



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Core groups: Practice guidance for social workers

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

1 Purpose of core group

- The core group is a multi-agency forum responsible for developing and implementing the child protection plan based on the child's assessed needs and the actions agreed at the case conference. *Working together to safeguard children* states that the key role of the core group is to identify clearly what needs to change and what actions should be taken to achieve this change.
- The core group must ensure that the child protection plan is able to continue to keep the child safe and promote their welfare between case conferences and that work is carried out with the family to ensure the child's safety and welfare on a long-term basis.

2 Key policy documents

Working together to safeguard children 2023

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK](#)

Camden works to the London Safeguarding Children Partnership child protection procedures. [CP5. Implementation of Child Protection Plans](#)

3 Membership

- Members of the core group will be identified at the initial conference and should include the following:
 - The child's allocated social worker as lead social worker.
 - The parents and/or any other family member who will be involved in implementing the child protection plan.
 - For looked after children, their foster carer or residential key worker.
 - A health professional who works directly with the child and/or their family. This will be the health visitor for under 5s or the school nurse for school age children. If the child has a specific health issue, a specialist medical advisor may need to be included in the core group. For unborn children, this will be the allocated midwife.
 - A representative from the child's school or nursery (if attended).

- This should be the child's class teacher, year tutor or the designated child protection teacher who has been fully briefed by a member of staff who knows the child well. If the child is of school age but does not have a school place, social workers should contact the Camden Learning team and ask for a member of the team to join the core group meeting to discuss finding the child a school place.
- A representative from any service that is working directly with the parents.
- If there are concerns about specific presenting problems of the parent such as mental health or substance misuse, their key worker from these services should be part of the core group. For cases involving domestic abuse, a representative from Camden Safety Net should attend.
- The child. It is Camden's policy that children over the age of 12, who have sufficient understanding of the process and who request to attend should be allowed to attend in core group meetings where social workers and team managers believe this is consistent with their safety and welfare. Otherwise, social workers should enable children to participate in the process by obtaining their views and wishes prior to the meeting and ensuring these are given due consideration.

Membership of the core group should be reviewed at every subsequent review conference.

4 Attendance

- All members of the core group should be made aware of their duty to attend core group meetings and any difficulties in attending should be reported as soon as possible to the social worker.
- Agencies should be asked to ensure that someone is able to attend in the absence of the original core group member so that the agency is represented at the meeting, and that the person attending has enough knowledge of the child to contribute to the meeting.

- Changes of allocation of professionals who are involved in a core group should be notified to the social worker immediately. Where there is a change in social worker, the team manager must ensure core group members are informed of the name of the new allocated worker.
- Social workers are responsible for making arrangements for interpreters where this is necessary for the family to take part in the meeting. All interpreters must be sourced from a council approved supplier and have an up to date DBS check in place.
- Scheduled core groups must go ahead as long as the social worker and one other member of the professional network is in attendance. Written reports may be submitted if a core group member is not able to attend. Postponed meetings must be re-scheduled to take place within a week of the cancelled date.

5 Frequency

- The first core group meeting must take place within 10 working days of the initial case conference and the date will be arranged at the conference.
- The next core group meeting should be held within 6 weeks of the first.
- Subsequent core group meetings should be held at a frequency of no less than once every 2 months but the conference may opt to hold more frequent meetings depending on the circumstances of the case.
- Any member of the professional network may request that a core group meeting is brought forward if concerns about the child are escalating or there has been a major change in the family's circumstances; social workers should give due consideration to any such request.

6 Venue

- The venue for meetings should be one that facilitates the attendance of parents and professionals and guarantees some confidentiality and privacy for families.

7 Key responsibilities

- Core group members are responsible for:
 - sharing relevant information with the allocated social worker
 - participating in the conduct of any assessments.
 - developing and implementing the child protection plan
 - monitoring the child's welfare and progress against the plan
 - ensuring services are being delivered effectively.
- The allocated social worker will be the lead social worker and will also be responsible for:
 - carrying out assessments
 - co-ordinating the work of the core group
 - convening and chairing core group meetings
 - oversight of any monitoring of the child's welfare and the implementation of the plan
 - recording of the plan and core group episodes on MOSAIC
 - distributing minutes and copies of plans
 - working directly with parents and children to agree the plan
 - ascertaining the views of the child
 - liaising with the conference chair regarding any difficulties.

8 Conduct of the meeting

- The aim of Core Group is to work together with families in an honest and open manner in order to achieve clarity of purpose and to actively engage them in the development and implementation of the child protection plan.
- The meeting should focus on the development of the plan and engaging parents to ensure its successful implementation in achieving the changes needed to keep the child safe.
- At the meeting, it should be made clear:
 - what the concerns are
 - what needs to change to reduce these concerns
 - what tasks parents and professionals must carry out in order to bring about change
 - how progress will be monitored and change measured

- what will happen if the desired changes do not happen in the right timescale; a contingency plan should have already been agreed at the case conference and should have been recorded on the child protection plan.
- The first core group meeting will fully develop the child protection plan based on the actions agreed at the initial conference. Subsequent core group meetings will monitor the effectiveness of the plan, review the family's progress and consider any changes that are needed to the plan.
- One key task that must be agreed at the core group meeting is arrangements for the child to be seen by a member of the professional network every 10 working days in line with the pan-London procedures.
- Where there are any serious differences of opinion between professionals regarding the plan or written agreement, the advice of the conference chair should be sought in order to resolve these and agencies should refer to the CSCP escalation policy for details on procedures for resolving professional differences.

9 Recording and distribution

- Social workers are responsible for all recording on to the core group episode on MOSAIC and completing the core group record available on MOSAIC. The record of the meeting should be distributed to all members of the core group within 5 working days of the meeting.
- It is essential that parents sign their agreement on the record of the core group meeting to indicate that they understand the concerns and their own role in reducing risk and implementing the child protection plan.

10 Difficulties in engagement or implementation

- Successful implementation of the child protection plan relies on the full co-operation of parents. ***If there are any difficulties in engaging parents reported by the core group, the social worker must report these to their team manager and the conference chair as further action may need to be taken to protect the child.***