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Child Protection and Court Service

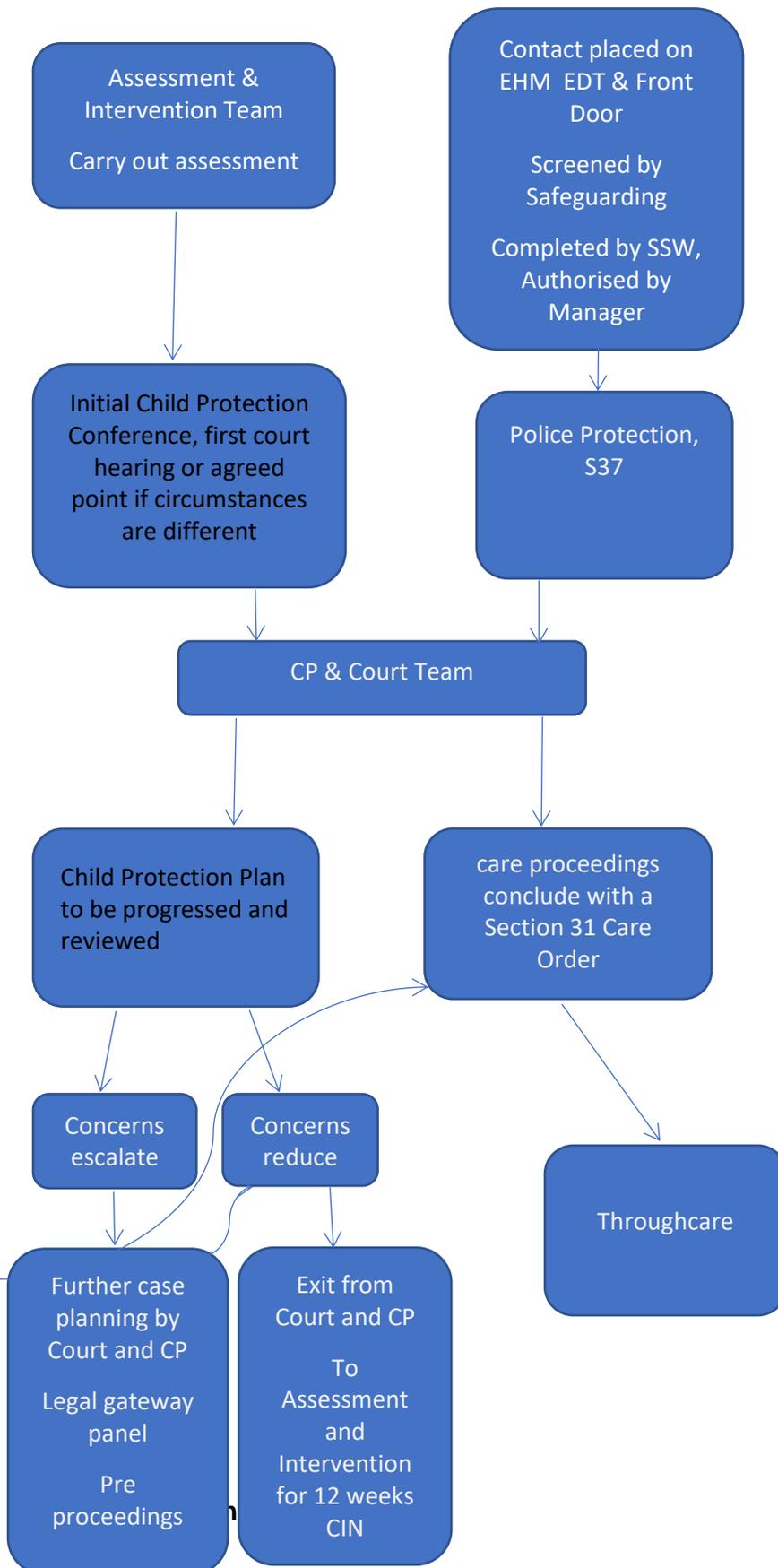
Terms of Reference

1st November 2020

Goals of the Child Protection and Court Team:

- The primary purpose of the Child Protection and Court Service is to support families to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of their children through effective planning and collaboration across all agencies. The service ensures the safety of children who are on child protection plans or involved in Public Law Outline (PLO) family proceedings.
- Children's cases that have reached this level of need will be transferred, either directly from the Integrated Front Door (IFD) if appropriate, or from the Assessment and Intervention Service following completion of a Single Assessment and clear case planning around building safety.
- Any case that requires managing through Child Protection arrangements, following an assessment and a decision made at Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) will then transition to an identified Social Worker within the Court and CP team.
- The Child Protection and Court Service is responsible for working with children and families when the courts have ordered a Section 37 enquiry due to welfare concerns. The role of the Child Protection and Court Service is to consider whether the local authority should issue care proceedings.
- The Service also coordinates planning for children who are being supported at Pre-Proceedings level, ensuring that there is no drift or delay in making plans to improve circumstances for children.
- The Child Protection and Court Service is responsible for preparing and filing the Local Authority's evidence and plans for children. The service also produces reports as directed by the Courts, both to a high standard and in line with timescales set out by the court.
- The service will remain involved and support families for the duration of child protection plans/care proceedings. Child Protection Plans should last no longer than nine months and care proceedings for a maximum of twenty-six weeks.

Referral into the Child Protection and Court Service requiring long term intervention:



- Children on child protection plans will transfer to the CP and Court Service at the initial child protection case conference (ICPC) or at the first core group meeting. The appropriate transfer point will be agreed at the case transfer meetings that are held on a weekly basis.
- CP and Court Service social workers will work with children, their families, and our partner agencies to ensure the progress of CP plans, ensuring that they are realistic, relevant, timely and achievable for families.
- Management oversight is key to ensuring that CP plans do not drift. Alternative options will be considered for children that have been on CP plans for 9 months.

Strategy Discussions

- When an Assistant Team Manager considers that a strategy discussion is required, there will be a conversation between the Team Manager and the Police DDM. It will be agreed within this discussion whether threshold is met to convene a strategy discussion. Where threshold is agreed, arrangements will be made for this to happen. Social Workers and Assistant Team Managers should work together to set up multi agency strategy meetings, which are chaired by Team Managers.
- Strategy meetings will then be held within 24 hours, in attendance at the strategy discussion, as a minimum should be Children's Social Care, Police and health representatives, however should time allow, all involved professionals, who are working with the children should be given the opportunity to attend.
- Strategy meetings are then held within 24 hours. This meeting enables agencies to share information and to plan next steps and decide if the threshold is agreed for a section 47 enquiry. If threshold for section 47 is met and agreed, then a clear plan must be agreed about who will do what, by when. The Social Worker must record the findings from the enquiries on Liquid Logic within 24 hours.
- Once the Section 47 has been completed, there should then be a formal supervision held, within 24 hours between the Assistant Team Manager and the Social Worker. This supervision must discuss the finding of the investigation and make a clear plan for the case to move forward and progress.

Private law Section 37 Enquires

- Court Orders directing Section 37 enquiries on new cases will come straight into the CP and Court Service from MASH.
- In the event that a Section 37 enquiry is directed on a case that is open to the Assessment and Intervention Service, then Team Managers will discuss who is best placed to complete this work, be it the current social worker or one from the CP and Court Service. Those discussions will take place at the weekly case allocation meeting when an appropriate transfer point will be identified.

Pre-Proceedings and Public Law Outline

- A decision to present a case at Legal Gateway Panel must be endorsed by a Service Manager who will need to be assured that purposeful social work intervention has been timely and effective.
- If agreed, the Social Worker will be tasked with completing the Legal Gateway Panel referral, along with other supporting documentation. This is signed off by the responsible Team Manager before submission.
- If pre proceedings is agreed at legal gateway panel after the social worker and Assistant Team Manager have presented the case, a letter before proceedings will be delivered to parents or those with PR within two working days to invite them to a PLO meeting with their legal representative and advise them of the Local Authority's reason for holding the meeting.
- Pre-proceedings meetings are chaired and reviewed by the appropriate Team Managers. This includes the initial meeting, the six-week review.
- Cases in pre proceedings should return to legal gateway panel at sixteen weeks for oversight and decision making.

Care Proceedings

- If the Legal Gateway panel decides that immediate safeguarding measures need to be taken to safeguard a child, the social worker and their team manager will prepare the initial paperwork for the commencement of the Proceedings and have the papers with Legal Services within 2 days. The Proceedings will be issued as soon as practicable but no longer than 4 working days from receipt into Legal Services
- There may be cases where the immediate risk to a child is so great that a decision is needed outside of panel arrangements that proceedings need to commence. This decision can be made by the Head of Safeguarding. Cases must be discussed, and all documents considered retrospectively at the next available Legal Gateway Panel.
- Police Protection Orders on new cases will be referred directly to the CP and Court Service from the Integrated front door.
- Cases will transfer to the CP and Court Service at the initial Court hearing when an Order is granted.
- Court directions and timescales for completion will be agreed by social workers from the CP and Court Service.
- Social Workers in the CP and Court Service will complete statements, assessments and care plans that are directed by the Court within a 26-week timescale. Legal planning weeks held at the beginning and close of proceedings will provide robust management oversight to ensure that the work identified is going to be effective and follows a clear trajectory.
- Finding of Fact can only be agreed by senior management following discussion with the Local Authority legal department.

The Child Protection and Court teams will be made up of the following workers:

Team Manager



Assistant Team Manager



Social Work Practitioners – comprising of Senior Practitioners and level 1 and 2

Practitioners.



Family Support Workers

Outcomes for children

Achievement of the following outcomes will be vital to the successful and effective delivery of the Child Protection and Court Service in North East Lincolnshire:

- Less children will be subject to Care Proceedings.
- Permanency will be achieved for children at an earlier point in their lives when they are younger.
- Stable kinship placements will be secured for more children.
- More children will leave care through adoption
- Children are safe and feel safe through the work we do with them.
- Children and families are not involved in Children's Social Care intervention for longer than necessary.
- Resources are effectively targeted to ease future demand on services.
- Children, young people, and their families are supported so they can access opportunities for themselves and help themselves to make changes.

Challenge and Escalation

Refer to the new IRO escalation process