

Practice fundamentals for Children's Services

This is a tool to help all practitioners and managers to achieve and maintain a consistently good standard of practice. It provides an aide memoir and quality control tool to compare our work with before we sign it off and become individually and collectively accountable for it. These fundamentals, or 'bottom-lines', have been drawn together from our practice standards, from the DfE's qualifying standards for workers and managers, from Essentials, from our performance and quality framework, and improvement activities. The tool should be used routinely to ensure that the standard of assessment, planning, support, intervention and reviewing practice reflects the detail of what is required. If it doesn't this should be addressed before the task is completed or the practice is authorised by the relevant line manager.

Supervision and Management will:

- Promote and govern excellent practice and develop excellent practitioners.
- Shape and influence the practice system, and use power and authority effectively.
- Ensure managers understand and track the needs and risks for children; and provide confident analysis, direction, and decisions.
- Offer guidance, challenge and support to practitioners so that their interventions are purposeful and effective.
- Be regular, reflective and clearly recorded (and filed in the 'Forms' section on Liquid Logic).
- Clearly show the impact of the manager's 'foot print' throughout the journey of the child.
- Ensure the voice of the child, their story and lived experience is known, understood and taken into account.
- Analyse the child's circumstances and the impact of protective factors, needs and risks, and longer term consequences.
- Define the threshold and consider the likely, significant and imminent risk of harm for the child.
- Include specific actions about what needs to change for the child (with realistic timescales).
- Confirm how management direction will be reviewed.
- Evidence critical challenge and address poor practice, drift and delay.
- Be used proactively by staff to work professionally, reflectively and reflexively.

Visiting and Direct Work will:

- Support children and young people to benefit from a safe, stable and trusting relationship with their worker.
- Help in understanding and respectfully addressing barriers to engaging.
- Be timely, purposeful (guided by the child's plan) and persistent.
- Include a schedule of planned activity with the child and parent(s)/ carer(s) when they are seen.
- Ascertain the child's independent views, wishes and feelings and take these into account in planning and decision making.
- Work together with parents/carers, including those who are separated, divorced or live apart from the child.
- Support the development of a safety plan where needed, and identify a trusted adult to build safety for the child.
- Help children to address their worries and concerns by explaining what is happening and why.
- Include a variety of approaches in line with the child's age, understanding and preferences, e.g. observation, play, structured activities/tools and verbal interaction.
- Reflect and promote Systemic Practice principles and tools as the emerging model of social work practice.

Assessments will:

- Be timely, proportionate and focused on the relevant issues.
- Be regularly reviewed, and updated in line with significant life events.
- Be shaped and directed by management oversight provided on days 1, 8, 20 and 40 for all open assessments.
- Take the voice of the child, the views of parents and relevant others into account.
- Give a clear picture of the child's life, what this feels like for them, and what needs to happen to improve it.
- Address the impact of parents' behaviour on the lived experience of the child, including capability and capacity to change.
- Be professionally curious, evidence based and informed by best practice tools and research, including around child development.
- Include consultation and checks with relevant partner agencies and professionals who know the child and family.
- Be informed by an updated chronology of significant events for the child with a genogram/ sociogram.
- Reference the Essentials 'Anchor' and 'Risk Assessment' principles.
- Allow for the use of intervention and safety planning during assessment as needed.

Planning and Reviewing will:

- Attend to the legal, physical and psychological permanence for children.
- Maintain clear continuity from the assessment and analysis.
- Always reference the Essentials C-SMART planning principles so that the plan maintains focus on the child and represents their views.
- Engage parents, carers, family and friends to identify and build on existing strengths.
- Identify what progress will look like and how it will be evaluated
- Be timely and kept up to date with expected timescales, that keep pace with the child's needs and changing circumstances.
- Learn from, and adapt to, what has previously worked well and less well.
- Include careful consideration of contingency arrangements.
- Include routine consultation with CP Chairs and IROs who will check and follow-up progress for the child through progress checks.
- Evidence the use of Escalation and Dispute Resolution Protocols to challenge decision making and planning when necessary.

Case Recording will:

- Be written in a clear and concise way with the child in mind.
- Be up to date, accurate, comprehensive and well written in plain English without the use of jargon.
- Provide good quality biographical information for the adult that the child will become in the future.
- Be personal to the child and not simply a duplicate of sibling records.
- Be well laid out so that key information is easy to access and the child's story is easy to navigate.
- Include an analysis of the available information/evidence (working out meaning and implications).
- Include an evaluation of the available information/evidence (making a judgement).
- Include a clear rationale for decisions (giving reasons) and include informative case, transfer and closure summaries.
- Consider the impact of life experiences and our practice on the child.
- Demonstrate how we are using the law, regulatory and statutory guidance (including GDPR) to inform practice decisions.
- Take account of the complex relationship between professional ethics, the application of the law and the impact on both of social policy.

