

Role and Remit of Social Work in Child Protection

Introduction

All agencies and services that deliver adult and/or child services and work with children and their families have a responsibility to recognise and consider potential risks to a child, irrespective of whether the child is the main focus of their involvement.

Social Work (SW) have a central role within the local authorities with a duty to promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of all children in need in their area, and, insofar as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to children's wellbeing needs.

Children and family social workers either directly provide, or facilitate access to, a wide range of services to support vulnerable children and families, increase parents competence and confidence, improve children's day-to-day experiences and help them recover from the impact of abuse and neglect.

SW, together with the Police, has a statutory responsibility for investigating child protection referrals and co-ordinating an interagency response. Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, SW also has the responsibility of assessing the needs of children identified as being 'children in need'. In fulfilling this responsibility, SW has a number of key roles. These include investigating referrals, co-ordinating multi- agency risk assessments, arranging Child Protection Case Conferences, maintaining the Child Protection Register and supervising children on behalf of the Children's Hearing.

Social workers play a key role in helping to ensure that suitable care arrangements are put in place by identifying appropriate placements, assessing and supporting kinship carers and foster carers and supporting children within these placements.

When the local authority receives information which suggests a child may be in need of compulsory measures of supervision, SW will make enquiries and give the Children's Reporter (SCRA) any information they have about the child.

Responsibilities of key SW staff

The following describes broadly the key roles of certain SW staff within the child protection process.

Social Worker

- Record details of any child protection referral
- Check child protection register (as delegated by TL)
- Check available records for child/family
- Alert child protection register of any ongoing investigation

- Complete CP1 (Social Workers report)
- Interview child (may involve police)
- Consults and gathers information from other agencies
- Advise health and education if a child protection order (CPO) has been taken
- Offers advice and support to families/access additional services

Team Leader

- Decide whether or not the referral requires a response under child protection procedures
- Invoke child protection procedures and investigations
- Assign activities to social worker/others
- Consult with police
- Discuss with the police the level of detail about the alleged offence that can be discussed with the parent/relative
- Ensure that time frames are being met throughout the investigation
- Ensure appropriate invitations are sent out for child protection meetings
- Engages with the Procurator fiscal where necessary (often in combination with the police)
- Discuss and plan arrangements for medical examinations
- Ensure referral to the Reporter where this has been agreed
- Chair core groups
- Countersign case records fortnightly
- In an emergency discuss application for orders with the service manager
- Ensure that a child protection plan exists

Assistant Service Manager

- Chair child protection meetings
- Read all relevant child protection paperwork in advance of the meeting and ensure that all relevant information is available for the meeting
- Distribute minutes within timescales
- Inform agencies of the outcome of the child the child protection meeting using the 24 hour decision letter
- Facilitates decision to place child's name on the child protection register- this is a multi-agency decision, if no clear consensus chair will use professional judgement to make final decision.

Service Manager

- Decide about taking emergency legal measures
- Decide to place child's name on the child protection register if chair of meeting
- Countersign 3 monthly case records
- Decide to investigate using child protection procedures in residential and foster placements
- Countersign all CP1's and Child Protection Plans
- Review case conference decisions where there is dissent

Making a referral to SW

Health staff may have concerns about a specific incident, a disclosure made by a child or parent/carer, certain behaviours of parent/carer which may place child at risk of harm or may be the result of a culmination of minor concerns over a period of time. Concerns may also be in relation to an unborn baby.

When staff have a concern, telephone contact should be made with SW in the first instance to discuss the concern/referral and any possible action that may need to be taken. If the situation requires an urgent response ensure the referral is discussed with a qualified SW or team leader.

Following the telephone referral, the Shared Referral Form (as attached) should be completed and sent. It is good practice to ensure that this form is completed within 48 hrs of the telephone referral.

Three copies of the referral form should be generated for each referral-

1. The first copy should be sent to the SW department where the initial telephone referral was made.
2. The second copy should be placed in the appropriate case notes i.e. the child's or referrer's record
3. A third copy should be sent to the Child Protection Unit, 2nd Floor medical Records Building, Dalnair St, Glasgow G3 8SJ or electronically to Dorothy.ramsden@nhs.net

On receipt of the referral, SW should complete and return an acknowledgement of the referral indicating the response made by SW.

Referrals about concerns over a child's welfare will not always require a response under child protection procedures. Instead, the child and family may be in need of general support, advice and guidance or may require a comprehensive multi-agency assessment to determine their needs.

Further details and guidance on referrals can be found on the Child Protection Unit website-

http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_Child%20Protection%20Unit