

Department of Services to Children & Young People Social Care - Aiming High for Children

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23rd May 2011

Dear Colleagues

RE: AGREED STANDARDS OF PRACTICE.

As you are aware the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) extended the maximum timeframe for the completion of Initial Assessments from 7 to 10 working days.

The guidance sets out that, "an initial assessment is deemed to be completed once the assessment has been discussed with the child and family (or caregivers) and the team manager has viewed and authorised the assessment". The guidance goes on to state that the initial assessment period may also be very brief, i.e. when the criteria for undertaking S47 enquiries are met.

Thank you all for the tremendous effort and improvement you have made in both the quality and the timescales for the completion of Initial Assessment over the last year. This was recognised within our most recent and positive Unannounced Inspection.

Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection recommends that timescales become more flexible. Until we get the new guidance, it is important that our high standards of service delivery are maintained and that children continue to have their needs met in a timely manner and also, that we effectively manage our practitioner workloads. In considering all of the above factors, I am now writing to inform you of an amendment to our agreed standards of practice in respect of Initial Assessments (I.A.)

Initial Assessments - Agreed Standards of Practice:

- We will aim to complete most Initial Assessments within 7 working days.



- Exceeding 7 days should only occur in exceptional circumstances and in such cases, the reasons for a more prolonged assessment, as well as the added value to the assessment will be clearly evident on the case file. For example, a more complex chronology; ensuring the carer / child have had the assessment shared with them where it was not possible to do so within 7 days
- All Initial Assessments must be completed and authorised by a Team Manager within a **maximum** of 10 working days.
- All children who are the subject of an Initial Assessment must be seen by a Social Worker as part of the assessment. The only exception to children not being seen during the IA is where the Referral & Initial Assessment immediately conclude that a Section 47 and Core Assessment is required, which will record the interview and visit to the child.
- The decision to progress or end a Contact should be made within 24 hours. No contacts should be held open unnecessarily, where it is clear that a Referral is required.
- The decision to progress or end a Referral should be made within 24 hours.
- Team Managers must authorise all case decisions, i.e. from Referral > Initial Assessment > Section 47 enquiries > Core Assessment. Case decisions must record the rationale behind the decision making and plan.
- Referrers must be informed of the outcome of the Referral.
- All activity and enquiries during an Initial Assessment should be recorded on the Initial Assessment and not on case records.
- Children's Advisers should not be undertaking Initial Assessments.
- Further demographic details that are obtained during the assessment must be recorded, with service user contact details kept up to date.
- Agreed actions and recommendations at the end of the Initial Assessment must be recorded as a plan, with all relevant professionals, family members and young people informed of the outcome.

Agreed Standards of Practice – Looked After Children & Child Protection Conferences and Reviews:

- No Child Protection or Looked After Children Reviews will take place without a Pre-meeting report, submitted a minimum of 2 days prior to the meeting.
- Pre-meeting reports will be shared with parents and children, with their views represented, before the day of the meeting.
- Child Protection Case Conferences meetings must take place within 15 days of the final strategy discussion. Social Worker must make every effort to be available/attend on the available date. Only where this is impossible should they liaise with their line manager for a manager to attend in their place.

- All involvements relating to a child must be kept up to date on Liquid Logic, to ensure that full details of all people to be invited to the Case Conference are available to Child Protection Unit Admin upon request.
- Reviews will be booked on a 2.5 and 5 monthly cycle for reviews due at 3 months and 6 months, in order to ensure Reviews can take place within timescales in the event of any unforeseen problems.
- Looked After Children (LAC) consultation papers should be circulated to the child, parent and carer at least 4 weeks in advance of a LAC Review.
- Child looked after statutory visits – the child, or young person, must be seen alone.
- Meetings may be adjourned in the absence of relevant and accurate information, as set out in the Pre-meeting report. Meetings may also be adjourned if not quorate. To be quorate a meeting must be attended by a minimum of Children's Social Care and 2 other agencies.
- Reports can no longer be recorded and submitted as word documents.
- There must be an up to date Placement Information Record (PIR) on the child's file; placements should not be made without an up to date Placement Information Record (PIR)
- The Safeguarding & Reviewing Unit must be immediately informed of any child becoming looked after, via completion of the Placement Information Record (PIR).
- Decisions and recommendations of Child Protection Case Conferences and Reviews will be recorded on Liquid Logic within 24 hours.
- Decisions and recommendations of LAC Reviews will be recorded on Liquid Logic within 7 days.
- Minutes of CP and LAC meetings will be recorded on Liquid Logic within 28 days.
- All key decisions and plans must be authorised by a Manager.
- Change of legal status/change of status must be immediately recorded on Liquid Logic.
- If a child moves from Child Protection to becoming Looked After, the Child Protection Co-ordinator will Chair the initial 28 day LAC review (booking at 2.5 weeks). The Child Protection Co-ordinator will retain responsibility for Reviews until the child ceases to be subject to a Child Protection Plan, at which point the Independent Reviewing Officer will take over responsibility.
- For any child who has been the subject to a Child Protection Plan, has been looked after or subject to Children's Social Care involvement beyond a Core Assessment, no case will be closed without an agreed multi agency step down plan.

Underlying core standard: All children and young people should know they have and be aware of their Care Plan/Child Protection Plan and, according to age, should be provided with a copy of it.

Chronologies

- All cases are to have an up to date chronology;
- As of 1st April 2010 Practitioners must ensure that all open cases have a chronology on ICS. Any existing chronology in carestore up to that point, should be signposted within ICS;
- All re-referred cases from 01.04.10 are to have a chronology created in ICS, including pulling historic information which is not in ICS, at the point of assessment;
- All previously unknown cases from 01.04.10 are to have a chronology created in ICS.

Finally, I would like to say thank you, to all of you who have implemented and worked to these Standards of Practice. We want children and young people who are referred to us and receive our services, to be responded to in a timely and consistent way, irrespective of where they live in the district and, to receive the very highest quality services. These agreed Standards of Practice are the bedrock of excellent practice. I appreciate your hard work every day to put them into practice.

Yours sincerely



Julie Jenkins
Assistant Director (Social Care – Children)
Services to Children & Young People