Practice Matters

Child’s Plans

What is a Child’s Plan?

A Child’s Plan is the written document which details how any risks and needs identified in the assessment will be addressed to keep the child safe and achieve other outcomes identified to promote their wellbeing. A Plan is developed at any threshold level: Child Protection, Child in Need or Early Help, is regularly reviewed (usually at least every 6 weeks) to ensure it is effectively driving improvement in the child’s circumstances and will be stepped up or down the threshold levels accordingly.

Why have a Child’s plan?

To ensure all involved professionals and the family are working well together to achieve the agreed outcomes for the child; to ensure everyone knows what they (and everyone else) are responsible for doing. To respond quickly to any changes in the level of risk or circumstances of the child.

How to develop a good Child’s Plan?

* A child’s plan should be child focussed and outcomes personal to the individual child.
* It should always be developed together will the child and their family; through regular visits/direct work. Do they accept change is needed? What do they think will help?
* It needs to address the key risks and needs identified for the child in the assessment; and incorporates any new risks / needs as it is reviewed.
* It needs to be achievable; consider how many outcomes / action are being focussed on in any plan. It is recommended a maximum of 6 and these should be prioritised according to level of risk and impact.
* It will be outcome focussed rather than task or process focussed; an outcome is the end result you are aiming for, for the child – whereas tasks or processes will be the actions/means to try get to that outcome
* Ensure outcomes are clear and measureable; it’s really important that that the child and family are clear about what the purpose of the plan is and what change is needed to either step a plan down or for the case to be closed.
* Be clear about what progress / success could look for each outcome – steps along the way. Document progress made and how this has impacted on the child’s life.
* All actions should be SMART, reviewed regularly, and if not helping to achieve their intended outcome, addressed / changed. If outcomes are not being achieved be curious about why. *Do we need to give more time? But be careful of drift. Was the action the wrong one for this child / family? If so change the action to achieve the outcome. Does the family have capacity to change? If not what are you going to do?*
* Be clear about what will happen if outcomes are not achieved (the contingency plan) and the timescale around this – a good plan should drive change in a timely manner and respond to any drift or delay promptly.
* A good plan will consider what needs to happen to achieve sustainable (2nd order) change; ensure the plan isn’t just about modifying behaviour but is also addressing the values, family scripts, attitudes that will sustain that behaviour.
* Each child should have one plan that incorporates all that everyone is doing.