

# DUDLEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

'Working Together to Keep Children & Young People Safe'

## Inter-Agency Child Protection Practice Standards



### Dudley Safeguarding Children Board

Quality Assurance Framework

Learning from practice to improve  
local safeguarding outcomes



Working together to keep children and young people safe

## CHILD PROTECTION & INTER-AGENCY WORKING

*The following set of overarching quality and outcome statements should form an integral part of inter-agency practice:*

### **Overarching Outcome statements:**

- Child protection plans and 'children in need' plans result in objective, tangible improvements in the wellbeing and safety of children and their families;
- Children and parents identify positive improvements in their safety and wellbeing as a result of the work arising from the children in need/child protection plan;
- Parents feel – and can support with concrete examples – more empowered and effective in their parenting as a result of the involvement of child protection services;
- Parents report that contact with child protection services have made a positive difference to them and their children's lives;
- Risk factors are reduced and protective factors increased in vulnerable children and their families;

### **Overarching Quality statements:**

- Plans for children arising from assessments (single or multi-agency) are framed in terms of the measurable wellbeing and safety outcomes to be achieved;
- Parents report that they are treated empathetically and with respect by staff in child protection services;
- Those making referrals to the front door of Children's Social Care are able to talk directly with an experienced social worker with minimal intervening steps;
- Children remain the focus of professionals' attention';
- The involvement and impact of fathers and partners is understood by practitioners;
- Children, young people and parents do not experience disjointed and uncoordinated involvement by different agencies;
- Professionals in different organisations in the area know and trust each other, report positive working relationships, and converse with each other in a way that communicates a shared understanding;
- Professionals within agencies report that they have effective, creative relationships with other professionals/teams within their agency;
- Professionals know the range of services available and match them appropriately with the needs of children and families;
- Professionals are confident: to be the lead professional, to challenge, to share information;
- Professionals use escalation processes effectively to achieve desired outcomes;
- Children's and adults' services have a 'Think Family, Act Family' mindset reflected in an holistic approach to assessment and care planning;

**Practice Standards**

Please refer to DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures (Part A and Part D – Joint Investigations Protocol between Children's Social Care and West Midlands Police) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) \*

Practice	Standard	Additional Guidance
<b>Initial Assessment</b> (under review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All assessment will be based on The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families</li> <li>All 3 domains of the Assessment Framework must be considered</li> <li>The child should be seen and spoken to as part of the assessment</li> <li>If it becomes clear during the Initial Assessment that a child is or is likely to be at risk of significant harm, a strategy discussion held</li> <li>Assessments should have multi agency involvement</li> <li>The outcome of the completed assessment must be fed back to the family and they should be provided with a copy of the assessment</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 2a</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 145-151</i></p>
<b>Immediate Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned emergency action will normally take place immediately after a strategy discussion between the police, local authority social care and other agencies as appropriate</li> <li>All children in the household and the alleged perpetrators household should be considered</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 3</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 151-152</i></p>
<b>Strategy Discussion</b> (under review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The strategy discussion will take place <b>within 24 hours</b> of the decision to hold it</li> <li>The strategy discussion should be coordinated and chaired by a social care manager</li> <li>In cases involving complexity the strategy discussion should take the form of a face-to-face meeting between police and social care, and other professionals if appropriate</li> <li>In complex situations a series of meetings may be appropriate</li> <li>The decisions of the strategy discussion and their rationale will be recorded and circulated</li> <li>If the matter is complex in nature or involves allegations in respect of someone working with children a Complex Strategy Meeting should be convened and chaired by Safeguarding &amp; Review normally within <b>3 working days</b> of the decision to hold one</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 3</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 152-154</i></p> <p><i>Joint Investigations Protocol between Children's Social Care and West Midlands Police</i></p>
<b>Section 47 enquiries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's social care are the lead agency for initiating and undertaking Section 47 enquiries. The police, health professionals, teachers and other relevant professionals have a legal duty to help social care in undertaking these enquiries</li> <li>Ordinarily Section 47 enquiries should be initiated after the Strategy Discussion</li> <li>All children should be seen by a social worker within the timescale set out within procedures and agreed at the strategy discussion</li> <li>Social care, police and health will act in accordance with the Joint Investigations Protocol</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 3</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 145-151</i></p> <p><i>Joint Investigations Protocol between Children's Social Care and West Midlands Police</i></p>

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Practice	Standard	Additional Guidance
<b>Medical Examinations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Protocol outlines expectations in respect of medical examinations</li> <li>Informed consent from a parents(s) should be ascertained for medical examinations and where possible from the child (depending upon their developmental age)</li> <li>Medical examinations should normally be undertaken within 24 hours of the Strategy Discussion by an appropriately qualified Consultant Paediatrician and take place in a child-centred environment</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> Section A, Part 4</p>
<b>Outcomes of Section 47 enquiries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's social care will record the outcomes of the Section 47 enquiries to include the dates on which the child was seen by the lead social worker during the course of the enquiries, if they were seen alone, and if not, who was present and for what reasons. This should be endorsed by the Team Manager</li> <li>Parents and children of sufficient age and appropriate level of understanding should be informed of the outcome of any Section 47 enquiries, in particular in advance of any Initial Child Protection Conference</li> <li>Other agencies should be informed of the outcome of any Section 47 enquiries and engaged in decision-making with regards to the plan for the child &amp; family and whether to convene a child protection conference</li> <li>If there professional difference about whether to convene an Initial Child Protection Conference, the LSCB Conflict Resolution Procedure should be followed</li> <li>This information should be conveyed in an appropriate format for younger children, individuals with special needs and those people whose preferred language is not English</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> Section A, Part 3</p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 154-161</i></p>
<b>Social work report to Initial Child Protection Conference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The social worker will prepare a report for the initial child protection conference in accordance with the guidance set out in the safeguarding procedures. This should be quality assured by the appropriate social care team manager.</li> <li>The report to the conference will be sent to the Safeguarding &amp; Review <b>at least 24 hours</b> in advance of the conference</li> <li>The assessment should be shared with parents and children <b>at least 24 hours</b> in advance of the conference</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> Section A, Part 5</p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 161-172</i></p>
<b>Other agency reports to Conference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports from other agencies will also be sent to the chair <b>at least 24 hours</b> in advance of the conference and will normally be shared with the family in advance of the conference (where appropriate)</li> <li>Conference reports should be completed in accordance with the agreed agency template</li> <li>The conference chairs will monitor whether reports are sent on time and whether they have been shared with the child and their parents.</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> Section A, Part 5</p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 161-172</i></p>

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<b>Initial Child Protection Conference</b> (under review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Initial child protection conference must be convened within <b>15 working days</b> of the strategy discussion to initiate Section 47 enquiries</li> <li>The Local Authority solicitor to be invited to all pre birth conferences and they should be invited to any other conference when it is thought appropriate</li> <li>The chair will make arrangements to meet with parents and participating children prior to the conference</li> <li>If the conference decide the need for a child protection plan the chair will determine the category</li> <li>The category of emotional abuse will only be used if it is severe and persistent</li> <li>The outline child protection plan to be explicitly explained by the chair of the conference at the end of the meeting</li> <li>The conference should establish how the child, their parents (including all those with parental responsibility) and wider family members should be involved in the ongoing assessment, planning and implementation process, and the support, advice and advocacy available to them</li> <li>Identify what further action is required to complete the core assessment and what other specialist assessments of the child and family are required to make sound judgements on how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child;</li> <li>Agree a date for the first child protection review conference and under what circumstances it might be necessary to reconvene the conference before that date.</li> <li>The decisions of the conference , category of plan and lead social worker and core group membership to be circulated <b>within 1 working day</b> of the conference</li> <li>The minutes to be circulated <b>within 15 working days</b> of the conference</li> <li>The outline child protection plan to be completed on a template by the chair (to be implemented September 2012)</li> <li>Chair will complete a Monitoring Report as part of QA Framework (to be implemented by January 2013)</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 161-172</i></p>
<b>Child Protection Visits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lead social worker will visit the child at least <b>every 28 days</b>, unless there is a higher visiting frequency determined by the Child Protection Plan</li> <li>Other professionals should visit in accordance with the frequency outlined in the child protection plan or subject to the changing circumstances of the child and family</li> <li>Social workers and other professionals will undertake announced and unannounced visits to the child. The purpose of visits should be clearly set out in the child protection plan and/or detailed case records</li> <li>Social workers and other professionals need to consider as part of their visit or contact with the family whether there is evidence that the child's risk of significant harm is increasing - agency escalation processes should be considered alongside other options such as early core group, conference or immediate action to protect the child</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures Section A, Part 6</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) – page 161-172</i></p>

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Practice	Standard	Additional Guidance
<p><b>Core Group Meetings</b> (under review)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first core group will take place within <b>10 working days</b> of the initial conference, the date of which will be agreed at the conference</li> <li>• Thereafter the core group will meet at least <b>every 6 weeks</b></li> <li>• The first core group meeting must be chaired by a social care team manager</li> <li>• The core group will develop the outline child protection plan into a detailed child protection plan and keep this under regular review.</li> <li>• The plan will set out clear intended outcomes for the child. The core group will identify evidence of the impact of the child protection plan on improving the safety of the child</li> <li>• The plan must be individualised for each child in the family</li> <li>• A record of the core group meeting will be taken and circulated to all members of the core group and to the conference chair <b>within 5 working days</b></li> <li>• The responsibility for keeping a record of the core group should be shared across all core group members</li> <li>• The Conference Chair will monitor/quality assure the detailed child protection plan and core group process</li> <li>• Agencies should expect their staff to attend core groups or provide a written/verbal up-date to the lead social worker</li> <li>• If an agreed action from the Conference cannot be implemented by a core group member, they must contact the lead social worker and or if necessary escalate the matter in accordance with their agency procedures</li> <li>• If there are significant concerns about the welfare of the child or significant professional differences, the LSCB Conflict Resolution Procedures should be initiated</li> <li>• The core group members will aim to meet or liaise <b>10 working days</b> prior to all review conferences, with the aim of providing an up-to-date report for the Review Conference</li> <li>• Where the core group is recommending the end of a child protection plan, the lead social worker must share this recommendation with the social care team manager</li> <li>• Members of the core group should actively contribute to assessments and interventions in accordance with the child protection plan</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> <i>Section A, Part 7</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)</i> <i>– page 172-178</i></p>

Practice	Standard	Additional Guidance
<b>Child Protection Review Conferences</b> (under review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first review conference will be held <b>within 3 months</b> of the initial conference</li> <li>• Further review conferences will be held at intervals of <b>not more than 6 months</b></li> <li>• A review conference will be re-convened early if significant changes to the child's circumstances occur</li> <li>• The social worker will prepare a report for the review conference on behalf of the core group</li> <li>• The review conference report should be sent by the social worker to the Chair of the Child Protection Conference <b>at least 3 working days</b> before the review conference and it must evidence that the report has been shared with the child (where appropriate) and their parents.</li> <li>• Where necessary, other agency reports will be forwarded to the Chair at <b>least 3 working days</b> before the review and will have been shared with parents</li> <li>• The review conference will measure the impact of the child protection plan against clear planned outcomes</li> <li>• The conference chair will challenge any decision to end the child protection plan if there is insufficient evidence from the assessment (particularly at first review conference)</li> <li>• Where the decision is made to discontinue a child protection plan, the child and their family will continue to receive support through a robust multi-agency child in need plan or team around the child for <b>at least 3 months</b> (subject to parental consent or exceptional circumstances) unless the matter is to be put before the court</li> <li>• The child in need or team around the child plan will be reviewed <b>3 months</b> after the child has been removed from the child protection plan, by the lead professional</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i>  <i>Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)</i>  <i>– page 178-180</i></p>

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<b>Receiving-In Conferences</b> (under review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requests for a Receiving-In Conference from another local authority area should be received in writing and relevant reports (e.g. conference minutes, core assessment, child protection plan) be forwarded to the Safeguarding &amp; Review Unit and appropriate social care team by the lead social worker <b>5 working days</b> prior to the Conference taking place</li> <li>Receiving-In Conferences should be attended by the appropriate social care manager for the team that will assume casework responsibility for the child/children</li> <li>The chair of the conference will ensure that the focus remains on safeguarding the child and decision-making is in accordance with standards for Initial Conference - any issues with regards to case transfer between local authorities must not become the focus of the conference (subject to revision of West Midlands Regional Protocol)</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> <i>Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>West Midlands Cross-Border Boundary</i> <i>Section D (under revision)</i></p>
<b>Temporary Child Protection Plans</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a child is subject to a temporary child protection plan in Dudley (a child protection plan in another local authority area), these must be reviewed by the Safeguarding &amp; Review Unit on a <b>monthly basis</b> – this will involve writing to the other local authority area and ensuring that local professionals are aware of the child’s status</li> <li>The local social care team where the child is living should be notified by Safeguarding &amp; Review</li> <li>Local professionals from other agencies are likely to be part of the Core Group and must act in accordance with all of the standards in this document</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> <i>Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)</i> <i>– page 178-180</i></p>
<b>Pre-birth Conferences (Unborn children)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a child is subject to a child protection plan and the mother becomes pregnant, consideration must be given to convening a pre-birth initial child protection conference – this should take place once the pregnancy is viable (after 24 weeks) and a core assessment has been completed, allowing sufficient time to plan for the child’s protection once born</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> <i>Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)</i> <i>– page 181-182</i></p>
<b>Children and young people in care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a child who is the subject of a child protection plan comes into the care of the local authority under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the plan will remain in place for <b>28 days</b> until the first statutory review meeting is held to consider how their safeguarding needs will be met – in exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate to maintain the child protection plan</li> <li>Where a child becomes the subject of an interim care order, they will be removed from the plan by the Safeguarding &amp; Review who will write to all members of the core group to inform them of the child’s new legal status</li> <li>Where children are being discharged from care to home, their safety should be addressed as part of the statutory looked after review process.</li> </ul>	<p><i>DSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures</i> <i>Section A, Part 5</i></p> <p><i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)</i> <i>– page 180-181</i></p>

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