

Delivery of Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care Reviews in light of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Rob England – Head of Quality, GCC Children's Services

In light of the rapidly changing situation relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) we have set up a phased response model to how we will be delivering Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care reviews. Increasingly, families and partner services are being subject to self-isolation or working from home arrangements which are limiting their ability to attend and participate in meetings in person.

Following announcements from central government this week in relation to social distancing we are now in a position of moving from Phase 1 (normal business) into Phase 2 to ensure that children and staff are protected and that we maintain a sustainable service. This shift to Phase 2 will also reduce pressure on our partner agencies and reduce unnecessary risk for families and professionals.

It is hoped that we will be able to maintain delivery within Phase 2, but should continued adaptation be required then will adopt a Phase 3 approach which against the prioritisation of risk and need, will involve further emphasis on remote meetings and a reduction of some of the quality assurance activity of conference chairs and IROs.

Fundamentally, Phase 2 involves a move from physical to virtual meetings for those review child protection conferences (RCPCs) and Child in Care Reviews where this is safe and appropriate. This will impact on all participants so it is important that we do this in an organised and consistent way.

For the time being, Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) will continue to be organised and run as normal. Care will be taken to minimise risks in ICPCs following guidance on limiting numbers in attendance and using the most appropriate venues.

RCPCs and CiC reviews will change from Monday 23rd March as follows:

- Reviews will be held remotely unless the chair/IRO or social worker deem that it would not be safe to do so. Any professional differences about this should utilise the existing GSCE escalation process.
- Remotely means either via conference call where all participants call into the meeting, which is the preferred option, or if this is not viable, the chair/IRO calling round all participants to seek their views and updates on the progress of the plan.
- Social workers and other professionals should produce reports to conference/review as normal.
- Outcomes and plans will be produced and distributed as normal.
- Minutes will be taken and prepared as normal for those meetings held via conference call. Where the chair/IRO rings round participants, then the chair/IRO will take notes of the meeting and these notes should form the minutes of the conference. For RCPCs these can be limited to bullet points but the decision and rationale must be clearly recorded. For CiC reviews, the minutes will still take the form of a letter to the child/young person.
- All conferences/reviews will need to follow normal routines for setting the next dates for relevant meetings (incl. core groups).
- Timescales will continue to apply and should be adhered to.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the Reviewing service on:

For Child in Care: Email ironotifications@gloucestershire.gov.uk, Telephone 01452 328196

For Child Protection Conferences: Email ICPCRequest@gloucestershire.gov.uk, Telephone 01452 427814