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AN ROINN

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agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

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Caseload Management Model

**Proposed Guidance for Implementing
the Model across Family and Child Care
Services within the Northern Ireland
Health and Social Care Trusts**

April 2008

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was written by Oonagh Sage and Sheila Simons under the auspices of the Reform Implementation Team.

Special thanks to the former Foyle Health and Social Services Trust as the genesis of this model originated from their caseload management model scheme.

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FOREWORD

This guidance has been developed to assist social workers and their managers in the Health and Social Care Trusts to allocate and prioritise cases and associated tasks within manageable workloads.

The guidance should therefore be seen as integral to the supervision process and seeks to afford individual staff, teams and the service the opportunity to work to optimum effect in delivering best outcomes for children.

The nature of a caseload management model is such that it is a dynamic tool and is not intended to be an exact science. The complexity of circumstances being addressed and the need to respond to unforeseen events requires that the model and its application have a degree of flexibility.

The guidance is being issued at a time of significant change within children's services and for this reason a formal review of the document will be undertaken twelve months after the date of issue.

Equality

This report can be made available on request, on disk, in large print, via email, in Braille, on audiocassette or in minority languages for anyone not fluent in English.

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CASELOAD MANAGEMENT MODEL

1.1 Introduction

With the introduction of the new Trusts it is anticipated that there will be greater clarity, consistency and understanding within the region as to what constitutes core business for children's services and how these services should be delivered.

The primary task of the proposed workload management system is to ensure that the allocation of staff resources is optimised and the social work input into each case is monitored, reviewed and outcome focused. It is understood that effective caseload management is a process not an event and should be based on principles of best practice.

Social Care Institute for Excellence [SCIE] defines caseload management as a model for:

"Looking at direct work of individual client-worker transaction and primarily as a tool for the immediate benefit of the client and professional; and supervision and development".

SCIE identified 3 major elements which makes up workers effort:

1. Risk
2. Complexity
3. Travel

SCIE also suggest that by agreeing some definitions within these categories would give:

"A consistent and clear weighting system for each case and therefore each workers caseload."

The ADSS response to phase two of Victoria Climbié Inquiry, April 2002 stated in their submission:

"Workloads for all staff engaged in assessing children's needs should build in time for proper collection of information, analysis, communication, planning and reflection for each child who is referred. It is important that workload allows for proper discussion between key health personnel."

It is important that the caseload weighting scheme is implemented in tandem with the Regional Supervision Policy, Standards and Criteria issued by DHSSPS.

1.2 Aim

The aim of a caseload weighting system is to devise:

A uniform model to be adopted by all managers in children's services to look at individual social worker's caseloads and assign a weighting system against commonly agreed criteria. This provides a common and consistent means of comparing workloads carried by individuals, teams, or services as a whole within an organisation. It should be noted that the scheme is applied retrospectively with regard to work completed but gives a sense of what capacity there may be to allocate future work.

1.3 Purpose

- To offer guidance on what a reasonable caseload for a social worker should be;
- To enable managers to identify and prevent overload of the individual social worker or teams and to inform workforce planning;
- To provide an avenue whereby social workers can have clear expectations about the acceptable workload which they can carry;
- To inform case allocation by social work managers;
- To establish a coherent system of priorities for individual social workers, the social work team, the family & child care programme and ultimately the Trust;
- To contribute to supervision process in terms of discussion about organisational, professional and personal objectives;
- To provide an overall measurement of the workload;
- To enhance the quality of service provided to service users; and
- To highlight unmet need.

1.4 Principles

- Caseload management tool is based on the recognition that individual social worker's capabilities will vary depending on experience, skills, and knowledge.
- Personal circumstances will also influence an individual social worker's capacity at times and must be given consideration by the manager when assigning points e.g. assessed year/induction phase.
- Acknowledgement must also be given to the tension which will always exist between allocating work and not overloading individuals; however the team leader's judgement in respect of this is final and will be taken in consideration of the staff member's experience and training.
- It is expected that the total point scheme may be exceeded from time to time and the guidance should be clear as to when this may be appropriate and how this should be monitored.
- Caseload weighting cannot just be a ``numbers game``. It has to be part of a framework to assist effective monitoring, evaluation, supervision, support and accountability. As a consequence, this proposal has been framed within a service context with meets the twelve practice standards for supervision set out in the guidance produced by the Reform Programmes workstream on supervision.

1.5 Pointing System

The pointing system is based on allocating points to individual social workers against hours worked on specific tasks taking account of risk, complexity, travel and the workers capacity. It is envisaged that the model will provide:

- Clarity
- Consistency
- Equity
- Promotion of good practice standards regionally across children's services
- Easy to use

1.6 Formula for Awarding Points

- I. The **basic points** arrived at is the **lowest** average points to be awarded to a case/child/family.
- II. The **maximum points** are the **highest** average points to be awarded to a case/child/family.
- III. **Additional points** to be awarded to the case are at the **discretion** of the team manager taking account of the 3 areas identified by SCIE: Risk, Complexity and Travel.
- IV. Cases that are co worked will attract the same points as the case would be given if worked by a single worker, except where the tasks are divided, then less points will be given.
- V. Certain points may be awarded per child or per family, others depending on circumstances will be allocated per child.
Example: where you have a number of children from the one family who are looked after each child will be pointed separately.
- VI. Half and quarter points can be used.
- VII. Maximum of 9 points per month may be awarded per social worker for training, team meetings, project work, supervision, and other duties, with 1 point equating to 3 hours work.

1.7 Workload Allocation

1	Plus years qualified	50 - 60 per month
0—1	year qualified	40 – 50 per month

[It should be noted that this is an approximate figure only]

Social work manager retains the right to allocate cases to social workers even if such allocation exceeds the recommended maximum limit. Social work managers must explain the reason for this action to the social worker and take responsibility for reprioritising their workload. Such allocation must be time specified and subject to regular review.

1.8 Categories

Children's Services covers a wide range of areas from:

- (i) **Gateway Team**
- (ii) **Family Intervention Team/Family**
- (iii) **Looked After Team**
- (iv) **Fostering /Supervising Social Workers**
- (v) **Fostering/Specialist/Bail Assessments**
- (vi) **Adoption**
- (vii) **Permanency**
- (viii) **Leaving & Aftercare in a community placement**
- (ix) **Leaving & Aftercare in a statutory placement**
- (x) **Children's Disability**
- (xi) **Court (Private and Public Law Applications)**
- (xii) **Early Years**

Therefore any model designed to assist social work managers measure and weight tasks undertaken by individual social workers must reflect areas of commonality as well as differences. Despite different responsibilities all social work managers may choose to use the three elements identified by SCIE: Risk, Complexity, and Travel. For example:

Risk may include:

- Vulnerability
- Lack of information
- Likelihood of significant harm
- Lack of access to support services

Complexity may include:

- Multiple problems
- Child protection investigation
- Legal status
- Care Placement
- Multi-agency involvement

Travel may include:

- Siblings placed in different placements
- High level of contact
- Placement outside Trust area
- Location of court

(i) Category – Gateway Team

To ensure consistency of service delivery at the first point of contact to Family and Child Care Services the DHSSPS mandated the introduction of Gateway Teams across the region.

- one point of entry into Family and Child Care Social Work Services; and
- that all referrals are assessed and responded to appropriately.

Basic: Caseload weighting should be undertaken within the monthly formal supervision process. Given the anticipated short term involvement of the team it may be more appropriate to allocate points having considered the number of hours undertaken to complete the full assessment and which is deemed by the manager as proportionate to the level of the assessment undertaken.(i.e. 1 point to 3 hours work)

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Child Protection
- Child Abuse Investigation Required/Joint Protocol
- Threats of violence to worker i.e. police needed
- Children placed in police protection/EPO
- Parent/Carer non-cooperative
- Case Conference

Complexity:

- Multiple difficulties identified
- More than two parents
- Multiple children
- Communication difficulties
- Disability
- Diminished parental capacity due to mental health/substance abuse
- Foreign Nationals

Travel:

- Number of visits undertaken
- Inability to access parents/professionals
- Rural area/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base

Up to a maximum total of 10 points per month per family should be allocated to reflect high levels of intervention over a short period. This should be used in exceptional circumstances.

(ii) Category – Family Intervention Team/Family Support (including child protection)

Basic: 1 point per case per month per family.

Where less than 1 point per case is merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel. The Social Work Manager will reduce points depending on the allocation of other services to the case e.g. family support services.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- New Case
- Crisis
- Number of family support services
- Number and age of children
- Level of assessed risk
- Multiple house moves
- Violence to worker

Complexity:

- Multiple problems i.e. substance abuse/domestic violence, etc
- Number of family support services involved
- Number and age of children
- Child abuse investigation/strategy discussion/joint protocol processes initiated
- Non-co-operative client
- Care proceedings initiated
- Case Conference

Travel:

- Number of visits undertaken
- Rural areas/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base

Up to a total of 9 points per month per family. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods).

(iii) Category – Looked After Team

Basic: 2 points per child per month.

However if 2 or more siblings are in the same placement they should be awarded 1 point each). Also where less than 2 points are merited i.e. very settled placement, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Managers will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel. The Social Work Managers may reduce points depending on the age of the child and other services being allocated to the case e.g. Leaving and After Care Team.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Unstable placements
- Difficult behaviour
- New placements
- Carers need a lot of support
- Abuse of alcohol/drugs/substances
- Self harm/suicide ideation

Complexity:

- Permanency plan
- Extra reviews etc
- Respite
- Specialist accommodation
- Supervised contact/frequency/duration
- Carers assessments
- Assessment/pathway plans
- Completion of LAC documentation
- Secure accommodation

Travel:

- Different placements
- Respite
- Out of Trust placement
- Facilitation of contact
- Location of office/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office location

Up to a total of 7 points per month per child. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term intervention periods, e.g. secure placement, extra contact, placed outside jurisdiction).

It is recognised that Leaving and Aftercare Social Workers will also be carrying statutory responsibility for looked after children as a result of transition arrangements for young people aged 16+. In this eventuality the pointing will be as indicated in this section.

(iv) Category – Fostering/Supervising Social Workers

Basic: 1 point per case per month per family.

where less than 1 point is merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Newly approved
- Allegations/complaints/concerns against foster parents
- Inappropriate placements
- Fostering disruption

Complexity:

- Multiple placements
- Sibling placements
- Specialist/Enhanced
- Placements experiencing severe pressure
- Kinship placements
- Recruitment
- Compliance with Standards
- Provision of training
- Disruption panels

Travel:

- Rural areas/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base
- Outside of Trust

Up to a total of 3 points per month per family. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods, e.g. allegation against foster carers, new placements, placements facing possible breakdown, illness in foster placement).

(v) Category – Fostering/Specialist/Bail Assessments

Basic: 2 points per case per month per family.

Where less than 2 points are merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Friends and family placements
- Network of supports limited

Complexity:

- Number in home to be assessed, i.e. more children will take more time
- Whether review assessment or new assessment
- Compliance with standards
- Training
- Support/Group work
- Panel meetings

Travel:

- Rural areas/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base
- Outside of Trust

Up to a total of 5 points per month per family. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods, e.g. allegation against foster carers, new placements, placements facing possible breakdown, illness in foster placement).

(vi) Category – Adoption

Basic: 2 points per month per adoptive parent(s).

The Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Where less than 2 points per case is merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Disruption of placement
- Difficult behaviours
- Emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Withdrawal of consent where child has been placed with parental consent

Complexity:

- Sibling(s) also placed
- Issues pertaining to infertility
- Competency based assessments/report writing
- Attachment difficulties/trauma
- Post adoption contact
- Issues of loss, rejection
- Inter-country placements
- Court work
- Best interests/matching panels
- Therapeutic input with child
- Concurrent planning
- Additional training

Travel:

- In excess of 30 minutes travel time from office
- Out of Trust placements

Up to a total of 9 points (to be used only in exceptional circumstances or with points of high intervention e.g. placement disruption, facilitating initial face to face contact with birth parents).

(vii) Category – Permanency (via adoption, residency order, Kinship care following LAC decision that rehabilitation is not in child best interests)

Basic: 2 points per child per month.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Where less than 2 points merited Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- 1st time placement
- Sibling(s) placed together
- Unresolved issues of fertility
- Challenging behaviours
- Change of care plan
- Withdrawal of consent
- Concurrent placement

Complexity:

- Sibling/parental contacts post placement
- Individual work with children
- Understanding of historical and current issues (review of all case records)
- Compliance with delegated statutory functions re Looked After Child
- Input into statutory review processes
- Attachment issues
- Other children in placement
- Kinship assessments
- Legal consultations
- Attendance at court/timetabling
- Instruction of expert(s)
- Best interests/matching panel
- Completion of all statutory documentation
- Preparation/presentation of panel reports
- Freeing/adoption proceedings
- Statement of facts/agency summary
- Liaison/co-working with adoption colleagues

Travel:

- Out of Trust placement
- In excess of 30 minutes from office base

Up to a total of 9 points per month per family (only to be used at times of intensive intervention e.g. writing reports, presentation to panel).

(viii) Category – Leaving & Aftercare - In A Community Placement (This pointing system is not applicable to Personal Advisers)

It is understood that the changes resulting from the introduction of the Leaving Care bill, may affect this weighting system. Until a more robust activity analysis can be carried out it is suggested that as an interim measure, social work managers and staff may combine this category with the 'Looked After Team' category.

Basic: 2 points per child per month. (in keeping with LAC)

Where less than 1 point per case is merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Coping skills i.e. disability
- Breakdown
- Homelessness
- Lack of income
- Mental Health
- Vulnerability
- Level of functioning, social and intellectual
- Parenting status
- Isolation
- Engagement in criminal activity
- Engagement in sexual harmful behaviours – victim/perpetrator
- Drug/alcohol abuse

Complexity:

- Type of placement
- Parents, drug/alcohol/substance abuse
- Legal status- care/criminal proceedings
- Multiple risks identified

Travel:

- Out of Trust placement
- Rural area/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base

Up to a total of 4 points per month per child. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods).

(ix) Category – Leaving & Aftercare – In A Statutory Placement

Basic: 1 point per case per month per child.

Where less than 1 point per case is merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Vulnerability
- Unstable placement/multiple disruptions
- Mental health issues
- Level of functioning – social and intellectual
- Isolation
- Alcohol/drug/substance abuse
- Engagement in sexual harmful behaviour – victim/perpetrator
- Engagement in criminal activity

Complexity:

- Behaviour
- Multi-disciplinary work
- Legal status- care/criminal

Travel:

- Out of Trust placement
- Rural area/in excess of 30 minutes travel from office base

Up to a total of 3 points per month per child. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods).

It is recognised that Leaving and Aftercare Social Workers will also be carrying statutory responsibility for looked after children as a result of transition arrangements for young people aged 16+. In this eventuality the pointing will be as indicated in Category (iii) – Looked After Team.

(x) Category – Children’s Disability

Basic: 2 points per child per month.

Social work manager will add points based on assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel.

Where less than 2 points is merited the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Poor family/community supports
- Significant intra-familial stress
- Competing parental demands where there are other siblings in the family

Complexity:

- Life-limited prognosis
- LAC/Hospital placement
- Child protection/court proceedings initiated
- Multiple appointments
- Complex health needs
- Legal status
- Parental/carers assessment

Travel:

- Rural area/in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office
- Up to a total of 4 points per month per child. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term/high intervention periods).

(xi) Category – Court (Private and Public Law Applications)

Basic: 4 points per month per family.

These points may be added to a case that has been awarded points under a different category.

Where less than 4 points are merited, the Social Work Manager has the discretion to award less points – i.e. in some private law cases where the involvement is time limited.

Social Work Manager will add points based on an assessment of Risk, Complexity and Travel. The Social Work Manager will reduce points based on the involvement of other services in the case.

Examples might include:

Risk:

- Lack of access to support services
- Non-co-operative client
- Risk of violence to social worker

Complexity:

- Lack of placement etc
- Number of professionals involved
- Number of children involved
- Number of reports requested
- Independent expert(s)
- Parent/carers assessment
- Secure accommodation
- Liaison with Guardian Ad Litem
- Attendance at court/legal consultations/time commitment
- Statutory review processes

Travel:

- Location of court
- Home visits – in excess of 30 minutes travel time from office base

Up to a total of 9 points per month per family. (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances or for short term high intervention periods, e.g. secure placement, extra contact, residential assessments, difficult placement).

(xii) Category – Early Years

Further work is on-going within the Early Years service to develop a caseload management model which best reflects activity within Early Years work.

1.9 Conclusion

The implementation of a model for caseload management should reflect the following:

- The principles of the UNOCINI assessment framework.
- Principles of regional supervision policy.
- Evidence of the competency framework under KSF.

All these elements have been taken into consideration and have influenced the proposal outlined in this guidance.

1.10 Appendix 1 – Monthly Supervision Summary

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST FAMILY & CHILD CARE PROGRAMME MONTHLY SUPERVISION SUMMARY FOR CASELOAD MANAGEMENT

Name of Social Worker: _____

Points – 50 – 60 (Please select)

Date: _____

or 40 – 50

CASE-CATEGORY i.e. Family Intervention, Looked After, Fostering, etc.	FAMILY NAME	SOSCARE NO	CURRENT POINTS	POINTS ADDED FOR:			NEW POINT AWARDED*
				RISK	COMPLEXITY	TRAVEL	
OTHER DUTIES							

SUB-TOTAL: _____

TOTAL POINTS AWARDED: _____

Signed: _____

Social Worker

Signed: _____

Senior Social Worker

* Award Point – up to max total: 9 Points A Month per Social Worker For Team Meetings/Other Duties/ Training/Project Work/Supervision. Up to a total of 5 points maximum per Social Worker can be awarded at the discretion of the Senior Social Worker for exceptional cases.

Equality

This policy/proposal has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and it was found that there were no negative impacts on any grouping.

Human Rights

This policy has been considered under the terms of the Humans Rights Act 1998 and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained within the Act.