

Workforce Brief No.4

Child Protection Concerns & Timescales

Audience

- Professionals with lead responsibilities for child protection
- Practitioners required to contribute towards child protection processes
- Senior managers across all agencies,

Moray Children Services Partnership began implementing the National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland (2021) on 15 August 2022

We would like to inform you about improvements to our child protection processes over the coming months as part of the implementation program.

1. New Timescales for Child Protection Processes.

In line with the 2021 guidance, the following timescales changes will apply from 01 Feb 2023:

- The timescale between Inter-Agency Referral Discussion meetings and initial Child Protection Planning Meetings will change from 21 days to 28 calendar days. This allows time for sufficient assessment/investigation to take place and engagement with family.
- Similar to above, Pre-birth Child Protection Planning Meetings should be held as soon as possible and always within 28 days of the concern being raised and within 28 weeks of gestation.
- First review Child Protection Planning Meetings will be held within 6 months instead of 3 month timeframe. This allows time for sustained change to be evidenced.
- Where appropriate, first review Child Protection Planning Meetings can still be held earlier than 6months (for example first review following Pre-Birth Child Protection Planning Meeting) but this will become the exception rather than the rule.
- Core group should meet within 15 days of the first Child Protection Planning Meeting

What does this mean for staff?

The majority of timescale changes apply to the Childrens Social Work Reviewing Team when co-ordinating Child Protection Planning Meetings.

- **All Practitioners** are asked to anticipate these slightly longer timeframes and recognise the rationale behind these changes.
- **Social Workers as Lead Professionals** are asked to note the changes to core group timescales and the time allowed to convene an Initial Child Protection Planning Meeting

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2. Recording Child Protection Concerns

In line with the 2021 guidance, we have updated the definitions for, and recording of concerns for children who are at risk of harm.

- Child concerns will be categorised to differentiate between the harm that a child is at risk of experiencing (e.g neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse) and the wider vulnerability factors that contribute toward this (e.g parental drug use, child affected by parent/carer mental ill-health.)
- A number of new concerns have been introduced (e.g underage sex, online safety), this will allow more accurate recording for individual children and families, and also provide a better understanding of emerging themes at a service-wide level.
- We will no longer use the concern termed 'child placing themselves at risk'. Instead a more rights based and child centred approach will be used to describe concerns, for example child at risk of 'Criminal Exploitation' with 'Services Finding It Hard to Engage'.

What does this mean for staff?

Reviewing Officers and Reviewing Team administrators will implement changes required for recording and reporting purposes.

All practitioners are asked to consider these changes when preparing for a Child Protection Planning Meeting. The revised concerns & categories are outlined in the table below, full definitions for each are detailed in an appendix to this briefing.

IMPACT ON/ ABUSE OF THE CHILD IDENTIFIED	VULNERABILITY FACTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Sexual Exploitation • Emotional Abuse • Neglect • Physical Abuse • Sexual Abuse • Child Trafficking • Criminal Exploitation • Female Genital Mutilation • Honour-Based Abuse and/or Forced Marriage • Internet-Enabled Sexual Offending • Underage Sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services Finding It Hard to Engage • Domestic Abuse • Parental Alcohol Use • Parental Drug Use • Child affected by parent/ carer mental ill-health • Other Concern • Parent(s)/ Carer(s) with Learning Disability • Child experiencing mental health problems • Child displaying harmful sexual behaviour • Online safety