

## **Joint Working Protocol - Social Care / Connecting Families**

This protocol provides guidance to the Connecting Families Team (CF) and Children's Social Care Service (CSC). It gives clarity for co-working arrangements between Connecting Families and Social Care in respect of Children in Need and those Children in need of Protection. In addition, this document gives details of the process for referring and 'stepping down' from Social Care to Connecting Families. Finally, it outlines roles and responsibilities to create more cohesive working practices.

### **Allocation meeting**

Connecting Families is now part of the Early Help Allocation Panel (EHAP). This panel meets every two weeks.

For more details please refer to the EHAP Terms of Reference.

### **Referrals to Connecting Families**

Any requests from CSC practitioners for a Connecting Families intervention are to be discussed with the Senior Practitioner Interface Workers in the first instance. If the Senior Practitioner Workers advises that it's an appropriate request, the allocated worker will be asked to complete a CF referral form, for discussion at an allocation meeting.

The Senior Practitioners will attend the EHAP as part of her step up-down role. This will provide the opportunity to bring back to CSC any cases that need a CSC response that can be considered at the case transfer meeting, and for general discussion regarding thresholds.

Referrals may come direct to the panel from duty or a service, if they do not meet the safeguarding concerns but are complex and need an Early Help Service.

### **Children in Need**

- If the decision at the allocation meeting is for the family to be transferred to the Connecting Families Team for intensive intervention, or be allocated to the most appropriate service, a step down Team Around the Family (TAC), Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting will be organised by Social Care and if it Connecting Families a CF team lead will attend.
- Once allocated to a Keyworker and the handover is completed, social care involvement ceases and the Keyworker will be the lead professional for the whole family. This information will be recorded on Liquid Logic.
- Where there is a Social Care Single Assessment completed within 6 months, (approximately) of allocation to the CF Team; the CF Keyworker will produce a Family Profile that considers the issues that have not been addressed in the assessment, but will not duplicate the assessment. These additional assessed

needs will then determine the Family Outcome plan which will be SMART and avoids duplication.

## **Child Protection**

Connecting Families will only work with child protection cases if:

1. the case is open to a Connecting Families Keyworker, and concerns have escalated requiring a child protection response; and it is appropriate to remain involved, or
2. the Child Protection Plan is about to be or has recently been discharged. This arrangement will be co-ordinated by a Step Down/TAC/TAF meeting with the involvement and approval of the family, or
3. by special arrangement by Social Care Service Manager and the Head of Children and Families Prevention Service.

Where Social Care and Connecting Families have a difference of opinion regarding allocation the issue should be escalated to the relevant managers. If unresolved at this stage, the Council procedure will be followed.

### Cases that are currently allocated to a keyworker

- When a child protection concern is identified the Keyworker should refer directly to Social Care by telephone, and then followed up by completing a request for service referral form. The Connecting Family worker will be kept formally informed of all decisions made regarding the family, including if no future action needs to be taken.
- Social Care will arrange a strategy discussion and Connecting Families will be invited to attend.
- If there is a decision to proceed with a Section 47 investigation; Connecting Families will be invited to contribute to this process with Social Care taking the lead.
- If the Section 47 substantiates the allegations and a child protection conference is convened, Connecting Families will prepare and submit a CP5 outlining their involvement with the family.
- If this results in a child protection plan, the social worker will be the lead professional for the duration of the child protection plan.
- The Social Worker, Keyworker and their respective managers will hold a professionals meeting to discuss the plan and clarify roles and responsibilities, communication and visiting arrangements.
- This should include confirmation of responsibilities regarding case recording and decision making (refer to Case Recording Guidance).
- Where there is a disagreement or difference of opinion throughout the duration of co-working, Social Care and Connecting Families manager's to discuss and agree a way forward. If issue still not resolved, discussion will be escalated to Social Care and Head of Children and Families Prevention Service to resolve. If unresolved at this stage, the Council procedure will be followed.
- The Connecting Families process will continue to be followed and the Family Outcome Plan will be reviewed with the family every 3 months.

### Care Proceedings

Where a child is the subject of a pre-proceedings process and if Connecting Families are working with the family, the Social Worker must inform the Connecting Families Keyworker and Service Managers, at the earliest opportunity.

If there is a Community Based Assessment commissioned, Connecting Families will be invited to the commissioning meeting. Connecting Families will be asked to submit a report to assist the completion of the 'parenting capacity' assessment. If the involvement of Connecting Families has been significant and over a long period of time, the keyworker may be asked to produce a separate statement for court, they will be receive guidance from social care/legal services regarding the content of the statement.

It is the responsibility of the Social Worker to inform the Connecting Families Keyworker (with a copy to the manager), of the social workers' care plan, how, when and where this will be shared with the family, so that the Connecting Families keyworker is clear about their response when they next meet the family. If the Connecting Families Keyworker is not in full agreement with the care plan, they must inform the Head of Children and Families Prevention Service, as soon as possible. The Head of Children and Families Prevention Service will then discuss this with the Social Care Service Manager. If unresolved at this stage, the Council procedure will be followed.

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