

PART 6

CHILD PROTECTION PLANS AND REVIEW CONFERENCES

MANAGING THE CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Role of Key-Worker

Core Group Working

Written Plans

Agreeing the Plan with the Child

Agreeing the Plan with Parents

Intervention

CHILD PROTECTION REVIEWS

Summary

Timescales

Process

Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

Dual Systems

Following Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

STRATEGIC ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

Summary

Enquiries to the “Child Protection Register”

Purpose of Enquiries

Access to the Data Base

Actions Following an Enquiry to the Data Base

Children Subject to another Local Authority’s Plan Moving to Staffordshire

A Child Subject to a Plan in Staffordshire Who Moves to another Local Authority

Temporary Arrangements

CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

Managing the Child Protection Plan

The Role of the Key-worker

1. When a child protection conference decides that a child is to be made the subject of a child protection plan, the operational Team Manager in children's social care (social services) must ensure that in every case, a qualified and experienced social worker is appointed as the named key-worker.
2. The key-worker is responsible for ensuring that the outline child protection plan formulated at the conference is developed, with the core group, informed by the outcome of the core assessment, into a more detailed working inter-agency document.
3. The key-worker is the lead professional for co-ordinating inter-agency work with the child and family. S/he should:
 - Co-ordinate the contribution of family members and agencies in terms of planning required actions, affecting the child protection plan and reviewing progress against planned outcomes.
 - Regularly ascertain the child's views, wishes and feelings and ensure they and their parents/carers understand the child protection plan, including changes and developments made to it.
 - Ensure that family members have understood the findings of the conference by discussing with them the detail of the decisions and the recommendations and of the summarised minutes of the meeting. (There is a leaflet explaining how family members may participate in the core group).
 - Co-ordinate the work of the core group as set out in *Working Together*, including ensuring that there is a written record of the action agreed at meetings, decisions taken and in up-dating the child protection plan as necessary.
 - Complete the core assessment within a maximum of 35 days, securing contributions from core group members and others as necessary. Some specialist assessments may take longer, or the requirement for a more specialist assessment may only be identified at a later stage. However this should not delay the core assessment, which can be updated upon subsequent receipt of specialist assessments.
 - Prepare an analysis of the findings of the assessment in providing an understanding of the child's needs, and parenting capacity and in responding appropriately to identified needs within the family context. This informs the planning, case objectives and the nature of service

provision in accord with Chapter 4 of the *Assessment Framework*. This understanding will not only refine the child protection plan, but it will also inform decision-making at subsequent child protection review conferences.

- Take emergency action in discussion with the Team Manager, and with the benefit of legal advice as appropriate, in protecting a child from significant harm.

Core Group Working

4. A Core Group is a critical forum for working with parents, wider family members and children of sufficient age and understanding. It is responsible for developing the detailed child protection plan, and for implementing it within the outline agreed at the initial child protection conference. A leaflet is produced for parents.
5. Membership of the Core Group is formulated at the Initial Child Protection Conference and will include the key worker who leads the Core Group, family members and professionals who have direct contact with the family. It may extend as appropriate to a child of sufficient age and understanding and to foster carers etc. Although the key 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 specified objectives.
6. Core group working provides a key opportunity for working in partnership with parents and others. Exclusion of a parent should be seen as exceptional and only occurring in circumstances where Exclusion Criteria may apply. **(See Part 5, parts 53-57).**
- 7.

Core Group Processes

8. The first meeting of the Core Group will take place **within ten working days of the initial child protection conference**. The purpose of this first meeting is to compile a “first” detailed child protection plan that seeks to:
 - Identify early objectives in progressing the core assessment and in compiling “first” detailed child protection plan
 - Identify resource implications of meeting these objectives
 - Decide what further steps need to be taken, and by whom
 - Ensure appropriate safeguarding of the child(ren) concerned
 - Progress the core assessment and detail of the plan within agreed timescales
9. Constituent agencies should take account of these critical first steps in putting the detail of the child protection plan in place and of the

resource implications in co-ordinating the work of the core group. For children's social care this will require Team managers to:

- Chairperson at least the initial meeting of the core group
- Ensure that a summarised record of core group meetings is maintained
- Review the progress of the case via formal supervisory processes

10. In ensuring that the necessary arrangements are in place in accord with agreed objectives.

11. Thereafter, the core group should meet at least at six-weekly intervals in order to facilitate proper collaboration, monitor actions and outcomes against the outline child protection plan, and make necessary changes as circumstances may require.

12. Specific tasks of the core group also include:

- Maintaining a detailed child protection plan in writing. This may change over time. It should identify the names of the personnel involved and ideally be signed by them as the basis of a written agreement of work to be undertaken, and within stated timescales.
- Maintaining a summarised record of its meetings that is confined to:
 - Attendance
 - Decisions made
 - Individual actions
 - Date(s) of next meeting(s)
- Operating the individually allotted tasks contained in the plan, including more detailed assessments, where these have been considered by conference.
- Having collective responsibility for producing reports to subsequent reviews, presenting the detail of the current child protection plan at the commencement of each review and for making recommendations about the continuing need for a child to remain the subject of a child protection plan.
- Identifying any need to convene an early child protection review or a further child protection conference where the criteria may apply.

13. It will remain the responsibility of Safeguarding Children Board and its constituent agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of core group working and to report regularly upon its development, including the effectiveness of individual child protection plans.

The Child Protection Plan

14. The core group should develop the outline child protection plan agreed at the initial child protection conference. The plan is part of a dynamic process and will change over time. The overall aim of the plan is to:

- ensure the child is safe and prevent him/her from suffering further harm
- promote the child's health and development (i.e. their 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

15. The child protection plan should be completed on the agreed template.

16. The child protection plan should be based on findings from the assessment in relation to the parameters of the Assessment Framework and should draw on knowledge about effective interventions. It should detail what work needs to be done, why, when and by whom.

17. The following components should be included in the child protection plan:

- Category of abuse/neglect by which the child was made the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- Core Group membership and the names of other contributors to the plan, with contact details.
- The date of the plan.
- The dates of planned core group meetings.
- Details of any legal steps taken to safeguard the child(ren).
- Contact arrangements for the child/ren, with parents and significant others, including arrangements for oversight and/or supervision, venues, frequency, and any other circumstances that may need to be considered in managing contact.
- Identify the developmental needs of the child, and what therapeutic services or other actions are required to meet those needs.
- Identify actions/interventions required to address issues of parenting capacity (basic care, ensuring safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries, stability).

- Identify actions/interventions required to address issues relating to family and environmental factors. This should include identifying risks posed by known offenders.
 - Clearly identified roles for family members and professional including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members.
 - Identify the roles and responsibilities of professionals having routine contact with the child and those providing specialist or targeted support to the child or family.
 - Identify when and how progress will be judged.
18. The prescribed outcomes of the child protection plan should be based on actions/interventions which aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. They should be specific achievable and child-focussed. The actions themselves should be specific and the strategies employed be realistic.
19. The child protection plan should take into consideration:
- the wishes and feeling of the child and
 - the views of the parents (in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare). Explanation should be provided if the family members' preferences are not accepted about how to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
20. The child protection plan should be provided to all core group members – by the key-worker, who should also lodge a copy of the plan with the independent Chairperson of the conference within six weeks of the conference.

Agreeing the plan with the child

21. The key-worker should:

- Explain to and agree the plan with the child, according to their age and understanding, using an interpreter if this is required.
- Provide a copy of the plan, in a format appropriate to the child's age and understanding and in their preferred language.

Agreeing the plan with parents

22. The key-worker should:

- Ensure parents understand the evidence of significant harm which resulted in their child becoming subject to a child protection plan.

- Ensure they understand what needs to change and what their own and others respective roles are in achieving this.
- Provide a written copy of the child protection plan to parents, in their preferred language.

23. NB: The minimum standard whereby the child is seen and spoken to by the key-worker should be regarded as three weekly.

Intervention

24. In deciding how to intervene, including what services to offer, staff should also draw on evidence about what is likely to work best to bring about good outcomes for the child. It is important that services are provided to give the child and family the best chance of achieving the required changes.

25. A child may not be able to be safely cared for by his or her carer(s) and will, therefore, have to be placed in a family setting where the carer(s) is/are not present 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 them
- the abusing carer/child relationship parental capacity to respond to child's needs
- the relationship between the adult carers both as adults and parents
- family relationships
- the family's relationship with professionals
- possible changes to the family's social and environmental circumstances

26. Intervention may have a number of inter-related components:

- action to make a child safe
- action to help promote a child's health and development, ie welfare
- action to help parent(s)/carer(s) in safeguarding a child and promoting his or her welfare
- therapy for an abused child and
- support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse

27. The development of secure parent-child attachments is critical to a child's healthy development. The quality and nature of the attachment will be a key issue to be considered in decision making, especially if decisions are being made about moving a child from one setting to another, or reuniting a child with his or her birth family. If the plan is to assess whether the child can be reunited with the carer(s) responsible

for the abuse, very detailed work will be required to help the carer(s) develop the necessary parenting skills.

28. A key issue in deciding on suitable interventions will be whether the child's developmental needs can be responded to within his or her family context and **within timescales that are appropriate for the child**. These timescales may not be compatible with those for the carer(s) who is/are in receipt of therapeutic help. The process of decision making and planning should be as open as possible, from an ethical as well as practical point of view. Where the family situation is not improving or changing fast enough to respond to the child's needs, decision will be necessary about the long-term future of the child. In the longer term it may mean it would be in the best interests of the child to be placed in an alternative family context. Key to these considerations is what is in the child's best interests, informed by the child's views.
29. Children who have suffered significant harm may continue to experience the consequences of this abuse irrespective of where they are living: whether remaining with or being reunited with their families or alternatively being placed in new families. This relates particularly to their behavioural and emotional development. Therapeutic work with the child should continue, therefore, irrespective of where the child is placed, in order to ensure the needs of the child are responded to appropriately. A separate protocol exists within the SSCB arrangements for conducting therapy prior to a criminal trial.
30. More information to assist with making decisions about interventions is available in the Chapter 4 of the Assessment Framework and its accompanying practice guidance.

Child Protection Review Conferences

Summary

31. The child protection review represents the formal mechanism for reviewing the safety, health and development of the child against planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan, in ensuring that the child remains safe from harm. It should consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be changed as a means of managing the dynamic nature of identified risks.

Timescales

32. The first child protection review should be **held within three months of the initial child protection conference**. Further reviews should be held at intervals of **not more than six months**, for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan.

33. Where necessary, reviews should be brought forward in addressing any unanticipated changes in the child's circumstances, including any recommendation for an "early" review by the core group. This recommendation may be initiated for instance in the event of unresolved aspects of the plan exposing the child to undue risks of harm.

Process

34. Invitations for review conferences will be sent out at least two weeks in advance of the meeting, as a reminder for the forthcoming review.

35. Attendees in child protection reviews should include those most involved with the child and family, including those represented in the core group. Information should be available to the review from at least three contributing agencies in supporting the work and the recommendations of the core group.

36. While scheduled dates to convene reviews can be changed in ensuring appropriate representation in this process, **child protection reviews cannot be postponed beyond the absolute timescales as identified above.** Independent Chairpersons, social care Team Managers and individual members of the core group have a shared responsibility in ensuring that this standard is maintained in keeping children safe.

37. The review requires as much preparation, commitment and management as the initial child protection conference. Every review should consider explicitly:

- the detail of the current child protection plan
- the progress made in evaluating strengths and areas of continuing concern in managing identified risks
- recommendations of the core group in determining whether the nature and degree of identified risks should continue to be managed via a formal child protection plan

NB: Where children are subject to a child protection plan under the category of neglect, discontinuing the plan at the first review (at three months) is not an option locally. This review will be confined to re-evaluating the scope of the child protection plan and in detailing support and services.

38. The core group has a shared responsibility in producing reports for the review. A template for summarising the progress of the child protection plan has been produced within the Integrated Children System (Dept of

Health 2002). The key-worker however has a particular responsibility for ensuring that copies of reports, including a summarised progress report, is provided to parents/carers and to the independent Chairperson respectively **five working days prior to the review**.

Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

39. A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan when:
40. A child protection review decides that a child is no longer at continuing risk of significant harm. This has to be based upon the completion of a core assessment, the successful implementation of the child protection plan and an inter-agency review of assessed needs. This also has to be based upon:
- Explicit acknowledgement of historical perspectives that had originally led to safeguarding procedures being invoked.
 - Recommendations of the core group and other contributing agencies – bearing in mind that that unanimity may not be required and that dissenting views are recorded in the minutes.
 - Explicit endorsement of the independent Chairperson.
41. The child/family has permanently moved to another local authority area. In such cases the receiving local authority should convene a “receiving-in” conference within 15 working days of the child’s move or otherwise determine that the criteria for such a conference are not met, given the assessed circumstances of the case. Only upon confirmation of this decision can the local child protection plan be discontinued.
42. A child has reached 18 years of age, or has died (when a critical incident notification should be triggered by the Safeguarding Children Board Manager to the Department for Education and Skills), or has permanently left the UK.
43. The discontinuing of a plan, however, should not necessarily coincide with a withdrawal of support and services. The review may make recommendations for continuing support and services under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including arrangements to review a plan for the provision of services.

Dual Systems

44. Where children who are looked after are also subject to a child protection review conference, the overriding principle must be that systems are integrated and carefully monitored in a way that promotes a non-bureaucratic child-centred approach. It is important to link review processes so that outcomes from a child protection review are

brought to the looked after review, in informing the overall care-planning process.

45. When a child who is subject to a child protection plan subsequently becomes subject to legal proceedings, the next child protection review must seriously consider whether the prospect of continuing risk of harm still applies. This should take account of the child's long-term protection and of the agencies' longer-term confidence about arrangements contained in the care plan. Particular regard must be given, for instance, to contact arrangements, to imminent rehabilitation plans or to the completion of assessments ordered by a court.
46. In general, children should not be subject to two parallel reviewing systems. When a child becomes subject to legal proceedings, whereby the local authority shares parental responsibility, any continuing risks should effectively be managed within the scope of the court care plan. The contribution of all agencies involved in the original child protection plan should be retained in keeping the child safe within the looked after children arrangements.

Following Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

47. When a child is no longer subject to a child protection plan, the relevant Team Manager in children's social care should ensure that:
- All agencies that were represented in the original child protection conference, which led to the plan, are notified of this change.
 - The relevant Primary Care Trust (PCT) and education authority are specifically informed.
 - Supportive services, in accord with Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, are maintained as appropriate.

Strategic Arrangements on Behalf of Children Subject to Child Protection Plans (The Child Protection Register)

Summary

48. Central coordinating arrangements for managing information systems on behalf of children subject to child protection plans have traditionally been associated with Child Protection Registers. These systems however are to be replaced within the Every Child Matters agenda as Information Sharing and Assessment arrangements are incrementally introduced.
49. The Child Protection Register will therefore be replaced in the mid-term, though until its replacement is properly in place; it remains the primary focus for coordinating arrangements across authorities on behalf of children thought to be at risk.

Enquiries to the Register

50. The central coordinating function is maintained within Children and Lifelong Learning Headquarters, as an adjunct to management arrangements on behalf of the Safeguarding Children Board. A data base is maintained which contains the details of all children resident in Staffordshire who are considered at continuing risk of harm and for whom there is an inter-agency child protection plan.
51. Contact with the Register (or its centrally-based administrators) can be accessed via:

The Child Protection Register Custodian
Children and Lifelong Learning
PO Box 11, Martin Street
Stafford ST16 2LH

Tel: 01785-277041 / 277151 / 276938

Purpose of Enquiries

52. To advise agencies and relevant professionals about those children who are judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm.
53. To provide professional staff that may have concerns about an individual child with a prompt response in establishing whether a child protection plan exists and whether there are any associated concerns.
54. To provide statistical information to the Safeguarding Children Board and its constituent agencies in monitoring and developing effective safeguarding arrangements.
55. To identify the category of significant harm which may have been identified in any particular case.
56. To help indicate the nature of previous concerns in an individual case to staff consulting the register and to provide any other advice that may be relevant.

Access to the Data Base

57. Contact with the child protection register can be made on a 24 hour basis. Out of normal office hours the contact is via the emergency duty service. Enquiries are processed on a strict "call-back" basis.
58. The child protection register may only be accessed by the following:
- Children's Social Care: social worker and managers.

- Police Sergeant or above (or Police Officer, Child Abuse Investigation Unit, Domestic Violence Officer).
- Dentists, Dieticians, Health Visitors, Midwives, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Psychotherapists, Physiotherapists, Registered Medical Practitioners (including Clinical Medical Officers), Radiographers, Registered Nurses (including School Nurses), Speech Therapists.
- CAFCASS.
- Probation Officer and senior staff.
- NSPCC operational staff.
- Head teacher (or the designated teacher for child protection).
- Education Welfare Officer and seniors.
- Armed Service Welfare Officer or commissioned rank not below captain/flight lieutenant.
- Prison governor (and nominated deputy).
- Head of paramedical services.
- Area Youth and Community Workers.
- Youth Offending Team Members.

Any other persons who may have genuine concerns in safeguarding the welfare of a child, including members of the public, will otherwise need to register that concern by making contact with the First Response Service.

Actions Following an Enquiry to the Data Base

59. For enquiries made about a child's whose case is open to Children's Social Care, the enquirer should be given the name of the child's key worker and the key worker should be informed of this enquiry so they can follow it up.
60. If an enquiry is made about a child living at the same address as a child who is the subject of a child protection plan, this information should be sent to the key worker of the child who is the subject of the child protection plan.
61. If an enquiry is made about a child not known to Children's Social Care, this enquiry should be recorded on a contact sheet, together with

the advice given to the enquirer. In the event of a second enquiry about a child who is not known to Children's Social Care;

- The fact of the earlier enquiry should be notified to the later enquirer and,
- The designated manager should ensure that consideration is given as to whether this is, or may be, a child in need.

Children subject to another Local Authority's Child Protection Plan moving to Staffordshire

62. Upon receipt of information by the Register Custodian of an impending (or actual) move, the child's name will be routinely placed in a temporary capacity on Staffordshire CPR pending further enquiries. The Custodian will in turn, liaise with the relevant children's social care team manager who will make initial enquiries via their operational counterpart in the originating local authority area. There are then two options available to the local team manager.

63. Making the necessary arrangements for a "receiving in" child protection conference **within 15 working days** of the child's move to Staffordshire. This will need to include local agency representatives together with appropriate representatives including the key worker from the other local authority in accord with local arrangements for conducting child protection conferences **and/or**

64. Arranging for further enquiries to be made locally to determine whether child protection procedures might apply in Staffordshire in ensuring that the child's welfare is appropriately safeguarded. The view may be taken for instance, that a child may be considered "safe" by virtue of their "placement" in a looked after child arrangement, or in a residential/educational placement or otherwise in their being looked after by extended family.

65. Either of these options should be referred to and endorsed by the Register Custodian in finalising the necessary inter-authority notifications. In cases where doubt applies in moving towards a "receiving in" conference, the advice of the Safeguarding Children Board Manager may be sought, and cases where there is any doubt should proceed to a conference in Staffordshire.

A Child who is Subject to a Child Protection Plan in Staffordshire who moves to another Local Authority

66. As soon as it becomes apparent that a Staffordshire child is moving, even on a temporary basis, to another local authority area, it is the responsibility of the local Team Manager to ensure that:

67. Staffordshire's Register Custodian is notified, including individual details about addresses, dates etc, and that the Custodian is supplied

with a copy of the current child protection plan and decisions and recommendations from the most recent child protection conference.

68. Contact is made with the operational counterpart in the other local authority area to discuss the circumstances of the move, identified risks and interim management responsibility pending the convening of a “receiving in” conference or of any other appropriate action.
69. Appropriate consideration is given to whether a “receiving-in” conference should be held. While this decision normally hinges upon the permanent status of the move, the circumstances of Victoria Climbié would urge protocol agreed by West Midland authorities effectively applies rather to “where a child lives.”
70. The Register Custodian is advised of the child’s actual move(s) from Staffordshire and of any operational agreements being made between the authorities about the outcome of “receiving in” conferences or of any other action in the “new” local authority.
71. The Staffordshire Register Custodian will:
 - Take responsibility for ensuring that effective inter-authority liaison takes place and that appropriate agreements are in place for safeguarding the child(ren) s welfare.
 - Communicate in writing with the Register Custodian in the other local authority in detailing those arrangements.
 - Ensure the child’s name is removed from Staffordshire’s Child Protection Register and that operational staff locally are appropriately advised together with other constituent agencies in Staffordshire (particularly health and education authorities as per local contact points).

Temporary Arrangements

72. Children who are subject to child protection plans and whose family frequently move address, are sometimes considered to be among the most vulnerable amongst this population of children. Therefore, children who move to other local authority areas should arguably attract the highest priority in giving due consideration to safeguarding their welfare.
73. Temporary “registration” status is an established organisational arrangement for monitoring the movements of children between individual local authority areas. There are two aspects of this process:
 - a child who is subject to a plan in another local authority and who moves into Staffordshire.

- a child who is subject to a child protection plan in Staffordshire who moves into the jurisdiction of another local authority.

74. In each of the above cases, it is critical that the register custodian in Staffordshire is informed by operational social work staff as soon as it becomes apparent that the child/family has moved address or intends to move. The register custodian will liaise directly with their counterpart in the other local authority area and it is the custodians' joint responsibility to ensure that appropriate organisational arrangements are in place in safeguarding the child's welfare. The register custodian will, in turn, advise the operational Team Manager in writing of the outcome of this inter-authority liaison.