



## **Multi Agency Briefing**

***The National Guidance for Child Protection in  
Scotland***

***Child Protection: From National Guidance to  
Local Implementation***

In December 2010, the Scottish Government published, *The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland*, which was a revision of the previous national guidelines for child protection, *Protecting Children: A Shared Responsibility* (1998).

The revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland has led to a revision of the West of Scotland Inter agency Child Protection Procedures. These can be accessed at

[http://www.reconstruct.co.uk/procedures/westofscotland/WebHelp\\_Pro/West\\_of\\_Scotland.htm](http://www.reconstruct.co.uk/procedures/westofscotland/WebHelp_Pro/West_of_Scotland.htm)

All key agencies have been revising their own child protection procedures to take account of the revised National Guidance and West of Scotland Procedures.

***In North Ayrshire, key elements of the new child protection procedures come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011.***

This briefing paper has been prepared for practitioners in North Ayrshire in order to support the changes in practice.

## **Key Changes**

### **1. Child protection registration of unborn children**

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011, it will be possible to place unborn children on North Ayrshire's child protection register.

This decision can only be made at a pre birth child protection conference and should be based on the same criteria as the registration of children, namely the likelihood of significant future harm and the requirement for a child protection plan to reduce this harm.

Practitioners are reminded that the child protection register has no legal status.

Pre birth child protection conferences should take place around 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Where there is a need to meet at an earlier stage in the pregnancy, you may be invited to a pre birth case discussion. At this meeting information can be shared about the concerns and supports put in place, as well as a decision made about the need to convene a pre birth child protection conference at a later stage in the pregnancy. The decision to place an unborn child on the child protection register cannot be made at a pre birth case discussion.

Whether or not an unborn baby is placed on the child protection register, the pre birth child protection conference is required to give consideration to actions to be taken at birth, as well as to the supports required for the family pre birth. This includes consideration of whether a Child Protection Order may need to be taken at birth, whether the baby can be discharged from hospital to their parents care and whether there is a requirement for a discharge meeting and a handover to community-based supports.

Everyone who attends a pre birth child protection conference is expected to contribute to making these decisions.

A review child protection conference should take place three months after the pre-birth child protection conference. In some instances this timing may coincide with the birth of the baby, or the baby may arrive before or after this date. There will be instances where the timing of the review conference in relation to the birth of the baby is important.

For example, where the risks have been clearly identified, a plan put in place for the management of such risk and there are no anticipated barriers or challenges to the effective implementation of the plan, it may be that the review child protection conference can take place at three months regardless of whether the baby was born several weeks prior to this.

In other situations, such as those where circumstances are fairly unstable or where there are unknown risks, or assessment is still at an early stage, it may be important to convene the review child protection conference at the time of the baby's birth.

Participants at the pre birth child protection conference will discuss these issues and the Chair will give an indication of the timing of the review conference.

Regardless of the decision made at this stage, if any practitioner becomes aware of a change in circumstances that may impact on the child protection plan, they have a responsibility to share this information with the lead professional and the core group.

## 2. The move away from "categories of registration" towards "individual risk factors"

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011, when any child, including an unborn child, is placed on the child protection register there will no longer be a requirement for conference participants to decide upon a category of registration.

Instead, the individual risk factors pertinent to each child will be noted by the conference chair and recorded in the minute.

Similarly, for children currently on the child protection register, the identification of their individual risk factors will take place at their next scheduled review child protection conference.

It is anticipated that the individual risk factors will be identified through the multi agency sharing of information and assessment that has taken place throughout the child protection investigation and during the discussion at the child protection conference.

To aid clarity for participants and family members and to inform the child protection plan, conference chairs will name the individual risk factors when summarising the discussion and detailing the reasons for registration.

These individual risk factors will also be minuted.

Clearly, risk factors can be unique to each situation. However, we know that, in terms of child protection, there are some common known risks such as domestic abuse and parental drug and alcohol abuse.

The Scottish Government have developed a list of risk factors that they will now require every local authority to report on annually. This list is as follows:

1. Domestic abuse
2. Parental alcohol misuse
3. Parental drug misuse
4. Parental mental health issues
5. Non-engaging family
6. Physical abuse
7. Emotional abuse
8. Neglect
9. Sexual abuse
10. Exploitation
11. Child placing themselves at risk
12. Other

This list is provided as a guide. ***It is not intended to be used as a checklist to be debated at conferences.*** However, these risk factors have been identified as the most relevant in child protection and it would be useful for practitioners to be familiar with these in order to be alert as to their presence in a case. You may notice the introduction of these risk factors into some child protection paperwork such as referral forms.

Fuller guidance in relation to each of the risk factors noted above can be found in Part Four of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2010.

For ***each*** child placed on the child protection register there should be an associated list of identified risk factors.

Conference participants will need to be alert to the possibility that children within the same family may be subject to different risk factors. This should be noted, recorded and reflected within the respective child protection plans.

There is no requirement to limit the number of risk factors recorded per child, nor to prioritise these (though it is expected that the child protection plan will reflect the priorities in relation to safety and protection).

### 3. Timescales

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 a revised set of timescales for the child protection process will come into effect. It is anticipated that best efforts are made to adhere to these timescales with the recognition and understanding that child protection is a very complex area and placing the needs of children first takes precedence over prescribed timescales.

Relevant timescales are as follows:

- Convening an initial child protection conference – within 21 calendar days of the notification of concern/referral.
- Circulation of the child protection plan – within 5 calendar days of the child protection conference.
- Circulation of the conference minutes – within 15 calendar days of the meeting.
- Initial core group meeting – within 15 calendar days of the initial child protection conference.

Timescales can be very challenging at times, particularly in relation to child protection. Practitioners can help support timely child protection processes by ensuring their particular roles and responsibilities are carried out promptly and any anticipated delays communicated to the lead professional.

There is increased emphasis now on preparing the child protection plan at the earliest stage. When attending an initial child protection conference, there will be the broad beginning of a child's plan contained within the child protection investigation report. The expectation is that conference participants will contribute to this at the initial conference to allow the initial child protection plan to be distributed within five days of the conference. Thereafter, the child protection plan will be further developed, via the core group process, though ongoing assessment, intervention and review.

### **Further Information**

All inter agency child protection training courses have been revised in line with the new National Guidance and local Child Protection Procedures. If you have not attended in a while, this would be a good opportunity for a refresher and we encourage you to access the programme and book a place using the link below

<http://www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info/download/1213>

For any further information regarding the implementation of the revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, please contact your designated agency/service child protection contact or the Child Protection Development Team based at Bridgegate House (01294 324736).

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June 2011