

New Approach to Service Requests to Children's Social Care, CYPD

Background

- The multi-agency service request template has been developed with the full cooperation of partner agencies and will succeed all other forms of requests for services to Children's Social Care, CYPD
- It has been a requirement from the inspection carried out in January 2010 of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Gloucestershire County Council's Children's Services, that there is a clear definition of what constitutes a , a contact a referral and a re-referral.
- Access to Children's services must be clear and timely, giving partner agencies clarity on expectations, services offered thresholds and responsibilities of partner agencies.
- The Children's help desk within Customer Services has developed with Children's Social Care a revised service level agreement with CYPD which ensures a common understanding of the management of services requests and contacts coming into the service.
- Requests for services for children who do not meet the criteria for a service within Children's Social Care will be forwarded to the locality teams who may work with the family and/or refer to a lead professional for a CAF to be completed.
- Professionals working with children and where there is a low level risk which may be prevented from becoming high risk will be asked to carry out a CAF.
- There is clearer and more comprehensive working between the R&A teams and the locality teams giving a much more focussed and comprehensive service to children and their families.
- The implementation of the multi-agency service request form will be reviewed in six months' time (February 2012) with the involvement of our partner agencies and a report of this review will be made available.

Gloucestershire's Referral and Assessment Teams receive a large number of contacts and requests for service, compared to their comparator Local Authorities. Many are incomplete and or inappropriate requests, leading to a common belief that, not enough clarity has been given to the expectations of our partner agencies.

We are now working with our partner agencies to ensure that there is a clear understanding of how to access services and how to maximise our joint services in keeping children safe and free from harm.

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From August 1st the new single request for service form will be used by all partner agencies wishing to request a service from CYPD. (See attached, together with guidance on the completion of the form)

This may follow on from a telephone request or an email sent to the Childrens help desk.

The multi-agency request for service form is designed to be clear and succinct in order to provide comprehensive information on the back ground to the concerns and the family history, as much as is known. The form will record the actions taken by CYPD, and be returned to the partner agency.

Our services must be transparent and clear about how we manage sensitive information, and above all how we involve and consult with children and families. We will ask on the form if the service requester has informed the family that they will be contacting CYPD. The expectation is that families will be aware of the request for service. This is absolutely necessary, to comply with data protection and to ensure that we have a clear and open relationship with families and with our partner agencies.

There are two exceptions to this;

- When it is considered that the child may be at further risk if the family are made aware of the service request.
- If partner agencies wish to discuss a child or family in principal and do not give names.

In the above circumstances it is not necessary to inform the family prior to the service request being made.

The Referral & Assessment teams together with the Locality teams are currently piloting a combined service for families who do not meet the criteria for a service from the R&A teams. This will give an early access to the development of early intervention proposals for children and their families and where intervention at the earliest possible time would prevent escalation of the concerns.

The definition of a referral

- A referral is defined as an acceptance of a service request; the decision is made by the Referral and Assessment Manager. The referral has four options for actions
 1. accept the request for service and carry out an initial assessment
 2. accept for the provision of providing information
 3. accept for other actions
 4. No further actions required.

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Referrers in all cases will be sent confirmation of the actions taken.

- All contacts received from the Childrens help desk will be considered by the respective R&A managers who will complete a CID (contact information & decision) exemplar and decide whether this should remain as a contact or be accepted as a referral.

The definition of a contact

- All other information sent to the R&A teams by the children's helpdesk or any member of the public or a partner agency will be treated as a contact until the decision is made to accept for service i.e. when it becomes a referral. This must take place within a 24 hour period.
- All other information received will be regarded as a contact and not progressed to a referral in the following circumstances
 1. If the request for service wishes the child to remain anonymous
 2. there is a request for "sign posting" to another service
 3. information on a case that is already open to CYPD
 4. a request for information
 5. The information received does not meet the criteria for a service to be provided by the R&A team.

The definition of a re-referral is where a referral occurs within a 12 months of a previous referral which is now a closed case.

Further information will follow when the pilot has been analysed.

Children's Social Care/Referral & Assessment/Children & Families teams will assist with the above processes and give advice to all partner agencies on any of the above matters contained within this paper.