**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Children & Family Assessments – Bottom Lines**

Before a Child and Family Assessment is submitted to a Practice Manager for approval it needs to contain the following:

**Full updated chronology containing significant events relating to the child(ren) throughout their lifetime**

A significant event is an incident that impacts upon a child’s safety and welfare, circumstances or home environment.

The assessment should include an analysis of how the history impacts both on the present situation and the ability of the parents to meet the child’s needs now and in the future.

**Reason for Referral**

A paragraph summarising the key events which immediately led to this assessment

**The Child’s Voice**

In the child’s own words what is the impact of the worries on their day to day lived experience.

**Safety Plan / ‘What if Safety Plan’**

Within the assessment it must state what the child will do to keep themselves safe in the event of the harmful behaviour happening, what the adults will do and how the child will seek help or safety as necessary. Who the child will tell at the time and later. (‘what if’ safety plan) The safety plan must be clear what steps the adults will take to avoid the harmful behaviour happening and be specific exactly who is to do what, where and when. The child and parents must each have a copy of this.

**Assessment of all parents / carers and adults living in the home or visiting regularly**

There should be clear evidence of all attempts made to contact and involve any parents who do not live with the child and a very clear rationale given if this is not done for safety reasons. All adults in the home should be identified and their role in the child’s life considered within the assessment.

**Agency Checks:**

All agencies involved with the child and adult must be spoken to and their feedback recorded in detail. This should include drug and alcohol and mental health services for adults as necessary. Do not record ‘no concerns’ - record

when they last saw the child / adult and their professional opinion of the current situation of the child or adult.

The should be clear evidence that feedback has been given to agencies about the outcome of our assessment and where relevant, a copy of the What If Safety Plan is shared.

**Analysis**

This should be a formulation of the information gathered in the assessment which balances mitigating factors (safety) against risk (worries) and in doing so reaches a professional judgement and prognosis of the likelihood of future harm. This needs to take into account the history as identified in the chronology, the voice of the child and the views of other professionals. The outcome should inform the recommendations (next steps)

**Management Oversight**

Every CFA should have the Manager’s name in all boxes requiring this and boxes ticked to identify who has approved this work. The Manager’s comments do not need to repeat the CFA but need to evidence the decision making.

**Family Friendly Language**

The assessment should be written in plain language that can be understood by the family concerned.

* Avoid all jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.

Any assessments which do not will need to be amended by the social worker before the PM can sign them off.

**CFAs need to be completed by day 40 at the latest to allow time for changes and amendments. Any exceptions must be agreed with the PM well in advance.**

**Work submitted on day 45 might not be approved within timescales.**

**New Guidance from 25.2.19**

In order to see improved outcomes for children through ensuring that their voice and experience is recognised as part of the assessment process and influences analysis and decision making processes in a more consistent way, the following is required:

* Group Managers will be responsible for signing off all CFA’s where the child is not seen as part of the assessment (this will include clear rationale from the GM as to why the child was not seen and whether any additional action is required) – **Group Managers w/c 25.2.19**.
* If the assessment is a pre-birth assessment then this should still be signed off by the GM with it noted that this was a pre-birth assessment – **Group Managers w/c 25.2.19**
* All team meetings should have an agenda item confirming this arrangement and revisiting the importance of seeing the child as part of the assessment process – **Service Leaders/Group Managers/Practice Managers – from 25.2.19**
* A reporting schedule will be confirmed for identification of all cases where an assessment has been completed without the child being seen – **Jen Taylor** (discussion to take place to confirm timeframe).
* QA to re-audit cases - **Roisin Madden/QA**

**Reference Points;**

