

Children's Services

Procedure For Approval of Weekend Working By Exception

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Dorset Children's Services is committed to the safety and wellbeing of its employees. It expects, and seeks to ensure, that employees will usually be able to complete their work within their standard contracted hours. However, it also recognises that the needs of the children and families with whom we work and the statutory requirements under which we work sometimes require us to work at weekends, outside of usual working hours.
- 1.2 This guidance sets out how cover may be arranged for work at weekends and how, if cover cannot be arranged, a practitioner can be authorised to do the additional work themselves and be paid for it.

2. Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for Team Managers of Children's Social Workers who are working with children and families on a statutory basis; that is, the child or children whose family require weekend work are being supported under s17 or s47 of the Children Act or are in care.

3. When should this guidance be used?

- 3.1 This guidance applies only to work that is required or implied by the child's plan or by our statutory obligations, which can only be done outside usual working time at the weekend, and for which ChAD is unable to provide a worker.
- 3.2 Our [Additional Guidance for Lone Working](#) states that:

Lone working outside of normal office hours is permitted where the visit presents a low risk, and the practitioner has their manager's prior approval.
- 3.2 This procedure therefore **cannot be used to authorise lone weekend working in a setting that presents increased risks to the Social Worker**. In such circumstances, a specific plan (including risk management) should be agreed in advance with the relevant service manager.

4. Step one: Discussion with Children's Advice and Duty Team (ChAD)

Where a Social Worker identifies that weekend working is required for a child for whom they are responsible, they should notify their Team Manager. If the Team Manager confirms the need, the Team Manager should contact ChAD (01305 228558) to enquire if a Social Worker or Out of Hours Worker from ChAD can cover the activity for them. ChAD will confirm within one working day whether it is able to meet this request.

5. Step two: Approval of Head of Service

- 5.1 If ChAD is unable to meet the request, or if the need for weekend working only becomes known 1 or 2 working days before the work is required, the Team Manager can ask the Social Worker to do the work themselves and seek authorisation for the Social Worker to be paid for this additional work.
- 5.2 The Team Manager should make the authorisation request to their Service Manager by email. The Service Manager should review the request, and if they support it, forward it to the relevant Head of Locality or Head of Service for final approval. The Service Manager should notify the Team Manager and Social Worker of the outcome within one working day of receiving the request.
- 5.3 Where authorisation is given, the Social Worker will be paid for all reasonable additional hours worked at their normal rate, including travel (minus commuter miles). The Team Manager must notify ChAD that the Social Worker is completing this work over the weekend, so they are aware and can help from their office base.

6. Support for those Working at the Weekend

- 6.1 Where a Social Worker who has been authorised to work at weekends needs information, guidance or assistance that would usually be arranged by their Team Manager, they should contact ChAD for support.
- 6.2 Employees will always be paid in accordance with the terms and conditions of their contract of employment.
- 6.3 Employees and managers should consider the working time regulations and the health, safety, and wellbeing implications to their working pattern.

7. Notifying Payroll

When a Team Manager has received authorisation of additional weekend working and the Social Worker has completed the authorised weekend working, they should claim for additional payment by [logging their additional hours worked in DES](#). Managers should approve these claims when alerts are provided in their DES inbox, and no later than the [relevant payroll deadline date](#) for the month to ensure payment that month.