

- feedback provided on the progress made in relation to their actions on the Child Protection Plan and what has gone well.
- reporting factual information about when the child/family have been seen, the circumstances, what they have said and specific outcomes of work to the Core Group
- providing up to date and historic information about the child(ren) and adult family members/carers of the child(ren) in a timely way
- exploring and obtaining additional services/ assessments required by the Core Group which fall within their area of expertise
- communicating all progress/deterioration in a timely way with other Core Members - especially the named Lead Social Worker
- raising any specific or new concerns immediately- for example being unable to gain access to the child(ren) - whether or not these are shared by other Core Group members - with the named Lead Social Worker/Core Group and confirm these in writing to the named Lead Social Worker within 24-48 hours
- challenging 'collusive thinking' or inaction by colleagues
- prepare an individual agency report on the child and the family for the child protection review.

### What is the specific role of the named Lead Social Worker?

The specific roles of the named Lead Social Worker (from Children's Social Care) are:

- the same shared and individual roles and responsibilities as detailed for all professionals above

### Plus

- the named Lead Social Worker must see / communicate with the child(ren) alone at least every 4 weeks (minimum departmental requirement) and fulfil the lead co-ordination role to ensure:
- that Core Group members understand their role and the Core Group's functions
- ensure that the child(ren)'s well-being is safeguarded and that their views & wishes are obtained and conveyed to the Core Group
- overall co-ordination of the Core Group's work
- completion of the multi-agency Core Assessment(s) including analysis and recommendations
- development and effective implementation of (a) multi-agency Child Protection Plan(s)
- that disagreements between agencies which cannot be resolved in the Core Group or at front-line management level are referred up to senior managers in relevant agencies for their early resolution.

### What if key person(s) cannot attend?

**Core Group attendance is essential to the effective management of child protection cases and conveys the seriousness of the situation as seen by all agencies to the family.**

**Therefore Core Groups should be ONLY be missed by the named Lead Social Worker and/or other professionals in exceptional circumstances.**

**Core Groups SHOULD NOT be cancelled or re-arranged unless, exceptionally, this is unavoidable.**

### If you think that you cannot attend, you and your manager should:

#### Examine:

- why not – and if the other commitment can be moved
- whether are you avoiding saying/doing/ experiencing something difficult and what additional support/assistance you require if so.

### If following this discussion, you still cannot attend you/your Manager MUST do the following:

- arrange for your manager or a senior colleague (fully briefed) to attend in your place
- arrange for you to provide a written report in advance of the Core Group to the named Lead Social Worker detailing the work that you have done and the child(ren)'s/family's /carer's response to it as listed under Professionals' responsibilities above
- send written apologies to the named Lead Social Worker/their manager in advance of the Core Group.

### If the child/young person or key family/ members/carers cannot attend, the Core Group should ensure that

- their views/wishes are obtained and available to the Core Group
- reasons for non-attendance are obtained
- whether family non-attendance could be indicative of an ineffective Child Protection Plan and/or family avoidance and/or added risk is fully considered during the Core Group Meeting.


**If professional Core Group members who are present decide that there are too few Core Group members present to constitute a viable Core Group and that in the child(ren)'s best interests it should be cancelled and re-arranged, the chair MUST**

- Ensure that this is recorded on the Core Group minutes proforma
- Communicated to all Core Group members in writing within 24 hours
- Ensure re-arrangement of a Core Group via their manager.

**Attendance is monitored by the Child Protection Conference, the Safeguarding Children Boards and by professionals' own agencies.**

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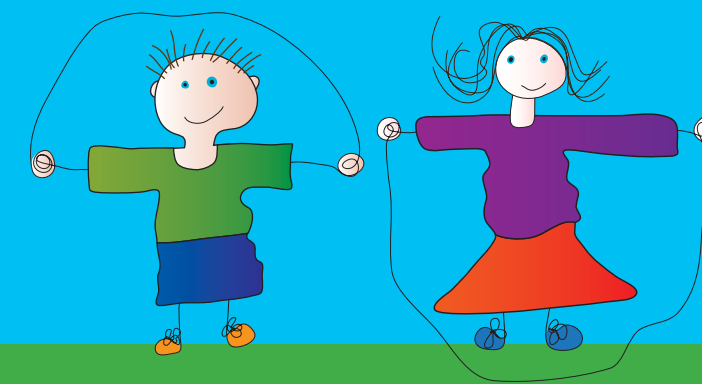
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## Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board & Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

*Working together to safeguard children*



## Core Groups - Guidance for Professionals

## Introduction

Following a Child Protection Conference, effective safeguarding of children subject to Child Protection Plans is dependent on purposeful, co-ordinated and clear day-to-day multi-agency work with both children and their families/carers to reduce risk.

Core Groups are central to achieving this.

This leaflet is issued by Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) & Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) to provide key information about the purpose and operation of Core Groups to staff who:

- attend Core Groups regularly
- attend Core Groups occasionally
- who have not attended a Core Group as yet

## What is a core group?

A Core Group co-ordinates and undertakes essential work agreed by a Child Protection Conference to reduce/remove risk to (a) child(ren).

### A Core Group is a work group comprising:

- key family members/carers and if required their advocates and/or interpreters
- Key professionals/staff who are regularly involved with and know the child(ren) 'at risk', their family and/or carers
- Consideration should always be given to the appropriateness of the young person or their representative attending.

The professionals frequently involved include: Health Visitors, Teachers, Classroom Assistants, School Nurses, Police Officers, and Voluntary/Private Sector Agency Representatives.

Professional membership may also involve: GPs, Consultants and/or professionals specifically involved with adult family members - eg Probation Officers, Community Psychiatric Nurses, and Psychologists.

It will **always** involve Children's Social Care as though safeguarding is a shared responsibility of all agencies/professionals, Social Care have a lead role. As a minimum, the named Lead Social Worker, or Senior Practitioner and/or their manager will attend from Children's Social Care. Where this is not possible then their qualified delegate will attend, this may be a duty worker or a Deputy Team Manager.

Core Group membership will be agreed by the Child Protection Conference initially. Additional family members may be brought in and likewise additional or replacement professionals may join the Core Group as work progresses.

## What does a Core Group do?

### Key tasks of Core Groups are:

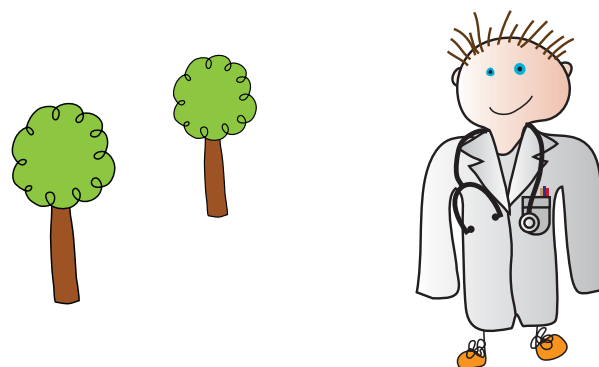
- to assist children/families/carers to make sense of the situation they are in, what the risks are, causes of the risks and the changes needed to reduce risk(s) in terms that they can understand and relate to
- to agree what needs to be done to reduce the risk(s) and why
- to decide by whom, when, where and how the work will be done
- to do the work required and ensure that work is done effectively and on time and that additional resources/services/professionals are provided/involved as needed

- to analyse progress or deterioration at every stage and ensure that assessment is continual/ongoing
- to produce/update the Child(ren)'s Core Assessment and recommendations for Review Child Protection Conferences

### To achieve this effectively the Core Group will be:

- **Chaired** - The 1st Core Group will be chaired by the Children's Social Care Team Manager or a professional deputising on their behalf. Further Core Groups will usually be by the child's named Lead Social Worker or their manager from Children's Social Care but could be delegated by agreement to another Core Group professional.
- **Minuted** - by nominated professional in the Core Group
- **Produce a Detailed Child Protection Plan** based on the outline Child Protection Plan devised at the Child Protection Conference but added to as required to reflect changes in need/risk

**The Core Group Minutes + Child Protection Plan will be typed-up and circulated to all Core Group members within at least 5 working days of the Core Group meeting.**



## Where does a Core Group meet?

The Initial Child Protection Conference members will set the venue for the 1st Core Group in addition to agreeing its membership. After that, Core Group members decide where to meet. This may be a school, GP surgery, agency office. Occasionally it may include a family's/carer's home. The deciding factor will be that the venue is accessible and safe for everyone involved and is suitable to undertake a professional meeting.

## How often does a Core Group meet?

The Initial Child Protection Conference members will set the date, time and venue for the 1st Core Group in addition to agreeing its membership. The 1st Core Group should take place within 10 working days of the Initial Child Protection Conference.

The Core Group should meet as a whole at least twice between each Child Protection Conference but additionally, fewer numbers of the Core Group may need to meet to undertake specific pieces of work.

## For how long does a Core Group meet?

Though specific circumstances may vary, on average a Core Group should last for no more than 1 to 2 hours.

If more time is required, it is advisable to hold a further meeting rather than prolonging an already lengthy meeting due to attention spans of all participants and their other commitments.

## What is the role of professional core group members?

Professional members of Core Groups have a shared responsibility for

- Working with others to implement the Child Protection Plan to reduce the risk(s) to (a) child(ren). This may mean sharing information, undertaking individual work or undertaking joint work with other professionals
- determining whether the Child Protection Plan is effective/being implemented effectively in terms of its outcomes
- deciding whether adjustments to the plan are required to achieve these
- assessing the ongoing level of risk to the child(ren) subject to (a) Child Protection Plan(s) and participating fully to produce/update the Core Assessment via supply of information and contribution to its analysis
- OR determining that risk is not being reduced/cannot be reduced sustainably/ is too great and that the case should return early to Review Child Protection Conference and if need be application for legal resources via Bedfordshire Allocation Panel (BAP)

Professional members of Core Groups have an individual responsibility for

- undertaking their specific area of work to reduce risk / sustain change / contribute to assessment & analysis

