

SECTION 7

COMPLETING THE CORE ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTING THE CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

This section sets out –

- The role of the lead social worker and the core group;
- The issues to be considered in planning and carrying out the core assessment; and
- The issues to be considered in drawing up the detailed child protection plan.

1. GUIDANCE

Working Together to Safeguard Children [2010] Chapter 5 Paragraphs 5.113 - 135

The words in this typeface are additions or amendments made in response to the 2010 edition of this guidance.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A core assessment is the means by which a section 47 enquiry is carried out. The core assessment must be completed within 35 working days of the strategy discussion that decided to initiate the section 47 enquiry.
- 2.2 The core assessment will consist of an analysis of:
- The child's developmental needs;
 - The ability of the parents or other carers to respond appropriately to those needs;
This will include consideration of the parents' own needs, for example any needs relating to a mental health problem, a learning difficulty or a substance misuse issue.
- And
- The impact of family and environmental factors on parenting capacity and on the child.
- It should provide evidence on which to base plans to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, by supporting the parents or otherwise.
- 2.3 ***The children's social care record for the child should set out clearly the dates on which the lead social worker saw the child during the s47 enquiries, whether the child was seen alone, who else, if anyone, was present, and the reasons for deciding to see the child alone, or not to do so.***

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3. THE LEAD SOCIAL WORKER

3.1 When a child protection conference concludes that a child needs a child protection plan, it will appoint a lead social worker. The lead social worker will be a qualified and experienced social worker from children's social care who is authorised to take on this role and who is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the outline child protection plan is developed into a detailed multi-agency plan;
- Completing the core assessment, drawing in contributions from other core group members and others as necessary;
- **Acting as the lead professional for inter-agency work with the child and family under the child protection plan;**
Note that there may also be a lead professional coordinating services to one or both parents; in this situation the two lead professionals will need to work closely together.

And

- Co-ordinating the contributions of family members and others to planning the actions to be taken, putting the plan into effect and reviewing progress in meeting the planned outcomes.

3.2 ***The lead social worker should see the child, alone where appropriate, as set out in the child protection plan. S/he should regularly ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and keep the child up to date with any developments or changes to the plan. S/he should keep a record of when the child was seen, who else was present and the reasons for deciding to see the child alone, or not to do so.***

4. THE CORE GROUP

4.1 Membership of the core group will be agreed by the initial child protection conference. It should include the lead social worker (who chairs the group), the child (if appropriate), family members, and professionals or foster carers who will have direct contact with the family. In deciding who should be members of the core group, the interests of the child should always take precedence over the interests of other family members.

4.2 The core group is responsible for developing the child protection plan as a detailed working tool and implementing it within the outline plan agreed at the initial child protection conference.

- 4.3 Although the lead social worker has the lead responsibility for formulating and implementing the child protection plan, all core group members are jointly responsible for carrying out these tasks. This includes monitoring progress against the planned outcomes and refining the plan as needed.
- 4.4 The first meeting of the core group should take place within 10 working days of the initial child protection conference. ***This meeting will decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the core assessment and develop the detailed child protection plan.*** Further meetings should be arranged at least once every two months.
- 4.5 The core group will monitor outcomes and make any necessary changes to the detailed child protection plan as circumstances change. The lead social worker will:
- Ensure that a note is kept of all decisions made and actions agreed by the core group ***as well as the written views of those who were unable to attend***; and
 - If there are significant medical/health issues, consider whether copies of these notes should be sent to the GP, health visitor and/or any other health professional.
[*This was inserted as a result of a serious case review*].

Each meeting of the core group will appoint a member to take and distribute the minutes.

- 4.6 It is the responsibility of all agencies to implement the parts of the plan relating to them and to communicate with the lead social worker and others as necessary.
- 4.7 If a child protection plan is still necessary 6 months before the young person's 18th birthday, and the young person is likely to meet the definition of vulnerable adult in the Safeguarding Adults Procedure then the relevant team manager in the Adults and Communities Directorate should be invited to join the core group to help plan the transfer of lead responsibility. The definition of a vulnerable adult is in [Section 4](#) of these procedures [Immediate Protection, Initial Assessment and Strategy Discussion] at Paragraph 6.15),

5. PLANNING THE CORE ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The core assessment will be based on the following principles:
- The aim of assessment is to identify the child's needs and how they may be met;

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- The process of assessment should be as helpful and as un-intrusive to the child and family as possible;
 - Repeated assessments by different agencies should be avoided if possible; and
 - If concern about the child's safety arises during the assessment, the core group must attend to this before continuing with the assessment.
- 5.2 The lead social worker will draw up the plan to carry out the core assessment in discussion with the child and family, unless to do so would place the child at increased risk.
- 5.3 It may be necessary to commission specialist assessments (for example from mental health services) which cannot be completed within the 35 working days, but this should not delay the drawing together of the core assessment findings at this point.

6. THE COMPLETED ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 ***The completed assessment will include an analysis of the child's developmental needs and the parents' ability to meet them within the context of their family and environment. This must include consideration of the parents' capacity to ensure that the child is safe from harm, the probability of change, and the likely consequences for the child if nothing changes.***
- 6.2 The lead social worker will present the completed assessment for discussion at a child protection review conference, and it will form the basis of any continuing child protection plan that is needed.
- 6.3 It may come to light at this stage that a person who has been identified as a perpetrator or likely perpetrator of abuse, also works with children or vulnerable adults (whether on a paid or unpaid basis). In this situation:
- If the person works with children, the lead social worker will discuss the issues with the Positions of Trust Team as set out in [Section 22](#) of these procedures [Concerns about Persons in a Position of Trust]
 - If the person works with vulnerable adults,
 - ◇ The team manager will advise the person's employer that an allegation has been made; and
 - ◇ If there is reason to suspect that the person has abused a vulnerable adult, the lead social worker will raise a safeguarding adult alert in accordance with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Procedures. The procedures and the Multi-Agency Alert Form will be found at www.bsab.org;

- If the person acts as an informal carer for a vulnerable adult,
 - ◊ The lead social worker will inform the relevant social work team in the Adults and Communities Directorate; and
 - ◊ If there is reason to suspect that the person has abused the vulnerable adult, the lead social worker will raise a safeguarding adult alert as above.

7. THE DETAILED CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

7.1 The aim of the detailed child protection plan is to:

- Ensure that the child is safe and prevent him/her from suffering further harm;
- Promote the child's health and development; and
- Provided that it is in the child's best interests, support the family in their efforts to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

7.2 ***In drawing up the plan, the core group will give particular attention to the family history (for example childhood abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse) and to past and present family functioning. They must address the following questions:***

- ***What interventions might help support family strengths, meet unmet needs and/or address the identified risk factors?***
- ***What resources are available?***
- ***What kind of approach, by which agencies/professionals, is most likely to achieve the family's cooperation?***
- ***What interventions are more likely to produce immediate benefit, and which might take more time?***
- ***What should be the sequence of interventions and why?***
- ***Given the severity of any ill-treatment suffered, the child's current needs and the capacity of the family to cooperate, what is the likelihood of achieving sufficient change within the child's time frame?***

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- 7.3 The detailed child protection plan will set out what needs to be done, why, when and by whom. It should
- Describe what needs to change to reduce the likelihood of future harm to the child;
 - Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the child's welfare;
 - Include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes;
 - Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of family members and professionals, including those with routine contact with the child;
 - ***Set out when and in what situations the lead social worker will see the child, both alone and with other family members or carers present;***
 - Set out the nature and frequency of contact by other 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
 - Include a contingency plan to be followed if there is a significant change in circumstances.
- 7.4 In the early stages, the detailed plan will include a plan for completing the core assessment. In the later stages it will address any need for further assessment.

Agreement

- 7.5 As far as is practicable and in the child's interests, plans should be drawn up in agreement with the child or young person and key family members and:
- Objectives should be reasonable;
 - Timescales should be achievable; and
 - Plans should not depend on resources which are known to be scarce or unavailable.
- 7.6 The lead social worker will ensure that:
- The plan is explained to, and agreed with, the child in a manner which is appropriate to their age and understanding, with the help of an interpreter if appropriate; and that

- The child is given a copy of the plan in his/her preferred language and written at a level appropriate to his/her age and understanding.

7.7 The lead social worker will ensure that the parents:

- Are clear about why their child is the subject of a child protection plan (the evidence of significant harm);
- Understand what needs to change and what is expected of them; and
- Receive a written copy of the plan.

Denial of access to the child

7.8 Difficulties may arise in which a family denies a practitioner access to a child. This includes:

- Regular non-attendance at pre-arranged visits or appointments;
- Refusal to allow the child to be seen;
- Refusal to allow the child to be spoken to without a parent present; and
- Refusal to allow a worker to see the child's living space (including where the child sleeps).

7.9 Before deciding how to respond to this, the worker should –

- Check how many missed contacts there have been and what proportion of the planned contacts this represents;
Workers should be alert to situations in which the parents are superficially cooperative but it is never convenient to produce the child.
- Check whether the family allows any other professional to see the child, talk to them alone or check their living conditions and, if so, how often; and
- Discuss the issue with other professionals in the core group.

7.10 If there seems to be a problem in the family's relationship with one particular professional or agency -

- It may be helpful for another professional to take the lead for that agency; and

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- It may be necessary for other core group members to adjust their frequency of contact with the child.
- 7.11 If the frequency of contact with the child is inadequate, the information needed for a full assessment of risk is not available. It is therefore not possible to know whether the risk is increasing, reducing or staying the same. Without this knowledge the child protection plan is unsafe, and the core group should consider whether an application should be made for a Child Assessment Order.
- 7.12 Where there is reason to believe that a child may be in imminent danger of significant harm the police may use their powers to gain access to the child.