**Practice Note for all Practitioners and Managers**

**Practice Note 1 – April 2019**

This is a Practice Note to advise you of recent changes to Process Maps, Practice Guidance and Procedures in Sandwell Childrens Trust.

1. **Practice Standards**

The Practice Standards have been designed for practitioners by practitioners and members of the Practice Improvement Board (PIB) have been involved every step of the way.  The A5 booklet contains practice standards that follow the child’s journey and sets the standard of practice we need to undertake with the children and families we work with. **The key message** is to read your booklet and reflect and discuss the Practice Standards in your team meetings and apply them to your practice.

1. **Life Work (Life Story Work)**

Life Work Guidance has been developed that gives clear practical advice and guidance for practitioners undertaking life work with children in colourful easy to understand packs. There are 4 different packs for different age ranges. Development sessions for all staff are being planned to provide guidance on undertaking life work with children/young people and starting and completing their life books with them.

**The key message** for all practitioners and managers is that life work begins when we very first start working with a child not just when they become looked after and their plan is adoption.

1. **Pre-Proceedings Public Law Outline (PLO)/Legal Planning meetings (LPM)**

An updated Process Map and Guidance has been developed with Team Managers, Court Officer, PSW, and Care Mgt Operations Manager. This will help and support practitioners and managers to understand what to do, and who does it, when we are thinking that children may require the added protection of a court order. **The key message** is that front loading your evidence through robust assessments and pre-proceedings PLO work means that families have the best opportunity to succeed, and if care proceedings are required the court process runs smoothly and swiftly within the 26-week timescale.

1. **Unregulated Placements**

A Process Map and Guidance has been developed by Heads of Service and the PSW to ensure that we know about all children in unregulated placements. The guidance helps practitioners and managers to identify what makes a placement unregulated, how to avoid it, and what needs to happen when there is an unregulated placement. In addition to the Guidance there is a new Form that must be completed to track unregulated placements. A weekly tracker ensures we know about all unregulated placements and can review them on a weekly basis. **Key messages are** that we all need to know what makes a placement regulated, and we must do everything we can to avoid having children in unregulated placements. If a child is in an unregulated placement then weekly visits are required and a weekly review of the placement.

1. **Connected Carers (including Schedule 4 Assessments/Reg 24 Immediate Placements Approval)**

A new process map with practice notes has been developed and co-produced between PSW, Care Mgt, LAC, Fostering Service, LCS Team, and Business Support. There are changes to how we will complete Schedule 4 assessments of prospective applicants who want to be considered as connected carers. There will be a robust initial screening of applicants, and a checklist has been developed to support this. Fostering SW will complete the first schedule 4 visit jointly (where possible) with the child’s SW so that there is a focus on the fostering task, health and safety of the home etc. When the schedule 4 is complete this will go on the applicants file (by the Fostering SW). There will be a Nominated Officer (HOS Fostering) that will sign off all Schedule 4s. **Key message** is to familiarise yourself with the process map as this describes each step and includes the new changes, which are due to go live on 01-05-19.

1. **Entry into Care**

The child’s entry into care process map has been reviewed, revised and updated by PSW, Care Mgt, LAC, Business Support, and the LCS Team. The process map supports all staff to know what happens when a child needs to come into care and who does what and when, up to the Initial LAC Review. **Key messages are** that it is vitally important that the legal status of a child is changed on the day they are placed, as this ensures the child becomes a looked after child on the system. The 72-hour post placement meeting must take place to ensure that the child’s needs in placement are known, understood, and planned for.

1. **Personal Education Plans (PEP)**

A new process map has been developed between PSW, LAC, Care Mgt, Virtual School, Business Support, and the LCS Team. This helps and supports all staff to understand how PEPs are undertaken and who does what and when to support and plan for a child’s education and learning from pre-school (early years) through to post-16 education. **Key messages are** to ensure that the PEP is held termly (3 times per year) for a child. It is important to that the SW, Designated Teacher and Child/YP all finalise the PEP on the e-PEP system before it can be moved and filed in the LCS system.

1. **Health Assessments (Initial (IHA) and Review (RHA))**

A new process map has been developed between PSW, LAC, Care Mgt, LAC Health Service, Business Support and the LCS Team. This helps and supports all staff to understand how Health Assessments are undertaken, the interface between the LAC Health Service and SCT and who does what and when to support a plan for a child’s health needs. From 01-05-19 all review health assessments for the current group of Looked After Children will be spread throughout the year.

**Key messages are** that it is important that practitioners are aware that the review Health Assessment is happening and ensure it is on the file, along with consideration of how the child’s health needs are being met and incorporated into the child’s plan.

1. **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)**

A new process map has been developed between PSW, LAC, Care Mgt, Business Support and the LCS Team. This helps and supports practitioners to understand how SDQs are undertaken and who does what and when to ensure we have considered the child’s emotional wellbeing. **Key message is** to read and understand the process map and consider the best time to undertake an SDQ (as the child needs to be known to you), and whether to complete the SDQ with the child, or an Adult on behalf of the child, or both.

1. **Looked After Children (LAC) Review to Permanence (Journey Through Care)**

A new process map has been developed between PSW, Care Mgt, LAC, SG Unit, Business Support and LCS Team. The process map supports all staff to know what happens when a child has come into care and what needs to happen and who does what and when after their Initial LAC Review through to Permanence for the child. **Key message is** to understand the importance of Permanency Planning Meetings and how they can support the child’s journey through to one of permanence.

1. **Good Practice Guides – Chronologies, Assessments, Plans, Summaries**

Four Good Practice Guides have been reviewed, revised and updated by the Beyond Auditing Team, PSW, Care Mgt, Front Door and LAC. The refreshed guides are ‘Back to Basics’ to ensure that all practitioners and managers are supported to know what to include in good chronologies assessments, plans and summaries. **Key message is** to read, reflect and discuss these good practice guides in your team meetings and apply them to your practice.

1. **Supervision Policy**

The Supervision Policy has been slightly revised by PSW and Heads of Service. We recognised that an interim revision of the Supervision Policy was needed following the Fostering Inspection, and therefore the document has had two immediate revisions

1. The addition of foster carer supervision to take place every 6 weeks
2. The alteration of frequency of case work supervision for Children in Need and Looked After Children to 4 weekly.

We are planning a full review of the Supervision Policy over the next 3 months’ starting on 12-4-19 at the Practitioners Improvement Board (PIB) and will conclude in early June 2019.  The process will be in full consultation with managers and staff in the Trust. **Key message is** to read the new policy and understand the 2 immediate revisions and changes and apply them to your practice.

1. **Assessment Forms**

The Single Assessment Forms have been revised and revamped and went live on LCS on 01-04-19. The forms include the Child’s World Triangle to help and support practitioners to think about the key areas to be covered in the assessment. **Key message is** that the pre-birth assessment is also contained in the new form. Learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) has been that it is essential that the pre-birth assessment is completed prior to the birth of a vulnerable baby to inform planning to protect the new born baby post-birth.

*Note; All Process Map and Guidance are available on Tri-x. Go to the Start Button, All Programmes, Childrens Tri-x, click Sandwell Guidance Button, click 12.Process Maps, and find the process map you are looking for.*

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**April 2019**