**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 Subject to ‘Dual Status’ – CLA/Child Protection Plan**

**Scope & Purpose**

This Practice Guidance is for situations when a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan and then becomes a Child Looked After by the Local Authority.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that children are subject to dual plans for the shortest possible period of time, to align and integrate safety planning arrangements whilst ensuring their continuing protection, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort by professionals.

**Background**

Generally, children **should not be** the subject to both Child Protection and Care Planning processes. The general presumption should be that children who are looked after by a local authority should not be living with a continuing level of risk that requires a Child Protection Plan. This is especially so for those children placed in residential care, foster care or other regulated settings where the placement arrangements ensure that the child is safe from continuing significant harm. If a child is still considered to be at risk of significant harm despite being looked after (for example, at risk of exploitation outside the placement) this is not a reason to keep the child on a child protection plan, as the CLA Care Plan should be addressing those risks.

When both planning processes are in operation it can result in unnecessary duplication but also create confusion about which forum is making key decisions; this may result in attention being diverted away from the child, safety arrangements and the management of risk. It can also be difficult and stressful for families to attend numerous meetings and understand the differing processes. There are also resource implications for professionals attending numerous meetings.

**Decision Making**

When a child becomes Looked After; either through a Court Order or s20 this provides the child with a more robust safeguarding process than would be provided by a Child Protection Plan.

In the majority of cases, a Child Protection Plan will no longer be required with very few exceptions;

* where there is a plan of rehabilitation before the 1st CLA Review. In these circumstances, the CPA may continue with the Child Protection Plan for a short period of time.
* where the child is subject of an ICO but remains placed at home with parents.

When the child becomes Looked After, the CLA Care Plan should consider all risk factors; including the action required should a parent seek to remove the child from the care of the local authority through withdrawing s20 consent.

**Action Required (refer also to ‘Process’ document below)**

* The Social Worker will notify the CPA that the child is now Looked After.
* When a child becomes Looked After, the CPA will review the case to ensure that the initial Care Plan considers the risk factors and liaise with the child’s social worker, if required.
* The CPA should write a brief summary of the decision on MOSAIC – including any advice, guidance.
* The CPA will inform the Team Manager who will approve the decision – on case notes.
* The CPA Unit will then write to all agencies involved to advise them that the Child Protection Plan will be discontinued as the child is now Looked After (see standard letter below).
* Agencies will be given 5 working days to respond before ending the Child Protection Plan.
* The Team Manager will review any challenges and determine whether a Review Conference is required.

**Reference Points;**

 