



Bedford Borough
Safeguarding Children Board

Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) Guidance for Core Group members



Introduction

Following a Child Protection Conference, effective safeguarding of children/ young people subject to Child Protection Plans or those who are looked after is dependent on purposeful, co-ordinated and clear day-to-day multi-agency work with both children and their families/carers to reduce risk. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility of all agencies/professionals not just for Children's Social Care.

This guidance is issued by Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) to provide key information about the purpose and operation of Core Groups to staff who attend core groups.



Purpose of a Core Group?

The purpose of the Core Group is to develop the Child Protection Plan into an achievable plan of action for all those involved. This is to ensure achievable and measureable outcomes for the child/ren or young person(s). A Core Group co-ordinates and undertakes essential work agreed by a Child Protection Conference to reduce/remove risk to the child/ren or young person(s).

A Core Group is a working group comprising of:

- 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 or young person(s) 'at risk', their family and/or carers,
- Consideration should always be given to the appropriateness of the child/ren or young person(s) or their representative (including family) attending.

The professionals frequently involved include: Social Workers, Children's Centre professionals, Health Visitors, staff from Early Year Services, Teachers, Classroom Assistants, School Nurses, Police Officers, and Voluntary/ Private Sector Agency Representatives. Professional membership may also involve: GPs, Paediatricians and/or professionals specifically involved with adult family members – e.g., Probation Officers, Community Psychiatric Nurses and Psychologists. This list is not exhaustive, but indicative of key professionals.

It will always involve Children's Social Care even though safeguarding is a shared responsibility of all agencies/professionals. Children's Social Care should designate a Social Worker to be the Lead Professional. As a minimum, the Lead Professional 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. 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.

If in the process of assessment and continued participation in the Core Group, a professional in collaboration with the other Core Group members considers that there is no role for them at the time, a professional can withdraw from attendance until such time as a need for continuing work becomes apparent. Discussion with the Conference Chair would be necessary in such circumstances to ensure that there is quoracy at the next Child Protection Conference.

What does a Core Group do?

Key tasks of Core Groups are:

- To assist children/young people and their families/carers to understand why professionals are concerned, 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 fully implement the Child Protection Plan to reduce the risk(s);
- To decide by whom, when, where and how the work will be done;
- To do the work required and ensure that the 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 update the child/ren or young person(s) multi-agency Single Assessment and Child Protection Plan outlining progress of the Plan with focus on evidencing the reduction of risks or where risks remain and how these are being managed and addressed for the ongoing safeguarding of the child/ren or young person(s).

To achieve this effectively the Core Group will be:

- **Chaired** - by the Lead Professional or their Manager from Children's Social Care but could be delegated by agreement to another Core Group professional;

- **Minuted** – The minutes will include an accurate recording of the Core Group meeting including key actions/ agreements and who this should be undertaken by. A nominated professional in the Core Group will take these minutes;
- **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. As part of this Plan there is a multi-agency visiting matrix which outlines which professionals are to visit the child/ren or young person(s), the frequency of the visits and who they will see on each visit. This Plan will be developed further and altered as agreed at each Core Group. At each Review Conference a future visiting matrix and Child Protection Plan, which had been agreed at the last Core Group, is to be included in the Social Work report.

It is not appropriate or good practice that the Chair of the meeting also takes the minutes. The Core Group Minutes and the 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 first Core Group meeting in addition to agreeing its membership. After that, Core Group members decide where to meet. This may be a school, GP surgery or agency office. 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 and time for the first Core Group which 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 the Initial Child Protection Conference and the first Review. Subsequent Core Group meetings should meet a minimum of 4 weekly or more depending on the risks and complexities of the case, timescales will be specified at the Initial and Review Conference. Additionally some members of the Core Group may need to meet to undertake specific pieces of work.

How long is a Core Group Meeting?

Though specific circumstances may vary, on average a Core Group meeting 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.

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 the child/ren or young person(s). This will involve 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 or young person(s) subject to a Child Protection Plan and participating fully to produce/update the Single 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; the case should be escalated to the Lead Professional's Team Manager for a decision on what action is needed,
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i.e. immediate protection, application for Court orders, additional resources. An early Review Child Protection Conference can be convened but should not prevent the Lead Professional's Team Manager's decision making.

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; together to safeguard children;
- Providing feedback 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/ren or young person(s) and family members/carers 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 or young person(s) and adult family members/carers of the child/ren or young person(s) 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 Lead Professional;
- Raising any specific or new concerns immediately- for example being unable to gain access to the child/ren or young person(s) - whether or not these are shared by other Core Group members - with the Lead Professional/Core Group and confirm these in writing to the Lead Professional within 24-48 hours;
- Challenging 'collusive thinking' or inaction by professionals;
- Prepare an individual agency report on the child/ren or young person(s) and the family for the Child Protection Review, share it with the family and send to the Lead Professional 5 working days prior to the Review meeting.
- To support the Lead Professional in the chairing/minuting of the meeting as agreed.

What is the specific role of the Lead Professional?

The specific role of the named Lead Professional (from Children's Social Care) is:

- The same shared and individual roles and responsibilities as detailed for all professionals as per previous page,

Plus:

- The named Lead Professional must see/communicate with the child/ren or young person(s) alone at least every 4 weeks. The minimum frequency of visits is detailed in the visiting matrix which is completed at Conference and included in the Plan and Minutes;
- That Core Group members understand their role and the Core Group's functions;
- That the child/ren or young person(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 Single Assessment including analysis and recommendations;
- Development and effective implementation of a multi-agency Child Protection Plan;
- 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. This should be done in accordance with the BBSCB Escalation Procedures which can be found via this link http://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_reolution_disagree.html
- To chair the Core Group and ensure that another Core Group member is nominated to take over the role as appropriate.

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 Lead Professional and/or other professionals in exceptional circumstances. It is not appropriate to cancel a meeting just because the Lead Professional is unable to attend. The nominated Core Group member should undertake the chairing in Lead Professionals absence.

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 you are 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 detailing the work that you have done and the child/ren or young person(s) /family's/carer's response to it as listed under Professionals' responsibilities above;
- Send written apologies to the Lead Professional/their Manager in advance of the Core Group.

If the child/ren or young person(s) 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 or young person(s) best interests it should be cancelled and re-arranged, the Chair MUST:

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





Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ

Za Informacije

Per Informazione

 01234 276512

 **Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board**

Bedford Borough Council

Borough Hall

Caudwell Street

Bedford, MK42 9AP

 LSCB@bedford.gov.uk

 www.bedford.gov.uk/lscb