



Policy on working in partnership with other agencies.

Aim – To outline when and how we will share information about children and families in our care with other agencies.

Introduction

The Exwick Ark recognises the advantages of working in partnership with other agencies to support the needs of families and children. Everyone wants the best outcomes for a child and happy, secure and confident families. We recognise that other agencies have different knowledge, skills and resources that can often be utilized to support the families. We also recognise that we have knowledge, skills and resources that can be shared to support the work of other agencies.

Sharing information.

It is sometimes necessary to share information about the children and families in our care with other agencies. The reasons for sharing information include; to access appropriate services for our families, to allow for a smooth transition, to work co-operatively with other service providers to meet the needs of a child or to protect a child from harm or abuse. We will usually get consent from a child's parent before sharing information unless we feel that by doing so we are placing the child or adult at greater risk of harm or to prevent serious harm to an individual through the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime.

When sharing information with other agencies we will ensure that the information shared is necessary for the purpose for which we are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

We will keep a record of our decision to share or not share and the reasons for our decision. If we decide to share we will record what we have shared, with who and for what purpose.

The attached pocket guide to information sharing can be used to support decisions surrounding information sharing.



Transitions.

When a child starts at the Exwick Ark parents will be asked to complete our standard application form during or prior to our home visit. This form contains the information necessary for us to provide a smooth transition into pre-school for the child and family. This form also asks for details of other service providers who are currently working with the child.

When a child leaves The Exwick Ark to attend school we will complete a standard transition form detailing the achievements of the child during their time with us and the identified next steps. This form will be shared with the child and parents, who will also have an input, and with the permission of the parents will be shared with the child's reception teacher. If a child leaves the Exwick Ark to attend another early years provider we will give the child's records to their parent and suggest that they pass them to their new early years setting. This allows for a smooth transition between early years settings and schools.

A member of our staff usually accompanies children on their first induction visit to our main feeder schools (Exwick Heights Primary or Redhills Community Primary). We also usually meet with the reception class teacher prior to transfer to ensure the needs of the children are understood.

Work with other early years providers and child minders.

The Exwick Ark is keen to work in partnership with other early years providers. We regularly attend briefing meetings in which best practise and developments in early years are shared. We work closely with early years advisory teachers and Devon Early Years and Childcare Partnership. We regularly have visitors from other pre-schools in to observe our practise and in turn visit other settings to learn from them.

If a child attending the Exwick Ark attends more than 1 early years provider we send a copy of our newsletter to the setting or child minder so that they are aware of our plans and links can be made. We send a form sharing development matters stages for each area of learning along with personal comments and request the other provider returns the form with their assessments and comments completed in return.



Referrals.

Sometimes we are not able to meet the needs of a child or family within our setting and we need to access support or advice from other professionals. In this case with the parents consent we will refer the child or family to another agency using standard referral procedures. In some cases the child's parents may prefer to do this themselves.

Multi agency working.

Sometimes the needs of the child or family may be more complicated and a pre CAF checklist may indicate the child's needs may be best met by more than one agency working in partnership. In such cases we will ask the parents if they would like to complete a Common Assessment Form (CAF). The CAF is a standardized approach to conducting an assessment of a child's additional needs and is a key part of delivering frontline services that are integrated and focussed around the needs of the child. If the parents give their consent we will contact our CAF pathway co-ordinator (Charles Sumner tel. 07966889410). He will be able to advise us whether a child already has a CAF and can allocate a CAF reference number. A member of staff with which the family feels comfortable and has attended CAF training will then support the family in completing the CAF. On completing the CAF it will be submitted to the pathway co-ordinator. At this point it will be decided whether a multi- agency response is needed or not.

Team around the child meetings

If a multi-agency response is needed a team around the child (TAC) meeting will be called, usually within 15 days. Agencies, which have been identified by the family, pre-school and pathway co-ordinator as possibly being able to support the family will be invited. At this TAC meeting an action plan will be drawn up identifying the needs, outcomes, actions, person responsible and time scale. A lead professional will be appointed who will be the first point of call for the parent, child and other agencies. They will also co-ordinate the delivery of the actions agreed by the practitioners involved. The lead professional will be one of the practitioners in the TAC meeting and should be someone with which the family feels comfortable.

A CAF review meeting will be held at an agreed date to review the success of the action plan and to address any further identified needs. The process of regular review meetings will continue until the child or family



no longer needs multi agency support or until the needs escalate beyond the skills of the multi-agency team and a statutory assessment and social care response is needed.

If at any point in this process we consider the child to be at risk of harm or abuse we will suspend the process and follow our normal safeguarding children procedures.

Statutory involvement.

Within the group of children with additional needs, a small proportion have more significant needs which meet the threshold for statutory involvement. Thresholds for statutory involvement can be found on the Devon Children's Trust website. These children are;

- Children who are the subject of a child protection plan.
- Looked after children.
- Care leavers.
- Children for whom adoption is the plan.
- Children with severe and complex special educational needs.
- Children with complex disabilities or complex health needs.
- Children diagnosed with significant mental health problems.

In these cases we will support the process of statutory involvement and attend any review meetings required of us.

Signed:

Date: