



NOTTINGHAM CITY
Safeguarding
Children BOARD

NCSCB Mobile Children and Families Policy

30th August 2013

Mobile Children and families Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Children who experience frequent changes of address and/or are placed in temporary accommodation can be subject to particularly transient lifestyles. They are likely to lose contact with previous support networks and may become disengaged from services.
- 1.1.2 Frequent movers can find it difficult to access the services they need. For those already socially excluded, moving frequently can worsen the effects of their exclusion.
- 1.1.3 Children and families who move most frequently between Local Authorities are homeless families, asylum seekers and refugees, gypsy and traveller families, looked after children, children in the criminal justice system, and families experiencing domestic violence.
- 1.1.4 It is important that services working with children in care and within the criminal justice system maintain an awareness of how easily information and networks can be lost in moves. For these children planning moves should take account of these risks. Effective systems must be put in place and robust action taken to ensure that as soon as such highly mobile, vulnerable children and unborn babies are identified; services from health, education and specialist services if required are put into place.
- 1.1.5 Local authorities, the police, Youth Offending Teams and the health service have a specific 'duty to co-operate' to ensure better outcomes and to improve the well-being of all children, including children who move frequently.
- 1.1.6 Professionals who are working with families where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan (including concerns about an unborn child who may be at risk of significant harm) should be alert to the onset of missed appointments or failed visits. These may indicate that the family may have moved out of the area. Where children who are subject to Child Protection plans evade professional monitoring and intervention, the local authority (children's Social Care) and the Police should be advised immediately.

2 The scope of the policy

- 2.1.1 This policy relates to temporary or permanent moves and addresses of Local Authority Children's Social Care cases and other responsibilities in relation to children in need, including those in need of protection. Other local authority services and other agencies will have arrangements determined by different legislation and guidance.
- 2.1.2 For the purposes of this policy highly mobile families are those families who move on an unplanned basis on three or more occasions within a six-month period and there are concerns about a child.
- 2.1.3 Highly mobile children in care and within the criminal justice system (three moves in six months) should have the risk of lost information and the emotional impact of multiple moves identified and addressed in reviews. Whilst the policy is focused on children within the community, the principles of good risk assessments and transferring information apply to this cohort of children.

2.1.4 This policy should be followed alongside the NCSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures and the NCSCB Interagency Practice Guidance – Children who go missing from Home, Care or Education Protocol.

3 Identifying children at risk of harm

3.1.1 When families move frequently, it is more difficult for agencies to identify risks and monitor a child's welfare. Professionals in all agencies should be alert to the possibility that a child or family who has moved may not be in receipt of universal services. Professionals should proactively engage with the family in order to link them into local universal services, e.g;

- Seeking information about the child / family (full names, dates of birth, previous address, GP's name, if attending any school etc);
- Providing information about relevant services;
- Following up to ensure that the family has managed to make contact and register with a local GP, school and other relevant services to which the child is entitled;
- Engaging appropriately with relevant agencies regarding any concerns which emerge.

3.1.2 The following circumstances associated with children and families moving between Local Authorities are a cause for concern

- A child and family, or pregnant woman, not being registered with a GP;
- A child not having a school place or whose attendance is irregular;
- A child or family having no fixed abode (e.g. living temporarily with friends or relatives);
- Several agencies holding information about the child and family, which is not co-ordinated and / or which has not followed the child or family (i.e. information which is missing or has gaps).

3.1.3 Where families are highly mobile and/or transient and there are concerns for their children's safety, continuity of case management is essential to effectively assess risks and respond to the needs of the child/family.

3.1.4 Where a mobile family presents on multiple occasions (including requests for financial assistance) within a short period of time, an assessment must be undertaken. Where an assessment is not undertaken, the rationale for the decision must be recorded and approved by the Team Manager. At every subsequent contact by the family, the need to undertake an assessment must be reviewed. This decision and the rationale are to be recorded and approved by the Team Manager.

3.1.5 Upon receipt of a referral about a child and their family who are in the category of being highly mobile the Screening and Duty Team will undertake an Initial Assessment. The reason for the mobility should be questioned and understood within the context of an assessment of risk.

3.1.6 Where it is known that information is held by another authority or authorities the Social Worker must contact those authorities at the earliest opportunity, access the records held and record and share this information with partner agencies as appropriate. The assessment should consider the parents' earlier childhood history to understand the attributes they bring to parenting.

3.1.7 Social Care Team Managers will ensure that background information is sought from those authorities prior to authorising an assessment.

- 3.1.8 If the Initial Assessment indicates the need for an ongoing service the case will be transferred to the appropriate team in line with Nottingham City Social Work Operational Procedures.
- 3.1.9 In the event of a parent being pregnant and there is historical information that queries a parent's ability to care for a child when born, then a pre-birth assessment will be recommended to analyse potential risk to the unborn baby .
- 3.1.10 This assessment should include the potential additional stressors of multiple pregnancies including the likelihood of early delivery and perinatal mental health issues.
- 3.1.11 In relation to assessments undertaken across Local Authority Children's Services the focus of assessments will be clearly agreed and recorded. When Targeted Support Teams within Family Community Teams are involved in working with highly mobile families in conjunction with Social Care or are being commissioned to undertake either a Pre Birth Assessment or and there are identified safeguarding risks and indicators, an initial planning meeting to commission the assessment/piece of work must be chaired by a Community Team Manager or a Children's Social Care Team Manager. This meeting should, analyze and record risks and safety factors, identify and allocate key tasks and outline the timescale and set review meetings clearly.
- 3.1.12 Where an assessment is being completed to determine s47 enquiries in a case, where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or when a child urgently needs to be placed elsewhere other than his/her place of residence then a Police Information Enquiries (CRIMMs) check will be completed by Children's Social Care.
- 3.1.13 The outcome of the CRIMMs check should be sent directly to the Children's Social Care Team Manager who must provide a written acknowledgement that they have read the contents before passing the information onto the Social Worker.

4 Information Sharing

- 4.1.1 For agencies to maintain contact with children and families who move frequently, information needs to be accurate. Professionals should:
- Ensure that all forenames and surnames used by the family are provided, and clarification is obtained about the correct spelling;
 - Ensure that accurate dates and places of birth are obtained for all household members, wherever possible;
 - Obtain the previous full addresses and earlier addresses within the last two years;
 - Clarify relationships between the child and other household members, if possible with documentary evidence;
 - Ask the child / family with which statutory or voluntary organisations they are in contact with;
- 4.1.2 Professionals in originating authorities must ensure that their counterparts in the receiving authority have been sent a copy of all relevant records within five days of being notified of the move.

4.1.3 Professional staff in receiving authorities must ensure that they request relevant records from their counterparts in originating authorities immediately when notified of the move.

4.1.4 All attendances of children at Accident and Emergency departments should be communicated to the child's GP by the hospital's paediatric discharge system or paediatric liaison arrangements..

5. Information sharing where child is subject of a protection plan

5.1.1 If a professional from any agency discovers that a child subject of a protection plan is planning to move or has moved out of / into the area, they should inform the Social Worker immediately, and confirm this information in writing, whenever practicable on the same day.

6. Case Responsibility - Child subject to a statutory order in the originating authority

6.1.1 Children subject to a care order, an interim care order, any form of supervision or family assistance order, an emergency protection order, a child assessment order or subject to current use of police protection powers remain the responsibility of the originating authority.

6.1.2 Where a care, supervision or family assistance order is in force, the receiving authority may (and this must be confirmed in writing by a LA Children's Social Care first line manager or above) agree to provide required services on behalf of the originating authority. However, the legal responsibility remains with the originating authority.

7. Cross Boundary Arrangements

7.1.1 When checks are done on the under 18 year olds in the families, there should be a check carried out to see if they are subject to a criminal court order, have a outstanding court hearing and are subject to MAPPA. If this is the case the relevant Youth Offending Team should be contacted to ensure that 'caretaking' arrangements are in place. Nottingham YOT will liaise with the host Local Authority to ensure adherence to Youth Justice National Standards.

7.1.2 Where emergency action is needed the Children's Social Care Service for the area in which the child is found, is responsible for taking that action. The Team Manager for the authority where the child is found should consult with the originating authority at an early stage to clarify whether the child is;

- Looked after by, or
- Subject to a Child Protection Plan of another Local Authority.

If so, agreement should be made about;

- What emergency action will be taken; Roles and action immediately following emergency response.

7.1.3 Only if the originating authority explicitly accepts responsibility are Nottingham City relieved of the responsibility to take emergency action. Such acceptance should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours by both authorities.

7.1.4 Even if the child is neither looked after nor subject to a Child Protection Plan of the originating authority, the Team Manager for the authority where the child is found should still consult the originating authority to agree;

- What emergency action will be taken;

- Roles and actions immediately following emergency response.

- 7.1.5 It must be clear in their communications with the originating authority that in assisting them Nottingham City are not accepting responsibility as designated legal authority.
- 7.1.6 Where there are cross boundary disputes workers are strongly advised to seek Legal advice as soon as possible even if the case has been escalated to senior management.
- 7.1.7 Where children looked after who are the responsibility of Nottingham City are placed outside the City, it is the responsibility of the authority in which they are living to undertake enquiries where there are concerns that the child may have suffered harm or may be likely to suffer harm in that authority .
- 7.1.8 Where a child subject to Child Protection Enquiries moves out of the City prior to the conclusion of the enquiries, the Team Manager will ensure that enquiries are made to establish the current whereabouts of the child. When this has been established the Social Worker will liaise with the Local Authority responsible for the area that the child has moved to within the same working day to ensure that the child's protection needs can be assessed and ensure that there is clarity about case responsibility

8. Movement of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan between Local Authorities

- 8.1.1 It is essential that when a child subject to a Child Protection Plan moves out of or into a Local Authority, there is a clear procedure to assist the management of such a move so as to ensure the continuing safety of that child.
- 8.1.2 Working Together 2013 states the local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action. If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

9. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan moving out of Nottingham City

- 9.1.1 The Social Worker will inform the respective Safeguarding Children Information Management Team in City of any movements of children subject to a Child Protection Plan within the same working day as the details of the move having taken place are clear.
- 9.1.2 The Safeguarding Children Information Management Team will notify their counterparts in the receiving authority, giving full details of the child and family including details of the current Social Worker.
- 9.1.3 If the child's move was planned the Social Worker will liaise with the local Children's Social Care team in the receiving authority as soon as the move is confirmed. The purpose of this is to engage the local Children's Social Care Team in planning for the child's ongoing support / safety in advance of the child moving. If the move is not planned the Social Worker will liaise with the local Children's Social Care Team in the receiving authority to

share all relevant information and agree arrangements for the interim protection of the child within 24 hours of becoming aware of the move. Again the purpose of this is to engage the local Children's Social Care Team in planning to for the child's ongoing support / safety as soon as possible.

9.1.4 The Social Worker will notify all members of the Core Group, and the Independent Reviewing Officer of the child's move in writing. The Social Worker will attend any Initial Child Protection Conference the receiving authority decides to hold, and submit reports as necessary to assist the decision making about the future protection needs of the child.

9.1.5 Once a child subject to a Child Protection Plan has left Nottingham City, the local authority should make arrangements to discontinue the use of their Child Protection Plan for the specific child when the receiving authority holds their Initial Child Protection Conference. An exception to this would be where there is a plan for the child's imminent return to the originating authority or, in very rare circumstances, where the plan is that Nottingham City will retain responsibility for the implementation and review of the Protection Plan, e.g. where a child is subject to proceedings but has remained at home. In the latter case such a proposal must be agreed with the receiving authority. This agreement, the basis for it and any requested action from the receiving authority must be confirmed in writing by the Social Care Team Manager responsible for the case in Nottingham City as soon as possible.

10. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan of another Authority moving into Nottingham or City

10.1.1 The Safeguarding Children Information Management Team should be notified when a child subject to a Child Protection Plan moves into the authority. This will be by their counterparts in the originating authority or by any local agency that receives the information direct.

10.1.2 In these circumstances the Safeguarding Children Information Management Team will notify the relevant Children's Social Care team within the same working day in order that arrangements can be made for the case to be allocated to a Social Worker and for an assessment to be carried out. The threshold for Section 47 will be met by virtue of the child being subject to a Child Protection Plan of another authority.

10.1.3 The previous authority will be contacted for information and, other than in the exceptional circumstances set out below, an Initial Child Protection Conference should be convened within 15 working days.

10.1.4 The originating authority should be invited to attend and provide reports as necessary to assist the discussion about whether the threshold for the child to continue to be subject to a Child Protection Plan is met.

10.1.5 In the vast majority of circumstances an Initial Child Protection Conference will be required for children subject to a Child Protection Plan of another authority moving into Nottingham City. The only situation in which an Initial Child Protection Conference may not be required is when there is no proposal to discontinue the Protection Plan in the originating authority either because;

- The child has moved to stay in Nottingham City on a temporary basis. Temporary in this context means for a short, time-limited period, e.g. a holiday. It does not include children living in temporary accommodation whilst awaiting permanent accommodation in the City authority, or

- The originating authority wishes to maintain responsibility for the Protection Plan despite the fact that the child / children are living in the City. Such situations will be rare and will include for example when an authority is involved in legal proceedings with regards to a child and the child remains at home.

10.1.6 As indicated above the threshold for S47 enquiries will be met in both of these situations by virtue of the fact that information has been received that a child subject to a Protection Plan is living within Nottingham City. What this requires of Social Care locally, and in particular the Team Manager responsible for managing the local response, is that they satisfy themselves that the plans in place are sufficiently robust to protect the child whilst he/she is living in the City.

10.1.7 Any decision made not to hold an Initial Child Protection Conference in relation to a child subject to a Child Protection Plan of another authority should be made by a Team Manager who must discuss this decision with a Independent Reviewing Officer. This decision must be made with the agreement of the originating authority. The Team Manager from the City will write to the originating authority to confirm this proposal and set out any actions that it had been agreed will take place in.

10.1.8 These situations will be monitored closely by the Safeguarding Children Information Management Team (SCIMT) staff who should be kept informed of any change in circumstances.

10.1.9 As indicated above there will be very few circumstances where an Initial Child Protection Conference is not needed in the receiving authority. In such circumstances, subject to the family's view and consent, it may be appropriate to continue with and complete a Core Assessment of the child's needs to help determine what support services are best to help promote the child's welfare.

11. Movement to whereabouts unknown

11.1.1 Safeguarding Children Information Management Team staff should be informed of any situation when a child's whereabouts are unknown when the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or where there have been, or are, concerns about their safety and well-being.

11.1.2 The Social Worker has responsibility for tracing the child including referral to the Police, other Children's Social Care departments, Benefits Agency etc. Following agreement with the manager designated to be responsible for the Safeguarding Children Information Management Team staff will assist by notifying other local authorities through the agreed national notification process.

12. Children in Need

12.1.1 Where a child in need is receiving services, but is not looked after or subject of a protection plan, the originating authority must (in addition to informing relevant agencies in the originating borough) inform the receiving authority in writing of the plan, with intended date of move and details of the child's identified needs.

12.1.2 If the originating authority was unaware of the move before it occurred, the notification must occur within one working day following its discovery.

- 12.1.3 The receiving authority is responsible for seeking full information in writing from the originating authority, including information from other agencies where appropriate
- 12.1.4 Where a housing authority has been involved in the move of the child/ren and family, the originating housing authority must inform the originating and receiving LA children's social care services of the move.