

Leicester City Education and Children's Services
Guidance from Safeguarding and QA Unit
Child Protection Service

What is a Core Group and what does it do?

If a decision is made at a child protection conference that a child is in need of a child protection plan, then the chair is responsible for creating an outline child protection plan. The Lead Social worker and core group are responsible for ensuring that the Outline plan is developed into a detailed plan and progressed. The Core Group should work towards the outcomes specified in the Child Protection Conferences and add any additional outcomes if required. The Plan will have active intervention by members of the Core Group, agreed monitoring through visits to the home and in cases where relevant areas have not been covered sufficiently in the assessment, it will identify further assessments that enable the family to gain insight so that they and the professionals involved can build on their strengths and reduce any risk to the children of future Significant Harm.

The core group's task, via the child protection plan, is to: -

- Reduce the risks, (to the child), or
- Prevent the occurrence of further significant harm to the child, and
- Safeguard the child's well-being – to the point where the child no longer needs a Child Protection Plan

The Core Group achieves this by:

- Producing an agreed, detailed Child Protection Plan;
- Completing an assessment of the family;
- Meeting regularly to monitor progress;
- Providing a report for the Child Protection Review Conference;
- Requesting the review conference is reconvened earlier if the Child Protection Plan is not safeguarding the child or there has been a further incident of harm.

Who could be part of a Core Group?

Core group members are agreed at the child protection conference and normally include:-

- Parents / Carers / Other adults in the family who have responsibility for providing care for the child
- The child who is the subject of the plan, (however, children need to be of an appropriate age and understanding to attend)
- Those professionals who are involved with the child and family, (for example, a Social Worker, Teacher, Health Visitor / School Nurse, Youth & family Support Worker etc)

When and where should a Core Group take place?

The first meeting of the core group should take place within 10 working days of the initial child protection conference.

The core group should take place at a time and place that is convenient to the child and / or family wherever possible. A written record of each core group must be sent to all the group members.

Roles and responsibilities of the Core Group

All core group members are responsible for: -

- The implementation of the plan
- Refining the plan as required
- Monitoring progress against planned outcomes detailed in the plan

Plans formulated at the child protection conference should have the specific roles of the core group members in mind, so that everyone is clear about individual and shared responsibilities.

The task of arranging core group meetings will be with the relevant children's social care team, chairing of these meetings should be agreed by the members and be an experienced professional.

The specific responsibilities of individual Core Group members are to:

- Accept that the child's needs remain paramount and maintain a child-centred focus;
- Contribute to the multi-agency assessments;
- Make suggestions or approaches, if appropriate, for the involvement of other specifically skilled professional or agency seen as relevant to its completion;

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- Attend and participate in Core Group meetings or other relevant meetings. Core Group members must give adequate notice if unable to attend Core Group meetings or arrange a substitute colleague to attend if possible. If not, then along with their apologies, they must provide a summary of their involvement with the family since the last Core Group meeting;
- Carry out agreed tasks in accordance with their own agency functions: if this is not possible the Lead Social Worker must be consulted before any plans regarding the child or family are altered;
- Provide specialist advice which will inform the Child Protection Plan;
- Provide the Lead Social Worker with written reports as requested;
- Communicate regularly with the Lead Social Worker about the progress of their part of the agreed Child Protection Plan;
- Inform the Lead Social Worker of any change in circumstances relevant to the Child Protection Plan;
- Inform the Lead Social Worker of any changes and request either a Core Group or an earlier **Review Conference**.

The first Core Group meeting

The Children's Social Care Team manager of the Lead Social Worker will chair the first meeting of the Core Group, where possible, on the date set at the initial Child Protection Conference. This will be within 10 working days of the Initial Conference.

Using either the record of the Child Protection Conference or a copy of the decisions and recommendations, the Chair of the Core Group must help the group complete the detail of the Child Protection Plan. The plan will have set out what each member is expected to do and what work will take place, including visits to the home and further assessments where necessary. There should be timescales set within the plan by which this action is to be achieved.

The Core Group must also consider what steps need to be taken to complete the Assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare if this has not already been done.

The detailed Child Protection Plan, together with any other decisions made and actions agreed at the Core Group should be written up and circulated by the Lead Social Worker. The chair should also set dates for subsequent core group meetings to be held before the first child protection review conference.

The chair should remind all core group members of the review conference date

Subsequent Core Group meetings

The Core Group should meet sufficiently regularly to facilitate working together, monitor actions and outcomes against the Child Protection Plan, and make any necessary alterations as circumstances change.

The core group should take place within 28 days of a review conference and thereafter 6 weekly unless the conference decides that meetings should be more frequent.

Core Group Meetings will usually continue to be chaired by the Lead Social Worker or his/her manager.

Recording Core Group Meetings

Decisions and actions agreed at Core Group meetings should be recorded, as well as the written views of those who were not able to attend. Copies of the notes and written agreement must be circulated to Core Group members as soon as possible.

The Lead Social Worker should ensure that the Child Protection Plan is updated/reviewed following each Core Group and advise the Chair of its completion.