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Leicestershire Guidance

Family Care and Protect Meetings

Applies to- All children

Who is Responsible- Social Worker, Team Manager

Family Care and Protect Meetings

Leicestershire County Council believes that all children have a right to experience family life, and that wherever it is consistent with their health and welfare, this should be with their own families. If families in crisis request support from the LA this should be provided by the least interventionist service that can meet the assessed needs of the child and their family. The LA will work with families to support them in exercising their parental responsibility in caring for their own children unless the risk to the child's welfare is so great that it is unsafe for them to remain at home.

For families in crisis an assessment will be completed to assess the holistic needs of the child and family. In circumstances where a family are requesting that a young person be Accommodated under section 20, Children Act 1989 and the LA have assessed that there are no safeguarding concerns, the LA, along with partners, will work with the family to support them to care for their child. If the immediate family are unable to safely care for their child the LA will work with extended family and significant others to support the child to live within their family network. It is only in exceptional circumstances when a young person would be at risk of significant harm if they remained within their family that the LA would seek to Look After them.

In establishing Family Care and Protect meetings the LA is ensuring that pathways support our commitment to support families to exercise their parental responsibility to care for their children.

Aims of the Meeting

- For the LA and Partners to support families to care for their children within their own family by facilitating family led problem solving.
- To ensure a multi-agency approach to supporting families with the "Right Service engaging with the Right Families at the Right Time".
- To promote consistency in decision making in respect of the use of s.20 accommodation.
- To ensure the full exploration of alternatives to accommodation by the Local Authority.
- To ensure that imaginative, comprehensive and effective family support packages are offered to families where children are at risk of accommodation.
- To provide a response to parents/carers which reflects the seriousness of their request for accommodation.
- To ensure that following the accommodation of children/young people in an emergency, that where appropriate, effective reunification plans are put into place.

Values underpinning the process

- In all our activities with children and families, the child's welfare is of paramount concern.
- There are unique advantages to children who are able to experience family life within their birth or extended family. Research has confirmed that children who are enabled to do this achieve better outcomes. Being deprived of this opportunity is a major life event with consequences reaching far beyond childhood and should only occur in exceptional circumstances.
- The development of a working partnership with parents is usually the most effective route to meeting children's needs and maximising their participation is encouraged whenever possible. This includes working openly and honestly with service users.
- Where it is not possible for a child or young person to remain in their parents' care, they have a right to appropriate care within a substitute family. These children have a right to be cared for within their broader families, and if this is not possible within their communities through connected carers or by Leicestershire foster carers. In this way, their life experiences (including relationships with people who are important to them, relationships with friends and their school, hobbies and activities) are kept as stable as possible.
- Whilst, if possible, a family placement will be sought, for a small group of young people residential care offers a positive choice. The State of the Nation Report 1 Children in care and care leavers survey 2015, list that it is the quality of the placement and the significance of consistent relationships that makes a difference. If placements are in residential care, small units that more resemble family homes are less stigmatising.



Positivity



Trust and respect



Flexibility



Openness and transparency

- Children are entitled to protection from significant harm through abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Children are entitled to be listened to and respected as individuals, and also within the context of their own culture and racial origins.
- Children are entitled to participate, as fully as their age and understanding enables them, in decisions which affect them

Service Principles

- Children should be maintained within their own family with the assistance of family support services when necessary unless there are clear reasons why this might not be consistent with their safety and welfare.
- Active consideration of alternative family carers should always be given when a child is not able to be cared for by their birth parents to prevent a child becoming looked after. Family support services should be provided to kinship carers where necessary to help achieve stability.
- Children's views should be sought and individual needs should be considered when making decisions about them.
- Services for children in need should be provided by the least intrusive method of intervention possible, consistent with safeguarding and promoting a child's welfare.

Criteria for referral for a Family Care and Protect Meeting

- Children/young people considered will be over the age of eleven years.
- Where there is a request for accommodation of a child from someone with parental responsibility or from the child themselves and it has not been possible to resolve the issues.
- Where emergency accommodation of a child/young person has occurred.
- Where there is concern that a child/children are at risk of accommodation or family breakdown unless an effective family support package is put in place and it has not been possible to facilitate this outside of the Challenge to Care process.
- Disabled children where there is a request for shared care or full time care.

Circumstances when a Family Care and Protect Meeting is not required

- Where there is a risk of accommodation or family breakdown of a child /young person under the age of eleven or where there is a risk of significant harm, these children and young people should be supported using safeguarding procedures.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- Relinquished babies. Requests for babies to be relinquished for adoption should be dealt with using CAFCASS guidance.
- Disabled children using the short breaks scheme.
- Remands to the care of the Local Authority.
- Situations where a short term period of accommodation is required in specific circumstances (e.g. a lone parent having a hospital admission).

Operation of the Family Care and Protect Process

- Family Care and Protect meetings will be chaired by an operational Children's Social Care Service Manager.
- To arrange a meeting, the Team Manager for the child should contact the Service Manager chair and arrange for the child, family and relevant agencies to attend the next available meeting.
- A meeting slot will be available every Thursday morning, with the meeting to be arranged at a venue which is convenient for the family. This is likely to be one of the children and family Centres at Hinckley, Loughborough or Coalville, or an office base. If the family cannot attend on a Thursday morning, please liaise with the Service Manager to ascertain if a different date and time is possible.
- Genogram, chronology and the most up to date assessment need to be presented at the meeting.
- The meeting will be recorded using Signs of Safety mapping. Notes will be typed, distributed to those in attendance and uploaded to Frameworki.
- Attendance: Service Manager (chair), child, parent(s), any other relevant family members, key agencies (including Early Help), allocated Social Worker, Team Manager.

Outcomes of the Family Care and Protect Meetings

- The family (including extended family and significant others) have devised and agreed a plan to support the young person remaining within their family.
- Multi agency Family support package agreed.
- Referral to other agencies or services agreed.
- S.20 accommodation can be agreed for up to 14 days in the first instance. Date for review of this resource will be set.
- Referral to Placement and Additional Resource Panel for resources over and above S.17 support.