



Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

Edge of Care Panel and Services

Aim/Criteria of the Edge of Care Panel

The Edge of Care Panel seeks to prevent children and young people becoming accommodated (where appropriate to do so) through the provision of a robust package of support and intervention. The Panel is the gateway to support services for families on the edge of care and children can only be accommodated once they have been through this process.

The only exception to this is in an emergency when a Head of Service (or Service Manager if Out of Hours) can approve an accommodation request. However, where a child has been accommodated in an emergency, the case should then be referred to the Panel retrospectively so that they can consider whether with a support package the child/young person could return home/exit care.

Cases are normally presented to the Panel for 2 key reasons:

1. The Social Work/Targeted Family Support Team believe the family are in crisis and at risk of an imminent family breakdown - as a result the professional network believe the child or young person needs to be accommodated by the Local Authority to avoid them suffering significant harm. In some situations the worker believes that the child's needs are not being met within the family home as a result of various factors and there are no suitable relatives able to offer alternative placement.
2. The Social Work/ Targeted Family Support Team who work with the family are of the view that without an intensive package of support, the family situation will breakdown at some future point necessitating the accommodation of the child or young person. The professional network has identified the need for early intervention to avoid a further escalation of concerns leading to a family breakdown.

Examples of family stress factors which can lead to family breakdown:

- Poor parental mental health;
- Parents have received poor parenting themselves and have a limited repertoire for managing challenging behaviours in their own children;
- Parental/child drug and alcohol misuse;
- Offending behaviour/Anti-social behaviour;
- Low school attendance;
- Parent/Carer isolated with little family support;
- Unresolved trauma suffered by the parent when they were children;
- Lack of positive attachments;
- Domestic Violence.

Background

The Edge of Care Panel began in 2011, although the format of the Panel has changed over the last few years. The Panel sits weekly and is chaired by the Head of Service for Children's Social Work. There are on average 5 families presented at the Panel every week.

Originally, Targeted Family Support (TST) was the main Edge of Care service to work with families on the edge of accommodation, and was later joined for a short time in 2012 by the independent provider "Social Work Choices" who undertook edge of care work.

Work has taken place over the last four years to identify evidence based interventions likely to support families in addressing difficult periods, preventing breakdown. This investment in Edge of Care Services saves children and families from the trauma of separation and public care costs if an identified intervention can improve their relationships. Even if an intervention cannot successfully avoid accommodation of a child, it can help to repair rifts in family relationships making a long-term difference.

In 2013 an initiative called Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) was introduced, providing a therapeutic framework for working with families and the professional networks around them including schools. The criteria for accessing this type of support included children who displayed anti-social behaviour, who were involved with/or at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system and children with poor/low school attendance. 'MST standard' is not licenced to work with young people in child protection, however it has demonstrated a huge impact on families overwhelmed by trauma and complex histories. In the same year the Edge of Care Hub was also implemented to bridge the gap by providing support to families that did not meet criteria of MST.

In 2016, 2 further services contributed to the Menu of Services which could be accessed at the Panel. These were 'Multi-Systemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect' (specifically aimed at child protection) and Safe Families for Children as an earlier intervention. Please note Appendix A which provides more information regarding our Menu of Services.

Since the number of support services and interventions has increased, the Panel can now consider which of the services available best meets the needs of the family and this allows a more flexible approach to be taken. It is also important to note that families do need to give their consent to work with a particular service. All of these interventions have been established to work with families and prevent children being accommodated by working intensively with the whole family and building resilience, improving parenting and strengthening the relationships between parent/carers and their children

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