

# Walsall Family Safeguarding Procedures

## Contents

<a href="#">Practice Principles</a>	2
<a href="#">Which families receive the Family Safeguarding approach?</a>	2
<a href="#">Entering the Family Safeguarding Team</a>	3
<a href="#">Roles and responsibilities</a>	4
<a href="#">Description of activities or interventions</a>	5
Motivational Interviewing	5
The multi-agency parenting assessment	5
Working with adults	5
<a href="#">Understanding levels of risk and need</a>	5
RAG rating	5
Making connections with statutory processes	5
<a href="#">Case management</a>	6
Family Safeguarding supervision	6
Step up and step down arrangements	7
<a href="#">Recording principles and practice</a>	8
<a href="#">Process and quality standards</a>	8



## Practice principles

The practice principles of Family Safeguarding apply to all of our work with families that meet the threshold for children's social care, whether or not they are on the Family Safeguarding pathway.

These principles are:

- *Human rights and empowerment*
- *Choice*
- *Managing our anxieties and working with uncertainty*
- *Having difficult conversations*
- *Sharing risks and responsibilities*
- *Working with resistance*

The aim of Family Safeguarding is to ensure families receive a tailored response to their needs, not solely based on the level of risk to the child. This means workers and managers should be flexible when making decisions about case allocation and case transfer to best meet the family's needs.

## Which families receive the Family Safeguarding approach?

All families with at least one child meeting the threshold for children's social care (either Section 17 or Child Protection) enter the Family Safeguarding Teams and are allocated a social worker.

A child or young person or family is allocated to one of two pathways:

- Families where there is at least one child under 13 and the main concern is related to mental health, domestic abuse or substance abuse will follow the Family Safeguarding pathway. This is the focus of the rest of this procedure.
- Where the children are over 13, and/or the main concern is needs and harms located outside of the family home, the child or young person will follow the Exploitation pathway.

The Family Safeguarding pathway includes support for children and young people who are considered in need due to the following, if they meet the other criteria above:

- Being a young carer
- Being privately fostered or living with kinship carers without a care order
- Living in families with no recourse to public funds

Some children and young peoples supported by the Family Safeguarding Team are looked after children, and they may:

- be subject to interim orders from the Court,
- be accommodated by the local authority under Section 20, with a plan to return home
- be placed with parents under a care or supervision order
- be living with connected carers arrangements (Reg24).

It is important to be clear who the family members are who are part of the Family Safeguarding workflow. This might include or exclude:

- children in the family who do not live at home
- connected carers and / or birth parents.



Some children and families may be best supported by other services, instead of, or alongside the Family Safeguarding Team, for example when a child has significant disabilities, or when the child or young person is care. It is the responsibility of the team manager, in discussion with colleagues in other teams to make arrangements to ensure the whole family get the right help at the right time.

## Entering the Family Safeguarding Team

Families are referred to the Family Safeguarding Team following a child and family assessment by the Initial Response Service where this assessment identifies a need for longer-term work with the family. The IRS team:

- decides whether a family should follow the Family Safeguarding pathway, or another form of support based on the age of the children and the presence of parental mental health, substance misuse or domestic abuse needs.
- gains and records consent from the family to be referred to the Family Safeguarding Team as appropriate.
- opens a Family Safeguarding Workbook.

On entering the Family Safeguarding teams, a case allocation meeting is held. The outcome of the case allocation meeting is that:

- the family are allocated to a social worker
- where the family are following the Family Safeguarding pathway, a decision is taken as to the level of support from adults workers, based on the family's needs and capacity to change and capacity within the team.

## Roles and responsibilities

The Family Safeguarding Team manager is responsible for overseeing the work of the Family Safeguarding team. This includes:

- Allocating cases to a social worker on arrival into the FS team
- Chairing the Family Safeguarding supervision meeting
- Agreeing to RAG rating
- Agreeing and recording management decisions relating to thresholds
- Agreeing 'step down' arrangement to early help.
- Managing disputes and disagreements between team members and between employing organisations of team members.
- Working with the group manager and other team managers to allocate work to the adults workers

(Some practitioners employed by other agencies will have separate and additional management arrangements that are out of scope of this policy)

The allocated social worker is responsible for working with the family to understand their circumstances and capacity to change. This includes:

- Leading parenting assessments and direct work with families
- Sharing reports and assessments with the family

- Performing all relevant duties and statutory requirements related to the child's status. This includes statutory duties for:
  - children in need under section 17,
  - children on a child protection plan or
  - children on a care or supervision order
  - any additional duties resulting from the child's living situation (private fostering and informal kinship care, caring responsibilities)
- Ensuring records are kept in a timely and succinct manner

All members of the Family Safeguarding Team are responsible for working with the family to provide support and challenge to increase parental capacity to care for their children, or to better understand the limits on parents' capacity to change:

- Undertaking interventions as agreed in Family Safeguarding supervision
- Maintaining routine records of their work with families
- Completing monthly summaries describing their work with families
- Participating in Family Safeguarding supervision
- Attending statutory case management meetings (CIN meeting and review, child protection core group and review meetings, Looked After Child reviews and court proceedings) as required.

Adults workers may have responsibilities and reporting arrangements outside of the Family Safeguarding Team due to the terms of their employment. Where relevant, these practitioners are responsible for

- Recording their work on any other systems required by their employer
- Participating in supervision and other management processes as required by their employer.

## Description of activities or interventions

### Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing is the approach that underpins the work of the Family Safeguarding Team with children and families.

We use motivational interviewing as a core approach to practice with families. The practice principles guiding motivational interviewing are:

- *Express Empathy*
- *Develop Discrepancy*
- *Roll with Resistance*
- *Support Self-Efficacy*

### The multi-agency parenting assessment

The multi-agency parenting assessment is led by the allocated social worker, with contributions from adult workers, if allocated, reflecting their work with parents. It builds on the single assessment undertaken by the Initial Response Service and informs decision-making.

The parenting assessment provides a framework for discussing and exploring family life through different modules of the assessment. This should be used flexibly in line with the family circumstances.

Each parent within the family has their own multi-agency parenting assessment. Families should experience the assessment process as helpful in supporting them to reflect and adapt their parenting. It is a core part of the support offered to families, rather than a preliminary activity designed only to assess need for support.

### Working with adults

Adults workers provide support to parents where this is identified as a need in the case allocation meeting. The decision about what support to offer is based on the Child and Family assessment of the family's needs and the parent's capacity to change.

The capacity of adults workers to support parents is limited and it is important that families are prioritised according to need. Where the support of an adults worker is identified as an important part of the support for a family, the team manager should discuss the case allocation with the adults worker's line manager. The adults worker's line manager has the final decision as to whether the adults worker provides support.

The adults workers can provide a range of interventions to explore and support parental capacity to change. These interventions aim to support parents to address issues that affect the safety and welfare of the children, including mental health needs, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

Interventions and support might include:

- Direct work to engage parents with the support being offered
- One to one support
- Group work
- Risk assessments.

The adults workers may offer consultation, advice and support to other members of the Family Safeguarding Team when they are not allocated to the family for direct work.

## Understanding levels of risk and need

### RAG rating

The RAG rating is a measure of the risk to the child attributable to the parent or caregiver.

- **RED** – Highest risk of significant harm to the child
- **AMBER** – Medium risk of significant harm to the child
- **GREEN** – Lower risk of significant harm to the child (CIN or Section 17 financial provision)

All families are given a RAG rating to help the team agree a shared understanding of the level of risk or need associated with the family. Each worker with the family decides on a RAG rating based on their work with the family.



RAG ratings are shared and reviewed at each Family Safeguarding supervision and agreed by the team manager. This is an opportunity to discuss the rationale behind the RAG rating, and to identify what has changed for the family since the last Family Safeguarding Supervision.

The RAG rating does not necessarily align with child protection thresholds as they can change in between statutory review meetings. The threshold decision should also be revisited at every Family Safeguarding supervision. Changes in RAG rating and recommendations about changes to the threshold decision made in group supervision should inform decisions made about child protection or other status in statutory meetings.

### Making connections with statutory processes

At the point that the family is transferred to the Family Safeguarding Team, the Initial Response Team will have completed:

- A Child and Family assessment
- A threshold decision
- A strategy meeting and a S47 inquiry if required based on Child and Family assessment
- A relevant plan (Section 17 Child in Need or child protection plan or a Court / LAC care plan).

All the children in the family are recorded in the workbook, whether or not the individual child is on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. Each child with a plan will have statutory planning and review meetings in line with their plan.

All members of the Family Safeguarding Team working with the family, including adults workers, take part in the statutory planning and review process through attending child protection or child in need core group and review meetings where possible.

The allocated social worker is responsible for the statutory process from the point of allocation. This includes:

- Maintaining records of statutory activities on Mosaic (plans, visits, reviews etc)
- Writing the family report for the statutory planning or review meeting. This report draws together information from the workbook and monthly summaries produced by all those working with the family.
- Notifying the team manager if the threshold decision needs to be reviewed between Family Safeguarding supervision meetings

The Family Safeguarding Team manager is responsible for:

- Agreeing threshold recommendations from the Family Safeguarding team through Family Safeguarding supervision to be fed into the plan review process
- Monitoring the completion of actions in the child's plan that are the responsibility of members of the Family Safeguarding Team.
- Monitoring the completion of statutory recording, as well as completion of the workbook.



## Case management

### Family Safeguarding supervision

The Family Safeguarding supervision meeting is at the heart of the multi-disciplinary work of the Family Safeguarding Team. Every family open to the Family Safeguarding pathway is discussed at Family Safeguarding supervision meetings once a month.

#### **Before the meeting,**

- The allocated social worker and adult workers summarise the case recording into a monthly summary of their work with the family. Each worker writes their own monthly summary. This includes an individual assessment of the RAG rating of the assessed risk to the child. These are recorded in the workbook.
- The Business Support Officer makes arrangements for the meeting in liaison with the team manager. This includes inviting people from the Family Safeguarding Team and other relevant professionals to the meeting and identifying a suitable location for the meeting to take place, or arranging a virtual space for the meeting to be held.

#### **At the meeting**

- All Family Safeguarding practitioners working with the family attend the Family Safeguarding supervision where that family is being discussed. Where this is not possible, the monthly summary and professional's RAG rating is used to ensure that the work being done is reflected in the discussion.
- The relevant workers discuss and reflect on their work with the family, identifying progress made and next steps for support.
- The group discuss the current RAG rating for the family and decide if that needs to change. Where professionals give different RAG ratings the reasons for this difference in opinion should be explored.
- The Family Safeguarding supervision is guided by the principles of motivational interviewing. This means that everyone should talk and act in such a way as to promote:
  - sharing risk and responsibility
  - managing anxiety and uncertainty
  - having difficult conversations
- The Business Support Officer makes notes of the discussion in the relevant form, during the meeting.

#### **After the meeting**

- The Business Support Officer completes any notes of the meeting and submits to the team manager for approval.
- The team manager approves the meeting notes as an authorised record of the meeting.
- The social worker uses information and decisions taken at the Family Safeguarding supervision to inform the statutory processes of child in need and child protection planning and review.

## Step up and step down arrangements

### **Moving across thresholds within social care**

Children and Families can move between Child in Need and Child Protection depending on the level of risk identified through the work of the Family Safeguarding Team. Moving over this threshold does not change the offer of help provided.

When a child protection plan ends, the child must be put onto a child in need plan as part of the step-down process. Children stepped down from a Child Protection Plan to a Child in Need Plan remain within the Family Safeguarding Team.

### **Moving out of the Family Safeguarding Team**

Families only leave the Family Safeguarding team when all casework has been completed with all members of the family. When a family leaves the family Safeguarding Team, the workbook is shared as a read-only document to inform future work with the family.

When a decision has been taken to end a child in need plan and this is the last child in need plan for any child in the family, the social worker or team manager should consider if further support is required from early help. If so, the social worker or team manager must notify the Early Help team as early as possible that the case should be considered for transfer. The Early Help Team should be invited to the final Child in Need meeting to finalise the handover.

Where a decision is taken to apply for a care order, the social worker or team manager must follow the Public Law Outline process, including involving the clinical psychologist in any assessments of the child or parents required for court. The Family Safeguarding Team retains responsibility for the child throughout care proceedings. Once the Care Order is granted, responsibility for the looked after child transfers to the Corporate Parenting team. If there are children still living in the family home, then the rest of the family remain open to the Family Safeguarding Team until case work is finalised.

## **Recording principles and practice**

- There is one workbook per family
- Within each workbook, there is a parenting assessment for each parent.
- The workbook provides the narrative and context for working with the family. This is the core record of work with the family.
- All case records, and particularly the workbook, are written in such a way that they can be shared with families openly.
- All recording relevant to the child's needs are made by practitioners within the workbook or related modules. This contributes to the parenting assessment which is the main record of work with the family and progress made.
- Adults workers will collect and record much more information about parents than is necessary to include in the workbook. Adults workers should consider the relevance of information to the child's needs and wellbeing and only include relevant information in the workbook. Other information about their work with the parents should be recorded on their own agency systems to preserve confidentiality.

Statutory records only need to contain the minimum of information about statutory activities. This includes the date the activity was undertaken and a reference to the workbook for more information. Basic details of statutory visits are recorded on the usual template in ICS, with detail about work undertaken recorded in the workbook.





## Process and quality standards

Motivational interviewing and the principles underlying informs all of our work with families.

### Working with families

- All case discussions, decisions and recording should be family-focussed, considering the whole family and the level of need or risk to each child individually.
- Families should give consent to all information sharing, to receiving particular interventions or support, and be involved in decisions about thresholds and case closure. This consent must be recorded clearly in the workbook, or a record made as to why consent is not required.

### Timescales

- Cases should be allocated to a social worker within one week (maximum) of an IRS decision that further work is needed by the Family Safeguarding team.
- Monthly summaries must be completed at least 3 days before the Family Safeguarding supervision.
- Group case discussions must be signed off by the team manager within 3 days of the meeting.
- Statutory timescales apply depending on the status of the child's plan – for example statutory visits must be recorded within 24 hours of the visit or contact.