

**Business Continuity for Rochdale Safeguarding Unit Child Protection Processes and Cared for Children Reviews**

 **26TH March 2020**

**Context**

Given the changes in government advice that all people where possible need to work from home and increase social distancing the Rochdale Safeguarding Unit has agreed interim changes to how it will carry out its statutory duties in relation to children subject to child protection planning and cared for children.

At the centre of any decision making on application of this process is the safety and well-being of children and should there be any immediate concerns for children, which require an immediate response, Rochdale Social Care remains equipped to manage and respond

**Child Protection Process**

**Principles**

* Children remain at the heart of any process and their well-being and safety remains paramount
* Physical meetings will be significantly reduced in order to comply with the isolation of households in order to reduce spread of the virus and contribute to delay in spread
* **Regardless of numbers of reports, physical quoracy (presence/dial in) may not be able to be maintained therefore conference decisions will be made based on the information provided**

**Initial Conference**

* A referral for a CP conference should be made in the usual way
* The Safeguarding Unit and Social worker will record as usual on the LCS system
* Social Workers will be responsible for informing families of the change in process and explain how they can contribute and that the chair of the meeting will make telephone contact with them to discuss the situation if they do not wish or are unable to attend the case conference.
* On receipt of referral the Safeguarding Unit will set a date within required time frame and letters of invite to invitees will go out **BUT** itwill inform members to send full reports in which they should provide a recommendation based on their knowledge of the family by the date of conference. This will be required if the professional is unable to contribute directly to the conference due to illness to aid in decision making. Reports will then be collated for the Chair who is allocated to the conference.
* At the case conference, the Chair will review the reports and speak to any key professionals to clarify information and discuss their report if required.
* All professionals are required to be available to dial into the conference rather than attend in person.
* Should the parents wish to attend they **can** do so social distancing will take place and additional arrangements are in place. Hand washing basins in reception at Number One Riverside and all attendees at case conferences will be requested to wash their hands prior to case conference commencing. Disinfectant wipes are placed in the conference room to wipe down all surfaces following the meeting conference room.
* The Chair and the minute taker will be in attendance at the case conference to coordinate information in order to manage and record the conference as usual.
* The chair as far as possible will make contact with families to discuss and ascertain their views if they are not willing or able to attend in person.
* The ICPC will then take place in a shortened format with contributions from both parents and professionals. Confidential information needs to be shared prior to the conference by the Chair as appropriate to aid in decision-making.
* Colleagues should expect to contribute to a shared discussion and joint decision making as part of a multi –agency conference process
* Following the conference the Chair and the minute taker will write a summary and recommendations based on the outcome of the conference, including the outline child protection plan.
* The chair will then send the summary, recommendations and the CP plan to invitees and the family as usual.
* The social worker will be responsible for managing the virtual core group to further develop the plan.

**Review Conferences**

* The same process as above will be followed in terms of invites going out but the review conference will be a virtual meeting only.
* In addition **if** **there is a clear majority view** **the chair will sign off the decision to either continue or end the plan**.
* Where the chair is unclear or has concerns re a decision specifically re a  cp plan ending the **chair can overrule and continue with the plan until a meeting can be held**

**The same process for escalation remains if a Chair has a concern that a child is not being adequately safeguarded**

**Cared for Child Reviews Process**

**Principles**

* With immediate affect physical meetings will cease, to reduce spread of the virus and contribute to the delay in spread
* Children remain at the heart of any process and their well-being and safety remains paramount

**Child Becoming a Cared For Child**

* Notification will be received in the usual way to the Safeguarding Unit.
* Safeguarding Unit and Social worker will record as usual on the LCS system
* Social Workers will be responsible for informing families of the change in process and explain how parents and children can contribute and that the IRO will make telephone contact to discuss the case and incorporate the child’s views
* On receipt of referral the IRO will set a date within time frame with the social worker and agree invites
* Letters of invite to invitees will go out **BUT it** will inform members to send reports in ready for the meeting time
* Prior to the meeting the IRO will contact the birth family, carers and the child, young person.
* **On some occasions the IRO may need to speak directly with the young person. This should be managed on a case by case basis. In order to maintain isolation of households this should be attempted via Facetime or Skype.**
* **Face to face visits will be in exceptional circumstances and will need to be completed by agreement with senior managers**.
* The IRO will review reports and the care plan and contact any key professionals as appropriate to clarify or discuss information
* The chair will use the same minute template to record their review and any discussions including a view on the care plan
* The focus of the review will be around the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child.
* The IRO/Safeguarding Unit will send minutes out as usual.
* The expectation is that IROs will contact children/young people between reviews and for some young people they may increase this contact given there may be less visits to children in placement

**The same process for dispute resolution remains if an IRO has a concern that a child care plan is not appropriate to their needs or there are any additional concerns regarding the child’s situation**

**LADO Service**

* LADO service will continue to run with the change being that allegations management strategy meetings will be carried out virtually.

Signed by Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership Key Partners

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