**Children’s Safeguarding and Social Care Division Core Group Standards**

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# Introduction

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The core group meeting is the key multi-agency mechanism for achieving effective implementation of the child protection plan. Although children’s social care are the lead agency all members of the core group are jointly responsible for carrying out the tasks, refining the Child Protection Plan (CPP) and monitoring progress.

# The GSCB leaflet regarding Core Groups must be sent to all core group members with the Decision Sheet within 24 hours of the Initial Child Protection Conference.

**The role of the lead social worker**

* The social worker is responsible for making sure that the outline child protection plan is developed into a more detailed inter-agency plan. The Child Protection Plan must be informed by the outcome of the core assessment.
* The social worker is responsible for acting as the lead professional for the inter-agency work with the child and family.
* The social worker must co-ordinate the contribution of family members in setting out the change that is required when planning the action that needs to be taken.
* The social worker must see the child, alone as appropriate, in accordance with the plan.
* The social worker must record on Framework that a Core Group has been held and the actions agreed.

# Frequency and minutes

* Core Group membership, time and venue of meeting must be identified at Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences.
* The first Core Group **must** take place within 10 working days of ICPC.
* A Core Group **must** be held no longer than 8 weeks after a Review Child Protection Conference.
* There must be at least two Core Groups held between each Child Protection Conference.
* Minutes of the Core Group meeting must be circulated to Core Group members and the Child Protection Conference chair within 5 working days of the meeting and a case note on Framework written to indicate that this has happened.

# Arrangements for Chairing

* The receiving Assistant Team manager or Team manager must chair the first Core Group.
* Social Workers must chair subsequent Core Groups unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case their line manager must chair.
* The chair of the Core Group must refer to the chair’s script at the beginning of the meeting (contained in core group agenda) and follow the Core Group agenda (see appendix 2).

# Core group actions

* It is the responsibility of the Core Group to develop the outline Child Protection Plan focussing on achieving change and improved outcomes for the child
* The Core Group must determine the frequency of visits, ensure they are within timescales proportionate to the risk and are sufficient to monitor the children’s wellbeing. In the early stages of a child protection plan visits are likely to be necessary at no greater than fortnightly or three weekly intervals, but should be more frequent if necessary. If the plan is progressing well the Core Group may decide that visits can be less frequent than outlined in the Child Protection Plan following a review Child Protection Conference.
* The minimum statutory timescale for social work visits is every 6 weeks.
* Core Group members are expected to prioritise their attendance at these meetings, as they would a Child Protection Conference. If they cannot attend, apologies and a report must be sent to the social worker at least one working day prior to the Core Group meeting.
  + The core group must evaluate the impact of the actions and analyse whether sufficient **change** has occurred to minimise or prevent harm to the child
  + The Core Group is responsible for drawing up a Written Agreement with the family in line with the London Child Protection Procedures.
  + Core Group members must be flexible about venues for core groups.

# Action to be taken when the Child Protection Plan is not effective

* + When the Child Protection Plan is not working well it is the responsibility of the Core Group members to attempt to resolve this and to use the escalation procedures if they cannot do so.
  + When the Child Protection Plan is not working well due to lack of parental co- operation the keyworker and their supervisor/manager must decide whether action is required outside of the Core Group process including acting on the contingency plan within the Child Protection Plan.
  + Where a lack of parental engagement leads to concerns about the child’s safety, Core Group members who are aware of this must inform the Social Worker. The contingency plan may need to be acted on immediately and without a Core Group meeting to discuss this. All Core Group members must be notified that the contingency plan has been initiated.

# Action to be taken when the Core Group is not effective

* + If there is disagreement amongst Core Group members the inter-agency escalation protocol must be followed.
  + If Core Group member/s are not carrying out the responsibilities outlined in Child Protection Plan the inter-agency escalation protocol must be followed.
  + Continual absence from Core Group meetings by parents must be addressed by the social worker and other professionals. Continual absence from or failure to provide information for the Core Group meetings by professionals, including key professionals, must be addressed by the social worker using the inter-agency escalation protocol.
  + Delay and drift in implementing the Child Protection Plan must be challenged by all members of the Core Group both within the meetings and using the inter-agency escalation protocol.
  + Difficulties implementing the Child Protection Plan due to disagreement among professionals must be referred to managers at the earliest opportunity.

# Core Group recommendations to the Review Child Protection Conference

* + Core Groups held prior to a Review Child Protection Conference must ensure that the risk analysis is reviewed, focusing on what has changed and that a **recommendation is made** about whether or not the Child Protection Plan needs to continue.
  + If a step down to a CIN plan or a TAC is going to be recommended, the Core Group must consider and outline what should be in those plans and who will lead on them (e.g. Lead Professional)