**Protocol**

**Service Manager/Team Manager cover arrangements during periods of Leave and TOIL**

**Overview**

The overall aim of this protocol is to ensure that a clear process in in place during periods of annual leave/TOIL for Service Managers and Team Managers setting out the arrangements for appropriate cover during these periods.

This protocol will also cover emergency leave at short notice and short-term sickness cover

**Involved parties**

This protocol is aimed at Service Managers and specifically around approving annual leave/TOIL for Team Managers and also for all Team Managers who are covering for colleagues within and across the teams.

It is intended that this protocol will set out the arrangements for cover during periods of leave/TOIL and for this to then be understood within individual teams and services and across team members including cover for sickness and emergency leave

**Details of protocol**

During the course of the year, Team Managers will take planned periods of annual leave and also TOIL. It is essential that during these periods that cover arrangements are in place and that these arrangements are understood and communicated to team members and admin support staff

To this end, prior to requesting annual leave or TOIL, Team Managers will seek and secure cover for the proposed period that they are intending to be away from the office

Prior to approving annual leave or TOIL, Service Managers will ensure that cover arrangements have been secured. This is essential to approving and requests for leave/TOIL. Where cover has not been secured then the Service Manager will support in securing this.

If a Social Worker is off sick or any other unplanned reason, the Team Manager will arrange for the out of office message to be activated on the Social Worker’s email account on the same day as the absence. If a Team Manager is off work for any unplanned reason the Service Manager will make the same arrangements as above.

The covering Team Manager will not be off during the agreed cover period except in circumstances relating to emergency leave or sickness

As part of the cover arrangements the Team Manager going on leave/TOIL will provide a brief handover to the covering Team Manager including but not exhaustive:

* Any key staffing issues impacting on the team i.e. sickness
* Any key court dates relating to individual children and young people during the leave period where advice/support may be needed
* Any key meetings that may arise or need covering i.e. strategy meetings or urgent Letter before Proceedings meetings, Placement forum or CSE panel to name a few
* Any individual children or young people of concern that may need Team Manager intervention/oversight during the proposed leave period
* Any complaints they are dealing with or have most recently responded to
* Which workers should be allocated new work

Team Managers taking leave or TOIL will communicate to their team members and admin support staff, who is covering for them, during their planned time away from the office so this is understood by all involved and reduces any confusion. The out of office email message will be updated by the Team Manager to reflect the cover arrangements. If this involves multiple covering Team Managers during the absence then the message should direct people to business support.

In the first instance where team members are seeking routine support on cases then they should approach, their senior social worker for advice and assistance and the senior social worker will indicate if management advice is required.

Team Managers covering for colleagues will undertake the following as support for the absent Team Manager and covering team:

* Undertake work on the desktop on a daily basis to avoid Team Managers returning to a high volume of work to approve and in doing so will prioritise:  allocations, assessments and plans, concern contact forms and missing episodes on the desktops. Case closures/step down cases will be left for the Team Manager who will have a more detailed knowledge of the case and can ensure as part of the case closure or step down process all the necessary work has been completed  in line with the overall quality assurance processes in place
* Offer advice and guidance to team members on emergencies that cannot be dealt with by the senior social worker and which cannot wait for the returning Team Manager.
* Be available for case discussion/s to team members for the team they are covering for
* Chair any meetings that may need covering i.e. strategy meetings or urgent Letter before Proceedings meetings
* Approve one off S.17 payments in an emergency situation and as an holding position

It is possible during this period that the covering Team Manager requests the support from others in supporting with specific tasks i.e. chairing a specific meeting. On these occasions this will be clearly communicated to team members

As part of the ongoing service delivery across teams, it is recommended that Team Managers from the Looked After Children and Leaving Care Teams and Assessment Teams do not take leave/TOIL at the same time as their counterparts within the same service.

Regarding DCT and Case Management Teams, it is recommended that no more than 2 Team Managers are off at the same time thus ensuring appropriate Team Manager cover arrangements are in place across the service.

As part of this protocol, Service Managers will also ensure appropriate cover arrangements are in place during periods of their proposed leave/TOIL and this will also be communicated to Team Managers i.e. who the covering Service Manager/s will be

It is not proposed as part of this protocol that the covering Team Manager will respond to stage one complaints unless the Team Manager is off for several weeks and the complaint will need to be responded to within the statutory timescales. This will be discussed and considered with the Service Manager and in line with the individual case and timescales involved

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