

# Guidance

## Unallocated Cases in North East Lincolnshire Children's Services

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Review date	
Author	



North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) starting point is that there should be no unallocated cases within the system.

### **Definition of an Unallocated Case**

Any child who has an open referral/under assessment for more than 24 hours is deemed as unallocated, including:

- Child Protection
- Children Looked After
- Children in Need
- Order Statutory Youth Justice Court

Any child whose allocated worker is absent (sick/leave/left) for longer than two weeks is also deemed unallocated until their return/replacement.

### **Priorities for the allocation of work across the service**

To ensure that children who have the greatest potential needs for support are prioritised, when there are difficulties allocating children's casework promptly.

A child's Case will only be deemed unallocated once discussed and agreed with the AD safeguarding and this will be shared immediately with the DCS.

Managers will consider factors that might increase risk and highlight the severity of the child's lived experience.

The Team Manager (TM) in discussion with the Assistant Team Manager (ATM) should be mindful of any characteristics which might elevate the risk and require a higher priority for allocation e.g. repeat referrals/plan due to a similar pattern of concerns historically, SEND etc.

### **Recording of unallocated cases**

North East Lincolnshire (NEL) currently code unallocated work in the CP/Court team to a worker titled – 'to be allocated'.

In the exceptional circumstances where there is no allocated worker for a child/family, this needs to be formally allocated to the ATM. A daily report, should be ran and shared with the senior leadership team to ensure the reporting of unallocated cases is accurate and up to date, timely decision making re next steps and managing resource across the service. This also allows professionals who know the case to provide the oversight and re-assess risk on an evolving basis. The performance data will need to track the rag rating and the date of the last visit, statutory meeting, and management oversight/supervision.

## How to manage unallocated cases

- Each Team (supervision group) needs to have a duty worker who is available for the day to undertake any visits (including statutory visits), tasks, respond to situations on cases that are allocated to the ATM's.
- All cases will continue to be worked on this basis whilst awaiting allocation to a worker.
- All cases will be allocated a family support/early help worker who will be a consistent professional for that child for their whole time whilst allocated to the ATM. This worker may continue to be the lead professional for this child if the case is stepped down to ensure consistency
- ATM remains the accountable worker for all unallocated cases in their supervision group.
- Cases allocated to the ATM need to be provided with monthly case supervision by the Team Manager
- The Team Manager must put management oversight in case notes as Manager's Oversight or authorisation comments for signing off the case is allocated to the ATM on day 1. This oversight will task the duty worker with an initial plan to support. This includes:
  - Case Summary of reason for Children's social care involvement/issues and concerns
  - Action plan - Including visiting frequency, actions by other agencies, date of actions to be completed whilst being worked unallocated on duty.
  - Safety Plan (how we know child is safe during the unallocated period)
  - Date child will be next seen and frequency of visits – it is expected that the early help/family support worker will visit weekly
  - The Team Manager will identify a family support worker/early help worker and assign them as the lead profession allocated to the case – NOTE as this person is not a qualified social worker, the case is not allocated – The EH/FS worker should not be assigned more than ten case which are allocated to the ATM.
  - Date case will be reviewed by Team Manager (at a minimum of every 5 working days whilst allocated to the ATM).

## Reviewing unallocated cases and escalation

On day ten of being allocated to the ATM, the Team Manager should review the file and attempt to allocate within their service area or liaise with other Managers to attempt to achieve allocation. They should also record Manager's Oversight

Management review (recorded as management oversight) of all cases allocated to the ATM's by the Team Manager and Service Manager must take place fortnightly, this must include:

- Review of the RAG rating
- Talking to the EH/FS worker and reviewing the visiting frequency and date on which the child was last seen and spoken to
- Talking to other relevant professionals
- Talking to the family

Oversight and planning must be recorded in the case notes by all managers (ATM, TM, SM) each time they review the work and risks. They must ensure that all new information on the case is reviewed, and visits take place until case allocation to the identified social worker. This should also be recorded as a case note, Manager's Oversight.

EH/FS workers providing such intense support to statutory cases must receive reflective supervision fortnightly and they may ask for a joint visit with the duty SW if concerned about any aspect of the case or risk.

EH/FS Workers must not be responsible for chairing/holding statutory meetings (including but not limited to CiN, Core Group, Child in Care Reviews), these must continue to be held and chaired by the ATM or nominated duty worker.

If a child's case cannot be allocated, the Team Managers must send a letter to the family and other involved agencies within 5 working days of the case being allocated to the ATM (standard letter to be developed)

This letter should include details regarding how to contact the team in the event of any issues and details of the visiting frequency by the assigned worker etc. Partner agencies, such as schools or health, should be informed that the case is unallocated and given the Assistant Team Manager's name and contact details. Given that a child will be expecting to be contacted by their new worker we must keep them informed of our plans and ensure that they feel we are committed to supporting them and listening to what they say. To ensure that we keep children informed a similar letter will be sent by the Team Manager to the child if they are over 11 years of age and also to the parents so that they are fully informed of plans.

A weekly report will identify cases allocated to the ATM's including length of time they have been allocated to the ATM, Case Status, RAG rating, last visit and meeting date, to enable the DCS to inform resourcing decisions to support full allocation.

On a fortnightly basis unallocated cases are reported to the Chief Executive and SLIP to inform resourcing decisions.