

Children & Families Moving Across Local Authority Boundaries

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1. DEFINITION

MOVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

At any stage in the process of working with children and their families, the parents and/or the child/children may move from one household to another, with a change of address possibly to another local authority area.

The move may be planned and relevant information shared in advance with the professionals and workers involved with the family and child/children.

In some circumstances, however, the move may take place in haste and as an attempt to avoid the involvement of professionals and agencies. In such circumstances, the agencies involved must assess the impact of the change in circumstances on the child/children.

2. RISKS

Where children move to a new address - either within the same local authority area or to a new area - and there are concerns about the welfare of the children such that it is considered that a Section 47 Enquiry is required, the local authority for the last known address must make every effort to locate the children and complete the Section 47 Enquiry. The child's move may be temporary or permanent. If the parent is not prepared to give information or take advice, the receiving authority should assume the move is permanent and act accordingly.

Professionals in all agencies should be alert to the possibility that a child or family who has moved may not be in receipt of universal services. Professionals should engage with the family in order to link them into local universal services in the new area, e.g.:

- Seek
 - Ensure that all forenames and surnames used by the family are provided, and clarification is obtained about the correct spelling.
 - Ensure that accurate dates and places of birth are obtained for all household members, wherever possible.
 - Obtain the previous full addresses, and earlier addresses within the last two years.
 - Clarify relationships between the child and other household members, if possible, with documentary evidence.
 - Ask the child / family with which statutory or voluntary organisations they are in contact.
- Providing information about relevant services.
- Following up to ensure that the family has managed to make contact and register with a local GP, school and other relevant services to which the child is entitled.

Where there are concerns about risk of significant harm information should be shared immediately as all information about a child should be held where the child is residing.

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Where a child moves across local authority boundaries, and a Section 47 Enquiry is being considered or is in progress and/or a Child Protection Conference is proposed but has not yet taken place, the local authority where the concerns originated should make decisions as to how to proceed.

In these circumstances, therefore, the originating authority must continue with the Section 47 Enquiry and should convene a Strategy Discussion/Meeting - this should take place within 72 hours of notification of the child's move. Timescales may be varied depending on the individual circumstances e.g. proximity of the two areas and/or the gravity of the situation. In all circumstances, however, the Strategy Discussion/Meeting will always involve representatives of both the originating and the receiving authority and their respective roles and responsibilities will be agreed. The Strategy Discussion/Meeting should consider how the timescales for the completion of the Section 47 Enquiry and holding of the Child Protection Conference (if appropriate) will be met. The social worker from the originating authority will attend and provide a report for the Child Protection Conference.

Where a Section 47 Enquiry is in progress, as soon as the originating authority becomes aware of the child's move to a new area, the following action should be taken:

The child's social worker will:

- Notify the Children's Social Care Services in the receiving authority of the change in the child's circumstances within one working day of discovering the move.
- Send the child's relevant personal details to Children's Social Care Services in the receiving authority.
- Inform his or her line manager of the change.
- Inform any other agencies working with the family of the change in circumstances and ask them to inform their colleagues in the new area.
- Attend any handover meetings in the receiving authority.
- Ensure that all information is updated and the correct address is displayed on the child's electronic record.

The social worker's line manager will:

- Inform the relevant team manager in the receiving authority of the current details and forward any relevant documentation.
- Agree any urgent action and roles and responsibilities.
- Agree the convening of a Strategy Meeting within 72 hours.

3. PROTECTION AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN **CHILDREN SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN**

Where a Child subject to a Child Protection Plan moves out of the home area, anyone who becomes aware of the plan to move or the move taking place, must inform the allocated social worker or, their line manager.

The Social Worker will:

- Immediately inform the Children's Social Care Services in the new area of the change in the child's circumstances.
- Send the child's relevant personal details to the new area including a copy of the most recent Child Protection Plan.
- Inform the 'home' Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) of the changes.
- Inform the Core Group of the change in circumstances.
- Attend any Initial Child Protection Conference in the new area.

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- Ensure that all information is updated and the correct address is displayed on the List of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

The Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) will:

- Inform the new area's Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) of the current details and forward any relevant documentation such as copies of minutes of the Initial Child Protection Conference and the most recent Review Conference.
- Inform the local Designated Nurse of the relevant information in order for the health agencies in the new area to be informed.

A receiving in Conference should be convened and following this the child's details will be removed from the List of Children who have a Child Protection Plan in the original area.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN THE CHILD'S NEW AREA

At the point of notification, the Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) or their nominated representative in the child's new area will Place the child's name, address and relevant known personal details on the List of Children with a Child Protection Plan.

- Request information from the originating Local Authority, including copies of the Initial Child Protection Conference and the last Review Conference minutes from the originating area.
- Inform the relevant Children's Social Care Services team of the details of the incoming child.
- Inform the Designated Nurse.
- Make arrangements to hold an Initial Child Protection Conference within 15 working days of the notification of the child moving in.
- Confirm the outcome of the Initial Child Protection Conference with the originating local authority's Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) and forward a copy of the Conference Minutes for their records.

The relevant Children's Social Care Services team will:

- Undertake enquiries to ensure that protective action is taken in order to safeguard the child in the new area until the Initial Child Protection Conference has taken place.
- Undertake an assessment to determine whether the child is likely to be at continuing risk of Significant Harm in the new area and work with the child and family to prepare for the Initial Child Protection Conference.

TEMPORARY MOVES

Where it is known that the child has moved out of the area for a temporary period, however long or short, the area where the child is temporarily residing must be provided with the relevant information and contact numbers as follows:

- The allocated Social Worker must contact the Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) and the Children's Social Care Services team where the child is temporarily resident, providing them with the relevant personal details and the last Child Protection Plan.
- The 'home' Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) must write to the Designated Manager (Children subject to a Child Protection Plan) in the area of the temporary residence and include any relevant information.

The child 's name and details will remain on the List of Children subject to Child Protection Plans in the permanent home area until the criteria for discontinuing the Child Protection Plan are met.

5. ISSUES

There can be uncertainty about whether the move is permanent or temporary, this can cause delay in the transfer of the case and the allocation of services to support the family in the new area. Fundamentally, the child becomes the responsibility of the area where they reside, regardless of the length of time they have been there.

The transfer of some agency records can be delayed until there is a request from the new provider of a service. It is unlikely that GP records will be transferred until the family have been registered with their new surgery for some time.

In addition to any safeguarding concerns. The priority should be creating support for the family in the new area from universal services. This includes registering the child and a new school roll and registering with a GP.