

## Chapter Seven

### Core Groups and the Implementation of the Child Protection Plan

#### Core Group

- 7.1 The purpose of core groups is to manage the detailed implementation of the child protection plan. They are the forum for working with parents, children of sufficient age and understanding and wider family members. They are smaller groups than conferences and this often provides a setting in which it can be easier to engage parents to work with the child protection plan.
- 7.2 A core group (comprising key professionals, parents and where appropriate children and foster carers) is established by an initial child protection conference when the decision is made to register the child / children. Key professionals are those who have frequent or substantial contact with the child.
- 7.3 Successful safeguarding and promotion of the child's welfare most often depends on:
- parents/carers and other family members accepting and actively engaging in the plans. Parents and carers will, therefore, be included as full core group members together with other involved family members as appropriate. Exclusion must be justified within the agreed criteria as for child protection conferences
  - the child's experience, wishes and feelings being fully reflected in the plan. Children and young people should also be included where appropriate. Similar considerations apply as for children attending child protection conferences
  - members of core groups having equal ownership of and responsibility for the child protection plan. This shared commitment means planning and co-ordinating their own work in a way that takes account of the work of other agencies
  - being able, wherever possible, to forge an agreement with the parents and the child about how this is to be carried out

#### Core Group Responsibility

- 7.4 Core Group members are jointly responsible for:
- the development and implementation of the child protection plan
  - refining it as needed and monitoring it against specified objectives in the plan
- 7.5 The core group will be led by the key worker who will be a member of children's social care, who will carry future responsibility for the case. The key worker will:
- act as lead worker for the interagency work with the child and family

and take the most proactive role in ensuring that the safety of the child is monitored and the risks kept under review

- ensure that the tasks set are fully understood and addressed
- make sure that the outline child protection plan is developed into a more detailed interagency plan
- complete the core assessment securing contributions from core group members and others as necessary
- co-ordinate the contributions of family members and other agencies and plan actions that need to be taken
- put the child protection plan into effect
- review progress against objectives set out in the plan
- provide a record of the meetings

7.6 The responsibility of other members will be:

- to maintain, in their own work, a focus on the child's safety and welfare in the light of the child protection plan
- to attend and participate honestly and openly in core group meetings
- to carry out agreed tasks including contributing to the core assessment
- to communicate regularly with the key worker and
- to alert the key worker to any change in circumstances relevant to the child protection plan
- to contribute to evaluation and analysis of the work undertaken and of the ongoing needs, including risks

7.7 The first core group should be held within ten working days (the date being set at conference) of the child protection conference and thereafter as appropriate, but at least six weekly and always sufficiently frequently to:

- facilitate working together
  - monitor actions and outcomes against the child protection plan
  - make any changes necessary as circumstances change
- in the light of the needs and of the circumstances of the particular child.

7.8 The first core group will normally be chaired by a team manager for the keyworker. Subsequent core group meetings will be chaired by the keyworker, or by the team manager depending on the needs of the situation.

7.9 For pre-birth conferences where it is agreed that the baby will be subject of a child protection plan from birth, the core group should meet within 10 days of the birth of the baby. There is often need for a professionals' meeting prior to the birth to ensure that any immediate protection arrangements are in place.

### **Completion of the Core Assessment**

- 7.10 Any aspect of the core assessment which has still to be completed will be outlined in the initial child protection plan. It should complete the analysis of the child's development needs and the parents' capacity to respond to those needs, including their capacity to ensure the child is safe from harm.
- 7.11 All core group members should continue to contribute to the core assessment which builds on the information obtained within child protection enquiries.

### **The Child Protection Plan**

- 7.12 The outline child protection plan will have been agreed at the initial child protection conference.

**Please refer to sections 6.78 and 6.79**

- 7.13 As far as possible, an agreement should be forged with the parents and child about how this is to be carried out but this should never be at the expense of recommendations agreed within the child protection conference.
- 7.14 Parents should be clear about the causes of concern which resulted in the child becoming subject of a child protection plan (CPR), what needs to change and what is expected of them as part of the plan for safeguarding the child. All parties should be clear about the respective roles and responsibilities of family members and different agencies in implementing the plan. There should be a written agreement as part of, or additional to the plan, which is negotiated between the child, the family and professionals.

### **Development of the Child Protection Plan within the Initial Core Group**

- 7.15 The child protection plan will be developed at the initial core group. The more detailed plan must continue to reflect the outline child protection plan although it will need to take into account the developing situation. The plan should:
- describe the identified needs of the child, and what therapeutic and support services are required
  - include specific, achievable, child focused objectives intended to safeguard the child and promote his/her welfare
  - include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the objectives
  - include the contingency plan.
  - clearly identify roles and responsibilities of professionals and family members including the frequency and nature of contact by professionals with children and family members
  - lay down points at which progress will be reviewed, and the means

by which progress will be judged and

- set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of those professionals with routine contact with the child

### **Work within the Core Group**

7.16 Subsequent core groups will be held as appropriate but at least six weekly. The task will be to:

- continue to implement the child protection plan and to ensure that responsibilities under the plan are being carried out
- allow an exchange of information and opportunity to evaluate the progress achieved since the previous meeting
- refine the plan as needed
- monitor progress against specified objectives in the plan
- to ensure there is a continuing assessment of the child's needs
- to agree to reconvene the review conference early where there are significant developments which affect the safety of the child and the viability of the current child protection plan

**Please refer to sections 8.4 to 8.5**

### **New Concerns**

7.17 Whilst a core assessment is progressing particular note needs to be taken of any new concerns that come to light. If any further injuries are reported to the child, or there is any other relevant information which suggests continuing abuse may be occurring, then these issues must be reported to the police CAIU for further discussion about the need for a joint investigation. Such matters have significant relevance when a child is subject of a child protection plan and it is important that each issue is dealt with as a potential section 47 referral.

7.18 Work with the family will normally focus on the following:

- action to make a child safe
- action to help promote a child's health and development
- action to help the parent(s) in safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare
- therapy for an abused child
- support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse

### **Record of Core Group Meetings**

7.19 There must always be a record of meetings covering

- the date of the meeting
- a list of those present
- details of the child and the family
- a summary of how the key tasks are being progressed
- details of the decisions made and the actions agreed to progress the specified objectives
- the date of the next meeting