

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Boards' Revised Child Protection Procedures

Dear Colleagues,

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures have now been revised to reflect the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and the findings from local serious case reviews.

The revised and renamed NSCB / NCSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures were agreed in November 2009 to be published in December 2009. Subsequent to this, Working Together 2010 was revised and published earlier than expected in March 2010 and it was therefore agreed that we should await receipt of the revised national document prior to further revisions and the publication of local procedures.

They have been published on the respective Board websites

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb

and

www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ncscb

The revised NSCB / NCSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures replace all previous versions of the Child Protection Procedures.

Given the extensive nature of the revisions the following is a brief summary of what is contained within each chapter.

Chapter 1- Introduction and Principles

Chapter 1 sets out the context and principles on which the procedures are based. The chapter stresses that inter-agency cooperation is vital to effective safeguarding arrangements. It also highlights the importance of adopting a child centred approach that is based on good quality assessments and focussed on improved outcomes for the child. Other issues covered include:

- Inclusive Practice

- Early Intervention & Prevention
- Information Sharing.

Chapter 2 – Legal Framework

Chapter 2 sets out a summary of key legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes:

- Children Act 2004
- Children Act 1989
- Education Act 2002
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Chapter 3 – Roles & Responsibilities

This chapter summarises the overall roles and responsibilities of practitioners working with children and families. It reminds staff that all statutory and voluntary sector agencies have important roles in supporting families, promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm. Further guidance with regard to roles and responsibilities is set out in Chapter 2 of Working Together 2010 and statutory guidance with regard to agency responsibilities under section 11 of the Children Act 2004. All staff are encouraged to examine this.

Chapter 4 – Pathways to Services

This chapter summarises the framework for agreed levels of intervention and care pathways. Although based on national policy this is primarily local guidance. Information is provided with regard to the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire SCB have produced specific detailed guidance to outline the pathway to services that includes the threshold for referral to Children’s Social Care. These will be published on the respective Safeguarding Board’s websites.

Chapter 5 – Child Protection Procedures

The key changes introduced by Working Together 2010 to Chapter 5, include emphasising the importance of keeping the focus on the child and his or her safety and welfare, understanding the daily life experience of the child, seeing and using information about the family’s history and functioning to inform decision making. There is also an increased emphasis on the importance of analysing the inter-relationships between strengths and protective factors, and vulnerabilities and risk factors, when deciding whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and of the accurate recording of actions.

Some of the more detailed requirements of Working Together 2010 include:

- updated definitions of the categories of abuse (sexual abuse, and emotional abuse)
- a requirement that in all cases where the child is subject to a child protection plan consideration is given to the possibility that legal proceedings may be required. The decision on whether or not to make such an application must be recorded in the child's file
- a requirement that for children who are still subject to a protection plan as they approach their 18th birthday, a review child protection conference is convened around the time of the child's birthday to consider how best to manage any ongoing risk
- the role of the lead social worker, who would previously have been referred to as the key worker, is described in more detail. They should see the child, alone when appropriate, in accordance with the plan. They should develop a therapeutic relationship with the child, regularly ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and keep the child up to date with the child protection plan and any developments or changes
- the lead social worker should record when the child was seen and who else, if anyone, was present at the time of each visit and also the reasons for deciding (or not) to see the child alone
- it is still a requirement that the initial core group is chaired by a team manager. Subsequent core groups must now be chaired by a social worker, which is a change
- the guidance extends the timescale for the completion of an initial assessment from seven to ten working days with effect from 1 April 2010
- it is made clear that the planning and reviewing processes for looked after children who are also the subject of a child protection plan should be integrated into the looked after review process.

Changes in chapter 5 resulting from the findings of Serious Case Reviews include:

- ensuring assessments are based on all available information. This would include accessing information from another authority, ensuring race, culture and religion are fully considered, engaging birth fathers and establishing when it is appropriate to share information about the risks that a member of the extended family may present to a child
- a strengthened pre-birth section in the procedures which requires that a referral should be made to Children's Social Care when a person (or their partner) who has previously had a child removed has become pregnant, a core assessment should be undertaken on any child subsequently cared

for by that person. This includes an unborn baby and any children they have assumed the care of.

- two issues regarding child protection plans have been strengthened. The first is that protection plans should be written in a way that enables outcomes to be measured more effectively. The other is that protection plans are enhanced, as appropriate, by the use of written agreements with parents.
- expectations regarding the provision of written summaries and full reports by paediatricians following a child protection medical
- the requirement that no child be discharged from hospital where child protection concerns have been identified, without an agreed plan to manage those risks, was already covered by the existing NSCB / NCSCB Child Protection Procedures. The revisions to the procedures further clarify that this expectation also applies to babies being discharged following birth.
- Reinforcement of the importance of contingency planning, in relation to disengagement by parents/ carers from services.
- understanding the purpose of core assessments; that they are multi-agency and should be updated regularly and the importance of ensuring a child's ethnicity and the needs arising from this are addressed.
- A requirement that random unannounced visits, examination of bedrooms and food storage are undertaken and that a child must be seen at least every six weeks away from their parents.

In addition to the above we have strengthened the procedures with regard to the movement of children subject to a protection plan into and out of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City.

Chapter 6 – Child Protection in Specific Circumstances

This chapter outlines some specific considerations that apply to safeguarding children in a range of specific circumstances. Not all children in these circumstances will require responsive safeguarding from Children's Social Care, but may require coordinated support from universal and targeted services, usually provided through the Common Assessment Framework and a delegated lead professional. The chapter covers:

- Parental Drug and Alcohol Use & Safeguarding
- Adult Mental Health & Safeguarding
- Disabled Children
- Missing Children

- Concerns of Harm Rising from Sexual Activity of Young People Under the Age of 18 Years
- Children and Young People who Display Sexually Harmful Behaviour
- Children and Young People at Risk of Sexual Exploitation
- Child Abuse using Information and Communication Technology
- Fabricated or Induced Illness
- Children Living Away From Home
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage and honour based violence
- Hospital Discharges for Children about whom there are Child Protection Concerns
- Abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession
- Child victims of trafficking
- Investigating Complex Abuse
- Historical cases

Chapter 7 – Managing Concerns in Relation to Adults

This chapter contains guidance covering the management of ‘concerns/allegations regarding people who work with children’. The procedure covers both paid employees and volunteers and reflects a new requirement for establishing a variety of specific roles within organisations for the management of allegations and revised timescales for completion. It also contains guidance regarding management of the movement of individuals who present a risk to children.

Chapter 8 – Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)

This chapter has been significantly revised. It confirms the prime purpose of a Serious Case Review as to learn lessons both at an individual and inter-agency / LSCB level. The previously reported extension to the time scale for completing a SCR from four to six months remains in effect, as do the strengthened requirements in relation to Executive Summaries and the requirement that the Chair of the SCR Panel should be independent. Some further changes have now been incorporated; key amongst these are a template for SCR Executive Summaries and a flow chart providing an overview of the SCR process. A further change to Working Together 2010 which indicates that for all reviews started after 10th June 2010 the Overview Report **and** Executive Summary will be published in anonymised form has been incorporated into the revised procedures.

Chapter 9 – Child Death Review Process

This Chapter sets out the processes to be followed when a child dies in the respective Board’s area as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010). There are two interrelated processes for reviewing child deaths either of which can trigger a Serious Case Review (Chapter 8 in Working Together).

These are:

- rapid response by a group of key professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child
- an overview of all child deaths up to the age of 18 years (excluding both those babies who are stillborn and planned terminations of pregnancy carried out within the law) in the LSCB area(s) undertaken by a panel.

The key changes here include revised definitions of preventable child deaths and unexpected deaths, and clarity on the roles of Coroners and Registrars and on how to respond appropriately to the deaths of children with life limiting illnesses.

Chapter 10 – Safeguarding Children Information Management Team

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Boards each have a specific team whose primary purpose is to ensure that information held about children with a Child Protection Plan is accurate and up to date. These teams were previously referred to as the Child Protection Register team but are now called the Safeguarding Children Information Management Team. This chapter sets out the role/remit of these teams.

Chapter 11 – Inter-agency Training & Development

This chapter provides guidance on the training and development staff and volunteers need to ensure they safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively. This includes being able to recognise when a child has additional or complex needs and may require safeguarding and knowing what action to take in these circumstances. Revisions have been made to reflect the revised requirements set out in Working Together 2010 regarding, for example, the different levels of training that should be offered to staff according to the nature of their contact with children.

Chapter 12 – Local Safeguarding children Boards

This chapter describes the role and function of the county and city's Safeguarding Children Boards. It confirms that the core objectives of the LSCB as set out in Section 14(1) of the Children Act 2004 are to:

- (a) co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the Authority; and,
- (b) ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for that purpose.

Membership of the Boards has been expanded to include a Head teacher and work is underway to recruit Lay Members to each Board.

Chapter 13 – Safeguarding Children Board Complaints Procedure

This chapter remains largely unchanged from what was published previously. The only change is that whereas previously for this procedure to apply the complaint must be relating to the process or outcome of a child protection

conference this has now been expanded to include complaints regarding the conduct of a strategy meeting that is independently chaired on behalf of the Board.

Chapter 14 – Resolving Inter-Agency Disagreements (Escalation Procedure)

This chapter has been developed locally in response to the findings of a Serious Case Review. It is based on an understanding that problem resolution is an integral part of inter-agency working to safeguard children. It is often a sign of developing thinking within a dynamic process and can indicate a lack of clarity in current procedures or approach. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion. The process for resolving such disagreements is set out in this chapter.

Publication of the revised procedures

Individual organisations should now ensure that all relevant staff are aware of and have access to the revised procedures. Where organisations maintain their own intranet/internet site this can be achieved by either providing a link to the NSCB or NCSCB web pages or placing the procedures directly onto their own sites.

Yours sincerely

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