

## **PARTICIPATING IN CHILD PROTECTION PLANNING MEETINGS & CORE GROUPS PRACTICE NOTE**

As part of your professional role, you may be invited to participate in a Child Protection Planning Meeting, (formerly known as a Child Protection Case Conference. The revised National Guidance changed the name to make it plain to children and families the purpose of the meeting). This practice notes gives a brief overview of the meetings and the what's required of professionals attending.

### **PURPOSE OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLANNING MEETING**

A Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM) is an inter-agency meeting convened when there are concerns that a child is or may be at risk of significant harm to:

- **Share information** about the child.
- Jointly assess that information and risk to the child
- Discuss potential risks to each child in the household.
- Determine whether there is a **likelihood of significant harm** through abuse or neglect that needs to be addressed through an inter-agency Child Protection Plan
- Decide if a child's name should be placed on, or removed, from the Register.
- Clarify roles and tasks & formulate an inter-agency CP plan.
- Consider need for compulsory measures and referral to Children's Reporter.
- Set a date for reviewing and monitoring conference decisions.

### **PROVISION OF REPORTS**

- All professionals invited to or attending a CPPM should provide a written report and include an agency chronology.
- Reports should be provided to the Chair **5 working days** in advance of the meeting.
- **All agency reports** – each author has responsibility to share with the child and family in an accessible, comprehensible way in advance (not the morning of the meeting).
- **Prior to an initial CPPM, consideration needs to be given as to the most appropriate means of sharing reports with the child and family and when it should be done.**

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS**

1) You will be expected to provide a written report and single agency chronology in advance to the CPPM chair and give a verbal summary at the meeting. Parents/carers should have sight of your report prior to the meeting and depending on the age of the child, you should also ensure that the child and/or child's advocacy worker if they have one, and family have read your report. This is to ensure parents, carers and young people have had an opportunity to clarify any issues or concerns before the meeting with you. There should be no surprises for families at the meeting. Some practitioners may find this difficult and should seek support from line managers or colleagues to help with this process.

2) Depending on your role and level of involvement with the child and family, you may have a direct role supporting the child, or parents or carers within the meeting. If you have any questions around this you should discuss with the chairperson of the meeting beforehand to clarify. For example the chairperson will meet with the child and family prior to the meeting and it may be appropriate that you are also in attendance to provide support.

3) In terms of decision making around whether to place the child's name on Argyll & Bute Child Protection Register, the chairperson will ask you to give your recommendation of whether to register or not and your reasons. If there is no consensus the chairperson will make the decision using their professional judgement. The child and family should be asked their view, but do not contribute to the overall decision.

## **WHAT IS THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER?**

In Scotland the child protection register (CPR) is a confidential list of all children in the local area who have been identified as being at risk of significant harm at present or in the future. It has no statutory status but is a way of planning how agencies work together to improve the child's circumstances and reduce the risk.

A child may be placed on the register if there are reasonable grounds to believe or suspect that a child has suffered or will suffer significant harm from abuse or neglect, and that a Child Protection Plan is needed to protect and support the child. The local authority should ensure the child's name and details are entered on the register, as well as record the areas of concern identified. The local authority should inform the child's parents or carers verbally and in writing about the information held on the register and who has access to it

### **What is the purpose?**

To make essential basic information readily available to professionals involved in child protection work and to assist in the identification and management of children considered to be at risk.

It allows authorised professionals to check if a child is known to be at risk, for example, if a child attends Accident and Emergency with bruising, an authorised member of the health team can check the register to see if this child is already known to services and is at risk.

The following may be areas of concern (identification of risk) and reason for registration. All areas of concern should be recorded as part of the registration

### **Reasons for registration**

There are 4 main areas of concern of which each child's name will be registered under:

- ® Physical Abuse
- ® Emotional Abuse
- ® Sexual Abuse, and
- ® Neglect

There are other areas of concern such as:

Domestic Abuse

Parental Substance Misuse

Parental Mental Health

Non-engaging family

Child at risk of sexual exploitation

Trafficking.

It is important that each area of concern is identified and supporting evidence provided. It is essential that parents clearly understand why their child's name has been placed on the register and why. Any support and changes the parent needs to make in order to reduce the risk of harm to their child must be clear and explained in a manner conducive to each parent's level of understanding, i.e. use plain language and no jargon. An advocate or interpreter should be provided for parents if required. If the parent does not understand what they need to do, then there will be little or no progress made .

Parents often feel judged by professionals and believe they are viewed as 'bad 'parents. Using a strength based approach ensures that the parents strengths are identified and acknowledged. This approach is based around the core belief that despite concerns parents have strengths, skills, resources and capability to effect positive change in their lives if enabled and supported to do so. Using assessment tools such as the Resilience Matrix can be helpful in illustrating where strengths and vulnerabilities lie. A visual interpretation can at times be easier to understand than words alone and would be a helpful tool to use within the core group meeting.

This approach will assist with developing stronger working relationships with parents and joint working between professionals.

### **Where is the child protection register?**

The CPR is held by Social Work Services and is part of the social work computerised system. A senior manager with a lead responsibility for child protection maintains the register and is

known as 'the keeper of the register' Business support personnel are responsible for updating the register following any changes made

### **CHILD'S PLAN AND ROLE OF THE CORE GROUP**

An important outcome of the meeting is that a child's plan should be written and this is usually discussed at the first core group 15 days following the CPPM that decides on registration. A timescale should also be agreed to complete a multi-agency chronology (usually presented to first review CPPM).

#### **The child protection plan must:**

- ® be developed in collaboration and consultation with the child and their family
- ® link actions to intended reduction or elimination of risk
- ® be current and consider the child's short, medium and long term risks
- ® clearly state who is responsible for each action
- ® include a named lead professional
- ® include detailed contingencies
- ® consider the sensitive direct involvement of children and /or their views.

#### **The core group**

The core group consists of the child and family, agency representatives actively involved with the child and family and is chaired by social work.

The purpose of the group is to agree actions required to reduce or manage risk, who is responsible and a timescale for completion and review.

This group also makes recommendations to the review Child Protection Planning Meeting in terms of any amendments to the plan and whether registration needs to continue or not depending on progress.

The core group meets 4 weekly with the child and family, but may need to have discussions out with the formal core group if there are difficulties needing ironed out. For example, issues and tensions between agencies around resources or indeed the plan itself and how responsibilities have been designated. It is good practice for the professional members of the group to check in with each other and assess if all are satisfied with the progress of the plan and if an extra meeting is needed if not.

Members of the core group are responsible for carrying out their actions according to the plan and contribute to supporting the parents in reducing risk and ensuring the child remains at the centre of the plan. A core group meeting is not a mini CPPM as the focus is not just about progress of the plan but how it is working and reducing risk. As a result this meeting is more focussed on parental contribution on how they are managing the risk and what their

strengths are in achieving this. Specific supports for the parents must be discussed and an assessment made as to how effective they are and if any changes are required. Each member who has a role in providing support, needs to be honest with the parent and clearly evidence if there are concerns around their progress. Members also have a role in supporting each other but also in raising issue or concerns appropriately in order to ensure the plan progresses as it should. (See below for guidance on multi-agency reflective supervision)

### **Types of Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPMM)**

**Initial CPPM** – is the first meeting where relevant information is shared (where it is proportionate to do so), a collective assessment of risk is carried out, and a plan to minimise risk of harm to the child agreed. The initial CPPM must decide whether the child is at risk of significant harm and requires a co-ordinated, multi-disciplinary Child Protection Plan.

**Review CPPM**- is every meeting until de-registration where the child protection plan, any changes in the risk assessment and the child's safety are reviewed. These are held within six months of the CPPM with the exception of reviews that follow a pre-birth CPPM, which are recommended at an earlier juncture. Thereafter, reviews should take place six-monthly, or earlier if circumstances change. Where a child is no longer considered to be at risk of significant harm and the Child Protection Plan no longer forms part of a child's plan, their name should be removed from the child protection register by the review CPPM (referred to as deregistration). The child and their family/carers may still require on-going support and this should be managed through the child's plan

**Pre-birth CPPM** - These meetings consider whether serious professional concerns exist about the likelihood of significant harm to an unborn or newly born baby, with early engagement and planned support being essential. Participants need to prepare an inter-agency plan which will meet the needs of the baby and mother prior to and following birth, minimising risk of harm. Plans for discharge from hospital and handover to community-based supports must be clearly set out in the inter-agency plan. CPPM's are recommended within 28 calendar days of the concern being raised and always within 28 weeks of gestation, taking in to account the mother's needs and all the circumstances in each case. There may be exceptions to this where the pregnancy is in the very early stages. The CPPM may place the unborn baby's name on the child protection register before birth. If the child is registered the Child Protection Plan must stipulate who is responsible for notifying the birth of the child and what steps need to be taken at that point.

**Transfer CPPM** - if a child or children are moving to another local authority and the current assessment is that their names need to remain on the child protection register, then a Transfer meeting must be arranged between the two authorities concerned. The originating authority must ensure that the relevant child's records are made available to the receiving authority for the purposes of the assessment of current and future risk and need. This Transfer CPPM will be held within the timescales of the receiving local authority but a

maximum of 21 working days is recommended. Until the transfer meeting, where necessary, an interim safety plan must be agreed between the relevant authorities.

### **REFLECTIVE MULTI-AGENCY GROUP SUPERVISION**

Supporting a child and their family who are involved in the child protection process is difficult for the professionals providing the support, both as individuals and as representatives of an agency.

Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee has produced Multi-Agency Reflective Supervision Guidance to help staff create safe spaces for discussing any concerns or issues with plans and interagency working arrangements. You can find this guidance in the resources section of *Participating in child protection planning meetings and core group* stage of A&B Child Protection Procedures