

Levels of authority for casework management decisions in Children’s Social Care

Version number	Date updated	Updated by	Review date
Version 2	June 2021	OM Group	June 2022
Version 3	May 2023	OM Group	May 2024
Version 4	December 2023	HoS Group	December 2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to identify the appropriate level of manager who can take responsibility for a specific decision or action in respect of an individual child’s case. Whenever possible the decision / action will be made within the child’s social worker’s line management, but this document allows for any manager at the appropriate level or above to make a decision, where required, in order to avoid delay.
- 1.2 Staff requesting a decision are expected to make informed recommendations to the relevant manager and to implement the decision in an agreed timescale.

Abbreviations:

- DCS: Director of Children’s Services
- SDC&F: Service Director Children & Families – in the absence of this person contact should be made with the relevant Head of Service
- Head of Service: HoS
- OM: Operations Manager
- TM: Team Manager
- SW: Social Worker

- 1.3 For financial decisions refer to corporate delegated authority.

Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
Community based actions: Child in Need / Child Protection / PLO										
To convene a Child in Need meeting								X		
Request a step-up meeting					X	X				
To request a family group conference (FGC)								X	X	
To hold a strategy discussion and commence a Section 47 investigation					X					
To convene an initial child protection conference (CPC)					X					Following discussion with the social worker, with the advice of the Duty CP Chairperson
To change the date of a planned child protection initial or review conference (CPC) – within statutory timescales								X		Field work Team Managers in consultation with the CP Chair for the child
To change the date of a planned child protection initial or review conference (CPC) – outside statutory timescales				X						Field work Operations Managers in consultation with the CP Chair and QA Service Manager
Decision to go to Area Legal Threshold meeting / CP or CIN tracking panel					X					
Decision to go to Permanence Panel					X					Following discussion in supervision
Decision to go to Legal Gateway Panel to request initiate proceedings or initiate PLO				X						Following discussion at area legal threshold meeting
Decision to initiate proceedings or initiate PLO		X	X*							*Via Legal Gateway Panel
Prohibit Private Fostering arrangement			X							Usually Head of Service for CLA.

Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
Court Action										
To apply for a child assessment order		X	X*							*Via Legal Gateway Panel following recommendation of area legal threshold meeting
To apply for emergency protection order (EPO)		X								Approval from SDC&F upon information from Head of Service outside panel process due to emergency nature of application. This child MUST then be added to the next legal gateway panel agenda.
To apply for recovery order				X						Approval from OM for child in discussion with relevant HOS, made in consultation with Legal Department.
To apply for a care or supervision order		X	X*							*Via Legal Gateway Panel following recommendation of area legal threshold meeting
To approve initial court care plan document				X						Authorise on LCS
To approve final court order application (if the order applied for is the same as the initial plan)		X	X*							*Via Legal Gateway Panel following recommendation of area legal threshold meeting
To approve final court order application (if the order applied for is different to the initial plan)		X	X*							*Via Legal Gateway Panel following recommendation of area legal threshold meeting
To agree discharge of care order		X	X*							*Via Legal gateway panel following recommendation of OM CLA/LC in discussion with SW and TM
To use secure accommodation without an order (maximum 72 hours)	X									Preliminary discussion must be held between relevant HOS and SDC&F (statutory requirement for DCS to make decision)

To seek secure accommodation order	X										Preliminary discussion must be held between relevant HOS and SDC&F (statutory requirement for DCS to make decision)	
To seek a Section 34 order concerning reduction or cessation of contact				X							OM following discussion with child's Independent Reviewing Officer	
Sign off Section 7 or Section 37 reports					X						In consultation with the relevant OM.	
Sign off all other court reports, e.g. Special Guardianship					X							
Appeal a Court decision		X	X*								*Via Legal Gateway Panel following recommendation of area legal threshold meeting	
Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS	ESW	LCW	Notes
Special Guardian												
Agree SG financial assessment and financial recommendations		X		X								Requests for SG financial assessment must be sent to SG inbox (SGORequests@somerset.gov.uk) for the OM Permanence recommendation to SDC&F, along with Special Guardianship Assessment and Special Guardianship Support Plan.
Extension to SG payment period		X			X							Requests can be made direct from Kinship Team Manager to SDC&F
Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS	ESW	LCW	Notes
Children Looked After												
To agree planned reception into care and placement type		X	X*									Yr11 & Under SDC&F via Legal Gateway Panel. 16+, post Yr11 SDC&F following recommendation from 16+ Support & Accommodation Panel.

To agree emergency reception into care		X								SDC&F following discussions with Head of Service outside panel process (or manager on call out of hours). This child's name MUST be added to the next Legal Gateway Panel.
To agree initial external placement costs		X								In consultation with Placements Team (who will base searches on P1 received from social worker)
To agree change of care placement		X Residential		X * Fostering						Fostering: approval internal / external fostering searches (only after all internal placement options have been explored and reason for not using is understood) Residential: SDC&F in discussion with HOS who requires documents listed above
To agree that a child is suitable to be adopted		X ADM	X ADM							Via ADM adoption process only– requests with CPR via AdoptionandFosteringBS@somerset.gov.uk
Decision to refuse parental contact with a child subject to a Care Order for up to seven days in an emergency when it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard or promote the child's welfare				X						IRO to be consulted as soon as such a decision is made, Legal Services should be contacted as a matter of urgency so that the necessary Court action can be initiated Where the child is subject of an ICO or full Care Order an application to the Court for authority to terminate contact will always be necessary if contact is to be suspended for more than 7 days
Decision for a child looked after to have overnight social visits (or holidays) with peers/school friends								X		Foster carer with delegated authority can make this decision. Social worker should record this on case record.
School trips, camps etc (including consent for necessary medical treatment) for child subject to Care Order where parent does not agree or is not available					X					Need to give due weight to any objections by those with PR
Passport for child subject to Care Order								X		

Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
To agree to end of Section 20 for child aged 16/17		X								Delegated by DCS to SDC&F (statutory requirement)
To change the date of CLA reviews which will remain in statutory timescales								X		Social worker in consultation with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer
To change the date of CLA reviews which will be out of statutory timescales				X						Relevant OM in consultation with the child's Independent Reviewing Officer & QA Service Manager
Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
Education decisions										
To agree to move a child's placement during Year 10 or 11				X						OM CLA & Leaving Care in conjunction with the Virtual Head and Independent Reviewing Officer
To agree changes of education provision for children who do not have an EHCP					X					In consultation with advisory teacher / Virtual School alongside change of placement in yr. 10/11 (above). For children with an EHCP an emergency annual EHCP review will be needed.
To agree the suspension of a foster carer/stepping stones provider				X						OM Fostering and Resources who then initiates an investigation process
To agree the registration of a foster carer/stepping stones provider			X							Following recommendation from Foster Panel decision is made by Agency Decision Maker

Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
To request appointment of an independent visitor								X		In consultation with the team manager and child's Independent Reviewing Officer
To bring a care placement to an end (concern for child)				X						
To bring placement to an end when concern for child placed with prospective adopters				X						OM CLA & LC in consultation with Team Manager Adopt South West.
To approve placement of child on care order with parents, under care planning regulations			X							On receipt of relevant assessments via the HOS as set out in Tri.x procedures and with the view of the Independent reviewing officer
To approve emergency connected person placement with relatives/friends			X	X						OM Permanence or Head of Service CLA & LC- viability assessment must be completed jointly by Safeguarding Social Worker and Kinship Social Worker and recorded on LCS.
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Consent										
To permit child or young person looked after to leave UK for holiday of up to one month								X		If the holiday is in term-time must consult OM and Virtual Head before agreement is given. Parents should be consulted.
To consent to young person looked after joining armed forces				X						OM for the service responsible for the child. This must be recorded as a management decision case note on the child's LCS record. Parents should be consulted.

To consent to an abortion (young person looked after)				X						OM for the service responsible for the child in conjunction with the child (where they are Fraser competent). This must be recorded as a management decision case note on the child's LCS record. If the procedure requires a general anaesthetic, see consent to medical or surgical treatment below.
Consent for a young person aged 16 or 17 subject to a Care Order to marry		X								The request should be considered in consultation between the social worker, the Team Manager and the Independent Reviewing Officer and a recommendation made to inform Deputy Director's decision. The consent of all those with PR must also be secured & legal advice sought if this is not possible.
To consent to medical or surgical treatment (young person looked after) under general anaesthetic			X	X						Decision to be taken by OM in conjunction with Head of Service of the service responsible for the child and in discussion with parents. The OM must speak to the surgeon carrying out the surgery and record a contemporaneous case note setting out the risks and benefits. If there is any doubt about the decision, or conflicting medical opinion, legal advice must be sought.
To consent to change of name (child looked after)				X						Legal advice to be sought. Decision and legal advice must be recorded as a case note on the child's record.
To support / not support foster carer application for CAO, SG or adoption of child looked after					X					On the recommendation of a Permanence planning meeting, following discussion with OM where not supporting application.
To support child's application for British citizenship (child looked after)			X							

Decision	DCS	SDC&F	HoS	OM	TM	TL	AP	SW	FIS ESW LCW	Notes
To seek publicity in respect of a search for missing children				X						In consultation with the relevant Head of Service, legal dept and police, following a Section 47 strategy meeting. The DCS and SDC&F must be informed and briefed on this decision on the same day.

List of Agency Decision Makers, Designated Managers and Nominated officers