

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Services to Parents with Disabilities, Substance Misuse, Mental Health, Physical or Learning disabilities and their Children

A joint working Protocol between Adult and Children's Social Care Services

Introduction

This protocol, which should be read in conjunction with adult and children social care and safeguarding procedures, is an agreement between Adult Social Care Services and Children's Social Care Services, to assess and subsequently implement a plan to meet the needs of vulnerable parents (those with disabilities or debilitating illness) and their children. This includes parents with substance misuse, physical disabilities, mental ill health or learning disability or subject to domestic abuse, and where this affects their ability to undertake essential tasks and impacts on their ability to meet the child's needs.

Knowsley Council is committed to helping parents care for their children and to remain as independent as possible themselves.

Care Act 2014 statutory guidance makes it clear that a whole family approach to assessment ensures a holistic view of the person's needs. This includes recognising where there is a young carer or if the child requires a needs assessment under the Children Act 1989. Following an assessment, if a parent has eligible needs under the Care Act 2014 criteria, a support plan will be developed to meet these needs. Where there are concerns about parents' capacity and / or willingness to provide adequate parenting, to the extent that those children are in need or at risk, then it is the joint responsibility of adult and children's social care to co ordinate services designed to work with the whole family to address these issues, and monitor any potential risks to the children. Good communication and face-to-face dialogue between managers and social workers are the key to this.

This protocol demonstrates a clear pathway for assessment and provision of services, and recognises that the provision of services to assist vulnerable adults to parent their children is a joint responsibility. At the same time, the children living with family members, who are disabled, are sometimes 'children in need' and require emotional support from school, young carer's project and other children's services.

Where parents are experiencing difficulty meeting their children's needs or make arrangements for their children to live with friends or relatives then adult social care will seek advice and support from children's social care to maximise family support and ensure a child's needs continue to be met within their family. In these situations due regard should be given to private fostering arrangement regulations and National Minimum standards 2005.

Engagement and Participation of Vulnerable parents and children

Knowsley Council is committed to assisting both vulnerable parents and children to be able to engage and participate in any assessments, meetings, reviews, and decisions, wherever possible.

Accessible information and communication is often crucial in enabling parents and children with learning disabilities and/or sensory impairments to engage with services, which will maximise opportunities for the children's needs being met.

For parents and children with learning disabilities, information needs to be made accessible in ways which are suitable. This may include:

- Easy read versions of letters and documents.
- Not using jargon
- Taking more time to explain things
- Telling people things more than once
- Avoid sounding patronising
- Ensuring that advocates are available to support all family members

When working with parents with learning disabilities, it is good practice that before any meetings, a pre-meeting is held between the chair of the meeting, and the vulnerable parents and their advocate. The chair should discuss the purpose of the meeting, and go through the agenda, to enable the parents to give any views which they might not be able to within a bigger setting.

In addition children and young people can also seek advice and support from NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service).

If a parent has a Care Act Assessment and has substantial difficulty in understanding the process, the Council is required to provide an independent Care Act Advocate.

Referral and Assessment

- 1- Where a vulnerable parent's ability to parent is compromised, a joint assessment by adult social care and children's social care will take place. In situations where children are seen as 'in need' or where there are child protection issues the Children and Adult service teams to carry out a joint assessment. The respective duty teams will carry out such joint assessments, unless there is already an allocated worker. Unless in an emergency, this will be implemented by a multi-agency meeting that includes key agencies and family members. If specialist needs are identified, they will be referred to the relevant specialist teams for appropriate intervention and support. At each stage of the process, it will be the responsibility of the respective team managers to co-ordinate the assessment and team involvement.
- 2- Whenever a vulnerable parent requires an assessment of their needs, a referral should be made to the Knowsley Access Team (KAT). They will redirect referrals where appropriate to the relevant social work team, mental health service and/ or OTs). The assessment of needs will follow the Council's Care Act 2014 asset based assessment guidance and be subject to the Council's Eligibility Criteria and Charging for Services policy. The assessment,

by adult social care services, will consider what assistance the parent with disabilities requires both to meet their own needs and to care for their children. The capacity of other adults in the household will be taken into consideration. Where the assessment identifies eligible needs, a support plan will be developed to meet the identified needs. Where there are ineligible needs, these will be considered within the support plan with signposting, information and community referrals made as appropriate.

- 3- If the parent receives the support that they have been assessed as needing (including reasonable assistance with parenting) under Care Act statutory guidance and there remain concerns about a child's health or development or emotional state, including a child's role as a young carer, then the child may be "in need". In other cases a vulnerable adult may not require any additional support, but the child's health or development would suggest they might be 'in need' or at risk of significant harm. In these circumstances consideration should be given to the completion of a Single Assessment or an early help assessment depending on the presenting level of need as determined in MASH.

Should an assessment be required from Children's Social Care, then this assessment will be in accordance with the "Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families". Children's social care will have access to any relevant community care assessments to inform their assessment. The children's worker will liaise closely with any adult worker involved with the family, as well as with professionals from other agencies supporting the family.

Review

All plans of interventions should be reviewed at least every 6 weeks by the lead social care professional's manager and the plan amended accordingly.

Arranging the Service

- 1- Assessments that indicate single service needs should be arranged through the established processes.
- 2- Assessments which indicate that service from both Adult social care and Children's Social Care are required these should be co-ordinated via a multi-agency planning meeting. In the event services need to be commissioned the relevant assessment and proposed plan of intervention should be presented to relevant Children's/Adult services manager(s) in accordance with the service scheme of delegated responsibilities.
- 3- In the event of one service co-ordinating, it will be responsible for making sure the care plans are implemented. Where one service will be invoiced for their portion of the care plan costs.
- 4- It is quite consistent with legislation for a parent with disabilities to be given Direct Payments to meet their needs, including help with parenting tasks. In this instance, the care plan implementation should follow the Adult Direct

Payments framework. This would indicate the Adult Services should co-ordinate in these situations.

- 5- Reviews – The co-ordinating service will be responsible for arranging reviews of need and services provided, with the involvement of the other team as appropriate.
- 6- Financial Contribution – Services provided will be subject to the existing financial assessment regulations relating to Adult Social Care or Children's Social Care.
- 7- Copies of all assessments and reviews will be shared with the relevant staff in both children's and adult social care.