

ISLE of WIGHT CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SOCIAL WORK
BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Contact/Referral and Duty Process

- The Assessment Framework informs and underpins all children's social work practice on the Isle of Wight.
- Two suitably skilled administrative workers will operate the duty desk in the assessment intervention (AI) Team. The duty desk will receive all incoming calls. Contacts will be initiated at this point and actioned to the AI manager.
- Contacts for the children's disability team will be taken by the AI duty desk and progressed to referral by the AI team duty manager.
- If new information is received about an open case this is NOT a contact, unless this information relates to child protection. New information should be either passed directly to the social worker or manager involved in the open case, recorded as a case note or a message taken for this purpose. Where new information relates to child protection then it will be recorded as a contact, whether it is a new referral or an open case.
- The duty admin workers will not make any decisions other than in very straightforward redirect situations. Their role is to take the contact information, input it onto the IT system and initiate an initial contact new cases.
- Any matter which the admin worker is concerned about or which appears to have a child protection element must be brought straight to the attention of the duty manager.
- The completed contact must be actioned to the duty manager as soon as it is completed.
- A management decision about the disposal of the contact will always be made within 24 hours of the receipt of this information.
- If the decision is that the contact matter is 'core business' then the **authorising manager** will need to complete the 'referral' form on ICS and date it at that point. This will still be within 24 hours.
- There will be no 'duty checks' or calls made before or during this decision making. It is only possible to speak to the person who made the contact to clarify information and seek any previous information held to inform the management decision. NO ADDITIONAL information can be sought from other external sources at this stage.

- The duty manager will check the ICS system throughout the day to make decisions on contacts which have been received. There are only 6 decisions that can be made at this point; either;
 - 1) No Further Action is necessary
 - 2) Progress to Referral is required
 - 3) Open Referral – Child Protection Discussion Required (Child Protection Enquiry - CPE)
 - 4) Referral to Another Agency
 - 5) Signpost to CAF
 - 6) Information & Advice Given

This decision will be made and recorded on the ICS system accordingly. There must always be a duty manager available to undertake this task - it is the service manager's responsibility to ensure this.

- If the referral decision is that an IA or a CPE is required, the matter will be allocated immediately to a social worker undertaking the assessment. Assessments are to be completed within 7 working days for initial assessments and 15 days for child protection enquiries.
- The assessment intervention team will operate a duty rota which will have at least two qualified social workers on a weekly rota taking on any incoming IAs and CPEs. The rota should include a backup worker for unexpected situations.
- Social workers in the assessment intervention team will not carry any case work which requires intervention of more than eight weeks.
- These workers will undertake Core Assessments where necessary, take matters to first Child Protection Conference, Looked After Children to first placement meeting and to the first application hearing if care proceedings have been commenced. They will also provide short term planned/focused intervention of not more than eight weeks duration.
- The children's disabilities team will have a qualified social worker covering duty on a weekly rota. They will be responsible for receiving and progressing new incoming work from the assessment intervention team and undertaking other duty tasks as required by the duty manager.
- On all new cases, there must be a single case file on Swift ICS and all 'paper' documentation is to be scanned in using the document handler in preparation for implementing fully electronic social care records in early 2010. Where information or documents relate to a case that is not new (or a CPE on an open case) ICS case notes must at all times identify (and be updated with) the location of any data, documents that are not recorded on the Swift ICS single case file.

Initial Assessment Process

- An IA will gather preliminary information about individual need. The whole process from allocation to sign off by a manager must be completed within 7 days. The manager must record their decisions on case notes.
- Children must be seen and where appropriate spoken to during the course of the IA and this should be clearly evidenced and recorded on the assessment document.
- The IA must conclude with a brief analysis. Needs and risk factors will be balanced with strengths and difficulties.
- An IA must lead to a decision as follows: either CA, limited services, Strategy Discussion required or NFA.
- If an IA cannot be completed with the 7 day timescale this matter must be brought to the attention of the team manager who will clearly record his/her decision about the matter in case notes.
- Team managers will use the information available to them via ICS to assist them in collating performance management information and tracking progress to ensure adherence to the Contact, Referral and Initial Assessment processes and timescales.

Core Assessment Process

- A Core Assessment (CA) is undertaken when the IA identifies issues of a complex nature and must be completed within 35 working days.
- The social worker undertaking the original IA will retain these cases and undertake the CA.
- The CA is interdisciplinary in its approach: social workers will always take responsibility for summarising and analysing the information gathered.
- Reasons for undertaking a CA are:
 - 1) The commencement of a CPE
 - 2) When the situation is complex e.g. multi agency involvement or issues that may be of a child protection nature but which do not require a formal CPE
 - 3) Where there have been three IAs in the past 12 months
 - 4) For unborn children where care proceedings may be commenced at birth
- Where complex issues or CPE warrant progress to CA, then the referral process must be followed, but using briefer information and a management decision recorded on case notes supporting this.

- The CA is a social work tool and requires the skills, knowledge and professional judgement of practitioners and their managers to use it effectively.
- Some dimensions of need may not be relevant – use it flexibly and proportionately.
- IAs and CAs should always contain a clear analysis of information and a summary of individual need, unless management decision is made to inform action.
- When a CA is required, a separate one must be undertaken for each child.
- Any analysis will balance strengths and difficulties and lead to a professional judgement regarding the individual needs of the child in the context of the wider family.

Child Protection Enquiry and Conference Process

- When a Child Protection Enquiry is undertaken a Strategy Discussion should always be held. This can be a telephone discussion. In complex matters a more formal face to face Strategy Discussion will take place and should include other key professionals (police, schools, health etc)
- All children in a family household will be subject to the Child Protection Enquiry and accompanying Core Assessment.
- If the matter requires an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) this must be held within 15 working days of the last Strategy Discussion and within 28 days of the original referral. The Assessment Intervention Team will compile the report for the ICPC.
- The ICPC report should reflect the information gathered and the risk assessment undertaken within the auspices of the CA process, which will have commenced with the instigation of the CPE. This information will be presented as a conference report at this stage. The start date for the CA must be recorded on the ICS system as the date of the commencement of the CPE.
- A qualified social worker from the receiving team will be identified to take on case responsibility if the child requires a Child Protection Plan.
- The receiving social worker will complete the CA by taking the information contained within the Initial Conference report together with the information shared at the Conference and transferring this onto the CA paperwork.
- A date for the multi agency Core Group will be set at the ICPC, and this will be held within 10 working days of the ICPC. The Outline Plan will be drawn up at the Conference and notification of this sent to all attendees and parents within 24 hours of the conference. Minutes should be available within 14 days of the ICPC.

- The detailed CP Plan will be developed further at the initial Core Group and will identify the specific actions, responsibilities and timescales to ensure that the CP Care Plan is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, and Time bound).
- The Child Protection Plan must be reviewed regularly at the Core Group meetings and updated accordingly, ensuring families and professionals are informed.
- Children who become Looked After will be subject to the National Looked After Children (LAC) procedures, plans and paperwork. LAC will be transferred to a Child in Care (CiC) Social Worker at the first placement meeting.
- To ensure workflow all cases ready for transfer should be transferred promptly to the receiving team. The case will become the responsibility of the receiving team at that point. This must be reflected on ICS (the case file).

Care Planning Process

- Every child who receives a service must have a Care Plan. This plan flows from the needs identified and the desired outcomes set at the conclusion of the Assessment process and should only be updated at the statutory meetings.
- The Care Plan is used to record the specific actions, responsibilities and timescales to ensure that the Care Plan is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, and Time bound).
- To formulate the Care Plan a multi agency care planning meeting will be convened (this can be a virtual meeting). The parents must always be involved in this process.
- Where key partner agencies have a role in providing services to meet the identified need, they must also be involved. This meeting should produce the written Care Plan to which all attendees should sign up to. A social worker from a receiving team should be identified to take on case responsibility if the situation is going to require more than eight weeks of intervention. This social worker must be invited to the care planning meeting. **The case will transfer at this meeting.**

Care Plans should be reviewed regularly. The date to review the plan must be agreed at the Care Planning meeting (and subsequent meetings) The Care Plan must be reviewed at a minimum of every eight weeks, or more frequently (as required).

Abbreviations:

Assessment Intervention Team = AI

Child in Care = CiC

Child Protection Enquiry = CPE (process for Sec 47 investigations)

Child/ren = under 18 as defined in 'Children Act 1989'

Common Assessment Framework = CAF

Core Assessment = CA

Child Protection Plan = CP Plan

Information Technology =IT

Initial Assessment = IA

Initial Child Protection Conference = ICPC

Integrated Children's System = ICS

Looked After Child/ren = LAC / Children in Care

No Further Action = NFA

Social Worker but also to refer to social work = SW

August 2009

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