



PAN DORSET INTER-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

CHAPTER 4

4.6 Working Harder To Engage With Children, Young People or Their Families More Effectively

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Review Date:

If you have any comments or queries about the pan-Dorset procedures please contact your agency representative on the Pan Dorset Policy and Procedures Group or notify the LSCB using the following email addresses:

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Working Harder To Engage With Children, Young People or Their Families More Effectively

Practice Guidance to Agencies

Introduction

This guidance has been prepared in response to a recommendation from Independent Case Review W by Bournemouth and Poole Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), published Spring 2011.

One of the features identified by the review was that these young people and their families could be considered “hard to engage”.

Working with families who are hard to engage is a commonly recognised feature in safeguarding and this guidance seeks to challenge all agencies and organisations to consider how they ensure the fullest engagement possible of young people and families. There are many reasons for families finding it hard to engage, some of which are set out below.

More generally, when one agency refers a service user to another agency for the provision of a specialist service, a situation may arise that the service user fails to engage with the receiving agency and so the specialist service is not delivered or is delivered in an incomplete or ineffective manner. When this occurs, it may also happen that the referring agency is not notified that the service has not been delivered successfully. As a result of this the safeguarding of the service user is severely compromised, the needs of the service user have to be addressed in a different, possibly less effective, way by the referring agency and there is the potential for significant waste of resource for the receiving agency.

Consequently, the Bournemouth and Poole LSCB and the Dorset SCB have published this guidance with the intention that agencies, referring and receiving, should review their own policies or use this guidance to review procedures and practices to prevent this breakdown of inter-agency service provision.

Background

Service users' reluctance to engage can be manifest in a number of ways, including:

- ambivalence towards the service;
- denial of the need for the service or avoidance of it;
- lack of response to the service, despite apparently cooperating and complying; and/or
- hostility (sometimes including violence) towards the service provider(s).

Frequently this reluctance to engage can be overcome through, (amongst others):

- communication;
- understanding of the perceptions of the service user; often through
- understanding of social, cultural, religious and ethnic background of the service user in addition to other diversity factors of the individual including age, gender and sexuality;
- flexibility in adapting to the diverse needs of individual service users; and
- understanding the service user's history and expectations of the service.

Preparing and implementing policies to overcome this reluctance has (amongst others) the following benefits

- improved safeguarding for the service user;
- better meeting the individual needs of the service user;
- reduction in waste of resource for the receiving agency;
- reliable referral pathways for the referring agency;

- increases ownership, responsibility and clarity of approach; and
- it informs equality impact assessments (a statutory requirement under the Equality Act 2010).

These guidelines are designed to support referring and receiving agencies in the preparation of policy and the review of procedures and practices to ensure these issues are addressed.

Working Harder to Engage with Families More Effectively – Guidelines for Policy for the Referring Agency

Engagement policy should include guidance on:-	Exemplification/Rationale
Making an effective, clear referral	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the services provided to date and how the service user has engaged with this service • Evidence to support the analysis of the needs of the service user • A description of the specialist service required • Expected outcomes from the specialist service • Clearly setting out expectations with regard to feedback to the receiving agency • A full risk assessment, describing any risks and factors that might aggravate these risks. This assessment might also be shared with other agencies involved with the service user.
Clearly communicating, to the service user, the need for the referral, what the service user might experience in engaging with the service and what the outcomes of the specialist service are likely to be.	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The details given above • A description of how the service is provided, what flexibility there is in terms of venues, times, etc and what sort of professionals they might encounter • The outcomes generally achieved by the specialist service
Raising the confidence of service users in the specialist service	<p>This might include :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing the experiences of others that have used the service and what the service user might expect • Engaging other family members/friends who are supportive of the referral • Providing a previous service user as a mentor • Visiting the service with the service user, perhaps identifying a suitable worker to accompany the service user – family support worker, health visitor, social worker, for example. • Sharing information about the services • Discussing with the service user any difficulties that might be anticipated and working out shared strategies to manage these.

Engagement policy should include guidance on:-	Exemplification/Rationale
<p>Communicating to the specialist service any difficulties that might be encountered in engaging with the service user.</p>	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any factors that might cause the service user to be mistrustful of the service (social, cultural, religious, ethnic or service user's personal history) • Any reasons the service user might be scared or anxious about the service • Any mobility, financial or geographic issues that may make it difficult for the service user to access the specialist service • Any language or other communication difficulties that the service user has that might make engagement difficult. <p>It should certainly include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any information that leads the referring agency to suspect the service user might be hostile or violent towards the specialist service providers. • Any risk assessments that identify triggers and ways of managing conflict that are known to be successful
<p>Communicating to the specialist service any strategies that have been, or could be, used to overcome difficulties with engagement.</p>	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with communication • Support with transport/mobility • Provision of specialist intermediaries • Times of the day/week when the service users are most accessible for communication • Details of other family members/friends supportive of the referral

Working Harder to Engage with Families More Effectively – Guidelines for Policy for the Receiving, Specialist Agency

Engagement policy should include guidance on:-	Exemplification/Rationale
The appropriate deployment of resources between centralised, locality and outreach working	This should include a rationale of the chosen deployment, demonstrating how it is most effective in reaching hard to engage families, within the total resource allocation.
Making an appropriate and personal invitation to the service user to the first session with the specialist agency	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a standard welcoming letter • Telephoning the service user • Liaising with the service user via a trusted worker from the referring agency • Ensuring that other relevant agencies are informed in writing of any invitation whether verbal or written • Where the referrer intends to support the service user in attending the appointment, liaising with the referrer to ensure a mutually convenient appointment is secured. • Copying in the referrer to ensure that where they intend to support the service user, they have the details directly
Use of language	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on reducing the use of technical vocabulary • Advice on communicating with service users for whom reading is difficult • Advice for communicating with service users for whom English is not a comfortable communication medium
Appropriate responses if service users fail to attend or repeatedly cancel and re-book appointments. (Responses to these may be different.)	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat communication • Additional communication via different medium – text, e-mail, social networking sites. • Seeking support from referring agency worker • Visit from outreach worker • Support with transport/mobility
Appropriate responses to repeated failure to attend	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A further repertoire of strategies to reach out to the service user • Calling a multi-agency meeting • A maximum on the number of attempts to engage with the service user before closing the case • Feedback to the referring agency for joint agreement on next steps

Engagement policy should include guidance on:-	Exemplification/Rationale
Identifying service users, or their family members, who are disguising their lack of cooperation and compliance	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring clear communication to avoid claims from the service user that they did not understand • Joint working with other agencies to share perspectives/observations and ensure consistency • Ensuring observations correspond with what is being reported by service users • Setting of clear goals with measures to show improvement • Guidance on challenging service users when there is poor cooperation
Identifying and working with service users, or their families, who are likely to be hostile or violent.	<p>This might include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for sharing risk assessments • Making clear statements to service users and their families that violence will not be tolerated • Training for staff to ensure they are confident in de-escalation of difficult interactions • Procedures for arranging joint visits, either with colleagues or with representatives of other agencies • Where appropriate, training for staff in self/defence and/or restraint
Appropriate responses and procedures to be followed when service users or their family members make complaints (informal or formal) about individual service providers as a method of avoiding engaging with the specialist service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints processes which aim to resolve difficulties whilst maintaining professional relationships. • Risk assessment strategies to identify if/when complaints are being made in an attempt to avoid or disengage • Enhanced management and supervision arrangements to secure highest quality professionalism and service delivery in such situations. (This might involve higher level supervision and management, as frequently team managers become involved in complaints of this type.) • Openness to considering the risks and benefits, to the service and the service user, of allocating the case to a different worker/team of workers • Strategies to care for and support workers/managers involved in such situations

Engagement policy should include guidance on:-	Exemplification/Rationale
On-going communication with the referring agency.	This might include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and frequent updating communication on the progress of the specialist service towards its agreed objectives • Participating in multi-agency meetings It certainly should include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerting the referring service if the service user shows signs of beginning to disengage. • Proper notification to the referring service if the referral case is closed through lack of engagement, including engagement/re-engagement strategies tried.

Which Agencies/Organisations Should Prepare These Policies?

All LSCB agencies and organisations should devise and implement policies on working to engage with children, young people and their families more effectively. They should consider their roles as referring and/or receiving agencies and devise policy appropriately.