

Improving Local Practice

Key Messages from the Multi-agency Audit on The Effectiveness of Core Groups

Multi-agency Core Groups lie at the heart of effective child protection work. Those working directly with a child or young person and his/her family meet regularly to develop the child protection plan implement it and monitor progress.

The audit explored whether procedure is followed, how effectively the process works and whether it has a positive impact on the children involved. Fourteen cases were subject to audit (comprising 5% of children with a plan) by a multi-agency group.

What we did well

1. Core groups are convened for children with a plan. Usually the appropriate agencies attend or become involved later. On average core groups meet within the required timescale, they are chaired by a social worker and actions are recorded for the majority of cases.
2. Core groups scrutinise, update and implement plans in the majority of the cases audited.
3. Actions plans are clear, specific and outcome focused in the majority of cases (11), with good plan development in half of those.
4. When meetings are well structured and based on the plan, they are more effective and outcome focused.
5. Core groups consider the quality of agency interventions at their meeting.
6. There is evidence of interagency challenge in 4 cases.
7. The views and wishes of children are discussed at core group.
8. Risk is reviewed and managed by core groups, where it is proactively managed well outcomes for children are better.

Key Actions Taken

Immediate actions taken:

- One case was escalated
- Children Social Care staff reminded to complete decisions and distribute to all member of core group within 10 days of meeting.
- Key contacts and alternative methods of contact for core group members shared by key partner agencies.
- Deputy Managers to chair Core Groups for complex cases



Areas for development

BSCB action plan has been developed to address the remaining actions including those below:

9. The Core Group administrative process performs variably. Improvement is required in communication between agencies on changes to staff or meeting date and sharing contact details of key personnel.
10. Greater consistency is required in the distribution of core group decisions to all members of the core group, whether or not they attend the last meeting.
11. Core groups to follow a standardised structure to improve quality,:
 - A standardised agenda to guide the meeting
 - Child Protection Plans to be available at all core group meetings. There should be greater consistency in the detailed development of the plan.
 - Training for chairs.
12. Tracking the progress for the individual child through the core group process. The views and wishes of young people and observations of younger children to be routinely recorded in core group decisions.
13. Proactive risk management improves outcomes for the child. The Strengthening Families approach to risk management to be disseminated to all relevant professionals.
14. Professionals to escalate concerns quickly to a manager where there is professional disagreement and concerns about a case. This improves outcomes for children.
15. Stability of worker in cases of particular complexity and vulnerability improves outcomes for the child.
16. Close and challenging supervision of the core group's effectiveness by child protection chairs and deputy manager reduces case drift.

Further Actions for BSCB

17. BSCB to disseminate the findings of this case review through practice guidance, e-bulletins, workshops and newsletter.
18. Agencies to promote the learning from this audit and good practice with practitioners and through the BSCB Newsletter.
19. Implementation of action plan to be monitored by BSCB Quality Assurance Committee.

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