Bristol City Council Children and Families and Safer Communities

Practice Direction regarding working with Children in Need

Practice Change: To ensure the quality of our work with children in need.

During July 2021 all children in need that had been allocated to a social worker for more than 6 months within the 3 area social work units were audited to assure ourselves that we were working with the right children at the right level of intervention. In undertaking this audit, practice improvements were identified. The Practice Direction is intended to reinforce existing practices that are already highlighted as working well (to achieve better consistency) and to clarify expectations around other identified areas that require improvement.

Agreed actions

* Always map the family situation when a referral is received. Use scaling and danger statements at this point that can be reviewed with the family. Always consider Social Graces and incorporate these into the mapping/assessment process.
* Unless there are clear reasons, that are recorded, the initial mapping and completed assessment should always be shared with the family.
* Use Genogram and Chronology as key tools with, and alongside the families, at the beginning of our involvement with them.
* The visiting frequency for children should be proportionate to the level of risk/need assessed and the rationale for this should be recorded on the child’s record. In most circumstances children in need should be visited at least 4 weekly and if it is less frequent the rationale should be clearly recorded on LCS under Case Directions. Where a decision is made that it is proportionate to the child’s plan to visit less frequently than 4 weekly, this should be no more than 6 weekly intervals with the exception of children open long-term in DCSS where the maximum is 8 weekly intervals.
* A family/network meeting should take place at the earliest possible opportunity and within no more than 12 weeks from the date our involvement commenced. The child/family should take the lead in identifying who they wish to be present at the family meeting. (See Practice Direction Family/Network meetings February 2020)
* The frequency of Child in Need reviews should be proportionate to the needs of the child. In order to ensure timely progression of plans, CiN review meetings should take place 1 month following the initial plan and thereafter every three months, with a minimum requirement of a review taking place at least every 6 months.  The rationale for the frequency of review meetings should be recorded in Case Directions.   CiN reviews should always be chaired by a qualified social worker.
* Assessment and plans should be shared along with the summary of the meeting with all professionals at CIN reviews with the families consent and if they don’t consent then the danger statement, safety goals and next steps with the summary of meeting should be shared.
* Words and pictures should be used at different points throughout the work with children and families.
* Trajectories should be used with families.
* Following the end of a Child Protection plan a Child in Need plan should be written and a review set for within 3 months.
* If a child is subject of a pre proceedings process and is not also subject of a child protection plan then the child in need processes and pathways should be followed. Legal Panel should always agree and record the decision if a child will be subject of pre proceedings/care proceedings and not also subject of a child protection plan.
* When undertaking an audit of a child’s record the audit cannot be graded Good unless the above elements are in place.

Practice Directions are supported by:

* Working Together to safeguard children 2018
* Social Work England Standards
* South West Child Protection Procedures
* Bristol Children and Families, Quality Assurance Framework

Objective: the aim of Practice Directions are intended to provide clarity of any change of expectations in practice OR clarity on elements of practice where there is confusion. Practice Directions are intended for practitioners and managers. Practice Directions enable an audit trail of change in practice expectations to be maintained.

Process: Children’s Management Team will consider and approve PD’s. The PSW will issue and ensure that Practice Directions are entered onto Tri-x.

Quality Assurance of practice change:

Compliance with Practice Directions will be monitored by deep dive audit and performance indicators where possible.

Timeliness of visits and reviews, use of mappings and chronologies and genograms will be monitored in performance clinics.

Service Areas / roles applicable:

Area Social Work Units

DCSS

First Assessment Service

Date of Change: September 2021

PSW: Herdaypal Johal