

Introduction:

Multi-agency audits of Core Groups were carried out by the SSCB every year from 2012 to 2015. A further survey was carried out with CP Chairs asking their feedback in 2015. The main purpose of these reviews was to identify any issues and establish any practice improvements over time. Although some improvements were identified, most of the findings were similar without any significant improvement. Therefore, focus groups were held in 2017 to explore the first-hand experiences of practitioners involved in Core Groups. The report has been produced based on experiences and opinions of practitioners who attended the focus groups



Methodology:

In order to gather a deeper understanding of the issues and how to resolve them, four focus groups were arranged covering four areas in Surrey. Multiagency frontline practitioners who had recently attended Core Groups (last six months) were invited to attend a focus group. Previous audits report findings were considered and were grouped into four main themes which required further exploration. The focus groups were conducted following the Signs of Safety format. Information on what's working well, what we are worried about and what needs to happen were gathered around the following four themes:

- ✶ Administration and pre-planning
- ✶ Engagement of children and families
- ✶ Roles and responsibilities
- ✶ Planning and outcome

Outcome:

The procedure, guidance and templates of the Core Group meetings have been revised and updated based on the recommendations from this audit. The Core Group audit has been presented at the full board meeting on 10th July 2017. The board members agreed that the Children's Services will act as a lead agency and work with partners to take the recommendations forward and provide regular updates on the progress to the SSCB.

Main Recommendations by practitioners

- ✶ More administrative support
- ✶ Better understanding of professionals' roles and responsibilities.
- ✶ Consistent guidance, contingency plans and standard template/structure to be shared by all professionals
- ✶ Standard template for submitting reports for professionals who are not able to attend a Core Group meeting
- ✶ Time and venue of the meetings need to be considered carefully based on each families circumstances
- ✶ Social workers to meet and communicate with the family before the first Core Group meeting
- ✶ Minimise changes of professionals to ensure consistency where possible
- ✶ Everyone needs to take responsibility to share the voice of the child with the Core Group members
- ✶ Professionals need to take responsibility in making notes of their actions and delivering them
- ✶ Actions from Core Group meetings need to be clear and achievable. Child Protection Plan also need to be clear and achievable in order for Core Group to progress that plan
- ✶ The right professionals are involved throughout
- ✶ Improved confidentiality awareness and/or training
- ✶ Full roll out of Signs of Safety training as professionals are not entirely familiar with the "grading/scaling" process

Further information and resources:

<http://www.surreyscb.org.uk/professionals/guidance-protocols/>

If you are concerned about the safety of a child, young person or an adult you can contact our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. **Phone:** 0300 470 9100 or **Out of hours phone:** 01483 517898 to speak to the emergency duty team.

