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Practice Guide 2

Core Groups

**Core Group Practice Guidance**

**What is a Core Group and what does it do?**

In Shropshire the term ‘Core Group’ is typically used to describe a multi-agency meeting with children, young people and their families to discuss and review a plan in between key meetings. This may be in relation to a plan for a child who is subject to Child Protection, Child in Need or be Looked After by the Local Authority. Sometimes the meeting may be called Child in Need Meeting. In Early Help it is locally known as a Partnership Meeting.

The expectation is for all children receiving support from Social Care to have ‘Core Group’ meetings to agree plans and roles and responsibilities, share updating information, monitor progress and review and update plans.

If a decision is made at a child protection conference that a child is in need of a child protection plan, the core group is responsible for ensuring that the Plan agreed at the child protection conference is carried out.

The core group’s task, via the Plan is to:

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

**Who could be part of a Core Group?**

* 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, or for children in need, 10 days after the completion of the social work assessment. Core groups for looked after children should occur following the first LAC Review.

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: -

* Attending core group meetings
* Share updating information
* The implementation of the plan
* Undertaking key actions that have been allocated to them within the plan
* Monitoring progress against planned outcomes detailed in the plan
* Refining and reviewing the plan as required

Plans should have the specific roles of specific core group members explicitly recorded, so that everyone is clear about individual and shared responsibilities. Social workers should ensure all core group participants are aware of their role within the plan.

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 first Core Group meeting**

This meeting must be used to discuss the areas of concern/risk/assessed needs and the requirements of the Child Protection / Child in Need / Care Plan. There should be a detailed discussion regarding the requirements of the plan and the desired outcomes to be achieved. The plan will have set out what each member is expected to do and what work will take place, including visits to the home, further assessments where necessary and specific actions that need to be undertaken. There should be timescales set within the plan by which this action is to be achieved. Where appropriate contingency plans should be made in the event that the plan is not adhered to and concerns for the child are not reduced.

Any actions / decisions agreed at the core group, should be recorded and circulated by the chair within 7 working days, along with a copy of the plan. The chair should also set dates for subsequent core group meetings to be held.

For Child Protection this should be before the first child protection review conference.

For Child in Need and LAC, this should be no longer 28 days after the first Core Group Meeting.

**Subsequent Core Group meetings**

Should be held every month (unless a decision is made at conference for it to be more frequent) and good practice suggests that core group meetings should occur within 2 weeks of the child protection review conference.

Subsequent reviews for Child in Need, should take place regularly and are determined on a case by case basis in discussion with the Core Group and the Manager, they should generally take place every 6 weeks but should not exceed 12 weeks in between reviews,(exception applies for children with disabilities who have short break arrangements).

The frequency of subsequent Core Groups for Looked After Children should be determined on a case by case basis in discussion with Core Group Members and the Manager, but should not exceed 12 week.

**If you are asked to be part of a core group it should be a priority meeting. Children can be protected from harm when professionals and families are working towards common goals and outcomes, and it is clear who is doing what.**

**Quick View Quality Standard:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Child in Need** | **Child Protection** | **Looked After Child** |
| Activity / Meeting | Plan required following SWA | ICPCC | LAC Review (1) |
| First Core Group | 10 work days | 10 work days | 28 days |
| Second Core Group | 28 days | Before the RCPCC | 28 days |
| Subsequent Core Group Meetings | Frequency agreed, usually monthly.  No longer 3 months (exception DCT short breaks) | Monthly | Frequency agreed usually monthly.  No longer 3 months (long term) |

Outline Agenda for Core Group Meetings:

1. Status of child and purpose of meeting
2. Apologies
   1. Note agency / role and name of attendees and those sending apologies
   2. Note any updates / reports from those not able to attend
   3. Where significant family members are not in attendance, discuss how they will be represented and agree actions to ensure their participation
3. Review Membership
   1. Are the right people still around the table
4. Check minutes
   1. Ensure these have been received by the family and agencies
   2. Note dissent & any issues arising from these
5. Updates from all Members
   1. Invite Core Group Members to provide any significant updates
6. Review each action on the Plan
   1. Amend actions if necessary and ensure they remain SMART
   2. Note progress in relation to the task
   3. Revise and agree any changes to the Plan
   4. Review contingency plan
7. Analysis of current situation, risks/needs of the child
8. Any other matters to discuss
   1. Invite Core Group Members to raise any other issues
9. Setting next meeting