Torbay Children’s Services

Interim s17 Child in Need Process

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1. **Introduction**

Working Together 2023 was published in December 2023. Chapter 3 “Providing Help, Support and Protection”, outlines that a broader range of practitioners can be the lead practitioner for children and families receiving support and service under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

This interim process outlines Torbay’s response and interim service delivery model pending a full-service review based on the changes introduced by Working Together 2023 and the potential changes required as the implementation of Stable Homes Built on Love progresses.

1. **Working Together 2023 and its implications**

Working Together 2023 states *‘a Child in Need (Section 17) will be allocated a lead practitioner’*. The lead practitioner for Section 17 is not required to be a registered social worker. In addition, Stable Homes Built on Love states: ‘*We want to bring the ethos of targeted early help into child in need and this includes greater flexibility around who can be a lead practitioner – based on the principle of the right person at the right time to build a relationship with the family, who also has the right skills, knowledge, experience and oversight.’*

Torbay have published a survey to capture the views of the workforce in relation to the implications of these changes, and what this means in terms of service design and delivery. A review is underway to consider the most appropriate and proportionate delivery model and structure taken in to account the results of the survey and how this would be viewed from a child and family perspective. The review will consider any opportunities to:

* minimise unnecessary transition or handover points
* enhance opportunities for more effective multi-agency working
* ensure that children are able to access the right services, at the right time, from the right people.

1. **Child in Need Policies and Procedures**

This section is designed to be read alongside the procedures relating to Children in Need contained within Torbay’s procedures manual:

[Child in Need Plans and Reviews (proceduresonline.com)](https://torbaychildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_cin_plans_rev.html)

There will be no changes to the statutory expectations in relation to assessments, visits or reviews in relation to child in need planning as outlined in the procedures manual and associated statutory guidance.

In line with Working Together 2023, Torbay will introduce in the interim the opportunity for Children in Need to be allocated to Community Care Workers (non registered workers) within the service.

*Process*

Team Managers will identify children for consideration of Community Care Worker allocation within supervision and will notify the relevant Service Manager who will endorse the decision to allocate a Community Care Worker ensuring that a clear rationale is recorded as a management oversight on the child’s file. The allocated social worker should then clearly communicate the rationale for this decision and the next steps to the child and the family and record this communication on the child’s file.

A joint visit or Child in Need Review will be arranged between the outgoing social worker and the newly allocated Community Care Worker in line with the transfer policy. This will agree outstanding areas of support as identified within the child’s plan. The case summary on the child’s file will be updated to ensure that the wider partnership involved in the children’s planning are notified of this new allocation.

Supervision will be provided to the Community Care Worker allocated to the child in line with Torbay’s Supervision Policy, with supervision undertaken by a social work registered Team Manager or Advanced Social Worker at minimum every four weeks.

1. **Scope**

The scope of children to be considered for Community Care Worker allocation would include:

* Children open to Child in Need planning primarily due to housing need.
* Children in the process of stepping down to Early Help.
* Children identified as moving towards closure to services.
* Identified by Service Manager or Head of Service within Child in Need Clinic.

1. **Escalation of need**

Need is a continuum and levels of need will change dependent on a range of factors, including a child’s age and stage of development, significant changes in terms of a child’s lived experience, as well as other environmental and family factors. Therefore, the allocation of a Community Care Worker will be subject to review in the event that escalation of need or risk is evidenced.

If at any point, need is considered to have escalated and that a more enhanced level of support is needed for the child and the family, the Community Care Worker will raise this with their Advanced Social Worker and/or Team Manager, who will immediately consider reallocation to the previously allocated social worker, as this will minimise the impact of the transition. If this if not possible, the child will be allocated to a social worker within the same team, to enable consistent Team Manager oversight.

1. **Professional Difference**

Should any partner wish to raise a professional difference, they will be advised to following the process as outlined in the TSCP Professional Difference Policy:

[Policies - Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership](http://www.torbaysafeguarding.org.uk/publications/policies/)