



# **BARNSLEY**

## **Metropolitan Borough Council**

### **Children's Social Care Protocol for Supporting Staff Working with Parents/Carers Who Need Additional Support**

BMBC Children's Social Care Protocol for supporting staff who are working with parents/carers who require additional support and contact than would normally be expected. Barnsley Children Social Care aims to provide high quality services to all the families we work with. When things fall short of this standard, we will deal with those who have a complaint fairly, honestly and properly through the Council's Complaints Procedure. This protocol does not duplicate or replace any other corporate policy's but aims to set out the support to social workers and managers when working with parents/carers whose expectations of contact and communication is persistently so demanding that the capacity of the social worker or service is impinged. Where this means that other families are receiving a lesser service or that the social worker, team manager is at danger of being overwhelmed this protocol should be instigated. The protocol is also aimed at alleviating the concern that a parent or carer may have and ensuring that through clear and consistent communication there is an agreed plan of contact and that the parent/carer is heard and feels heard.

Where a parent or carer requires additional, high levels of support, contact and communication with the social worker or team allocated, we will understand that parents and carers often feel anxious about social care involvement with them and their children. We will seek to fully reassure where we can whilst ensuring the voice of the child is not diluted by the voice of the adults. In those very few cases where a social worker and/or team become overwhelmed by the levels of contact or communication by a parent or carer this protocol will be applied. This protocol sits separately from the BMBC Complaints Policy and Processes and from Human Resource Policy and Processes and is not intended to replace or replicate any of those policy and processes. This protocol is aimed at supporting staff who communicate with families face to face however it also applies to communication by telephone and email. Where staff feel threatened or there is violence or abuse from a parent or carer, specific guidance in the Violence and Aggression at Work, Policy and guidance must be followed.

This protocol will be applied when a parent or carer requires communication which is giving cause to impact on the capacity within a team to deal with the level of communication being requested this includes; raising numerous, detailed questions; insisting they are all answered; repeating questions persistently when responses have been given, either covertly recording meetings and conversations or suggesting they are; adopting a "scatter gun" approach to speaking or emailing social workers and managers, using family members to pursue the same issues, questions or responses.

In the first instance good communication with the parent/carer is required, understanding the parent/carers perspective and trying to understand the level of anxiety and what is causing that. It is very important to consider the parent/carer perspective from the outset when it first becomes evident that a much higher level of contact or communication with the service is expected. In the first instance the social worker should set out the expectations of communication and contact with the parent/carer. If this does not resolve the matter the team manager and social worker should meet with the parent/carer and set out formally:

- The level of regular communication, restricting telephone calls to specific days and times
- Requiring contact to take place with a single named member of staff
- Requiring that the parent carer is the named contact or that they name a single point of contact to avoid having the same conversations numerous times.
- Agreement that all social work contact will only be provided to the parent/carer to avoid the potential risk of inadvertently causing a data breach.
- Agreement to limiting the duration of telephone calls
- Agreement with the parent/carer to enter into an agreement about their contact and providing written information on expectations in order that both the service and the parent/carer understand fully what is agreed.
- Judgement and discretion will be applied to ensure that contact from parents/carers is not ignored, resulting in potential failures to respond to a request for service or an emergency.

The communication plan will be completed with the parent/carer and the parent/carer will receive their copy within 2 working days. The communication plan will be placed on the child's file.

The team manager will support the allocated worker and ensure that the worker is appropriately supported on a weekly basis and on a monthly basis the plan will be reviewed. If the plan is not effective the service manager and team manager should meet with the parent/carer to reiterate the actions to manage communication. The team manager should consider if the case requires co-allocation with a more experienced social worker to support the primary allocated social worker and to avoid lone working situations such as visits if necessary.

The support to the social worker should be consider both in terms of directly supporting practice and the communication plan but also considering other sources of support offered by BMBC such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Well @ Work and through Occupational health who can provide a range of support including counselling. All additional support services can be found on the Human Resource Share Point Site on the BMBC Intranet.

Supervision and the Personal Development & Appraisal processes should be used to support the social worker in considering what additional development or training can be offered.

The team manager will ensure the service manager is aware that this protocol has been initiated in each case. The clear plan of communication with the parent/carer should be recorded supervision and the level of support in place for the social worker clearly set out. It may be necessary to, in extreme cases, to consider reallocating a case to another social worker however this must be in the context of ensuring the child's needs are paramount.

All cases where this protocol is initiated a case alert will be provided to the Head of Service for the relevant service who will share this with the Service Director and Executive Director.

## **Appendix**

### **1 Communication Plan**

**OWNER: Keeley Boud**

**SERVICE AREA: Children's Social Care and Safeguarding**

**DATE: November 2022**

**REVIEW DATE: November 2023**