



Coventry City Council

Children's Services Practice Standards



Children's Services Practice Standards

High quality practice, leadership and management is at the heart of delivering good services for children, young people and their families and carers in Coventry, and they deserve our best practice.

The practice standards contained in this document should be viewed as part of an approach to ensure that services are delivered to an agreed quality. They do not stand alone, but are an integral part of achieving service strategies and policies and meeting procedural and operational requirements. These standards should be read in conjunction with the on line Children's Services Procedures, and the Coventry Local Safeguarding Children Board Policies and Procedures: <http://coventrychildcare.proceduresonline.com/index.html> and http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/206/coventry_local_safeguarding_children_board/2495/coventry_safeguarding_children_board_policies_and_procedures

Standard 1 – Records evidence management oversight and clear decision making at all stages of the child's journey:

- Management oversight clearly indicates what help or protection a child needs, and is recorded using the signs of safety framework.
- The allocated worker's recordings are clearly written and succinct.
- There is clear up to date management direction on the case file at least every 8 weeks and is focused on the experience and wellbeing of children and families.
- Managers record a CF15 in the following circumstances:
 - A key decision in a child's life is made.
 - A case is allocated or re-allocated to a worker setting out what needs to be done and by when.
 - A case is closing or stepping up or down or transferring to another team with rationale.
 - A discussion with the social worker where it is decided to progress a case to the Legal Planning and New Admissions Panel, Case Progression Panel or Resource Panel and the rationale for this.
 - The outcome of the Legal Planning and New Admissions Panel, Case Progression Panel and Resource Panel and actions required.
 - Decision to initiate pre-proceedings (PLO) and/or care proceedings with clear timetable.
 - Progress with the timetable for PLO and/or care proceedings.
 - Progress with learning from escalations following audit activity.
 - Significant decision or significant event, e.g. strategy discussion, disruption meeting, change of care plan, change of approval, outcome of assessments.
 - Any other occasion where a manager believes this to be appropriate in showing the decision making in a child's life.
- Robust oversight of casework leads to clear recording, written in plain language that the child or young person will understand.
- Supervision is held with staff every 4 weeks, and is of good quality, includes reflective conversation, using the signs of safety framework.

Standard 2 - Focus on the experiences and progress of children and young people and their families:

- The child's lived experience is at the centre of our work.

- Every child has a voice regardless of age and/or disability – observations of the child’s presentation and stage of development are recorded and inform decision making.
- There is recorded evidence of direct work with the child or young person and involvement in their care plans.
- Every child subject to a child protection plan or who is looked after is offered an Independent advocate.
- There is recorded evidence of the child being seen alone.
- The strengths of the child and their family are recorded in assessments, care plans, reviews and case notes, using the signs of safety framework.
- All visits to be completed, at a minimum, in line with procedures or statutory timescales, and in accordance with the child’s plan. All visits should meet statutory requirements with regards to where the child is seen.
- Looked after children receive good quality Life Story work according to the needs of the child.
- Care leavers are effectively prepared for independence and supported through their transition to adulthood.

Standard 3 - Assessments are child focused, timely and clearly analyse risk:

- Assessments incorporate all relevant information including family history, identity, ethnicity and diversity.
- Assessments include fathers, absent males, and all relevant family members.
- Assessments are informed by an up to date good quality chronology and genogram.
- Analysis in assessment clearly identifies main risks and protective factors and outlines what needs to change to make things better.
- Assessments build a picture of the child’s journey, the quality of care available to them and their individual needs, to evidence decision making.
- The child’s developmental needs have been identified.
- The family’s strengths have been considered.
- The perspectives of partner agencies are evident.
- Assessments are evidence based and informed by research.
- Assessments conclude with succinct analysis and clear recommendations of what needs to be done next.
- Assess and re-assess the needs of the child and answer the question, ‘What is it like to be this child in this family’?
- Assessments are completed within timescale.

Standard 4 - Children and young people receive effective planning and reviews:

- Plans state what will happen or is happening to identify and support the child in areas of their development. It is a ‘living’, evolving, comprehensive and enduring record of the child’s experience, progress and achievements.
- Plans have high expectations and aspirations for the children and families we work with and seek to secure the best outcomes.
- The views of children and families are always evident within the plan.
- The views of partner agencies have been considered in the planning process.
- Every plan has clear contingency arrangements.
- Plans are updated and recorded on the system at every multi-agency review meeting.
- Plans are developmentally outcome driven and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) and set out:
 - What we are worried about and the impact this is having on the child’s wellbeing.

- Positive goals and interventions to achieve.
 - Outcomes focus on the child's development journey and stretch targets so each child has everything they need to achieve the next stage of their development, defined in child centred terms.
 - What needs to be done to achieve the outcomes.
 - How progress will be measured, who will be responsible for each action and by when.
 - What the time frames are for change.
- Actions and tasks from multiple plans (Family Group Conference plan, Child sexual exploitation safety plan, Individual Education Plan, Education Health and Care Plan, Personal Educational Plan, Health Care Plans) for each child are well co-coordinated into one overarching plan to minimise duplication and increase efficiency.
 - The child and their family have participated in their reviews.
 - Formal reviews and multi-agency meetings should take place as necessary and in line with procedures (conferences, child sexual exploitation meetings, looked after children and child in need reviews, network and core group meetings, early help meetings).
 - Permanency planning is progressed in a timely way within the wider context of assessment, care planning and review.
 - Reviews are held and minutes are recorded on file within timescale.
 - There is recorded evidence of Independent Reviewing Officer interventions and escalation has taken place as required.

Standard 5 – Accountability:

- Set an example on how to conduct oneself and set expectations of good practice that must be adhered to, and create an atmosphere of professionalism.
- Managers oversee daily, weekly and monthly performance data, on the dashboard and take remedial action as appropriate.
- All cases to be allocated within 1 day and the dashboard checked to ensure that there are no unallocated cases.
- No newly qualified social worker is allocated high risk casework.
- Undertake audit activity, submitting it on time and to a high standard.
- Provide feedback from case file audits to promote learning and practice improvement.
- Manage complaints in a timely and professional manner with an openness to learn and a relentless focus on good communication with the complainant.
- Management information and decisions are shared with staff in a timely manner.
- Feedback from partners, children and their families is used to improve practice.
- Have regard to confidentiality, and consent when using, sharing, storing, discarding or traveling with information, to prevent data breaches or breaches of confidence.
- Use learning from compliments and complaints to enhance and change the quality of practice.
- Track performance and workloads and take swift action where practitioner's caseloads are complex or too high.
- Ensure the code of conduct and where appropriate HCPC requirements are met.

Standard 6 - Multi-disciplinary working and relationships with partners:

- There is evidence of the families consent to information sharing on file.
- Information from partner agencies is evident on file.
- There is evidence that agencies attend key meetings.
- Agencies contributions to the plan are clearly set out.

- Strategy discussions always involve police and the appropriate representative from the health system as a minimum.
- Joint work and information-sharing is improving outcomes for this child.
- Identify issues with professional relationships that may impede or prevent effective multi-agency working to protect and safeguard children and promote their welfare by raising these in accordance with the LSCB escalations policy.
- Identify any service gaps or areas where improvements can be made in a constructive and collaborative way, making sure senior managers understand and act to support your observations.

Standard 7 - High expectation, high support, high challenge:

- Promote an environment where practice is the best it can be, and a culture of high expectation, high support and high challenge for practitioners and peers.
- Manage practice that does not meet these standards through constructive feedback and challenge in supervision, clearly outlining expectations, providing appropriate support, advice, training and mentoring, and following HR procedures sensitively and consistently.
- All new starters have a prompt and effective local and corporate induction that takes account of the mandatory training for children's services, as well as the core learning and development offer.
- Attend and participate fully in the front line practitioner and manager Practice Improvement Forums.
- Follow up corrective actions from audit activity.
- Promote the use of Research in Practice and other learning resources that supports a research and evidence based approach to direct practice with children, young people, and their families.
- Prepare for and use supervision well, prioritising areas for discussion, observing practice, challenges for your team or service, and focussing on solutions.
- Identify areas of good practice and share the learning in teams and across Children's Services.