**Practice Guidance in Regard to Children and Young People Subject to Child Protection Plan that Travel Within and Outside the United Kingdom**

**Scope of this Guidance**

This guidance is in respect of children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan in West Sussex and travel within the UK or who are either harmed by family from abroad, or who are themselves taken abroad on a long or short-term basis.

**Related Guidance**

[DfE. Working with foreign authorities: child protection cases and care orders (July 2014)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351145/Working_with_Foreign_Authorities_-_Child_Protection_and_Court_Orders.pdf)

[Pan Sussex Child Protection Procedures](https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/page/contents)

1. **Introduction**

Social Workers, and other professionals, are required to carry out statutory duties in relation to children subject to Child Protection Plans

In accordance with [Implementing the Child Protection Plan Procedures](https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/tkylox/the-child-protection-plan/implementation-of-the-child-protection-plan-lead-social-worker-and-core-group-responsibilities#s6484) , Core Group and lead Social Worker responsibilities, the lead Social Worker should:

• See the child in accordance with their Child Protection Plan arrangements;

• See the child’s bedroom;

• See the child alone

In keeping in line with ensuring the safeguarding plans noted in the Child Protection Plan are carried out there should be contingency plans in place to address any factors which will inhibit the Social Worker (or other professionals) visiting the child.

Travelling within and out of the UK may affect the Child Protection processes due to the inability of professionals to have contact with the child and their family (e.g. needing to complete assessments, visits, engage in activities noted in the Child Protection Plan, etc.) so it’s important that parents keep practitioners informed of any travel plans that may affect carrying out the Child Protection Plan, including short and long term travel within the UK or Outside the UK. Therefore, it is important for parents to inform professionals of plans for travel at the earliest possible opportunity (e.g. during Child Protection Conferences, Core Group Meetings or home visits). Where families have informed the Social Worker in advance, the Social Worker should try and visit/see the children as close to the dates of travel as possible.

**2. Travel Within the UK**

In order to ensure that the lead Social Worker visiting the child and family is aware of when the child and their family will be away from the home on holiday within the UK (e.g. days or weeks):

**The Parent(s)/ Carer should** provide the following details to the Social Worker as soon as the travel plans are known:

• Details of the dates they will be travelling (leaving and return date);

• Details of where the family will be travelling to and staying (with family, friends, hotel, etc.…);

• If there are specific safeguarding actions noted in the child protection plan that need to be carried out by the parent, how will those safeguards be managed while on holiday.

**The Social Worker Should:**

• Inform parent(s) of Children’s Services requirement to contact the host local authority and inform them that a West Sussex child will be in their area;

• Inform the local authority where the child and family will be staying during their holiday. ( [Temporary Moves](https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/skyloz/child-protection-conferences/transfer-child-protection-conference#:~:text=the%20Originating%20Authority.-,Temporary%20moves,-7.4.7) Procedures)

• Consider arrangements to maintain contact with child and family while on holiday;

• Follow up with the child and family upon return home (e.g. resume visits).

1. **Travel Outside of the UK**

This guidance is written to clarify practice in regard to three different circumstances relating to children and young people travelling outside of the UK whilst subject to section 47 enquires or a Child Protection Plan, including unborn children. These three circumstances are:

1. Children taken abroad when Section 47 enquiries are being undertaken

Strategy discussions should be held and consideration to seek legal advice in order to determine known or likely risk of harm and what action should take place to safeguard the children from harm.

If the child is taken abroad when Section 47 enquiries have commenced, but are not yet completed, the investigating Social Worker should notify border controls (airports and ports), inform the relevant authorities in the country of destination, seeking advice from Children and Family Services Across Borders (CFAB) - (formerly International Social Services) - as necessary.

If the Section 47 enquiry is accompanied by a criminal investigation, police should inform the relevant Police force abroad.

1. Pre-arranged family visits or holidays overseas, whilst one or more of the children within the family remain subject to a Child Protection Plan;
2. The permanent or semi-permanent movement of a child or young person to a country outside of the UK.

In both of these circumstances it will be vital that the Social Worker and the Team Manager takes into account the following circumstances when assessing the level of likely risk to the child or young person in the new situation, taking into account the risk factors which led to the Child Protection plan in this country and seeking advice from Children and Family Services Across Borders (CFAB) - (formerly International Social Services) - as necessary.

As part of the risk assessment, the Social Worker and Team Manager must consider:

1. Where the child and their family are going, the address and the details of who they will be staying with and contact details;
2. Any political / social instability within the new country of residence;
3. Whether or not the new placement / residence is with a family member known to the young person or not;
4. Have the rest of the family moved with the young person or not;
5. Any risk factors that may have precipitated the move (e.g. imminent commencement of legal proceedings);
6. Was the move notified to the Local Authority in advance of the movement of the young person;
7. The length of time it is anticipated that the young person will remain outside of the UK;
8. Arrangements to remain in contact with the child and family while they are overseas;
9. Arrangements to ensure the child remains safe taking into consideration risks resulting in the Child Protection Plan. A risk assessment may need to be completed.

**All Circumstances (including Pre-arranged Holiday Outside of the UK)**

In all circumstances where a young person subject to a Child Protection Plan leaves the UK, **the Social Worker must notify the following:**

* Team Manager;
* Service Manager;
* Head of Service;
* Conference and reviewing officer (Chair of the CP Conference);
* Police;
* Child Protection Reviewing Service Administrator.

This notification must confirm if this absence from the UK was known about, and if so the dates of expected return. Where possible, the notification should provide details of the address and names of adults in the new home / address, and their relationship to the child.

**Lead Social Worker to notify** all other Core Group members. This notification should be a two way process, with partners specifically asked to provide any relevant background details linked to the absence from the UK.

**Core Group to:**

* Establish / clarify any plans the family have in relation to length of stay;
* Clarify GP and school arrangements for the child;
* Discuss any details / information that the host country has in relation to adults living at the new address.

**b) Absence from the UK with no Prior Notification or Return Date**

In circumstances where children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan leave the UK without a clear return date or where any circumstances indicate any other type of risk, the Assistant Director of Children’s Social Care / Head of Service for Conference and Reviewing Service is to be notified in addition to those listed within the previous section. The Conference and Reviewing officer must inform their Service Manager.

**Where there is no clear return date the Social Worker will need to begin the following tasks with immediate effect:**

* Hold a Strategy Discussion (with Police) or a Professionals’ meeting (if Police are not required) (Chaired by the Service Manager);
* Seek legal advice via the WSCC Legal Service;
* Contact the Embassy for the country in which the child and family have travelled to and request contact information for the Social Care Organisation for that area / district of that country. For a list of Foreign Embassies based in London See Link to [**Foreign Embassies in the UK (GOV.UK)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk) or contact the British Embassy in that country. See also [**DfE, Guidance on Working with Foreign Authorities: Child Protection Cases and Care Orders**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351145/Working_with_Foreign_Authorities_-_Child_Protection_and_Court_Orders.pdf);
* It may be necessary to contact the British Embassy in the country the child has gone to.

Where it is not clear whether or not the child and their family have left the country. It may be that advice needs to be sought from the Police and Border Agencies to identify if child has left the UK. In situations where it is suspected that the removal of the child is to avoid social care intervention, or the level of risk back in the UK is judged to be high, you may request that the Social Worker be informed by the Border Agency when the child returns to the UK.

Once contact with the relevant Social Care Agency is made the following communication will need to be outlined:

* Background to reasons for Child Protection concerns in the UK;
* Request for an initial home visit to the child to be undertaken which will need to assess new circumstances and any immediate risk;
* To establish / clarify any plans the family have in relation to length of stay;
* GP and school arrangements for the child;
* Any details / information that the host country has in relation to adults living at the new address;
* Arrangements should be made to maintain contact with the child and family.

**c) Procedural Issues**

1. Background Details of the young person / family;
2. Details of CP Plan – (category of Plan, Reason for Plan, key agencies);
3. Details of New Address / Location;
4. Outline of actions taken so far;
5. List outstanding Actions, Issues requiring decision;
6. Analysis of Continued Risk.

Once we have obtained sufficient information to make informed decisions regarding the level of any continued risk West Sussex County Council (WSCC) must inform the new Authorities of our recommendations in writing (translated where appropriate).

**Upon Return to the UK**

As and when we are notified that a child has returned to the UK, this notification should be accompanied with reciprocal details / information for the respective country’s Social Care Organisation if it still deemed by them to be appropriate. If the Child Protection plan has been ended in the family’s absence, the professional network may need to consider whether a new referral needs to be made to Social Care, should it be deemed that the child remains at risk of suffering significant ham.

**No Return to the UK/Ceasing Child Protection Plan**

The Child Protection Plan may be ended once the Local Authority and Conference and Reviewing Service are satisfied that:

* The child is safe; (taking into consideration the work completed as set out in above sections) or
* The Social Care Organisation in the country of residence has acknowledged receipt of the information provided by WSCC and will now respond (or not) according to the Laws, Policy and Procedures in their country.

A Child Protection Conference should be convened to consider whether to end the Child Protection plan, if the child / young person is not returning to the UK or a decision may be made to end the Child Protection Plan outside of the Child Protection Conference process by both the Local Authority and Conference and Reviewing Service.

**Timing of Review Child Protection Conferences when children are abroad**

If the move is temporary a Review Child Protection Conference should be held at the scheduled time. Consideration should be given for bringing forward the date of this conference if appropriate.

If the child does **not** return before the time of the Review Child Protection Conference is due, it must go ahead with information gathered from agencies abroad, as detailed above. A decision whether the child should remain subject to a Child Protection Plan will be made and if so a revised Child Protection Plan must be formulated.

On the rare occasion where the child has moved abroad permanently, and all relevant agencies abroad have been notified that it is the view of the core group that no further work can be undertaken a decision may be made by the responsible Social Work Service Manager in consultation with the Conference and Reviewing Officer and their Service Manager to end the Child Protection Plan outside of the Child Protection Conference process.