

SOCIAL CARE PROTOCOL BETWEEN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING NEEDS IN RELATION TO PROVISION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Lord Laming Enquiry in relation to the death of Victoria Climbié set out a number of recommendations as to how agencies could work better together, where the interests of vulnerable young people were concerned.
- 1.2 This protocol is therefore aimed at staff working in Housing Needs and in Social Services, who could encounter a situation where concerns about vulnerable children arise.
- 1.3 The protocol sets out the nature of situations that staff may face and the process that should be followed to ensure that information is shared in an effective and timely manner.
- 1.4 It is also important to reflect what each agency could reasonably expect from the other in terms of response.

2. SCOPE OF THE PROTOCOL

- Asylum Seeking Families or young people under 18 years
- Those who present to Housing Needs having moved from another part of the UK with no local connection
- Person's moving within the European Community and seeking housing
- Households with children that present to Housing Needs who are not eligible for assistance because of immigration status or because the family has been found to be intentionally homeless

Whilst the issue of young people presenting as homeless will be referred to this essentially is an area covered separately.

3. PRESENTATION

- 3.1 Victoria Climbié came to the UK with an aunt who had been formerly resident in France. Details about the circumstances of the 'family' were falsified and Victoria and her aunt presented at a number of area offices within the Greater London area over a period of time. This made it difficult to maintain continuity of response. However assumptions were made at the point information was presented at various times which contributed to the lack of 'tracking'.
- 3.2 It is therefore possible that any family who are requesting services may present themselves at any one of a number of Council reception areas or other agency settings and information will need to be gained in order for check to be undertaken. At this point an open mind should be kept as to the family's past and current circumstances in order to maintain the information flow.
- 3.3 The Borough of Telford and Wrekin has been host to a variety of families intent on settling in the town or locality, some arriving from other countries some of those seeking asylum in this country, having possibly escaped physical danger elsewhere. In some instances Telford may not have been the original destination.
- 3.4 Often where there are language difficulties, or where there is no preparation for arrival in the UK, the family are unable to effectively explain or evidence their situation.
- 3.5 Where families have moved from another part of the UK and present as homeless, Housing Needs will carry out a homeless investigation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Where officers decide that a homeless household containing children is:
- **not eligible** for assistance (usually because of their immigration status)
 - or
 - has been found to be **intentionally** homeless
 - or
 - there are doubts about the **validity** of the situation
 - or
 - there is concern for the vulnerability of those children, in the case of **eligible** households

contact with the Children and families Helpdesk should be initiated to determine whether the children meet the criteria of 'in need'.

3.6 the referral to the Helpdesk will prompt consideration of an Initial Assessment of Need under the guidance of the Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their Families. There may also be reference to the IRT process as it becomes widespread.

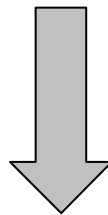
3.7 The Homelessness Act requires local housing authorities to refer families with dependent children who are **not** owed a rehousing duty to social services.

The following is a walk through of a hypothetical situation:

Process Guide

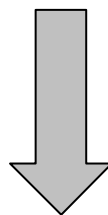
Scenario

Identified homeless family with vulnerable children or unaccompanied/ accompanied Asylum Seeker



Step 1

Dependent upon where the person(s) present themselves they may be directed to a Housing Needs or Social Services office. If in a Police Station it may be appropriate for them to remain whilst the Immigration Service is informed and legal status established, although in most cases this will not be appropriate.



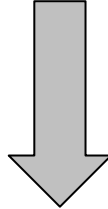
Step 2

Contact should be initiated by the receiving service (i.e. Housing Needs or Social Services) with the other to ensure that relevant checks are carried out. This Contact should be confirmed in writing within one working day (see appendix 1)

In Housing Needs terms this would be relevant to Part 7 of the Housing Act

1996 and would constitute an initial homeless assessment to determine if the household was **eligible** for assistance, **homeless** and in **priority need** and therefore able to access temporary accommodation.

In Social Care terms this would be initial enquiries which could constitute an Initial Assessment to determine whether the family meet the criteria of 'child in need' and therefore access to support services. Any assessment should take account of interpretation and translation requirements.



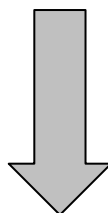
Step 3

Where Housing Needs determine, via an initial assessment that a homeless household with children is **eligible** for assistance, appropriate temporary accommodation should be secured, pending further investigation.

Households with children found to be **ineligible** due to immigration status cannot access temporary accommodation.

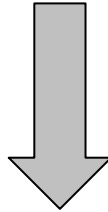
In such cases a referral must be made to social services. It is social services duty to assess the vulnerability of the children, however not all homeless children would be regarded as 'children in need'.

In the case of an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with no adult in a position of parental responsibility this will require consideration of the young person being 'Looked After' at least in the short term in either residential or foster care.



Step 4

A core group/planning meeting should be convened to bring agencies together to coordinate a plan of action and to allocate tasks. In Housing Needs terms this will be relevant for families placed in temporary accommodation.



Step 5

More detailed assessment and investigation is required to include contact with the Home Office and Immigration Service and the Council's Asylum Seeker Officer, where this applies.

Where there is concern that a young person may have arrived in this country as part of an illegal trafficking arrangement, Child Protection procedures will need to be considered.

In the case of a homeless UK family enquiries will need to be made as to background circumstances and if there are concerns about the circumstances of the children an Initial Assessment of Need (and possibly consideration of the Child Protection procedures) must be considered.

4. JOINT NOTIFICATION FORM

4.1 This should be used as the standard form to alert either agency to a situation or to confirm the dialogue between Housing Needs and Children and families that has already taken place.



**HOUSING NEEDS / SOCIAL SERVICES
Joint Notification of Vulnerable Family Situation**

FAMILY SURNAME

PREVIOUS ADDRESS

DATE OF NOTIFICATION

NOTIFIED BY

AGENCY

NOTIFIED TO

AGENCY

FORENAMES

D.O.B

**FAMILY MEMBERS
RELATIONSHIP**

ETHNICITY

REASON FOR NOTIFICATION

ACTION REQUESTED

APPROVAL FOR NOTIFICATION BY:

POSITION:

DATE: