

Request for Support - Capturing Vital Information

The Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP) carries out a programme of audits to help reflect and improve safeguarding practice. The recent audit focused on the quality and timeliness of Request for Support forms submitted to Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS). This briefing highlights the key learning, shares good practice and identifies areas for improvement in safeguarding practice, together with details on the steps you can take to find out more and access further training and resources.

Key Learning

- **Capturing the Voice of the Child** - It was found that most cases were heavily adult focused, with little or no mention of the lived experience of the child. There was a need for greater professional curiosity to be exercised to make sure children are seen and spoken to and that their living conditions are considered and accurately recorded when completing a Request for Support form.
- **Parental Consent** - On too many occasions consent was not recorded on the Request for Support form, so it was unclear if consent had been gained from parents. Consent is required for agencies to work with the family at anything below Child Protection (Section 47) or a Care Order. Parental cooperation with agencies is essential as it contributes to the overall improvement to a child's life.
- **Lack of details on Professionals and Families** - Some Request for Support form did not contain sufficient information about other agencies who were known to be working with the child and family. This information is really useful when trying to determine what support is currently being provided to the child and family. For example; in one case the child's school records contained information in relation to who the child's GP was, this information was not included.
- **Completing a Request for Support Form** - It was identified that in some instances the Request for Support form was not used, and this led to important information being missed. The Request for Support form acts as an Aid Memoir to help capture vital information.

Good Practice

- **Right Help, Right Time** - Guidance for Practitioners There was good evidence in the Request for Support forms that practitioners understood 'Right Help, Right Time' and were able to apply the guidance. A good quality Request for Support form enhances partnership decision making within CASS around appropriate support and intervention for children and families.
- **Timeliness** CASS aims to manage and respond to a Request for Support form within 24 hours. The audit found that the timescales were consistently being achieved, providing assurance that CASS were efficiently processing Request for Support form, ensuring a quicker safeguarding response to children and their families.

Improving Practice

1. When considering the level of need of a child, look closely at their lived experience, talk to them about their home environment and wider context such as school, friends, health etc.
2. When a child or family requires help, practitioners have a responsibility to discuss their concerns with the family and where possible agree a way forward. This will ensure that parents are aware of the worries. We should also seek their consent about the information we need to share with other agencies in order to help.
3. As a practitioner if you are aware of other services supporting the child, for example, a child's school record has information on who the child's doctor is. This information should be included on a Request for Support form. This will help to identify agencies who may need to be invited to a strategy meeting.
4. Where a child and their family have needs that require a multi-disciplinary approach, speak to other agencies involved and if necessary, seek advice from your Designated Safeguarding Manager or call CASS for advice. By having these early conversations, a more holistic picture will be gained of the child's circumstances and this will help you complete the Request for Support form.
5. When you are ready to submit a Request for Support form make sure you use the official template, it will ensure you capture and record the key information needed by CASS to help enable them to identify the right level of support and help for the child and family.

Next steps

- ✓ When making a referral to CASS complete the Request for Support form ensuring that all information about the child and family is provided. [Access the Request for Support form.](#)
- ✓ If you haven't completed a Request for Support form before or just need some help, [read further guidance.](#)
- ✓ Please complete the [Right Help, Right Time e-Learning](#) package. It will help you understand and apply the Right Help, Right Time guidance.
- ✓ Make sure you attend your own agency's safeguarding training and visit the [BSCP website](#) to access further multi-agency safeguarding training.