**Consent withdrawn for s.17 Child in Need Assessment and Overturning Front Door decisions – Practice Guidance**

Head of Service, QARSS

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# Introduction and Purpose

This practice guidance has been developed to ensure that all children who are referred to the Assessment and Intervention (A&I) Service with a referral outcome of “Assessment” under s.17 Children Act 1989, receive an assessment in a timely way and that there is robust management oversight and a clear professional rationale recorded for children where an assessment does not progress.

# Process

* 1. Every effort should be made within the Front Door service to gain consent from families for an assessment to be undertaken, however this is not always possible within the 24 hour timescale to make a decision for further statutory intervention under S.17. If a child is transferring to the A&I team and it has not been possible to gain consent, the Front Door Team Manager (TM) should make the A&I Team Manager aware.
  2. Prior to referral for assessment, the Front Door team must ensure they have recorded on the child’s Eclipse record why they were unable to obtain consent and their rationale for the child/young person meeting the need for statutory support.
  3. When a referral with an outcome of assessment is received by the Assessment & Intervention (A&I) team, a Team Manager (TM) must provide Management Oversight on the child’s Eclipse record, considering the referral information and outlining who the assessment will be allocated to.
  4. The TM must then start the assessment form. This ensures we can accurately capture the timeliness of our assessment completion. The TM should provide a timescale for the completion of the assessment, and this should be proportionate to the presenting need and can be reviewed.
  5. If, when the allocated Social Worker (SW) contacts the parent/carer, they do not give consent for an assessment under Section 17 and there is not reasonable cause to suspect the child/young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989), a supervision discussion should take place. This should consider the referral information and the context within which the family have not given their consent for an assessment to be undertaken.
  6. If, following this discussion, a decision is made that the assessment should be cancelled, the TM rationale and decision for cancelling the assessment should be recorded in the assessment form. Any decision to cancel an assessment should be exceptional and the TM should discuss any decision to cancel an assessment with their Service Manager (SM). The SW should ensure that the parents/carers have been informed about other support services which they may wish to access.
  7. If mid-way through an assessment, the parent/carer withdraws consent, the information gathered to date should still be recorded and analysed in the child and family assessment form on Eclipse. The SW should explain to parents that the information obtained is captured within an assessment form, similar to case notes, and is still recorded on Eclipse. A supervision discussion between the SW and their TM should take place to ensure that there is not reasonable cause to suspect the child/young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm (S47) and this should be recorded on the child’s Eclipse record. The TM should make their SM aware that they will be finalising the assessment based on the information gathered to date.
  8. The assessment will only be sent to parents/carers unless parents agree to a specific agency being sent a copy of the document.
  9. Non-resident parents should receive a copy of the assessment, information about the other parent can be redacted, with the non-resident parent being advised of this but that all information in relation to the child/young person is included. The exception to this would be where evidence suggests contacting the non-resident parent would place the family at risk of significant harm. In this case a rationale would be provided by the TM upon authorising the assessment.
  10. If, upon review by a TM within the A&I team, a decision by the Front Door is questioned, the TM will ensure that they discuss this with the TM in the Front Door. If it is not possible to reach an agreed way forward the decision will be reviewed by the Service Managers for the Front Door and the A&I Team. If the outcome is that a Front Door decision is overturned, the SM for the A&I Team will ensure there is a clear rationale and professional judgement recorded on the child’s Eclipse record. Any Front Door learning should be captured and shared with practitioners.

# Quality Assurance

The numbers of cancelled single assessments will be reviewed monthly by the Service Managers in the Assessment and Intervention Teams and if the numbers increase significantly, a dip review will be completed. Cancelled assessments will form part of the A&I dip sample review process.

Team Spotlight’s will also consider the number of cancelled Assessments as part of the diagnostic activity.