



Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee Guidance

Effective Communication between Agencies and Professionals

The importance of clear communication (face to face/telephone and written) between agencies and professionals is essential in ensuring the protection of vulnerable children. Learning from many significant case reviews indicates that children can be at risk when confusion amongst professionals results in either the wrong action or no action being taken. This guidance note is for professionals working to protect children in Renfrewshire to reflect on communication with their colleagues, within their own agency and on an inter-agency basis

Child's Plan

On a day to day basis verbal communication helps build relationships and trust between professionals and is crucial to delivering improved outcomes for children. Where a child has multi-agency intervention the support and protection plan should be set out in the "Child's Plan" template. This plan must be shared with the child's parent(s) or carer, the child (if age appropriate) and all professionals involved in supporting the child and their family.

The "Child's Plan" must set out clearly the actions to be taken to protect the child including identifying the person responsible for this and the expected timeframe. The level of direct contact with the child and who is responsible for this must be stipulated. The professionals involved in supporting and or protecting the child and their family must maintain regular contact with colleagues through core groups, face to face discussions and telephone calls. This is to ensure that actions are undertaken and the desired outcomes contained in the "Child's Plan" are achieved. On a day to day basis there may be requests for minor adjustments to the actions agreed in the "Child's Plan" - these should be responded to as routine practice and recorded in the child's file.

There will however be occasions **where professionals receive a request from another agency for a change to the level of contact, the introduction of a new service or a specific intervention not contained in the Child's Plan.** In these circumstances, **professionals should consider whether the request constitutes a new and/or significant action and if this is the case, ensure that written communication is used to confirm what is being requested and what action will be taken.** A new and/or significant action might include a change to the direct contact with the child (such as visiting a child in their own home rather than seeing them through clinic appointments) or a referral to an additional service (such as the family support service).

Increased risk/ child protection

Where there is an indication that there is an increased level of risk to the child or young person, consideration must be given to whether child protection procedures should be followed.

This may involve a significant deviation from the child's plan due to actions not being achieved or a change in the circumstances.

Written Communication

Where written communication is required, the professional making the request must state clearly what they are asking the other agency/professional to do and why. In response, the professional receiving the request must state clearly what action will be taken and the timeframe for this. The professional responsible for undertaking any action must provide written feedback to the professional who made the request in relation to the outcome. Within communications, professionals should avoid the use of generic terms such as monitor or ongoing and should not use acronyms.

Where professionals have access to secure email accounts, communication should be transmitted in this way. It is essential that both the sender and recipient use secure email accounts. Each member of staff should adhere to their agency guidance in relation to secure communication.

A copy of the written request and any response should be placed in the child's file.

This guidance note is operational from 1st December 2014.