



Core Group Regional Policy and Procedures

CHANGE LOG

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The Core Group

The core group carries out the interagency work outlined in the child protection plan and includes the case coordinator and professional workers who have direct contact with the child and family. Parents and the child have an important role in contributing to the Child Protection Plan and should be invited to the core group meetings.

The members of the core group will:

- Co-operate with the case coordinator in the UNOCINI child protection pathway assessment and Child Protection Plan.
- Plan and implement interagency work as agreed at the child protection case conference and outlined within the child protection plan.
- Meet regularly to evaluate progress against the objectives of the Child Protection Plan and agree on-going actions required to progress the plan

Principles underpinning Core Group activity are as follows:

- The core group does not have a remit to change the child protection plan.
- The purpose of the core group is to make sure that the Child Protection Plan is implemented and actions are effective in safeguarding the child/young person.
- Core groups must be multi-disciplinary and multi-agency; and where appropriate, parents/carers, children and young people should be supported to participate in core groups.
- Core group members identified at case conference should participate and contribute at core group meetings. If a core group member cannot attend they must provide the case co-ordinator (SW) in writing an update about their involvement and include information about progress made and any issues with implementation of the plan.

Purpose of Core Groups

The chair of the Case Conference will agree the date for the core group at the conclusion of the case conference. The Case Conference chair will outline the role of the Core Group as follows:

- To operationalize and review the progress of the Child Protection Plan developed by the case conference, adding necessary detail to the Child Protection Plan as required, including professional roles and responsibilities together with expectations of family members.
- To consider the implementation of the Child Protection Plan and the impact of changes which have occurred within the family situation; and if appropriate, respond to changes which indicate a change in the assessed level of risk.
- To share information and to assess the impact of the Child Protection Plan.

Membership of the Core Group

Membership is defined by the Child Protection Case Conference, Regional Policy and Procedures.

Frequency of Core Group Meetings

In the 3 month period between the Initial Child Protection Case Conference and the first Review Child Protection Case Conference:

- The first core group meeting must occur within 10 working days from the Initial Child Protection Case Conference
- The second should occur 6 weeks after the Initial Child Protection Case Conference.

In the 6 month period between Review Child Protection Case Conferences:

- There should be a minimum of 2 core group meetings. The suggested intervals are at 2 and 4 months.

Whilst these are the minimum level of Core Group meetings required; more frequent meetings will be determined by need and professional judgment, for example:

- Pre-proceedings process or on-going court proceedings.
- If a professional has concerns about the level of parental cooperation.
- If the ICPCC/RCPPC decides that the complexity of the case requires more frequent Core Group meetings

Recording of the Core Group Meeting

The core group meeting must be recorded on the UNOCINI Core Group Meeting Record template and copies given to professionals, parents/carers and child/young person at the end of the meeting. A typed record will be distributed within 14 working days and a copy retained on the child's file.

Role of the Case Co-ordinator

The case co-ordinator is defined as a social work practitioner (Band 5, 6 or 7). The case co-ordinator must ensure:

- Child(ren) must be seen at a minimum of at least every 4 weeks during the period of registration.
- That child protection visits are purposeful; case co-ordinator must undertake work with the child(ren) and parents/carers as outlined in the child protection plan.

If the case coordinator is an Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) social worker:

- The social work manager (band 7)/senior social work practitioner (band 7) must chair the core group.

Role of the Social Work Manager

The social work manager (band 7) or senior social work practitioner (band 7) will be available to provide consultation and advice to the case co-ordinator (the social work manager will provide monthly supervision of the case co-ordinator).

The social work manager may decide to chair a core group meeting following discussion with the case co-ordinator. This decision will be based on, for example:

- complexity of the case and risk;
- where there is concern about the level of parental cooperation and/or the level of professional agreement;
- where there are concerns about the effectiveness of the child protection plan;
- cases where there are pre-proceedings or court processes on-going.

Concerns about the Effectiveness of the Child Protection Plan

If the core group is concerned about the effectiveness of the child protection plan, a number of options are available to the Core Group depending on the circumstances of the case:

- Request an urgent Review Child Protection Case Conference;
- Request Senior Management (Band 8a or above) responsible for the case to consider how to ensure the immediate protection of the child/young person;
- Where necessary all core group members should seek appropriate line management guidance.

Dissent in Core Groups

Where there are professional disagreements about the role and function of the core group in relation to a case:

- The Case co-ordinator must notify their line manager and Case Conference Chairperson and if resolution to the disagreement cannot be achieved by intervention of core group member's line management, an urgent Case Conference must be convened.
- Other multi-agency/multi-disciplinary professionals must escalate concerns through their respective line management.

Participation of Parents, Children and Young People in Core Groups

In defining the membership of the core group the Case Conference will also establish if, and how, the child, young person, parents and wider family members should be involved in the process. Parents and the child have an important role in contributing to the Child Protection Plan and should be invited to the core group meetings.

Parents should be invited to all core group meetings with the exception of those excluded from attending by the Child Protection Case Conference Group. The case co-ordinator should advise a parent that they can invite a support person to accompany them to assist with their full participation.

Parent's views should be represented and recorded at the core group meetings. Interpreters should be provided when required. Exclusions from Child Protection

Case Conferences are outlined in another section of these policy and procedures. (Include link).

Where a parent is unable, excluded, or chooses not to attend the core group meeting the case coordinator must consider alternate arrangements to ascertain and facilitate the views of the parent and the parents' views must be recorded.

Where appropriate a child/young person, depending on age, understanding and level of maturity, should be facilitated to attend the core group meeting to enable the meeting to hear from the child/young person how they are experiencing the child protection plan. Where a child/young person is attending the chair must ensure:

- The child/young person's attendance is purposeful; and must consider if there is value in the child/young person attending all or part of the meeting.
- If the child/young person wishes, they can bring a friend or someone to support them.

When a child decides not to or cannot attend the core group meeting the case coordinator must ascertain the child/young person's views on how the child protection plan is working for them, (this can be done using a variety of methods, dependent on the child's age) and these should be included in the core group recording document. The child/young person's views should always be represented and recorded at the core group meeting.