

## **Barnsley Guidance on the current processes for Child Protection Conferences in response to Covid 19**

- 1) Safeguarding Unit Business Support team are now working from home but all calls and emails into the Service are being dealt with. Safeguarding Business Support must be contacted by the social worker on **01226 772400**, as at present, to arrange the initial child protection conference at the earliest opportunity following the Section 47 Strategy meeting. Conferences must be convened **within 15 days of the strategy discussion/meeting**. Business Support will need to be provided with the details of all the participants including their emails addresses and phone numbers including those of the parents and family members who are to be invited to the meeting which will take place via MS Teams. Partner agencies and parents will be emailed a link to join the Conference and where this is not possible, they will be contacted to join by phone.
- 2) Reports will continue to be requested from professionals for **all** conferences and there continues to be an expectation at the present time that these will be prepared and returned to the Safeguarding Business Support team **at least 2 days** prior to the conference taking place in respect of an ICPC and **5 days** before a Child Protection Review. Professionals should also share the reports with parents; however, the current rules regarding social distancing, self-isolation and staff absence will impact on this. As a minimum we ask professionals to share the main points from their report via telephone/ video calls 2 days before the Conference and any share any recommendations they have made regarding the plan. (This is in our separate Guidance to Professionals Completing a Report to Conference)
- 3) With exception of GP reports, for the interim period these requests will no longer be made to GP's. The information from GP's will be included within the report provided by the 0-19 service. Where this is not possible a report will be provided by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children.
- 4) The Children's Advocacy Service will now make contact directly with the parents. Parents will be asked for consent for the Advocate to speak with their child via the phone. The Advocate will then feed back to the Child Protection Chair.
- 5) There will be no face to face Child Protection Conferences until further notice. All Child Protection Conferences will be completed on a virtual basis using MS Teams. Professionals and parents or carers will be invited to join the virtual Conference and will be sent a link to via email to join MS Teams. Professionals

should provide their contact number and organisational email address when they send in their report to the Safeguarding unit, this will be used to invite them. On receipt of the email, the participant clicks on "Join the MS Teams Meeting link" and opens Teams via their browser. It is NOT necessary to download MS Teams on to organisational servers to join the meeting.

- 6) The Child Protection Chair will contact the parents the day before the Conference and confirm with them whether they are okay to use MS teams to participate in the meeting or will make arrangements for them to join by phone.
- 7) The Child Protection Chair will view all the reports, contact the parents and professionals and seek their views on; concerns, strengths and any unmet need that would inform the plan. They will seek views on scaling and whether continued Child Protection is required. Given the current circumstances, it is highly likely that Child Protection planning will continue unless there is very strong evidence that the risk of significant harm has ended (See bullet point 9).
- 8) There is currently no system in place at the present time that allows us to share reports amongst professionals. Agencies may consider how they do this although the Child Protection Chair will inform parents and professionals of the content of the reports. The reports that are received will continue to be added on to the child's file on TED. Police information will be shared by the Child Protection Chair with the Social Worker, but this will not be stored on the child's file in line with the current agreement with South Yorkshire Police.
- 9) The Child Protection Chair will have particular regard at the present time to the following when undertaking virtual conferences:
  - *What is the current safety plan for this child? Does this include their network? How is this plan affected by the current Government guidance in relation to social distancing and self-isolating? Does this plan therefore keep this child safe?*
  - Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan are those believed to be at likely risk of significant harm and therefore **do need to attend school** or an early year's provision, so that their safety and wellbeing can be monitored daily. The only exceptions to this is for the period where the child and/or their family may be unwell or having to self-isolate.
  - Where this is the case, what are the arrangements for the child to access education remotely?
  - Where children and/or their family are unwell and having to self-isolate what is the visiting pattern that has been identified by the SW/ other professionals needs to be sufficient to keep the child safe.

- Who will see the child weekly and where?
- What other support is needed and by whom? How will this support be identified?
- What other routine appointments, such as health or medical need to be attended and what is the impact to the child of these not taking place by key agencies and how will the child's needs be met?
- What are the family's plans for safe daily exercise for the child, whilst exercising safe social distancing?
- How does social distancing/isolation affect the child and crucially, impact on their safety and welfare? If the child cannot be kept safe from harm, should proceedings be considered?
- Is there appropriate financial support/benefits for the family? If there is not, how will this be addressed? Where will the family be referred on to, i.e. Community Foodbanks?
- In the event of separated parents; how are the contact arrangements impacted by the current Government guidance? Does this increase the risks for the child/ren?
- How will the historic or current concerns be impacted by the virus moving forward? For example; on parental substance misuse, mental health, domestic abuse parenting capacity, self-isolation and social distancing being in place for many months, families being in the home alone together for many months, a lack of professional and social support and a likely increase in domestic abuse concerns.

10) Each Child Protection Chair has been asked to ensure that when the service assumes its prior Covid-19 conference process and virtual conferences are no longer required that prioritisation is given to such families where under 'normal' circumstances due consideration would have been given to ending the Child Protection Plan.

11) The Child Protection Chair must facilitate sufficient time for the case conference to agree in live time, the specific details of the Child Protection Plan with clear actions and timescales to be recorded on the Plan on TED.

12) After the Child Protection Conference, the Chair will undertake the following:

- Complete the recommendations form to ensure that the child's status is clearly recorded on TED (Business Support)
- Complete the child protection plan on TED
- Complete the minutes on TED and ensure they are recorded on the child's file. (Business Support)

- Email the minute takers and request a further review date (if appropriate) in 3/6 months' time.
- The minute takers will continue to be responsible for the circulation of the minutes amongst professionals.
- It will continue to be the responsibility of the Social Worker to share the minutes of the conference with the parents.

8<sup>th</sup> April 2020