

# PRACTICE STANDARDS 2025



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# Introduction

At Sandwell Children's Trust we have developed our core Practice Standards and Service Expectations. They provide our workforce with a clear framework for their day-to-day practice.

The Practice Standards and Service Expectations sit alongside the legislation, policies, procedures and processes including the Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) policies and procedures) as set out in the diagram below.



Our Practice Standards outline how we will support children, young people, families and carers throughout their journey with services in Sandwell. Our practice and our Practice Standards are underpinned by our ST\*R Partnership Practice Model.



## Our 10 Core outcome-based Practice Standards

1. We will **intervene proportionately** in children's lives, through **risks** being clearly identified, managed and reduced safely whilst building on **family strengths, using a relational approach**.
2. We will accurately identify children's **needs and risks** through high-quality, analytical **multi-agency assessments** which balance children's wishes with parent's ability to make the changes.
3. We will **track progress** in children's lives through clear, bespoke **plans, co-produced with the family** that reflect identified needs and risks, with clear, measurable actions to address them.
4. We will help families to **prevent needs rising** wherever possible through **preventing risk**, forming **positive relationships** and undertaking evidence-based **interventions** that address the root causes of problems and trauma.
5. We will understand and improve children's lives through regular communication and high-quality direct work and life and memories work.
6. We will make sure all children have their **plans progressed** and needs met through consistent and effective **reflective supervision**, management **oversight** and independent **challenge** where necessary.
7. We will make sure that every child is able to understand why we are involved and **what life is really like** for them through relationship-based practice that is timely, easy to understand, and involves them. This means recording in a child's file, by writing to the child.
8. We will make sure the children we care for feel **safe, secure and positive** about their future through **having a stable home** that meet their needs and professionals being aspirational for them and treating them as they would their own.
9. We will **secure children's futures**, and where they cannot live with their parents, we will secure a plan of **permanence** for them as early as possible
10. We will **improve every aspect** of children's lives through involving all **relevant family members and professionals** and us having a **shared approach** to risk and decision making.

## Our Service Expectations are set out below

### Early identification and intervention – Family Help: right person, right time, right place

Before we engage in any interventions, visits, or meetings, we make sure to clearly define our purpose, approach, and the tools we will use to achieve our goals. We also plan how to measure success.

We recognise that community-based services are more likely to be accessed by families, so we ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of the local services available to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, services designed to promote empowerment have proven to enhance outcomes for parents, and consequently, for children.

Family help - To work alongside all family members, helping them to think about their worries and come up with their own ideas and plans to make things better, building on their own family and community resources and strengths.

To develop and train the children's workforce across Sandwell so that everyone uses the same language, tools and approaches so that everyone knows what to expect.

Right person	Right time	Right place
It is essential to have a clear understanding of who is the most appropriate person to support the family with specific issues. We recognize that supporting families is everyone's responsibility and that a support network is often required. However, there is always a designated individual who takes the lead in coordinating and providing the necessary support.	To have clear information along with agreed systems and processes so that problems are picked up early and support is put in place to help things get better. To work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.	To support connections in the community, building relationships with local people so that everyone knows how and where to get advice and support when they need it, and that people can access services and support in their local area.

## Assessment of need and risk

Assessments are **a dynamic and ongoing process**. We have a responsibility to utilise our systemic tools to understand the history and the social context of the family (**chronology, cultural genograms, ecomaps**). Furthermore, the more we **engage with the child, the family**, and significant others, the better informed we are about the family's history and context. Actively involving fathers and male carers in our assessments and interventions is vital. Even when fathers or male carers live outside the home or when there are concerns about violence, meaningful engagement with them is essential. This approach addresses the often-overlooked role of fathers and male carers, as highlighted in [The Myth of Invisible Men](#).

The **child's views, wishes, and feelings** are central to informing our assessment of need and risk. We will meet with the child separately to capture and record their views and perspectives. If the child is unable or unwilling to meet with the practitioner alone, this should be discussed with a manager and the reason must be recorded. It is important to reflect and consider what factors might be influencing or preventing the child from engaging with the practitioner.

For young children or children who have additional needs we use the range of tools available to us in our [Resource Library](#)

We **triangulate** the information shared by children, parents, and professionals, alongside our observations of the child's and parents' behaviours. To **use evidence-based tools** like GCP2 Neglect Toolkit, DASH, CE, and other relevant resources. Using motivational interviewing approaches, we ask questions that help us to understand the past, current and any potential future need/harm.

When completing the assessment with the family, the focus is on immediate and long-term risk/needs, **analysis**, and reflection of historical information, trauma, strengths, concerns, need for protection, family network and motivation to change. Our analysis and recommendations are evidence-based and proportionate, grounded in research, professional knowledge, and experience. This approach ensures that the **decisions** made for and with the family are proportionate and **defensible**.

As practitioners, we appreciate the potential impact that reading an assessment may have on each individual family member. To this extent, knowing our families well we will write the assessments in a way that each of family can understand. When sharing assessments with children it is important to think about how all this family information may impact on the child.

Preparing a narrative for the child in an age-appropriate way can support them to understand the relevant aspects of the assessment and the strengths and risks presented.

## Planning and reviewing outcomes

### Our plans will be SMART:

- Specific, Sensible and Significant
- Measurable, Meaningful and Motivating
- Achievable, Agreed and Attainable
- Relevant, Realistic and Results-based (outcomes)
- Time bound, Timely and Time sensitive

We will state clearly our expectations for all involved to deliver the outcome to be achieved for the child, who will do what and in what timescale. We will also be clear from the beginning about how we will measure success and mobilise the strengths of the family to achieve the solutions to reduce risk and meet the needs of their children.

When we identify resources and provide interventions, we need to be clear from the beginning about the impact this will have on achieving the outcomes for this child and family.

What needs to happen to make things better and safer for the child/young person	Who will be responsible	When does it need to be done
What are the interventions and resources including those in the family	This will include family members as well as the professional network	Use specific timescales and dates

Family members are encouraged to involve their wider support network in creating the family support plan through family network meetings, and to participate in reviewing the plan during subsequent meetings. We use ‘family finding’ tools and techniques e.g. Cultural Genogram, Impact Chronology to help the family build and strengthen their connected support network.

It is essential that everyone, including the child, understands what is in the plan and receives a copy. We will ensure that the plan is written in an age-appropriate way, so children can understand it without feeling overwhelmed.

Plans will be reviewed regularly, with progress closely monitored, measured and analysed. This process will guide our decision-making. Families and children will be made aware from the outset of the potential consequences if outcomes are not achieved, and if the risk continues or escalates.

## Recording and report writing

A child's record reflects their journey, and we will ensure it is written in a way that helps children understand their story. We are mindful that children may choose to access their records in the future, so it is important that we write with this in mind, and wherever possible write directly to the child. Including the child's views and experiences not only helps them to understand their journey but also supports us in reflecting on the support we provide to families and how we can evidence this in their records.

The child's record is not merely a place to store information; it should serve as a tool that aids practitioners in planning and making the best decisions for children. Descriptive records without analysis make it difficult to understand the reasoning behind key decisions (missing the working outs). Practitioners must always consider the purpose of each piece of recording. For instance, when documenting a visit to a child, the record should detail not only the reason for the visit but also how it contributes to the overall assessment and plan. It's important to capture not just what happened or what was said, but what this means for the child.

Recording also creates an audit trail of accountability for the quality of practice and decision-making. This ensures that, if a new practitioner becomes involved or if emergency access is needed by an out-of-hours team, they can understand the context and reasoning behind decisions.

We will always use language that is clear, sensitive, and understandable to the family. The active involvement of children and family members in recording practices is essential, and this includes using tools e.g. Social Ggraaacceeesss, and capturing the diverse perspectives, beliefs, and opinions of everyone involved in the child's life.



## Impact for children

Our practice is evaluated and measured based on the outcomes achieved for children, young people, families and carers. Therefore, we need to judge our work based on the impact and difference we are making into the lives of children, young people, families and carers.

We need to be able to answer the reflective questions set out below:

- How is our intervention and support helping them?
- How is our intervention making a difference to their lives, and how do we know this?
- How are we involving them and using their words in their assessments, plans and reviews?
- What would they say if someone asked them if we are helpful and respectful?

## Service practice standards

In Sandwell we are setting out the practice expectations and our bottom lines for each part of the service so that everyone has clarity about:

- What good practice looks like
- What is expected from our workforce as they deliver services to our children, young people, families and carers.

Our Practice Standards are underpinned and intertwined with several key documents and resources: [Click on a cover or title for more information]



Purpose, Ethos & Standards



Working Together Strategy



Supervision Policy



Permanence Strategy



Resource Library

The purpose of this document is to ensure that we have consistency in the quality of practice, language and interventions with children, young people, families and carers.

Pages 9 – 42 focus on the service specific expectations for practitioners and managers working within each service. It is anticipated that these will be used by practitioners and managers across front facing service who work directly with children, young people, families and carers as a working document to guide and support their day-to-day practice.

# Service Expectations

## Strengthening Families Service

### Connecting to our ethos

- We will prioritise our children; children are at the heart of everything we do
- We will respect that the family are the experts in their lives and their strengths and goals will be central to our approach
- We will work alongside our children, young people and their families, guided by their needs
- We will use language and/or communication styles with our babies, children, young people and their families that they understand
- We will have open and honest conversations celebrating what is working well whilst also addressing areas that could be strengthened
- We will take the time to understand the past experiences of the family, using this to consider how best to offer support that is, person centred, carefully considered and aids healing
- We will be inclusive of the whole family and encourage support through the wider family and community support network
- We will make it our ambition that all babies, children and young people are empowered to be happy, healthy and thriving

### Supporting the family

- We will always be respectful towards children and their families including being polite and courteous when entering their homes
- We will ensure timely contact with the family by day 5 from allocation and will complete an in person visit by day 10
- We will meet the family in an environment they feel safe in to allow us to start to build a relationship that is non-judgmental
- We will share service information when we first visit a family to enable families to understand and be clear about what the service offers and how we can provide help and support
- We will confirm we have the families consent to share information with all involved in support
- We will, at the initial visit, ensure the family are supported to complete a three generational genogram, considering their wider support network and the Social Graces to identify families' values, beliefs and cultural practices to identify their diverse needs to offer support accordingly
- We will use the families' genograms to identify their current support network and significant others that could be included. We will always ask the child/ren who they feel can support them
- We will use direct work during visits to develop a relationship with the babies, children and young people, to aid a greater understanding of their worries, the things the child feels are going well and the things they would like to be different. Visits should be completed in a setting the child/ren feel comfortable and are able to speak freely
- We will, with consent from the family, ensure that all agencies working with the family are informed of our involvement

## **Undertaking the Early Help Assessment (EHA) to inform a plan of support**

- We will capture the family voice using a variety of direct work and assessment tools, (e.g. Early Help Assessment, Outcome star, Graded Care Profile 2, Brief Alcohol and Drug Screening Tool, Child Exploitation screening tool etc) will be used, as appropriate, with children, young people and their families
- We will speak to all agencies who are connected to the child and their family to ensure we gather all necessary information
- We will collaborate with our partners to ensure the best and most relevant services are available to the families
- We will ensure that when the Early Help Assessment establishes there are worries about a baby, child or young person, a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting, will be arranged at the earliest point
- We will ensure the Family Networks will be a central element of the Early Help Assessment
- We will complete an Impact chronology with the family, which will be used to understand the child and family's history and experiences within 30 days of the family being received by the service
- We will contact and engage with all adults who hold parental responsibility for the child, including the non-resident parent (if applicable)
- We will ensure the analysis within our Early Help Assessments will include reflection on the families' strengths, emerging needs and complicating factors, which will formulate a family plan
- We will produce a SMART plan of support that involves all agencies who have a role in delivering services, which will be devised with the family

## **Team Around the Family Meetings (TAF)**

- We will ensure that children/young people are invited to all their Team Around the Family Meetings, and if they choose not to attend, their voice and views are shared by the Lead Professional
- We will ensure that in the Team Around the Family Meetings we hear what children, parents and professionals are telling us, in addition to what we observe is happening for the family
- We will ensure that during Team Around the Family Meetings, the progress and impact of the family plan is discussed, and all attendees are asked to contribute including the family and professionals
- We will be clear about what the family and professionals want to achieve, and the specific work required, always ensuring concerns or worries are actioned.
- We will review the plan from Team Around the Family Meetings and measure impact for the baby/child/young person
- We will update the family network information, revisit and confirm these details at each Team Around the Family Meetings meeting to ensure it is up to date and relevant
- We will ensure that the Team Around the Family plan is reviewed every 12 weeks but this maybe more frequently depending on needs and next steps

### **Direct work with Children/ Visits**

- We will carefully prepare our sessions with children and families so that every interaction is purposeful
- We will ensure all visits have a clear purpose, they detail the work to be completed with the family, how and why
- We will ensure all visits are completed and conclude with clear next steps
- We will ensure that babies, children, young people and families will be seen every 15 days, this could be more frequent if required
- We will be flexible in our approach to visits and direct work, taking account of the child, young person and families' needs

### **Management oversight and direction**

- We will ensure our management oversight at allocation clearly identifies: the strengths and worries in relation to the baby/child/young person, the actions required to be taken by the allocated practitioners and timescales for completion
- We will ensure all Strengthening Families Service allocations will be written to the baby/child/young person
- We will ensure that Managers have oversight of the practitioner's work and provide direction and guidance through supervision every 8 weeks
- We will ensure our management discussion, direction and oversight outside of supervision will be recorded on the child's records in the form of a note on the child's records, providing a clear rationale and ensuring the decisions are defensible
- We will ensure our managers' key reviews process, at 3 and 6 months, are used to ensure reflection, challenge and evidence a clear trajectory of the child's plan

### **Concluding support**

- We will ensure a Team Around the Family Meeting is held 2-3 weeks before we are due to complete our involvement with the family
- We will ensure all children, young people, and families that no longer require a service from Strengthening Families have a clear sustainability plan that is shared with everyone involved with the family, including the child/ren, family and professional and support network
- We will ensure a closure letter is written from the allocated practitioner to all babies, children or young people in the family, detailing the work completed, progress made and ongoing support once our service says 'goodbye' and will no longer be working with the family

## Front Door Services

### Connecting to our ethos

- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs
- We place children at the heart of everything we do
- We share a common understanding of our responsibility
- We make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell partnership

### Practice Expectation

#### Engaging with the family – Child centred; family led

- We will review the history and information pertaining to the family (both Early Help and Liquid Logic systems) and consider what life is like for the child
- We will check it is convenient to speak with family members when we/they call
- We will always speak with family members respectfully
- We will aim to speak with both parents (or carers) who hold parental responsibility where this is appropriate, even if parents are no longer in a relationship
- We will ensure that where parents inform of a support network, we seek permission to discuss the referral with them where reasonable and proportionate to do so, such as to confirm a safety plan or support system in place
- We will ensure that we don't leave voicemail messages on a Friday for parents to worry about over the weekend
- We will carefully go through each part of the concern with parents, seek to understand their view about this and record their response
- We will ask for consent to speak with other professionals about the child/family, unless to do so would place the child at risk of harm
- We will seek to speak to the child/young person where appropriate for circumstance and age
- We will gain the voice of the child/young person, as far as possibly discernible from the referrer or appropriate involved agencies
- We will consider carefully the implications to the child and to the parents if we are considering overriding parental consent to talk to other professionals
- We will ensure wherever consent is overridden, evidence-based reasons are recorded on the contact to ensure defensible decision making is clear
- We will ensure our Social Workers/Early Help Practitioners deliberately ask questions to the referrer and parents that enable us to understand the strengths and the safety that exists in the family
- We will ensure when a decision has been made to progress to further assessment, practitioners in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) explain to parents that in Sandwell we work with them and their wider network and support them and their network to identify solutions to the difficulties
- We will ensure the MASH practitioner encourages the parents to start thinking about who in their network they would like to involve

## **Evidence based, risk sensible and solution focused practice**

- We will ensure that consent has been obtained for contact to be made with MASH wherever this would not pose a risk to the child/young person
- We will advise referring partners appropriately, if we are not able to accept the contact in the absence of consent. We explain our processes and the rights of the family with respect to consent
- We will also advise the referrer where more detailed information is needed for a decision to be made about whether the contact should be accepted so the right help can be identified for the family
- We will always check the basic details to make sure they are correct and make sure we are aware of any previous addresses that the family have lived
- We will ensure basic family details are known such as Nationality, Ethnicity, Age, Family dynamics, social networks / support systems where relevant etc
- We will identify the strengths and areas where help is needed for the family and will always consider the impact on the child/children
- We will ensure that when we are speaking with professionals that we ask questions that help us to be clear about the specific, observable behaviours of the parents/children/others that we are worried about
- We will ensure that we are clear about what is fact and what is judgement, and that any fact is accurate
- We will ensure our Social Workers/Early Help Practitioners ask referrers questions that help us to understand the past and current harm, i.e. 'what specifically are the parents doing', 'how often' 'how severe', 'when was the last time' 'what was the worst time' 'what is the impact on the child?'
- We will ask questions to find out about the strengths and safety that exists within the family
- We will ensure that we explain in a clear, understandable way to children and families what happen next and what this means for them
- We will speak to the people/professionals that know the child/family best
- We will ensure if a further assessment is required, we explain clearly to the parents why we are making this decision
- We will ensure if we are recommending an Early Help Assessment, we clearly explain the process to the parents and seek their endorsement and consent
- We will share with the referrer our next steps and the reasoning behind the decision made
- We will ensure we keep an accurate record where a contact into MASH is accepted
- We will ensure the records produced do not include any abbreviations or language that would be simple and understandable to all

## **Management grip and direction**

- We will ensure at the point of a contact being accepted, our management oversight gives a clear timescale for decisions to be made depending on the presenting issue (help or harm), there will be clear direction about what actions are required from the MASH practitioners and partners to enable a decision to be made
- We will make decisions following an initial contact within 24 hours from the contact being accepted; when this is not possible, there is a clear management rationale for the reasons for delay
- We will ensure our managers have oversight of the practitioners work and provide them directions and guidance Managers record their decision providing a clear rationale and ensuring the decision is defensible
- We will ensure our managers are particularly explicit in recording whenever overriding consent

## Assessment & Intervention and Court Services

### Connecting to our ethos

- We place children at the heart of everything we do We only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs
- We empower and work with the whole, extended family

### Engaging with the family – Child centred; family led

- The first thing we do when we are allocated a child is to make time to read the file and understand the history and the likely impact of this on the child.
- A chronology is developed to support this understanding
- We make contact with the parents and arrange to visit them at their home by day 5 of the allocation
- In the event we are responding to a child protection concern, the visit is achieved within 24 hours of the referral; where applicable this will be jointly achieved with police/ partners
- We use impact chronologies to understand the child and families history and experiences
- On the first visit to a family, we introduce ourselves and the way that we work with families and what they can expect from us
- On this visit, we share the information provided by the MASH and to explain the assessment process
- We ensure the family are aware of their rights throughout the process of assessment/intervention and how they are able to raise praise or concern (complaints and compliments process shared)
- We clearly outline the potential outcomes of our assessments along with how long it may take
- From the first visit to a family, we complete a cultural genogram with the family and start to map out the worries/strengths and safety together with the family

### Engaging with the child

- We carefully plan and undertake direct work with the children (three houses or equivalent) as part of the assessment/ ongoing work in order to understand their worries, the things they feel are going well, and the things they want to be different
- On every visit we speak to children alone where age appropriate We help children to understand why we are involved
- We spend time understanding the child and members of their family's' beliefs, values, religion, family history and culture and what these mean to them personally
- The work we do with the children is captured in the assessment and shared with the parents and children where appropriate in terms of their age and level of understanding
- When children are under 5 years of age, we observe how they look, behave and interact with others in order to understand what they are telling us
- We ensure that each child has an understanding of their plan, they understand this is an active, living document that is regularly used and updated
- We visit the children in line with their legal status and individual plan and our visiting patterns reflect the level of risks/ needs identified for the child
- We spend time with the child on one to one basis both in and outside the home

## **Evidence based, risk sensible and solution focused practice**

- Before a visit or meeting, we have made time to think through and be clear about what we are trying to achieve, how we achieve it and how we know we have been successful
- We prepare solution focused questions before sessions with families or facilitating family network meetings
- When parents say they have no one in their naturally connected network, we sensitively but persistently ask questions to explore this further, use the 'family finding' tools and work with parents to help develop the informal network of support around the family

## **Family Network Meeting – when there are identified concerns about child's safety**

- We help families identify and develop their naturally connected support network
- When the initial visit to the family confirms that there are worries about a child's safety, a family network meeting (FNM) is convened and is attended by the people who are naturally connected to the child and their family
- At the family network meeting, the draft worry statements and wellbeing goals are shared and refined with the family and their network. Members of the family's network are asked to scale the situation from 0-10 in relation to each worry statement/ wellbeing goal
- Bottom lines are kept to a minimum and shared clearly with the family
- Family members and their informal network are invited to develop a plan that addresses each worry
- We facilitate the process by asking questions that help to test out the plan Everyone in the network gets a copy of the plan developed
- The safety plan is incorporated into the child in need or child protection plan

## **Rapid Family Network Meetings**

- In an emergency situation where the child's immediate safety is a worry, a strategy meeting is needed. Once the strategy meeting has taken place, the social worker and their manager do their utmost to convene a rapid family network meeting on the same day (which could be in the office/at a hospital)
- The family network meeting focuses on what needs to happen to keep the child safe for the next days
- Contingency planning takes place to identify a foster placement in the event that the network is unable to identify a satisfactory safety plan

## **Evidence based, and solution focused**

- We triangulate information from the mapping with the family, with the information about harm/strengths and safety from the professionals that best know the child, what the child is saying and what we observe the family doing
- When other professionals are worried, we help them to be clear and specific about their observations, clarifying how often, over what period and how serious these worries are
- We purposefully ask family members and professionals questions to find the things the family are doing that keep the child safe, even when things are difficult
- We use research about what increases or mitigates the risks (e.g. in relation to domestic violence, neglect, mental health, attachment, drug and alcohol misuse, criminal exploration , sexual abuse) to inform the analysis and to provide evidence to support our thinking about how worried we should be We create danger statements that are clear, specific and jargon free and these are shared with families, so they are clear about why we are involved Every danger statement has a linked safety goal that is clear and specific

and describes what we need to see in order to end our involvement (or return the children to the parents care) and these are shared with families

- In all our assessments the analysis includes reflection on the family strengths, emerging needs and complicating factors, with a clear next step proposed
- Clear communication and tools are used with all families to help children understand the worries and what the adults are doing to address them (i.e words and pictures)

### **Public Law Outline**

- We ensure all actions agreed as part of the Early Permanence and Legal Gateway Panel processes are progressed in a timely way, avoiding any drift and delay for the children and families
- When applications are made to the Court, our care plans for the children are informed by good and robust assessments, exploration of family's network
- Court statements always spell out the evidence of harm to children, complicating factors and the existing strengths and safety. These are of good quality and benefit from management oversight and challenge
- We always comply with the Court Orders and directions. We work closely with our commissioned legal services to ensure Court compliance and clarity of actions/trajectory
- When children are unable to remain/return in the parent/s' care we secure a plan of permanence for them as early as possible
- Life story works starts with the child from first day of coming into our care

### **Management grip and direction**

- Our allocation management oversight (completed within 1 working day from the transfer from MASH) clearly identifies: the strengths and concerns in relation to the child; the actions required to be taken by the allocated practitioners and timescales for completion(to include the direct work and assessment tools required, family network meeting/genogram etc); the impact of these actions on the child and family (outcomes) ; arrangements for the subsequent management oversight/ supervision
- All our single assessments benefit from Day 10; Day 25 & Day 35 management oversight/ supervision to ensure the practitioner is progressing the assessment, and the work identified at the point of allocation. This is also an opportunity for the manager and practitioner to identify and commission any services the family might benefit from
- Managers record their decision providing a clear rationale and ensuring the decision is defensible
- Managers have oversight of the practitioners work and provide them directions and guidance as per our supervision policy (Supervision policy)
- Managers review the families' journey through different frameworks (child protection, Legal planning) and ensure the family have clarity around expectations from them and refer to one plan for the child

## Child in Need meetings (CIN)

### Connecting to our ethos

- We place children at the heart of everything we do We only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs
- We empower and work with the whole, extended family

### Practice Expectations

#### 2 working days prior to the meeting

Social Worker ensures:

- That children and families understand what a Child in Need meeting is and who will be part of it along with being very clear about how they can participate in the meeting.
- The assessment we have completed with the family is shared by the Social Worker with the family (child if applicable) at least 2 working days prior to the pre-agreed meeting.
- Evidence of direct work with the child i.e Three houses (or equivalent) that we have completed with the child(ren) is also made available
- All relevant agencies/ family members and child (if appropriate) are available to attend the meeting. If not, their views and opinions need to be ascertained and made available to the meeting

### Evidence based, risk sensible and solution focused practice

#### The Child in Need Meeting (CIN)

- A safe, accessible, confidential setting is provided for the CIN meeting to take place
- We always speak respectfully with family members throughout the Child in Need Meeting
- The Social Worker (Chair) ensures that the child's voice is clear in the meeting, either through encouraging their attendance or through sharing the direct work that has been done with the child, use of an advocate to be considered
- The SW asks questions that encourage the family to identify what they currently do to protect/support and look after their child & seeks the views of the child
- Parents are invited to show their understanding of professional worries and help them to understand the lived experiences for the child
- Next steps always includes the social worker working with the family to develop a words and pictures version of the safety plan for the child, where appropriate
- We triangulate what children, parents and professionals are telling us, in addition to what we observe the child and parents doing
- During CIN meetings the progress and impact of the family plan is discussed with the family and professionals
- We are clear about the trajectory and the targeted work required
- We use scaling questions with the child and their family members to consider and understand the children's wellbeing and each person's view of the family situation/the impact the family plan is having
- Copies of the child's CIN Plans are made available to the families and other professionals within 3 working days

## Management oversight

- Managers have oversight of the practitioners work and provide them directions and guidance
- Managers record their decision providing a clear rationale and ensuring the decision is defensible.
- 6 monthly key review meetings are chaired by the Team manager to ensure progress of the CIN plans
- A family network meeting/discussion takes place and is coordinated by the SW prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference (or review of the family network for the Review Child Protection Conference. A safety and support plan is developed, alongside a trajectory with desired outcomes (permeance plans to be considered). The initial/reviewed safety plan is brought to the meetings

## Child Protection Conference

### Preparing for a Child Protection Conference

#### Connecting to our ethos

- We place children at the heart of everything we do
- We only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs

When evidence of ongoing child protection concerns is identified, we use the consultations sessions between Managers and Independent Chair to discuss risks and thresholds for future intervention with the family/child.

#### Practice Expectations

2 working days prior to the meeting Social Worker:

- The child protection Social Worker's Report is shared by the Social Worker with the family (child if applicable) at least 2 working days prior to the pre-agreed meeting
- Social Worker explains to the child and the family what a child protection conference is and what will happen in this meeting (prior to ICPC)
- Evidence of direct work with the child i.e Three Houses (or equivalent) that we have completed with the child/ren is also made available
- SWs and their managers have a good understanding of the risks posed to the child, the family's strengths and trajectory

#### Independent Chair (IC)

- Reviews the available assessments in relation to the child and conducts a discussion with the SW/TM. Based on individual child's circumstances, the Independent Chair may make contact with other professionals for further discussions
- Independent Chair quality assures the information and requests any further information if required
- Contacts the family/ child prior to the meeting to introduce themselves and explain the conference process, Independent Chair checks the family have had access to the assessments and are fully engaged. The Independent Chair explores any potential logistic arrangements required to ensure the parents full participation and if possible, the Independent Chair to have prior discussions with both parents

#### Engaging with the family – Child centred On the day of the meeting:

- The Independent Chair has a pre-meeting with the family (face to face) before the conference starts in order to re-check their understanding of what is happening and their views
- When children or young people attend the initial or review conference, the Independent Chair meets with them before the conference starts to find out what has been happening from their perspective and to understand their views, who in their network they would like to involve

## Child Protection Conference Meetings

### Connecting to our ethos

- We keep families safe, keeping them together where possible

### Evidence based, risk sensible and solution focused practice

- A safe, accessible, confidential setting is provided for the Conference to take place
- We always speak respectfully with family members throughout the conference
- Independent Chair's ensure that the child's voice is clear in the conference, either through encouraging their attendance or through sharing the direct work that has been done with the child, use of an Advocate
- Independent Chair's ask questions that encourage the family to identify what they currently do to protect and look after their child
- Parents are invited to show their understanding of professional worries Next steps always include the social worker working with the family to develop a words and pictures version of the safety plan for the child
- We use the danger statement and safety goals to inform the Conference: moving from where we are now to where we all want to get to for the child
- The time in Conference is used primarily to test out the robustness of the safety plan; questioning is used to help everyone to feel satisfied that it will work, especially at trigger times/ stress points
- Independent Chair's use scaling questions to understand the views of the family and to decide the level of help and support needed
- A focus on the safety goals is maintained. There is a clear plan reviewed at every child protection conference to help us understand how the children are being kept safe
- The family, network and professionals have a clear understanding on the concerns, the plan and the expectations from as individuals and groups
- The Independent Chair's summary report demonstrates the decisions made at conference

### Engaging with the family – Child centred On the day of the meeting

- The Independent Chair has a pre-meeting with the family (face to face) before the conference starts in order to re-check their understanding of what is happening and their views
- When children or young people attend the initial or review conference, the Independent Chair meets with them before the conference starts to find out what has been happening from their perspective and to understand their views, who in their network they would like to involve

## Post Child Protection Conference

### Connecting to our ethos

- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs

### Practice Expectations

- Family have the option to contact the Social Worker or the Independent Chair after the conference if they have any questions, point to clarify
- We reassure ourselves that family and professionals have received a copy of the CP Plan (within one working day post conference)
- Independent Chair completes the Monitoring Forms on child's records alongside a case note outlining the decision made by the Conference. This is completed under the heading 'Outcome of the Initial/ Review Child Protection Conference' and it includes the RAG rate given by the Chair (as per the predefined criteria). The Independent Chair summarises the actions required (if any) and the arrangements for the IC oversight
- Feedback, comments, escalations are provided by the Independent Chair to the Team managers/ other professionals within one working day
- A copy of the Child Protection Plan and recommendations made are sent out to all attendees with the case mapping within 2 working days
- Records of the meetings/ discussions by the Safeguarding Meeting within 20 working days
- First Core group meeting is held within 10 days from the Meeting

### Key reviews

- Children subject to 9+ month Child protection Plans benefit from the review and input from the relevant Service Mangers ( Locality and QAS) to ensure focus on the child and prevent drift and delays

## Children We Care For

### Connecting to our ethos

- We will have high aspirations for our children and young people and will aim to make a positive difference and change children's lives for the better
- We will place children and young people at the heart of everything we do
- We will only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We will celebrate our children and young people and enable them to smile, laugh, play and succeed
- We will help children and young people to understand their life and memories
- We will ensure children and young people are part of their plans for the future

### Engaging with our children and young people

- We will always speak with children, young people and their families respectfully
- We will invest in taking the time to build a relationship with our children
- We will recognise our children and young people's strengths and things that they do well
- We will work hard to understand the trauma our children and young people have experienced and what this means for them
- We will spend time with children and young people getting to know them and ensure that the conversations we have with them help us to understand the things that are going well for them, the worries they have and the things they want to happen/change
- We will spend time understanding the child or young person's beliefs, values, religion, family history and culture and what these means to them personally
- We will ensure that when we tell a child or young person we will do something, we always ensure we follow through and do so in a timely way
- We will always ask questions that help us understand the things that are going well and not going well
- We will ensure where a child's immigration status is unclear, we are pro-active in contacting the Home Office to clarify this
- We will ensure that each child and young person has an understanding of their care plan, that they are at the centre of this plan and complete it with them and that it is updated and reviewed regularly
- We will ensure that life and memories work is a continuous process that should always be revisited with the child on regular basis
- We will ensure that our practitioners ensure the child and young person has the opportunity to explore their history and personal experiences when needed
- We will ensure that all children have a version of their plan that they understand
- We will ensure that within Permanency Planning meetings and Children we Care for Reviews, the option of returning home is always considered
- We will ensure that when a child experiences a change of care arrangements we always take time to undertake direct work to provide the child or young person with an explanation of the change in their care arrangements
- We will ensure that if a child moves to a new home with new carers, we will visit the child/young person weekly for the first 4 weeks of them moving, to ensure they are settling well with their new carers/new accommodation and their transition is well supported
- We will visit our children/young person in and out of their homes and we will see them on their own

### **Developing, reviewing and implementing the care plan**

- We will use a variety of direct work and assessment tools in our ongoing work with children to understand their needs and circumstances and inform our social work reports and care plan
- We will continue to use information from carers, family members, professionals and what the child is telling us. We will talk to all the relevant professionals to ensure we have gathered all the necessary information to inform a SMART care plan
- We will ensure when other professionals are worried, we help them to be clear and specific about their observations, clarifying how often, over what period and how serious these worries are
- We will work with our partners to ensure the best and most relevant services are available to children
- We will contact and engage with all adults who hold parental responsibility for the child and other relevant adults from the child's life
- We will ensure when making any decision about a change in a child's care arrangements, we explore and analyse this information in an assessment of need
- We will provide clear rationale for our decisions, and we engage with our children/young people as early as possible to communicate the decision
- We will ensure when a permanence plan is developed for all of our children by the second Children We Care for Review. Our children are clear about their plans, and they are reviewed at every review with every option being carefully considered, including the child returning home/or to someone within their naturally connected network
- We will ensure where our children or young people raise a concern or complaint we will respond promptly and evidence how we have resolved this within their records

### **Engaging the network - Child centred approach**

- We will ensure that we engage the family network in discussions and meetings to explore their internal resources, support opportunities
- We will ensure when there are worries about family time, family discussions/network meeting are used to enable the family to find solutions to these worries
- We will ensure when there are worries about kinship arrangements, family meetings are used to enable the family network to develop a safety/support plan
- We will ensure when we are planning to return a child or young person home, family network meetings enable the network to develop a support plan
- We will ensure when there are worries about our children and young people who are going missing or at risk of exploitation, network meetings are used to enable to develop a safety/support plan

### **Understanding our children**

- We will spend time preparing our visits to our children and young people and are clear about what we want to achieve from the visit and how we know we have achieved this
- We will have a clear timeline of the direct work we are completing with our children and young people, that is linked to their care plan and life and memories work
- We will ensure when a decision has been made for a child to return home to family, there is a timeline setting out what will happen, and our involvement coming to an end, including what additional support may be needed
- We will ensure for children we care for long term, there is a clear plan built with them through adolescence and into adulthood

## Management grip and direction

- We will ensure that when a child or young person is allocated to a new Social Worker, our management oversight clearly identifies: the strengths and any worries in relation to the child; their needs and circumstances; their current care arrangements and important people in their lives; the actions required to be taken and timescales for completion (this should include the direct work and assessment tools required, family network meeting/genogram)
- We will ensure that management oversight includes reflection on the impact of our actions on the child and family and should consider the impact of trauma
- We will ensure that managers have oversight of the practitioners work and provide
- directions and guidance
- We will ensure that managers record their decision providing a clear rationale for their decisions

## Care Experienced Young People

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We will have high aspirations for Care Experienced Young People
- We will make a difference and change young people's lives for the better
- We will place our young people at the heart of everything we do
- We will only use language that our young people can understand and relate to
- We will celebrate our young people and enable them to smile, laugh and succeed

### Engaging with our Care Experienced Young People and the network: Young Person centred

- We will value our relationships with our young people and taking time to build a good relationship is a priority
- We will identify young people's strengths and share them with them
- We will work hard to understand the trauma they have experienced and how this might impact on them
- We will maintain contact with our young people on a regular basis, dependent on their needs, and have an open line of communication through visits, texts, email and WhatsApp
- We will ensure our Personal Advisors have good working relationships with our young people and are available to provide support, advice and guidance
- We will talk to our young people about their relationships and the people in their lives who are important to them
- We will spend time understanding our young people and support and celebrate their beliefs, values, religion, family history and culture
- We will support our young people to link into local community groups to help them to develop their networks
- We will ensure that when our young people are reluctant to accept our help and support, we persist and try different ways to build relationships with them and offer support
- We will ensure that if there are worries about a young person, Personal Advisors work hard to engage the network around them to explore the opportunities for support. We do this with the consent of the young person
- We will explore and build the young person's connection to their natural network
- We ensure our young people know about the Local Offer and know about their entitlements and rights
- We will work with our partner agencies and advocate for our young people and ensure they have access to the right services and support
- We will have high aspirations for our young people and work hard with our educational colleagues, to ensure they have access to the appropriate education, employment or training
- We will prepare for our visits so that we can help our young people achieve and plan

## **Developing and monitoring the Pathway Plan**

- We will ask questions that help us understand the things that are going well. We are curious and we look for strengths
- We will ensure that when there are worries about one of our young people, personal advisors explore these together in collaboration with our young people
- We will ensure when there are worries about a young person in relation to their safety or wellbeing, we consider a referral to Adults Safeguarding Team if required
- We will use language that our young people recognise and identify with, and we avoid using jargon
- We will help our young people to identify their own goals in the pathway planning process
- We will help young people to develop a clear trajectory's for achieving their goals
- We will use scaling questions to help our young people assess their progress towards their goals
- We will ensure Pathway Plans are clear and jargon free and are written by/in the words of our young people
- We will ensure when our young people decide to become parents, we ensure the right support and interventions are secured to ensure the parents and baby's future wellbeing
- We will ensure our young people are well informed about their education, training and employment options
- We will ensure our young people understand all their accommodation options

## **Management grip and direction**

- We will ensure when a young person is allocated to a new worker, our management oversight clearly identifies: the strengths and any worries in relation to the young person; their needs and circumstances; their current living arrangements and important people in their lives; the actions required to be taken by the allocated practitioners and timescales for completion; the impact of these actions on the young person; arrangements for the subsequent management oversight/supervision
- We will ensure Managers maintain oversight of the practitioners work and provide directions and guidance
- We will ensure all Managers record their decision providing a clear rationale
- We will ensure all Managers offer a safe space to practitioners for reflection

## Transfer between the Children We Care for Service, and the Care Experienced Young Adults Service

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We will have high aspirations for our young people and young adults
- We will make a difference and change young people and young adults' lives for the better.
- We will place young people and young adults at the heart of everything we do
- We will only use language that our young people and young adults can understand
- We will celebrate our young people and young adults and enable them to smile, laugh and succeed

### Engaging with the young person and the network: Young person centred

- We will ensure that from the age of 14 years old (at the latest) we start to talk with our young people and their carer about developing independence skills i.e. through learning how to cook basic recipes, managing money, helping with the shopping, using the washing machine and cleaning their bedrooms
- We will ensure that between the age of 14 and 16 years old, we talk with our young people to understand their aspirations for their education, career and housing. We are clear and well informed about the different options available to them
- We will also discuss their transition to adulthood and explore their continuing care/support needs
- We will think carefully with young people and young adults about what would need to happen for them to achieve these aspirations and plan for this in their Care Plan and their Pathway Plan
- We will pay particular attention to building and strengthening our young person's informal networks from the age of 16 years old
- We will ensure that the Pathway Plan is in the young person's own words
- We will value relationship building in the transfer stages as this helps our young people to feel safe and supported

### Evidence based, risk sensible and solution focused practice

- We will ensure that Pathway Plans are unique and specific to each young person/young adult and are based on their individual needs, strengths, areas of development and aspirations
- We will have high aspirations for our young person/young adult and put everything possible in place during this transition period to support our young people to achieve in all areas of their life. This should include the allocation of a Personal Advisor at 16 years to enable the Personal Advisor and Social Worker to work jointly to support this transition period
- We will discuss, agree and develop contingency plans with our young person/young adult in the event that they don't quite manage to achieve what they were hoping in relation to their hopes and aspirations
- We will use scaling questions to help our young person/young adult identify the areas of independence they feel confident in and the things they feel they need more help with
- We will facilitate the pathway planning process through a questioning approach but letting our young person/young adult take the lead in developing their Pathway Plan
- We will develop a clear trajectory of what happens throughout this transition period to support our young person/young adult to flourish and develop into a confident, independent, young adults
- We will ensure that our young people/young adults who will need support from Adult

Social Care are referred at the earliest opportunity to support with their transition into adulthood, preferably from the age of 14 years depending on need

- We will ensure that our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people/young adults have access to support to help them with their asylum application and journey to independence

### **Management Oversight and direction**

- We will ensure that when a young person/young adult is allocated to a new worker, our management oversight clearly identifies - the strengths and any worries in relation to the young person/adult; their needs and circumstances; their current care arrangements and important people in their lives; the actions required to be taken by the allocated practitioners and timescales for completion
- We will ensure that management oversight will be reflective and consider the impact of our actions on the young person/adult and family arrangements
- We will ensure that managers have oversight of the practitioners work and provide them with clear direction and guidance
- We will ensure that managers are recording their decision providing a clear rationale on the young person's/young adults records

## Fostering Support Teams

### Connecting to our Ethos:

- We place children at the heart of everything we do
- We make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell Family
- We embrace diversity and celebrate each other's differences
- We share a common understanding of our responsibilities

### Practice Expectations

- We will prioritise the child and young person's welfare, safety and needs, ensuring they are at the centre of their care
- We will ensure children and young people should have an enjoyable childhood, benefiting from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills leading to a successful adult life
- We will ensure that children and young people are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs
- We will ensure that every child and young person has his or her wishes and feelings listened to and considered
- We will ensure each child and young person is valued as an individual and given personalised support in line with their individual needs and background to develop their identity, self-confidence and self-worth
- We will ensure that all Foster Carers support children through life and memories work.
- We will ensure that the particular needs of disabled children and children with complex needs will be fully recognised and considered
- We will promote the significance of family time for the children we care for, and of maintaining relationships with birth parents and the wider family, including siblings, half-siblings and grandparents, is recognised, as is the foster carer's role in this
- We will ensure the children and young people in foster care are treated as a good parent would treat their own children and to have the opportunity for as full an experience of family life and childhood as possible, without unnecessary restrictions
- We will ensure timely permanence for the children we care for
- We will recognise the central importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer and that foster carers should be recognised as core members of the team working with the child and young person
- We will share full information about children and young people with foster carers to support them in their caring role
- We will provide foster carers with the relevant support services and development opportunities to provide the best care for children and young people
- We will ensure there is genuine partnership between all those involved in fostering children, and this is essential for to deliver the best outcomes for children; this includes the Government, local government, other statutory agencies, fostering service providers and foster carers
- We will ensure that Foster Carer profiles are available to support children and young people moving into a foster home
- We will ensure that where there is a planned move, the Fostering Social Worker speaks with the child's Social Worker and Foster Carer to arrange a visit
- We will have regular contact with our carers to ensure that any emerging concerns are responded to appropriately and in a timely way
- We will ensure that where difficulties arise that impact on stability, a home stability meeting is arranged by the Fostering Social Worker as soon as possible to ensure that

these difficulties do not escalate

- We will provide regular support groups and engagement activities for carers
- We will work to achieve compliance in line with the Fostering Regulations and Fostering National Minimum Standards
- We will ensure that we plan and prepare for all visits, and they have a clear purpose.
- We will ensure that where children and young people are moving foster home, we aim to support the transition in a planned way
- We will ensure that reviews of foster carers' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about their carers' ongoing suitability to foster
- We will ensure that any areas of concern, or need for additional support, that are identified between reviews are addressed. Such matters identified between reviews are addressed at the time they are identified, where appropriate, rather than waiting for a review

### **Management grip and direction**

- We will evidence regular management oversight, that identifies the parameters for the assessments and the arrangements for subsequent management oversight/supervision.
- We will ensure regular supervision is in place to support learning, development, and reflection
- We will ensure mandatory and development training is in place for fostering service staff.
- We will ensure safeguarding, timeliness, sufficiency and support is managed within the service
- We will ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service
- We will ensure the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring
- We will ensure the management of the service ensures all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards and with the service's policies and procedures
- We will ensure that all Managers, staff and foster carers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined
- We will ensure that there are clear arrangements in place to identify the person in charge when the Registered Manager, or Local Authority Fostering Service Manager, is absent
- We will ensure that the service has the facilities to work with children with physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties or for whom English is not their first language
- We will ensure that oral and written communications are made available in a format which is appropriate to the physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties and language of the individual. The procedures include arrangements for reading, translating, Makaton, pictures, tape recording and explaining documents to those people who are unable to understand the document

## Fostering Recruitment and Assessment

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We will place children at the heart of everything we do
- We will keep families safe and keep them together where possible
- We will make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell Family
- We will embrace diversity and celebrate each other's differences
- We will share a common understanding of our responsibilities

### Practice Expectations

- We will consider a family member/s when considering permanency for a child
- We will support where we can the family or friends' applications for a residence order or a special guardianship order as way of achieving permanence for children
- We will ensure that children are active participants and that their wishes and feelings are considered in all relevant processes when adults are trying to solve problems and make decisions about them
- We will ensure people who are interested in becoming foster carers are treated fairly, without prejudice, openly and with respect. Enquiries are dealt with courteously and efficiently by staff who have the necessary knowledge and skills. Prospective foster carers are provided with timely and relevant information following their initial enquiry and are kept informed about the progress of any subsequent application for approval
- We will ensure any prospective foster carers are prepared to become foster carers in a way which addresses and gives practical techniques to manage the issues they are likely to encounter and identifies the competencies and strengths they have or need to develop
- We will ensure our fostering assessments meet the national minimum standards
- We will ensure that abbreviations are not used in our fostering assessments or literature
- We will ensure that all applicants have the assessment and approval process explained to them
- We carefully explore the potential carers support network
- We will carefully prepare questions before we meet with the potential carers we are assessing
- We will explore and draw out strengths with potential carers and these are reflected in the foster care assessments
- We will explore how potential carers have used strengths and resources to get through different situations
- We will obtain references for potential foster carers and special guardians
- We will observe the carer child interactions where the child is living with the carer
- We will observe foster carers interactions with each other within the training groups to inform our assessments
- We will regularly check in our skills to foster training any worries that the applicants/carers may have
- We will analyse all information and make evidenced based recommendations and decisions
- We will provide regular feedback to applicants/carers within the assessment process
- We will ensure where there are concerns raised within the assessment these will be discussed with the applicant/carers and the child's Social Worker
- We will support applicants/carers with advice and guidance and the options available to them to challenge their assessment where there is a negative recommendation

## Management grip and direction

- We will evidence regular management oversight that identifies the parameters for the assessments and the arrangements for subsequent management oversight/supervision
- We will ensure that regular supervision is in place to support learning, development, and reflection
- We will ensure that mandatory and development training is in place for fostering service staff
- We will ensure that safeguarding, timeliness, sufficiency and support is managed within the service
- We will ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service
- We will ensure every manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring
- We will ensure the management of the service ensures all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 Regulations and National Minimum standards and with the service's policies and procedures
- We will ensure managers, staff and foster carers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined
- We will ensure clear arrangements are in place to identify the person in charge when the registered manager, or local authority fostering service manager, is absent
- We will ensure the service has the facilities to work with children with physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties or for whom English is not their first language
- We will ensure that oral and written communications are made available in a format which is appropriate to the physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties and language of the individual. The procedures include arrangements for reading, translating, Makaton, pictures, tape recording and explaining documents to those people who are unable to understand the document

## Quality Assurance & Safeguarding

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We have high aspirations for our children, we make a difference and change children's lives for the better
- We place children at the heart of everything we do
- We keep families safe, keeping them together where possible
- We work alongside our families, guided by their needs
- We empower and work with the whole, extended family
- We only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We celebrate our children and enable them to smile, laugh, play and succeed

### Independent Chairs

We Will	When	Why
Read the child's file	As soon as the child is allocated to me	We will know what has happened to the child and they don't have to explain to us.
Introduce ourselves to the child	Before the child's first meeting	The child will know who we are and how we can help them
Ask the child how they want us to keep in touch	Before the child's first meeting and each subsequent meeting	The child will know how they can contact us, and we are both clear how we are going to communicate
Have contact with the child	At least once every six months	We will develop a relationship with the child, they will contact us if they need us to do anything for them and we will know if there are any issues or concerns to resolve.
Understand the child's history, their current and future needs	Always	We will know how we can best help the child
Speak to other people who know the child	Prior to and following all contact with the child	We will have a full picture of the child
Make sure the child's voice is heard	Always	Other people will know and understand the child
Talk to the child about the advocacy service and complaints service	All contact with the child	Everyone will know if something is not right

### We Know Our Role

We Will	When	Why
Arrange the child's meetings	Within timescales (1 month prior to the statutory due date)	Statutory requirement CWCF Working Together CP
Plan the child's meetings with them	Prior to scheduled date	The child can choose where and how they are held and who attends
Prepare for the child's meeting	At least 15 working days before the scheduled date	The meeting will be of good quality and make a difference for the child
Have a good quality report from the social worker	At least 2 working days prior to the child's meeting	We can address any queries and discuss with the child and their parents

Encourage and support the child to participate in some way and where appropriate to chair their own meeting	Prior to every meeting	They will feel listened to, involved and in control of their own life
Make sure the child's meeting is accessible, safe and confidential for everyone	All meetings	To encourage good attendance and information sharing
Make sure the child has a permanence plan by their second meeting	By the child's second meeting (4 months)	The child will have a secure, stable and loving family as soon as possible
Address any concerns in respect of the child through the resolution and challenge process	An issue is identified in relation to care planning, procedural compliance, the child's safety or quality of practice	To prevent a negative impact on the child
Make sure the child has life and memory work	At every point of contact	To help the child make sense of who they are, what they have experienced and why.
Consider whether the child can exit care or step down	At every contact	The child should live with their parents or other member of their birth family wherever possible
Be proactive in respect of family and /or home/care arrangement breakdown from first point of contact "THINK FAMILY"	Always	Support services can be provided to prevent disruption and impact on the child's emotional wellbeing and mental health
Quality Assure all information received in respect of the child, regularly review their file and complete mid-way reviews	Always	We will have a clear picture of the child's needs and progress; We can identify where improvements are needed and identify good practice
Make sure the child has a trusted adult	Always	The child will always have someone who they trust and can talk to
Speak to the child and write them a letter	Following every review	The child will understand what has been discussed and agreed
Complete a record of the child's review	Recommendations within 5 working days Full record within 20 working days	Everyone will be clear about what has been discussed, what needs to be done, by who and when. The child can read their own file.
Make sure the child is prepared for adulthood and independence before they leave care	Young Person is 15years/8 months	The young person needs to be safe, stable and know what support they will receive at this challenging time.

## We are accountable for our Service

We Will	When	Why
Be accountable for the reputation and success of our service	Always	<p>We are our service.</p> <p>Together with our colleagues we can improve the performance and reputation of our service and ultimately the service we offer our children and families.</p> <p>Our contribution is crucial.</p>
Be an advocate for the Trust, the wider partnership and our children and families	Always	<p>We are one part of the Trust, one part of the partnership, our contribution will make a difference.</p> <p>We have a personal responsibility for the reputation and success of the Trust, the wider partnership and our children and families.</p>
Share a common understanding of our responsibilities with our colleagues	Attend reflective seminars, service meetings, team meetings, performance meetings	<p>We are clear about the vision for our children and families.</p> <p>We are working with our colleagues to achieve this, so we are consistent.</p>
Work together with our colleagues to achieve improvements	Attend reflective spaces and seminars, performance meetings, service and team meetings, L&D events	We can encourage and support each other to learn and develop and ultimately provide a better service to our children and their families
Take responsibility for our own performance	Always – by using power BI, preparing and engaging in supervision, performance meetings, L&D events	This directly impacts on, our colleagues, the reputation and success of my service and ultimately on outcomes for children and their families.
Make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell family	Team links with the wider trust, leadership hubs, marketplace events, partnership events	We can learn together, share and resolve problems
Embrace diversity and celebrate difference	Always	<p>Sandwell is a diverse community, we need to educate ourselves about different cultures, backgrounds and perspectives.</p> <p>Our workforce is diverse, we can learn together, share different approaches, experience and skills. This will lead to increased innovation, improved decision making and foster trust in the community. Our colleagues will feel a sense of belonging, more connected and productive.</p>
Be Solution Focussed	Always	We are leaders in the organisation, we can influence and motivate others. A positive work environment leads to greater productivity and better outcomes for children and their families.
Come to Supervision prepared	1 x monthly	The quality of supervision will be good and will make a difference to us, our service and our children and families

## Principal Independent Reviewing Officer's

We Will	When	Why
Lead by example	Always	We are role models for others.  We are responsible for influencing and motivating others.
Work with our colleagues so we are consistent	Always Weekly PIRO Meetings QAS Management Meetings Feedback from Service and performance meetings, Supervision	All staff receive the same response in respect of process and procedure.  All staff receive a good level of support
Provide good quality supervision	1 x monthly	All staff feel supported, are clear about expectations and standards, receive good direction in respect of their children and receive feedback in respect of their performance.
Provide a clear vision for the service	Always Service Meetings, Performance Meetings, Reflective Sessions, Team Meetings, Supervision	We share a common goal, we are all pulling in the same direction, consistent and motivated by seeing the difference we are making to children and their families.

## Business Insight and Intelligence

The Business Insight and Intelligence Team provide, produce and analyse Social Care/Partnership data across the service to meet the information needs of the Trust and Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership. We also produce statutory information relating to Children's Social Care, required by the Department of Education and Ofsted.

### Practice Standards

- We will take responsibility for the collation and preparation of performance information as required by the service on a daily, weekly and monthly basis
- We will complete the monthly performance book within specified timescales
- We will complete statutory Department of Education and Ofsted returns within the specified timeframe
- We will produce and analyse the Ofsted Annex A data on a monthly basis
- We will support and provide information during Ofsted Inspections as required
- We will respond to data requests in a timely manner
- We will respond to Freedom of Information requests within the specified timeframe
- We will attend meetings, present data and offer support where requested
- We will support improvement, good quality and performance
- We will engage with staff and managers and provide advice and support
- We will train new managers on how best to use the performance data available
- We will highlight areas of concern and any data quality concerns that may affect key performance
- We will manage the expectations of the service considering the demands on the team
- We will collate and provide data for the West Midlands Regional Benchmarking group
- We will collate and provide data for Adoption at Heart on a Monthly/Quarterly basis
- We will support the Quality Assurance service with the practice/thematic review activity across the service, selecting files and monitoring compliance and outcomes
- We will and continue to devise, design and amend Power BI interactive reports for Children's Social Care as required (including legislative changes i.e. Working Together and National Outcomes Framework published by DfE)
- We will support the service to design and develop tracking mechanisms to help monitor information where required
- We will provide data to our partners to support cross-agency working, where required
- We will support the service to unblock pathways on Liquid Logic system when required

## Family Solutions Team (FST)

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We support and look after each other
- We make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell family
- We share a common understanding of our responsibilities
- We embrace diversity and celebrate each other's differences
- We promote the positives – we are advocated for the Trust

### Practice Standards

- We will promote stability for children in their care arrangement. This may be at home with parents and carers or in alternative care arrangements such as foster/residential care and via all legal status
- We will offer a relationship-based approach to children/families/carers using systemic and solution focused practice. We will explore the child/young person's needs within the context of their family life and family history
- We will assess and support families via the use of relational Genograms and the parenting continuum as well as direct relationship-based family work. We will help families explore their strengths and possible solutions
- We will respond to crisis situations where relationships are breaking down and this may lead to disruption for the child/young person. We will provide an immediate response, within, but no later than 24 hours following referral
- We will work in partnership with colleagues in the Trust and other agencies to promote the need for children to be supported to remain outside of alternative care arrangements, if it is safe to so
- We will attend meetings as they relate to the child and family we are working with and give an overview of the work being undertaken
- We will help family identify their own networks of support to enable a child to remain with their natural networks. We will refer to our colleagues in Family Group Conferencing Team at the earliest opportunity if we believe it can promote a child/young person's safety, stability and welfare
- We will promote anti oppressive and anti-racist social work practice in our work with children, young people and families and use social graces as a way of ensuring that we take account of areas of oppression, disadvantage and culture as well as areas of strength and survival
- We will work jointly with children, young people and families and promote respectful interactions between families, children and professionals
- We will be open to having our own values challenged as they impact on our work with families and colleagues
- We will promote the reunification of children and young people back to their natural networks if this is deemed safe. We will use the Family Solutions Team reunification toll to inform this work
- We will add our family allocation note to Liquid Logic to ensure that the professional network are aware of Family Solutions Team's involvement with a family. We also add a summary of the work the child, young person and their family completed with the Family Solutions Team at the end of our involvement to ensure that this gives an account of the work undertaken and the outcomes achieved
- We will work with our colleagues in Multi Systemic Therapy and ensure timely and comprehensive information is available as part of transferring the family to the Multi Systemic Therapy service
- We will ensure that formal supervision takes place monthly and that supervision in action

is also an integral part of Family Solutions Team practice. Family Solutions Team will debrief and hypothesise with the manager throughout the process of Family Solutions Team intervention, particularly when responding to crisis situations

#### Bottom Lines

- All families should have the opportunity to explore their relationships via a relational Genogram and the parenting continuum. These will always be the assessment interventions used by Family Solutions Team to help generate hypotheses and these will be included on the child or young person's records
- Family Solutions Team will work through crisis situations with families until a resolution is found which keeps the child or young person safe and within their natural networks.
- Family Solutions Team will advocate for the need for a child or young person to be cared for outside of their networks if we believe that the child or young persons' needs cannot be met within the family network
- We believe that children and young people are best brought up within their families and we will strive to ensure this happens, unless it is deemed to be unsafe
- We will promote the values of parental responsibility and advise parents that they are ultimately responsible for the care of their children or young people (outside of care proceedings or other relevant legal order) and that we will support them to keep their children in their care and that alternative care is not an option until all avenues of support have been exhausted
- We will advocate for the creative use of resources as an alternative to bringing children into our care
- We will advocate for needs of a child and family to be supported to remain together if this is a safe option and will contribute to the decision-making process as it pertains to children becoming children that we care for

## Family Group Conferencing (FGC)

The Family Group Conferencing (FGC) Team is an accredited service and adheres to the Family Rights Group standards. The team offers Family Group Conferences, mediation and Emergency Network Meetings, and supports practitioners with family meetings. The Six Principles for Family Group Conferencing (Barnardo's, Family Rights Group and Action for Children, 2002) provide the framework for SCT FGC Team Practice Standards.

**We will be approachable, honest, reliable, trustworthy, punctual, committed and ensure that your views are respected and communicated to all involved.'**

- We will ensure families are given clear information about what a family group conference is and why they have been offered a family group conference
- We will check with family members that they understand and will find different ways of helping them to understand if they don't
- We will ensure families are informed about timescales and kept up to date about any possible delays
- We will let families know that most family group conferences will happen within six weeks of the full referral
- We will ensure that the information that is given to families is given in a way that meets their needs
- We will ensure all family members invited are told who they can contact if they have any questions about the process and about how they can make a complaint
- Where possible, we will ensure that coordinators reflect the local community, and families will be offered a coordinator who speaks their language and who has an understanding of the way religious beliefs, cultural traditions and other lifestyle issues influence how the family operates
- We will ensure an independent coordinator works with the family to arrange the family group conference. 'Independent' means that they have not and will not be involved in making any decisions about the child/young person
- We will arrange the meeting at a time, date and place that is mutually agreed with the child/young person and the parents or those who have parental responsibility
- We will ensure that adults and children/young people have consented to information held by agencies being shared at the meeting and that the referral form is signed by those who have parental responsibility and the child/young person, or that informed consent is gained
- We will ensure the coordinator works with the family and young person to decide who needs to be at the meeting
- We will use tools such as a genogram, button universe and helping hand. We will ensure that everyone is happy with the people attending the Family Group Conference and where there are difficulties or where there is Domestic Violence we will consider a 'shuttle' Family Group Conference (e.g. family members in different meetings or locations)
- We will ensure that family are asked what language will be used at the Family Group Conference and arrange interpreters when needed. Everyone has the right to feel safe
- We will ensure that everyone feels safe at the Family Group Conference and exclude family members if their presence would take away another person's right to feel safe
- We will ensure that the bottom line on the referral form is clear and is looked at within the exchange meeting with the allocated Social Worker
- We will offer an advocate or ensure a support person is in place for any family member or child/young person who needs or wants this. This person may be someone within the family network or someone who is able to make decisions about the family
- We will ensure the family is given relevant, factual and jargon free information about the agencies' concerns and the resources available
- We will ensure that the referral form is written in a strengths-based way, so that a 7-year-

old child could understand it. At the Family Group Conference, we will challenge any jargon used and ask for clarification

- We will ensure parents are given written information about the agencies' concerns at least 24 hours before the conference. We will ensure that each family member is visited or spoken to before the Family Group Conference and the worries that Sandwell Children's Trust have are explained fully
- We will ensure that if family or friends have had to travel to the Family Group Conference that their expenses will be considered
- We will ensure that the family have an opportunity to ask the allocated Social Worker any questions they have. During preparation time with the family, we will ensure that any questions are taken back to the Social Worker and the family and friends' network are given answers to these questions. The message is that there is nothing too small or too big that can't be talked about with someone
- We will ensure that family members unable to attend for any reason are supported to contribute in other ways. We will discuss the most appropriate ways of their voice being heard with that individual person
- We will ensure families are given time to meet on their own without the coordinator or staff from agencies being present
- We will ensure that there is a suitable area and time allocated, with appropriate refreshments, for the family to make decisions
- We will ensure that childcare provision will be available if required
- We will work with each network member to enable them to make a plan that meets the needs of the child/young person. We will challenge the plan if we feel that it will not meet the needs of the child
- We will ensure that the Social Worker agrees the plan as long as it does not place the child/young person at risk, and we will provide reasonable resources to make it happen.
- We will ensure all family members and agencies who attend the conference receive a copy of the plan within a stated time. The plan will include details of what resources the family needs and how the proposals in the plan will be carried out and monitored
- We will contact the family 6 weeks after their Family Group Conference and offer a review Family Group Conference. If we are contacted by a Social Worker requesting a review Family Group Conference, we will contact the family and make this offer
- We will ensure every effort is made to respond to the family's plan at the meeting. Families will be informed who will give them a written response, and when and how, if the plan or some of the resources cannot be agreed at the conference
- We will ensure agencies whose support is required to carry out a plan respond within ten days to say whether they can provide the support requested and if necessary, how long this will take to provide. If we have not heard from an agency within 9 working days, we will follow this up with the agency for a response
- We will ensure all families are offered the opportunity to give their opinion of the service they have received and that evaluations are followed up by a phone call from Family Group Conference business support within 6 weeks. We will ensure that all network members know how to complain, or give a compliment, or make a comment
- We will ensure that, where possible, families are kept informed about changes made as a result of their comments
- We will ensure families are given the opportunity to have contact with other families who have used the service. Wherever possible we will try to put families in contact with other families and we will invite family members to Sandwell's family forum
- We will ensure families who have attended a family group conference are given the opportunity to be involved in developing policies and practice about family group conferences. All families who have been through the family group conference process will be asked to join the family forum and the steering group

## Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) and Multi Systemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN)

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We support and look after each other
- We make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell family
- We share a common understanding of our responsibilities
- We embrace diversity and celebrate each other's differences
- We promote the positives – we are advocated for the Trust

### Practice Standards

#### Engaging with the family – Child centred; Family led

- We will always remain respectful towards children and their families. We contact them after receiving the referral and undertake a suitability assessment (looking at whether the family are ready for treatment to begin)
- We will ensure the Multi Systemic Therapy Supervisor and therapist will arrange a visit to the family within a few days of receiving the referral – to gain consent from the family to work with us and to develop a safety plan immediately. We also gain consent to record some sessions - so that we can ensure the therapist is adhering to the Multi Systemic Therapy model and so the Supervisor has a good understanding of the family and their circumstances
- We will ensure that each family has access to the teams 24/7 on call service
- We will ensure that during the first 4 weeks (initial assessment stage) the family will be supported to complete a genogram (to include contact details), a MASS assessment (looking at who their social supports are and what they offer); and a strengths and needs assessment (looking at the family; education; community; individual and peers)
- We will complete rigorous safety planning with the family, and this is updated as and when needed. This will be shared with all systems working with the child
- We will ensure Multi Systemic Therapists will use their skills to engage the child or young person in all systems (home, school and community) and ensure they are part of treatment wherever possible
- We will gain desired outcomes from the family; wider family and all systems, including what are their hopes from working with Multi Systemic Therapy)
- We will share and agree the referral behaviours we will be working on over the next 5 months with the family, child and all systems
- We will set with the family overarching goals and how we will track and monitor how we are achieving these
- We will ensure that the goals that are developed are also agreed with all systems and fed into the Child in Need or Child Protection plans
- We will notify the police, education, GP and CAMHS of Multi Systemic Therapy involvement and work towards good communication. They will also have access to the teams 24/7 on call number

### Multi Systemic Therapy Assessment and intervention (using the MST analytical process).

- We will ensure that each week every therapist will produce detailed summaries on the child or young person's records, which identify the fit of the problem (what may be driving the problem) and the systemic interventions that are going to be used to reduce that risk or problem

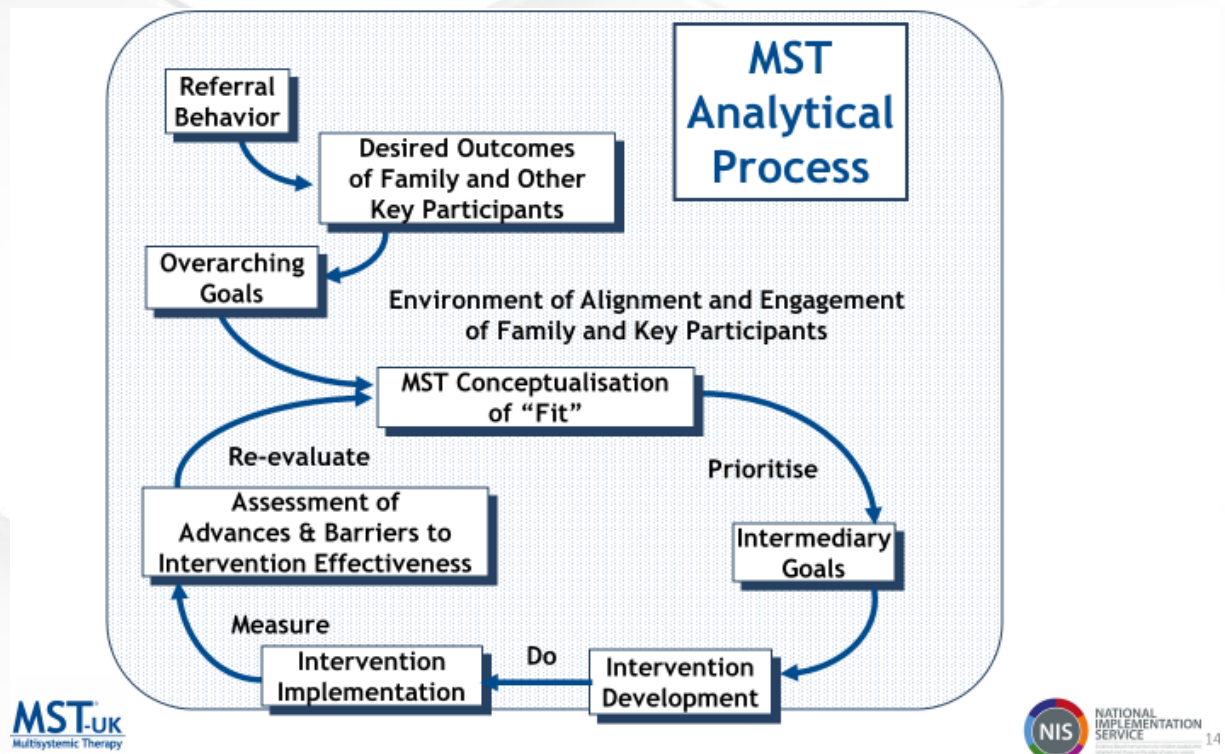
- We will ensure that each week the teams Supervisor has oversight of the weekly summary and ensures that they agree with the top clinical concerns and agree how this will be addressed systemically
- We will have weekly group supervision to discuss each family open to Multi Systemic Therapy. Weekly paperwork is then updated to reflect any changes to plans
- We will ensure that after weekly group supervision, consultation with a Multi Systemic Therapy consultant is undertaken. There is then an alignment and agreement for the steps that need to be taken to reduce the top clinical concern
- We will ensure that we support families in increasing their responsibility by using their social supports, giving homework tasks outside of Multi Systemic Therapy treatment sessions, barriers to monitoring and reviewing safety plans, remaining strengths based and solution focused
- We will share progress and barriers in multiagency meetings and encourage systems to attend treatment sessions and group supervision

### Sustainability

- We will ensure that at the end of treatment that we work with each family to produce their sustainability plan - to ensure permanence for every child
- We will ensure that the sustainability plan and a closure report is shared with everyone working with the family

### Bottom Lines

In all our work we will ensure we follow the Multi Systemic Therapy analytical process and 9 principles



## MST Nine Principles

### **Principle 1: Finding the fit**

An assessment is made to understand the "fit" between identified problems and how they play out and make sense in the entire context of the young person's environment. Assessing the "fit" of the young person's successes also helps guide the treatment process.

### **Principle 2: Focusing on positives and strengths**

MST Therapists and team members emphasise the positives they find and use strengths in the young person's world as levers for positive change. Focusing on family strengths has numerous advantages, such as building on strategies the family already knows how to use, building feelings of hope, identifying protective factors, decreasing frustration by emphasizing problem solving and enhancing parents or carers' confidence.

### **Principle 3: Increasing responsibility**

Interventions are designed to promote responsible behaviour and decrease irresponsible actions by family members.

### **Principle 4: Present-focused, action-oriented and well-defined**

Interventions deal with what's happening now in the young person's life. Therapists look for action that can be taken immediately, targeting specific and well-defined problems. Such interventions enable participants to track the progress of the treatment and provide clear criteria to measure success. Family members are expected to work actively toward goals by focusing on present-oriented solutions, versus gaining insight or focusing on the past. When the clear goals are met, the treatment can end.

### **Principle 5: Targeting sequences**

Interventions target sequences of behaviour within and between the various interacting elements of the adolescent's life—family, teachers, friends, home, school and community—that sustain the identified problems.

### **Principle 6: Developmentally appropriate**

Interventions are set up to be appropriate to the young person's age and fit his or her developmental needs. A developmental emphasis stresses building the young person's ability to get along well with peers and acquire academic and vocational skills that will promote a successful transition to adulthood.

### **Principle 7: Continuous effort**

Interventions require daily or weekly effort by family members so that the young person and family have frequent opportunities to demonstrate their commitment. Advantages of intensive and multifaceted efforts to change include more rapid problem resolution, earlier identification of when interventions need fine-tuning, continuous evaluation of outcomes, more frequent corrective interventions, more opportunities for family members to experience success and giving the family power to orchestrate their own changes.

### **Principle 8: Evaluation and accountability**

Intervention effectiveness is evaluated continuously from multiple perspectives with MST team members being held accountable for overcoming barriers to successful outcomes. MST does not label families as “resistant, not ready for change or unmotivated.” This approach avoids blaming the family and places the responsibility for positive treatment outcomes on the MST team.

### **Principle 9: Generalisation**

Interventions are designed to invest the parents or carers with the ability to address the family’s needs after the intervention is over. The parent or carer is viewed as the key to long-term success. Family members drive the change process in collaboration with the MST therapist.

- We will adhere to the Multi Systemic Therapy model in our work and seek maximum adherence to that model (measured through direct observations and TAM-R scores)
- We will work a flexible schedule, including weekends, to meet the needs of the families we are serving
- We will track progress and outcomes on each child or young person’s records by completing Multi Systemic Therapy paperwork and participating in team clinical supervision and Multi Systemic Therapy consultation weekly to help maximise the chances of finding solutions to complex issues with the families I am working with
- We will ensure each team member contributes to the provision of 24 hours / 7 days a week on-call system to provide coverage for families
- We will “take the lead” for clinical decision making for each child or young person, negotiating this with partners to achieve positive outcomes
- We will apply the principle that Multi Systemic Therapy programme discharge criteria are outcome-based rather than duration-focused
- We will ensure that families understand that working with the Multi Systemic Therapy team is voluntary
- We will record our work with a family on the child’s records on Liquid Logic

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We will place children and young people at the heart of everything we do
- We will only use language that our children and young people can understand
- We will work alongside our children, young people and their families, guided by their needs
- We will empower and work with the whole, extended family
- We will have high aspirations for our children and young people, we make a difference and change their lives for the better

### Practice Standards

#### Engaging with the family – youth first, offender second

- We will ensure that our young people and their families understand what we do. We will share the service information at our first encounter, whether that is within Court proceedings or following a referral from Police or another internal/ external/ partner agency. We will also direct them to our website where they can get additional information for them to read-through
- We will always be respectful towards young people and their families. We make contact with them and arrange to visit them at their home by day 5 of the allocation to introduce the new worker, provide an opportunity to ask any questions; ensure they understand, be clear about what the service offers and how we can provide help and support
- We will obtain consent around information sharing through completion of our initial induction pack
- We will in our first few sessions of intervention, post initial planning meeting, concentrate on relationship building with the young person by completing the six sessions within the Getting to Know You pack, which covers areas such as a family tree, peer networks and goals and aspirations enabling careful exploration of the family's wider family/support network
- We will ensure the family are encouraged to involve their wider network in developing the family support plan through attendance at initial planning meetings, home visits and in review meetings
- We will use creative direct work tools and evidence-based practice to develop an understanding of the young person's needs, strengths and risks and the things they would like to be different. We will consider any special educational needs, learning needs, diversity and cultural background with a view to reduce their risk of re-offending

## **Engaging with the victim**

- We will contact all victims of offences committed by young people to provide them with information about what the service offers and how we can provide help and support. We can also direct them to our website where they can get additional information for their perusal
- We are always respectful towards victims and their families. We make contact with them and arrange to visit them at their home by day 5 of the allocation to introduce the Restorative Justice Worker, provide an opportunity to ask any questions, ensure they understand what the service offers and how we can provide help and support and explore whether they would like to engage in Restorative Justice (RJ)
- We will obtain consent around information sharing through completion of our initial induction pack and complete a victim impact statement to be shared with the young person and their family and used to inform the intervention that's delivered to the young person
- We will ensure that if the victim is not ready to engage in Restorative Justice, we will keep in touch, if they are happy for us to do so, to support them to explore it at a later date ensuring that we give consideration to any additional learning needs, diversity and cultural background. We will also provide updates on the young person's progress
- We will be clear with victims that Restorative Justice is a two-way process and if they would like to engage in Restorative Justice this is only possible if the young person also agrees to engage. Wherever possible we towards getting both the victim and young person to meet face to face in a controlled Restorative Justice Conference. A robust risk assessment is carried out to ensure it is safe for all parties to attend
- We will, no matter how much they engage with our service, collate the victims' views through a victims' satisfaction questionnaire at the end, so we can see how we are as a service to help us shape our service for the future

## **Undertaking the Asset plus Assessment and Developing the Plan**

- We will use Asset plus in our ongoing work with young people and their families as part of the support to enable the family to move towards their wellbeing goals
- We will complete lateral checks with all the relevant professionals to ensure we have the necessary information to inform a SMART plan of support
- We will work with our partners to ensure the best and most relevant services are available to the families
- We will complete a family network exercise within the assessment to help the family identify and develop their naturally connected support network
- We will ensure that at the point there are concerns pertaining to a young persons' risk, safety and wellbeing a referral is made to our in-house risk, safety and wellbeing forum to formulate a risk management or safety and wellbeing plan at the earliest opportunity. If it is deemed an emergency situation, this will be completed within 24 hours and is attended by the people who are naturally connected to the young person and their family
- We will contact and engage with all adults who hold parental responsibility for the young person, including the non-resident parent (if applicable)
- We will sequence the sessions based on the priorities of the young person identified in the planning meetings
- We will ensure that the victim is included throughout the assessment

### **The Family network meeting**

- We will ensure that if the family think they would benefit from support from their wider family network, a referral is made to the Family Conference Group team
- We will ensure that each individual that can provide additional support is explored, and bottom lines are kept to a minimum and shared clearly with the family

### **Planning Meetings – evidence based, and solution focused**

- We will triangulate what young people, parents, victims and professionals are telling us, in addition to what we observe the young person and parents doing
- We will ensure that during planning review meetings, the progress and impact of the intervention plan is discussed with the family and professionals
- We will ensure we are clear about the path and the planned work required
- We will use scaling questions with the child and their family members to consider and understand the children's wellbeing and each person's view of the family situation/the impact the family plan is having
- We will ensure the young person and family are given an opportunity to add to the plan.
- We will ensure that the victim impact statement is included or incorporated

### **Sessions**

- We will undertake sessions with our young people, victims and their families within their home, office, community or school environment depending on their needs
- We will communicate our intentions with young people, victims and their families in advance
- We will carefully prepare our sessions considering the outcomes we hope to achieve
- We will ensure the worker is clear about the next steps, the work that will be completed, how and why and ensures that this is communicated throughout the journey

### **Management grip and direction**

- We will ensure when a young person is allocated to their worker, their records include management oversight that clearly identifies: the strengths and worries in relation to the young person; the actions required to be taken by the allocated practitioners and timescales for completion (to include the direct work and assessment tools required, family network meeting/genogram); the impact of these actions on the child and family (outcomes); arrangements for the subsequent management oversight/ supervision
- We will ensure that Quality Assurance is carried out on all assessments and reports that are completed by the allocated worker and feedback or any actions are given accordingly
- We will ensure that managers will have oversight of the practitioners work and will provide them directions and guidance
- We will ensure that managers will record their decisions, providing a clear rationale and ensuring the decision is defensible
- We will ensure our managers' key reviews process is used to ensure reflection, challenge and clear path of the child's plan

## Bottom Lines

- We will ensure that all services provided within Youth Justice are undertaken with Youth Justice Board National Standards and local standards in mind
- We will ensure in all our assessments the analysis will include risk of re-offending, risk of serious harm and risk of safety wellbeing reflection on the family strengths, emerging needs and complicating factors, a clear next step and intervention plan with a view to promote desistance
- We will ensure clear communication and tools are used with all families to help young people understand the worries and what the adults are doing to address them (i.e. words and pictures)
- We will ensure multi-agency meeting responding to risk, safety & wellbeing and the young person progression must be attended by all relevant professionals
- We will our interventions will be creative in method and relevance to the young person i.e. skill set, strengths, interest etc
- We will ensure our Planning Meetings will use scaling questions to understand the views and experiences of children and their families to help understand how the support offered is helping to make a difference

## Additional information

- Childs Journey
- Youth Justice Service Guidance Shared Folder
- Supervision Policy
- Quality Assurance Feedback tools
- Resource library and directory
- Sandwell Hub
- Victims Code of Practice

## Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice (DECCA)

### Connecting to our Ethos

- We support and look after each other
- We make meaningful connections and collaborate effectively with the wider Sandwell family
- We share a common understanding of our responsibilities
- We embrace diversity and celebrate each other's differences
- We promote the positives – we are advocated for the Trust

### Practice Standards

- We will adhere to the agreed Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice processes in our work and seek maximum adherence to that model
- We will work a flexible schedule, including evenings and weekends, where needed, both street and centre based, to meet the needs of the children/young people we work with.
- We will deliver face to face sessions to children/young people that focus on education, prevention and harm minimisation in schools and community settings, where appropriate
- We will deliver sessions to children/young people, in the virtual world, that are interactive and focus on education, prevention and harm minimisation in schools and community settings, where appropriate

- We will work with schools, primary and secondary, to support them in safeguarding and educating their children/young people on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- We will work with providers to support them in safeguarding and educating their children/young people on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- We will work with children/young people face to face and encourage those that require it to access specialist treatment
- We will participate in the monthly supervision structure where appropriate i.e. monthly supervision; monthly audit and child's progression supervision; monthly clinical supervision; quarterly group clinical supervision; and work with supervisors to help maximise the chances of finding solutions to complex issues with the children/young people, and providers, we are working with
- We will track progress and outcomes for each child/young person by completing the DECCA Electronic System (DES) and paper-file records and participating in monthly practice reviews and supervision
- We will, in collaboration with the Team Manager and colleagues, contribute to the provision of the Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice service as agreed in the Service Level Agreement (SLA)
- We will contact providers (schools, community groups, Sandwell Children's Trust etc.) to offer and then deliver Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice services to those that require them
- We will deliver training to help colleagues work with young people around issues to do with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- We will ensure that outcomes for the children/young people we work with will be met, or strived toward, and that all will be treated with respect, tolerance and a non-judgemental attitude
- We will ensure that children, families and professionals understand that working with the Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice team is voluntary
- We will record our work, utilising the appropriate Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice system, to ensure all work we carry out can be evidenced for effectiveness, and so that children/young people can actively contribute to the direction of the Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice service
- We will ensure that any child/young person that we work with will be encouraged to give us constructive feedback, both positive and negative. This will enable them to be an active participant whilst enabling Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice to respond to this feedback to ensure the service they receive is fit for purpose and actively informed by them