



Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility

Brent LSCB

Core Group

Policy

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Version	2
Date Agreed by the Policies and Procedures Sub Group	25th November 2014
Date Ratified by Brent LSCB	3rd December 2014
Date for Review	December 2017

Contents

Section	Content	Page
1	<u>Introduction</u>	3
2	<u>Context</u>	3
3	<u>The Process</u>	4
4	<u>Key Functions</u>	5
5	<u>Contingency Plans</u>	6
6	<u>Best Practice</u>	7

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This policy is devised by the Brent Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). It guides professionals through their role in relation to children who are subjects of Child Protection Plans (CP Plans).
- 1.2. Brent LSCB expects all professionals and agencies that work with children to fully engage with this policy. The safety of children who are subjects of CP plans in Brent is dependent on the commitment of all partner agencies to fully upholding their responsibilities with regard to CP plans.
- 1.3. Any agency/professional that does not fulfil its obligation regarding child protection plans will be held to account for their actions by the LSCB.

2 Context

- 2.1. The Core Group is the key mechanism for monitoring and implementing the CP plan outside of the child protection conference.
- 2.2. An initial child protection conference (ICPC) decides whether a child is at risk of significant risk of harm, and if required an outline CP Plan is developed and Core Group (CG) membership is identified.
- 2.3. The role of the Core Group is outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013:

The core group should develop the outline child protection plan, based on assessment findings, and set out what needs to change, by how much and by when in order for the child to be safe and have their needs met.

Membership should include the lead social worker, who chairs the Core Group, the child if appropriate, family members, and professionals or foster carers who will have direct contact with the family.

Although the lead social worker has the lead responsibility for the formulation and implementation of the child protection plan, all members of the core group should contribute and carrying out their allocated tasks, refining the plan as needed and monitoring progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan.

The group should decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the in-depth assessments inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare.

3 The Process

- 3.1. The first Core Group meeting is scheduled at the ICPC and must occur within 10 working days of the ICPC. (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013). This first meeting should be chaired by the Lead Social Worker's line manager.
- 3.2 The CP Plan will be discussed at Core Group to ensure that all members – particularly parents and carers, understand what is expected of them and why.
- 3.3 Subsequent Core Group meetings must take place at least every 6 weeks (unless otherwise specified by the Conference Chair) for the duration of the child protection plan.
- 3.4 There may be exceptional circumstances that prevent the Core Group happening every 6 weeks. The decision to delay the Core Group must be made by the Social Worker's line manager and the reasons recorded on the child's record.
- 3.5 The dates of subsequent Core Group meetings should be scheduled at the end of each meeting to ensure all members, including parents and young people, can attend.
- 3.6 Core Group's should be held at a suitable venue to ensure maximum participation.
- 3.7 It is good practice to hold a Core Group meeting 2 weeks before a Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC). This is to ensure professionals and parents have a clear understanding of what will be shared and what will be recommended to the RCPC.
- 3.8 The Child Protection Conference Chair will check at the RCPC that the Core Group has met as it should.
- 3.9 The Child Protection Conference Chair will set a date for the Core Group to meet within 10 days of each RCPC. This is to ensure that the momentum of the plan is maintained.
- 3.10 Core Group meetings are quorate when at least two other professionals from agencies other than Brent Children's Service are present. Where there is only one other professional agency involved, the attendance of both will constitute quorum.
- 3.11 If parents/carers and/or young persons do not attend, meetings should still proceed.
- 3.12 If there are too few people at the Core Group for it to proceed, the social worker must reschedule the meeting within five working days.

- 3.13 Where a child becomes a Looked After Child (LAC) and is still subject of a CP Plan, the Core Group will still happen until a decision is made by the Chair to remove the CP Plan.
- 3.14 When a CP Plan is discharged the Team Around the Child (TAC) should meet within 10 days to further develop the Child In Need (CIN) Plan.

4 Key Functions

- 4.1 Core Groups will be chaired by Brent Social Care
- 4.2 All professional members of a core group **MUST** share the responsibility for taking minutes of the Core Group. A minute taker should be agreed at each meeting. The social worker will take responsibility for distributing these minutes within 5 working days.
- 4.3 Core Group members are responsible for making a note of their respective actions from the Core Group. They should not rely on receiving the record of the meeting to prompt their intervention.
- 4.4 If there are difficulties receiving the record, Core Group members are encouraged to be proactive in contacting the Social Worker to enquire as to the reasons for the delay.
- 4.5 The record of the Core Group must reflect:
- The date, time, and venue of the meeting,
 - Brief summary of the discussions that took place and by whom,
 - Who was present or absent,
 - The child and parents/carers views,
 - Any disagreements,
 - That the CP Plan was reviewed, actioned, and revised as appropriate,
 - Who is responsible for each action and by when &
 - The date, time, and venue of the next meeting.
- 4.6 Core Group members are responsible for ensuring they attend all Core Group meetings. When this is not possible, they should notify the Social Worker as soon as possible and send a written report or well informed representative to the Core Group.
- 4.7 If the Social Worker has to reschedule a Core Group meeting, they must give 3 working days notice and arrange a new meeting.
- 4.8 The Core Group must ensure that the child is seen by a professional at least once every 10 working days, unless otherwise specified by the Conference Chair.

- 4.9 A Core Group may consider extending membership when a new agency is involved. Parents/carers and young person's views should be sought. If there is disagreement the Core Group Chair will consult the Conference Chair for resolution.**
- 4.10 Core Groups are confidential meetings and records should not be disclosed outside the Core Group membership without proper consent from the Core Group Chair. If there is disagreement the Core Group chair will consult the Conference Chair for resolution.**

5 Contingency Plans

- 5.1. ANY SIGNIFICANT DEVIATION FROM THE CP PLAN MUST BE AGREED BY THE CONFERENCE CHAIR.**
- 5.2 When CP Plans are not progressing, the Core Group must consider the reasons for this e.g. uncooperative families, poor professional working, new incidents or information.**
- 5.3 The Core Group must look at alternative means for securing the outcomes of the CP Plan such as:**
- **Considering joint visits amongst professionals or the police**
 - **Recommending a Family Group Conference (FGC) be convened**
 - **An alternative service that can achieve a similar outcome to one already identified in the CP Plan**
 - **Referring the family to an advocacy or mediation service**
 - **Consider inviting another person who can provide valuable insight into specific issues (e.g. a cultural organisation to help understand cultural differences in working with diverse families)**
 - **Having separate meetings for each parent/carer where conflicts between parents/carers arise (i.e. in domestic violence cases)**
 - **Ensuring any written agreement between Social Care and family contains expectations of appropriate behaviour in the working relationship between professionals and the family.**
- 5.4 The Core Group may need to recommend firmer measures to safeguard a child when there is considerable lack of cooperation from parents/carers or when there is increased risk of significant harm to the child. These recommendations may include:**
- **A legal planning meeting to consider court proceedings**
 - **Bringing the RCPC forward**
 - **Recommending a significant amendment to the CP Plan to the Conference Chair**
 - **Another agency to use statutory powers available to them (i.e. Education Welfare, Probation, Youth Offending, etc.)**

- 5.5 Any risk to professionals' safety from families must be raised at CP Conference and Core Group so that measures can be taken to reduce risk and keep the child safe. For example, Core Groups should be convened at a location that offers better security to ensure the meeting proceeds with minimum disruption. Further strategies for working with uncooperative families can be found in the London Child Protection Procedures 2010.**
- 5.6 If there is significant disagreement or impasse between professionals about a CP Plan, the meeting should be adjourned and the matter progressed through the LSCB Inter Agency Escalation Policy.¹**

6 Best Practice

6.1. Key indicators of best practice:

- The child and parents/carer's views and wishes are consistently sought throughout the CP process, especially when formulating the CP Plan and any decisions made in respect of a child.**
- Professionals do not allow hostile or confrontational parents/carers to impede the CP process or prejudice their views or decision making at the expense of the child's welfare.**
- The child's safety, welfare, views, and wishes are always at the forefront of any discussions and decisions made by the CG.**
- Meetings proceed in a manner that allows different views to be expressed sufficiently, whilst not losing focus on the child or the CP Plan.**
- Disagreements can be resolved in an amenable manner without causing significant disruption to the meeting or to joint working.**
- CG members understand they have a shared responsibility in formulating, implementing, and reviewing the CP Plan.**
- There is sufficient understanding of each agencies role, whereby collaborative planning can take place to minimise duplication and coordinate services more efficiently.**

¹ The LSCB Inter Agency Escalation Policy can be found on the LSCB website www.brentlscb.org.uk