



Multi-Agency Practice Standards December 2015



Creating a great place
to be young



Contents

Table of Contents

Standard 1:	4
Induction and Supervision	4
Standard 2:	6
Recognising a child or young person you know or are currently working with has unmet needs	6
Standard 3:	7
Seeking a consultation with the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS).....	7
Standard 4:	8
Child and Family Assessment.....	8
Standard 5:	9
Children and Young People who become subject to a Child in Need Plan.....	9
Standard 6:	11
Strategy Discussion and Section 47 Enquiries	11
Standard 7:	12
Child Protection Conferences and Core Groups	12
Standard 8:	13
Communication between Agencies	13
Standard 9:	14
Children and Young People in the care of the Local Authority.....	14
Standard 10:	15
Complaints and Escalation.....	15
Appendix	16

Acknowledgements:

These Practice Standards have been developed by the LSCB Safeguarding Children Operational Group, which is a multi-agency group of safeguarding managers across Cheshire East. - December 2015

Introduction

Why have Multi-Agency Practice Standards?

Effective multi-agency working and sharing information between agencies **is essential** in securing improved outcomes for children and young people. This is well documented in a number of reviews, policy documentation and statutory guidance.

These Multi-Agency Practice Standards establish **one way of working** across Cheshire East, so that we can provide a consistently good service to children and young people. They set the standard for practice for all practitioners, so everyone can know what to expect from all workers involved with a family. This will allow practitioners to ensure their work is of a good standard, and to challenge other workers on behalf of children and young people where the standards are not being met.

By working together, we can achieve our aim to make Cheshire East a great place to be young.

The term child or young person used throughout these standards also applies to unborn children.

Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#) sets out the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Two key principals of effective safeguarding arrangements are:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – each agency should take responsibility to challenge poor practice both within their own agency and in other agencies.

For services to be effective they need to be based upon a robust assessment of the child or young person's needs, and their views should be central to any intervention. There should be a consistent focus upon how interventions impact upon the child or young person, and outcomes should be clearly measured and evidenced.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Multi-Agency Practice Standards is to ensure:

- Frontline practice in all agencies is consistently good, effective, outcome focused and the child's voice is central to any intervention
- Local and national policies, procedures and statutory guidance are adhered to by all agencies
- Agencies are clear about what is expected of their service and staff understand what good practice looks like, and will challenge where this is not happening
- Children, young people and their families know what to expect from all agencies who safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Multi agency collaboration exists within every assessment and all plans for children and young people who live in the Cheshire East Borough

Standard 1:

Induction and Supervision

Induction

If you are new to your organisation or safeguarding, **you should receive a comprehensive induction** that ensures you are clear about your role and responsibilities.

You need to know who your designated safeguarding lead is **or** if this is you – who to contact if you have concerns about a child or young person.

Confidence, Competence and Communication is key part of your safeguarding role. You will need these skills for good multi-agency working, and your induction and supervision should support you to develop these.

Your induction should cover your safeguarding responsibilities. At the end of your induction **you need to:**

- Understand that **it is your responsibility** to safeguard a child or young person if you think they could be at risk – you need to do everything you can to ensure they are safe, and know what this looks like
- **Know how to make a referral** to Children's Social Care, who you contact, and when
- Understand **what information can be shared** and when you need **consent**
- Make sure you always **pass on information quickly** when a child or young person moves to another placement and/or area
- Establish **direct communication with partners** who might also be working with the child, young person or family - it is **your responsibility** to find out who to contact

Shadowing opportunities are available within LSCB partner agencies. These can be useful as part of your induction or continuing professional development and will enable you to gain a greater understanding of how other agencies work.

It is important for children and young people and their families that practitioners work together.

Details of [shadowing opportunities](#) in Cheshire East can be found on the LSCB website.

Supervision

Supervision is essential to support practitioners to take the right action for children, young people and families, to develop their skills, and cope with the emotional demands of working with children, young people and families through difficult circumstances and situations.

Working Together 2015 highlights the importance of effective professional supervision:

Supervision should support professionals to reflect critically on the impact of their decisions on the child and their family... Any professionals working with vulnerable children should always have access to a manager to talk through their concerns and judgements affecting the welfare of the child.

The frequency of individual safeguarding supervision will be based on an agreement between the supervisor and supervisee. Individual agencies' supervision policy should define the minimum levels of formal supervision; however **it is recommended that supervision should occur at least every 6 weeks.**

Supervision should include:

- **Challenge** – to help you to examine the rationale for your decisions, to make sure these are the right ones for children and young people
- **Reflection** – to help you to identify what you have learned, what worked well and what you could have done differently
- **Your development needs** – and what training, learning or support you need to continue to learn, develop and enhance your practice

As part of your safeguarding role, **you** need to:

- Talk about **safeguarding and your practice in supervision**, and make sure you have **regular supervision**
- Ensure safeguarding is part of your **team meeting agendas**
- Find out if there is any additional training to support your role
- Visit the [LSCB website](#) regularly to keep you updated on policy and find out what's new
- Read [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#) in addition to any other associated guidance

Designated Safeguarding Leads (Designated Persons) in every agency should be able to make safe, supported and sufficiently challenged **decisions** in relation to safeguarding. **Supervision** should be the forum where such decisions are discussed. For more information see the [Safeguarding Children in Education Settings](#) Guidance.

Standard 2:

Recognising a child or young person you know or are currently working with has unmet needs

Where your agency recognises there are unmet needs, your agency will take responsibility for carrying out an assessment using the [common assessment framework](#) (CAF).

As the identifying agency, you will:

- Ensure the family understand what the CAF is and how it is used to support them**; you have a responsibility to promote the CAF in a positive way as a tool to assess and support the needs of the child or young person
- Obtain consent from the child or young person** (if they are over 12 and they have [capacity](#)) **and their parents** to undertake the CAF assessment and contact other agencies to contribute to the CAF process
- You will **engage with other agencies to understand what the experience of the child or young person is** ; as no single agency has the whole picture
- Contact ChECS again** for a further consultation in the event a CAF is recommended but **the family are refusing to engage**

All agencies are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the **views of the child/young** person and what their daily lived experience is **clearly evidenced throughout the whole of the CAF process**
- Completing the CAF assessment within 2-4 weeks**. It should be needs led and all relevant agencies are responsible for contributing to the assessment and, where relevant, the delivery plan
- Making sure **Information is recorded in an open and honest manner** to promote respect between all parties. Information recorded should be factual, opinions can be recorded but it should be clear what is recorded as a fact and what is an opinion
- The CAF meetings taking place within statutory guidelines. Statutory guidelines state **a meeting should be held with a minimum of 1 meeting every 12 weeks; however it is strongly recommended meetings are held more frequently especially at the start of the process**.
- Recognising that **risks and needs change over time**; assessments should be dynamic, continuous assessments and respond to change so the right help is given at the right time
- Ensuring they have **up to date knowledge of current CAF processes** within Cheshire East and **have undertaken CAF training**

Standard 3:

Seeking a consultation with Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)

All agencies should have a current understanding of the role and purpose of [Cheshire East Consultation Service \(ChECS\)](#)

When you seek a consultation with ChECS, the expectation is you will have:

- Used the appropriate [screening tool](#)
- Considered the consultation in accordance with the **continuum of need** and discussed this with your safeguarding lead (see [Level of Need](#) Guidance). **If** there is an immediate safeguarding issue and the safeguarding lead is not available then the consultation with ChECS should be held without delay
- Obtained parental consent** unless seeking permission may itself place the child/young person at risk of suffering significant harm (**see parental consent**)
- Factual information about the family circumstances and reasons for the contact to hand** including details of work already undertaken with the family. Information should also include your agency's assessment of current risk to the child/young person
- Considered the impact on the child or young person** ensuring their lived experience, wishes and feelings are understood

The consultation may lead to the following outcomes:

1. **Advice**
2. **Early Help Offer**
3. **A referral to Children's Social Care** – if safeguarding needs at Level 4 are identified (see the [Level of Needs](#))

Following the consultation your agency must take responsibility for completing any actions agreed during the consultation.

Where your agency does not believe the consultation outcome is in the best interests of the child/young person **you are responsible for challenging this** via the LSCB [resolving professional disagreements](#) process **without delay**.

For concerns of **Child Sexual Exploitation** the [CSE Pan Cheshire screening tool](#) **will be completed in every assessment**. Other relevant tools should also be considered during the assessment. Children's Social Care will share the completed assessment with the family first and circulate to agencies involved prior to any Child in Need meeting/Child Protection conference.

If it becomes apparent during the assessment a child/young person is or is likely to be at risk of suffering significant harm, the assessment will cease and a multi-agency strategy discussion will be held.

Standard 4:

Child and Family Assessment

Children's Social Care will lead on the [child and family assessment](#) and all assessments will be completed within statutory timescales. Whilst the National statutory timescale is **45 working days**, Cheshire East Borough Council's Practice Standard is **15 working days, with a maximum of 35**.

At the beginning of the assessment it is important to identify who is the most appropriate professional to undertake work with the child or young person. This may be due to the communication needs of the child or young person. In the event this person is not the social worker and you are identified as the key professional, you will support the social worker to build a relationship with the child or young person.

Where appropriate the child or young person will be seen and spoken to alone and if appropriate, a joint visit may be undertaken with the referrer.

The child or young person's voice and lived experience is central to all assessments and planning. For those agencies that do not have direct contact with the child or young person, you will be able to identify the impact upon the child's lived experience through your knowledge of the parents and their parenting,

Assessments will be based upon the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families and should consider the individual needs and learning styles of the child or young person and parents or primary carers.

Every assessment will consider any additional vulnerability such as children with disabilities; babies under one year and those who are subject to private fostering arrangements. All assessments for children in need and children on child protection plans will include a completed risk assessment.

Assessments will be inclusive and encourage the full participation of the child or young person and family. This should also include any absent parents or significant others in the child or young person's life.

Delay in the assessment may have a detrimental impact on the child or young person therefore **where an agency identifies any barriers with the assessment process you will take responsibility to support the assessment and work collaboratively with the family and partner agencies to find positive solutions.**

You must **fully co-operate in sharing information without delay**, with Children's Social Care, to facilitate evaluation of risk to the child/young person. **You will share key information** in an open and honest manner with other professionals and the family throughout the assessment.

If there are concerns of neglect, Children's Social Care will confirm in a multi-agency planning meeting who will complete the [Graded Care Profile](#).

Standard 5:

Children and Young People who become subject to a Child in Need Plan

The first multi-agency Child in Need planning meeting should take place between days 15 and 25 of the assessment. The Plan should be in place on completion of the assessment, by day 15.

If a meeting has not been arranged within these timescales it is your responsibility to contact Children's Social Care to confirm the details of this meeting.

All [Child in Need Plans](#) will have child focused outcomes and be **SMART** (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound). Identified tasks will be completed by the identified agency within the agreed timescales.

Multi-agency Child in Need meetings **will be fully inclusive** and will promote the attendance and engagement of the child/young person and their family. Consideration should be given to preparation, accessibility, location and timing to promote the families attendance.

As an involved agency it is your responsibility to work in an open and honest manner with the family and you will be aware of the importance and significance of sharing any vital information/concerns during the Child In Need meetings when parents are present.

The child or young person's lived experience and current views will be discussed at every Child in Need meeting. Where the direct views of the child or young person cannot be heard or ascertained the lead agency should identify a mechanism through which their voice will be heard e.g. through advocacy.

Children's Social Care is responsible for arranging and communicating the details of the meeting **at least 5 working days prior to the meeting taking place.**

If you are not able to attend, your agency must take responsibility to provide the social worker with a report detailing the involvement with the child, young person or family since the last meeting and will include an analysis of the current risks and effectiveness of the Child in Need Plan; **this should be submitted 3 working days before the meeting.**

Where someone attends on behalf of a colleague they must have a good knowledge and understanding of the child/young person and be prepared to fully participate in the meeting.

All agencies attending the meeting should ensure the date, time and venue for the subsequent review is confirmed at every review meeting. Children's Social Care will be responsible for completing a comprehensive record of the meeting and will circulate the minutes and updated Child in Need Plan to the family and all involved agencies within 4 weeks of the meeting.

Consideration should be given as to whether a Family Group Conference should be convened if it is appropriate.

All involved agencies will take full responsibility and adhere to the requirements of the Child in Need plan.

In the rare event Children's Social Care is unable to attend a Child in Need meeting they will ensure all attendees are informed of this prior to the meeting.

If an alternative lead agency is identified to lead the meeting they should ensure there is an accurate record of the meeting taken and that this is provided to Children's Social Care who are then responsible for updating and circulating the Child in Need Plan within 4 weeks of this meeting.

No Child in Need Plan can be closed unless a multi-agency review of the plan has been completed and there is a multi-agency consensus the plan should end.

Agencies should always consider if there is a need for a CAF plan at this stage. In the event there is a disagreement about the decision to end the plan, the plan should **not** be closed and agencies should follow the [resolving professional disagreements](#) process.

To access the step up / step down process click [here](#).

Standard 6:

Strategy Discussion and Section 47 Enquiries

Agencies should be familiar with the content of **Working Together 2015 and section 11 of the Children Act 2004** which sets out the statutory duties in relation to safeguarding children and includes the processes relating to [Strategy Discussions](#), [Section 47 Enquiries](#) and [Child Protection Case Conferences](#).

Strategy discussions are held when professionals believe a child or young person may be at risk of suffering significant harm and discussions will involve all appropriate agencies' information in order to inform the decision for the child or young person.

Children's Social Care, (including the fostering service if the child is cared for), the police, education, health and other agencies such as the referring agency should be involved in the strategy discussion which should be face to face.

Strategy discussions and decisions **must be informed** by relevant partner agencies.

If you subsequently find out that a strategy discussion has taken place and you were not invited, and are a key agency, you should contact the Practice Manager in Children's Social Care without delay and follow the [resolving professional disagreements](#) process.

Where your agency is invited to attend a strategy discussion you must provide full information about your agencies involvement with the family which includes an analysis and evaluation of the current risks.

For those children or young people who are considered to be in need of immediate protection actions will be agreed at the strategy discussion for individual agencies in order to safeguard the child or young person. All children or young people in the household and the alleged perpetrators household must be considered.

In complex situations a series of meetings may be required in order to review the investigation process and agree any further actions.

Referral to LADO

A referral to the LADO in Cheshire East Borough Council **must be completed** where an adult who is working with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- Possibly committed an offence against, or related to, a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

This criteria relates to the adult's behaviour in the **workplace**, the **community** and in their **home and social life**.

Standard 7:

Child Protection Conferences and Core Groups

All initial and review [child protection case conferences](#) will be convened in accordance with the LSCB Multi Agency Child Protection Procedures.

All initial and review conferences will be held within statutory timescales.

For all initial conferences Children's Social Care will present the Children and Families Assessment with the report for conference. It must contain multi-agency contributions and include an outline child protection plan discussed with the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer (CP IRO) prior to the conference.

The CP IRO will meet with the child or young person and their family immediately before the conference to explain their role, the purpose and possible [outcomes of the conference](#).

All children and young people over the age of 12 years will be invited to attend the conference; unless there is a prior discussion between the social worker and CP IRO and it is confirmed this would not be appropriate. All children aged over 5 years who are subject of a child protection plan will be referred to the advocacy service by the CP IRO.

As an involved agency you will provide information about current involvement, analysis of risk and effectiveness of any current or proposed child protection plan to the social worker during the assessment who will include this information in the report presented to the child protection conference.

You have a responsibility to share any report you produce with the family **three working days prior to the conference**. Failure to do this may have an adverse impact upon the conference meeting.

As an agency representative attending the conference you must be fully prepared to participate in the meeting. You need to offer information about what you feel is going well for the child, what you are worried about and what you can do to support the child and the family. You must also provide an evidenced based view regarding the requirement for child protection planning. There is no expectation that your agency will automatically support the views of the lead agency and you should be prepared to share your views within the conference.

In order to end a child protection plan the majority of agencies involved must be confident and agree there is evidence of sustained change and the child/young person is no longer at risk of significant harm.

All core groups should be convened in accordance the requirements set out in Working Together 2015 and Children's Social Care will be responsible for completing a comprehensive record of the meeting and will circulate the minutes and updated Child Protection Plan to the family and all involved agencies **within 10 working days** of the meeting.

Standard 8:

Communication between Agencies

Communication between agencies is central to safeguarding children and young people.

All professionals working with the family will ensure they communicate all relevant information during and between meetings with each other; this will include any changes in circumstances i.e. changes of professional and/or any new additional concerns or positive improvements.

Written and verbal communication from all professionals should meet their agency's recording policy requirements or practice standards. Information shared or recorded should clearly differentiate between what is fact and what is opinion.

If you have requested a response from an agency and have not received a response within the required timescale, you should telephone the professional or agency direct to discuss this without delay.

When you cannot agree a resolution, your manager should be informed, they should then try to resolve the dispute, if this still cannot be agreed or resolved, you will need to evoke the [resolving professional disagreements](#) process.

Dissemination of information in a timely way is essential in safeguarding children and young people. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary delay, information should be shared electronically via a secure e mail address. It is your agency's responsibility to ensure the agency you are contacting has a secure e mail address **before** distributing any information or documents. Electronic information should not be shared if there is no secure e mail address.

If your agency is working with a child or young person who is not receiving services from Children's Social Care or who is subject to a CAF you should with the young person's or parents consent; contact their education setting to share information.

All agencies should be aware of their [roles and responsibilities](#) in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. [Statutory partners of the LSCB](#) have a duty under S11 of the children act.

Dual Process Policy

For those children/young people who are subject to a child protection plan and who then become cared for by Children's Social Care or who are legally secured by an alternative order, consideration will be given to ending the child protection plan outside of conference see [dual process policy](#)

Standard 9:

Children and Young People in the care of the Local Authority

Every child or young person in care must have an allocated social worker and should be visited by them within statutory timescales as a minimum.

Every child or young person in care must have a [care plan](#), annual health assessment and [personal education plan](#). The care plan must be based upon a robust assessment of need which is updated at least annually, see Standard Four for what is required in a child assessment.

The care plan is reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer within a statutory review which is held within 20 working days of the child or young person first becoming cared for, then at 3 months and then 6 monthly intervals thereafter.

All statutory reviews and pathway plan reviews are held in accordance with the requirements of the Care Planning, Placement & Review Regulations 2010.

All key agencies working with the child or young person will be sent a consultation document prior to the statutory review which will need to be completed and returned to the Independent Reviewing Officer before the review.

If you are not able to attend, your agency must take responsibility to provide the social worker with a report detailing the involvement with the child, young person or family

All education settings should have a Designated Teacher for cared for children and should liaise with the Virtual School on a termly basis for the purpose of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) review. The Virtual School will audit all PEP's.

Health assessments will be completed every 6 months for children under the age of 5 and annually for children and young people over 5. A strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) should be completed by the child or young person's carer as part of the annual health assessment for all children aged between 4 and 16 years. Young People over the age of 16 will complete their own SDQ and will be offered the opportunity to complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire by the Cared for Nurse at the time of their annual health assessment. This will help to identify those care leavers who make have increased emotional and mental health needs and to plan their care accordingly.

If your agency is working with a child or young person who is in care you should establish direct contact with the allocated social worker without delay in order to support the care plan for the child. You should contact your safeguarding lead in the first instance if you are unsure.

Standard 10:

Resolving Professional disagreements and complaints

As agencies working with children, young people and families you need to know what to do when you are worried that professionals are not working well together and, as a result, a child/young person is not making good enough progress or is at risk.

Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children.

Resolving professional disagreements is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard children. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.

Every agency should have their own procedures in place for how to deal with concerns within their own setting. On those occasions where concerns need to be raised with another agency, workers should ensure this happens as soon as possible and that discussions are clearly recorded. If the matter cannot be resolved with the worker from the other agency, then this will be progressed to their line manager. On these occasions please refer to the LSCB [resolving professional disagreements](#) process..

Please NOTE: Resolving professional disagreements process does not apply to disputes in respect of the outcome of a child protection conference. A separate process applies in those circumstances.

These standards will be reviewed annually
Date of next review ; December 2016.

Appendix

Key Guidance

[LSCB Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)

Tools and Guidance

These Multi-Agency Practice Standards should be read in conjunction with:

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#)
- [Local Safeguarding Children Board \(LSCB\) Child Protection Procedures](#)
- **Individual agency safeguarding policies, procedures and relevant guidance for working with children and young people**
- [Pan Cheshire Protocol for Missing from Home and Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

Useful tools and links to support practitioners working with families are included in the appendix.

Parental Consent and Information Sharing

[Consent and Confidentiality](#)

[Cheshire East Information Sharing Agreement](#)

[Information Sharing Procedure](#)

[Information Sharing – advice for Practitioners](#)

CAF

[CAF Procedures](#)

Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)

[Cheshire East Consultation Service](#)

[Levels of Need Guidance](#)

Child and Family Assessment

[Initial Assessment and Planning](#)

[Initial Assessment Analysis](#)

[Working with Uncooperative families](#)

[Gathering Information](#)

[The Vark Questionnaire](#)

[Risk Assessment and associated tools](#)

[Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

[Missing from Home and Care Protocol](#)

Domestic Abuse

[Cheshire Without Abuse Support Service](#)

[CAADA Risk Assessment Guidance](#)

Neglect

[Neglect Strategy 2014](#)

[Neglect Screening Tool](#)

[Neglect Graded Care Profile](#)

Strategy Discussions, Section 47 Enquiries and Child Protection Conferences

[Strategy Discussion](#)

[Child Protection Conference](#)

[Making Children Safer – The Cheshire East Child Protection Conference Model](#)

Resolving Professional Disagreements Process

[resolving professional disagreements](#)

Supervision

[Safeguarding Children in Educational Settings \(SCiES\) Team](#)