

Core Groups – Information for Professionals

This information sheet is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

A Core Group is a group of all relevant practitioners and family members who work together to create, implement and review a Care and Support Protection Plan. Each member of the Core Group has a responsibility for monitoring the plan to make sure it meets the needs of the child. When Core Groups work well, they can bring about great changes for children and their families.

Why am I a member of the Core Group?

The conference has identified that your work with the family means you have regular contact and can provide direct support to the family to help them achieve the Outcome Goals identified.

My work is with the adults in the family, why do I need to be in a Core Group?

The main focus of work may be with the adults in the family – as in the case of adult mental health, substance misuse, probation and domestic violence workers, for example.

We know that often the parent's needs will reduce their capacity to parent effectively and therefore impact on them achieving a 'good enough' level of parenting for their child/children. Your work will help them to overcome these barriers, by addressing these needs and therefore be able to reduce the risk of significant harm within the family.

When and where will the Core Group meet?

A date, time and venue for the first Core Group meeting will have been agreed at the end of the initial conference. Make sure you share your contact details with other Core Group members at the outset of the first Core Group meeting.

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Child Protection procedures state that the Core Group should first meet within 10 working days of the initial Child Protection Conference. Dates should be set for future meetings and the Core Group should continue to meet at least monthly but at no more than 6 weekly intervals up to the date of the first review conference.

Core Groups should be held in premises that are comfortable, accessible to all and that allow for privacy.

What is the first thing I need to do as a Core Group member?

Note the date of the first review conference as the Core Group will need to report back on progress with the Care and Support Protection Plan on that date.

Inform your Line Manager that you are now a Core Group member and that priority will need to be given to attending Core Group meetings.

What will happen at the first Core Group meeting?

- By the first Core Group meeting you should have received a copy of the initial conference recommendations, which should include the Outcome Goals and steps 2 and 8 of each of these (which form part of the Care and Support Protection Plan).
- At the first Core Group meeting you need to introduce yourself and be clear about your professional role and responsibilities, what you do and what your role is likely to be with the child/ren and family.
- At the first Core Group you will use the Steps to Change Tool for each of the Outcome Goals: describing what each step between 2 and 8 will look like. This will help you measure the change that the family achieves whilst on the Child Protection Register
- There is a partner agency briefing / training course that is offered by Denbighshire Safeguarding and Reviewing Service to understand the Effective Child Protection and Steps to Change tool.
- The Core Group needs to be chaired effectively and this can be done by any professional member of the Core Group. Within the Core Group, a chair and minute

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taker will be identified. The minute taker must be someone other than the person chairing the meeting.

- By the end of the first meeting, you should be clear about the tasks you are responsible for. All Core Group members, especially the family, should also be clear about what change will look like and how this will be achieved.
- A copy of the detailed Care and Support Protection Plan should be recorded and distributed to all Core Group members. A copy must be sent to the chair of the conference.

What other responsibilities do I have as a member of the Core Group?

Attendance at Core Groups is crucial. If you cannot attend, you should send a representative from your agency or send a written report. You should let the Social Worker know if you cannot attend and ensure you get the date of the next meeting. For child protection planning to work it is vital that all Core Group members participate fully and demonstrate their commitment to the protection of the child/ren. If there is an occasion when the Social Worker cannot attend but someone else can, the meeting should go ahead with the Team Manager or another Core Group member chairing the meeting. Meetings should only be cancelled as a last resort.

Participation – your contribution may be in the form of assessment, providing information or working directly with the child/ren and family. You will also have an active role to play in the development and measurement of the Care and Support Protection Plan.

Information Sharing – your own agency will have rules about confidentiality of information and you will be familiar with working within the boundaries of those rules.

Care and Support Protection Plan – all Core Group members are responsible for the development of the Care and Support Protection Plan. The plan should include Outcome Goals for the family and the steps needed to achieve these ‘good enough’ outcomes. You must ensure that the plan describes what the family will be thinking, feeling and doing at each stage. It will also describe how professionals are working with the family (interventions) to achieve these outcomes.

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In reviewing progress on the Care and Support Protection Plan, Core Group members should ensure they are not just measuring work done (activity) but are also measuring outcomes (results) for the child/ren.

You should refer to the Core Group protocol for further information about your responsibilities as a Core Group member.

Effective Child Protection

Denbighshire's Child Protection Conferences takes on a strength based, Effective Child Protection Process. This is made up of 4 parts:

- Threshold
- Conversations
- Change
- Measure

Before getting to the Child Protection Conference an assessment of significant harm should have been completed with the family. This assessment will explore whether the child/ren within the home are at risk or experiencing significant harm. It will consider whether this harm is greater than that expected for a child/ren of their age / development. The assessment will also think about whether the harm is unusual, considerable, noteworthy or important as well as thinking about the severity of the harm and the context in which it is occurring. This assessment will form the basis of the Social Worker's Report to conference.

It is expected that, wherever possible, the work completed with the family to complete this assessment has been completed through collaborative conversations. That the family have been co-producers within the report and been able to start to build their ownership within understanding the risks and where changes need to be made.

Within the conference, if a child/ren's name(s) is to be placed on the Child Protection Register, then what needs to change will be defined. It will be the role of the conference to describe what the priority risks within the family look like (step 2) and also what the family

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will be thinking, feeling and doing when things are 'good enough' (step 8). This will allow the family to understand what change will look like and have clear 'goal posts' to work towards.

The Core Group will then be involved in measuring these changes. This will be done using the Steps to Change Ladder Tool, where steps 2-8 are clearly defined in terms of how the family are thinking, feeling and behaving and then what professionals / family are going to be working on at each stage to achieve these changes.

Denbighshire offer training with regards to the Effective Child Protection model and the Steps to Change Tool. If you are interested in attending the training, please contact the Child Protection Conference Chair.

What do I have to do in preparation for a review conference?

Each Core Group member has to write a report for the review conference covering progress made in their area of involvement. A recommendation about continuing registration needs to be made by Core Group members, not only by the Social Worker.

How can I ensure the child/ren and family are involved?

Involvement is about more than just attending the Core Group. As a Core Group member, you will have contact with the family. You will have a responsibility to explain to family members your role in the Core Group and to consult them about their views. Research says that the child protection planning works best when we work in partnership with children and families. This means seeking their views, giving feedback and explaining the process.

You should consider whether the child/ren should attend the Core Group and if not, how their wishes and feelings can be represented – for example, a letter from them or a report or advocate on their behalf. Written feedback can also be given to children and is often appreciated by them.

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It is more likely that parents, carers, children and young people will stay involved if they feel they are being listened to and that their views are given respect, even if it is not always possible to agree.

What do I do if I am concerned that the Care and Support Protection Plan is not working and the child/ren is at increasing risk of harm?

You should discuss this directly with the Social Worker and/or your line manager and evidence your concern. Aim to reach agreement on the next steps to address your concern.

If you cannot reach agreement about a way forward, then you need to involve your line managers and contact the conference chair. Any Core Group member can request that a conference be reconvened if they think the Care and Support Protection Plan is not working.

Where can I go for more information?

For further guidance please refer to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures.

Complaints

If you want to make a suggestion, compliment or complaint about any of the services provided by Education & Children's Services you can contact the Complaints Officer in any of the following ways:-

Freephone number: 0800 032 1099

Email: ssdcomments@denbighshire.gov.uk

Write to:- The Complaints Officer, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl, Denbighshire, LL18 3DP

Web: www.denbighshire.gov.uk/yourvoice

This Information Sheet can be made available in alternative formats upon request.