeping arrangements;
21. Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour (these should be specific and avoid non-specific labels such as 'disturbed');
22. Any new incidents or injuries.

See Section 6.5, Recording Core Group Meetings (#recording-core-group-meetings)

## 5. Role of Lead Social Worker's / Practitioner's Manager

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

The manager should:

* Read and countersign all significant records and assessments on the child's electronic file, including the incident log;
* Discuss the progress of the Child Protection Plan and any concerns in supervision, including the need for any further risk assessment;
* Read and countersign Conference Reports and the Child Protection Plan;
* Review the Child Protection Plan with the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner 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 Initial Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Review Conferences as appropriate;
* Confirm the visiting frequency of the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner and the frequency of Core Group meetings;
* Arrange cover for the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner in case of sickness and ensure arrangements are in place when the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner 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 a new Conference if the plans cannot be achieved or need to be significantly altered.

### 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 professionals who have direct contact with the family.

### 6.3 The first Core Group Meeting

The Lead Social Worker / Practitioner will chair the first meeting of the Core Group on the date set at the initial Child Protection Conference. This will be within 10 working days of the Conference.

Using either the full minutes 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 Social Work Assessment 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 every 4 weeks 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 be held within 4 weeks of the first meeting, unless the conference decides that meetings should be more frequent.

Meetings will be held every 4 weeks after the first Child Protection Review Conference, although the needs of the child may require more frequent meetings.

Core Group Meetings will continue to be chaired by the Lead Social Worker  / Practitioner or their manager.

### 6.5 Recording Core Group Meetings

Core Group Meetings should be recorded.

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

The Lead Social Worker / Practitioner should ensure that the Child Protection Plan is amended as necessary, the amended Plan is attached to the child's record and a copy is sent to the Conference Chair. Full Minutes of the meeting should be circulated within 15 days.

Note: Disagreements with the plan should be specifically recorded and reference drawn to this within the minutes.

### 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 social work assessments, 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 / Practitioner 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.

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 / Practitioner 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 / Practitioner with written reports as requested;
8. Communicate regularly with the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner about the progress of their part of the agreed Child Protection Plan;
9. Inform the Lead Social Worker/ Practitioner of any change in circumstances relevant to the Child Protection Plan;
10. Alert the Lead Social Worker / Practitioner to the need to convene either a Core Group meeting or to reconvene the Review Conference early;
11. Help identify unmet need.

### 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 always has to be the possibility that intervention, monitoring or further assessment will reach the conclusion that the situation is not safe and the child will need to be removed in order to protect them from harm.

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 / Practitioner 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.

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.  Please refer to the Professional Resolution and Escalation Procedure.