

Practice Guidance – Allocating and Managing Cases which vary in Complexity

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1. Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of the following guide is to promote consistency in approach across Adult Social Care in Knowsley by providing a steer for managers and staff in relation to:

- The factors that should be taken into account when considering the complexity or otherwise of a case
- The types of cases that it may be considered appropriate to allocate to an Assistant Care Manager as opposed to a Social Worker aligned to the above
- The approach to managing cases that are only deemed to be complex after the point of allocation
- The range of duties and responsibilities that are considered to be reserved for Social Workers only

2. What is a Complex Case?

There is no single defining factor that makes a case complex or otherwise. Moreover, it is the cumulative impact of a number of different factors that should lead to one case being considered complex and another less so.

The factors to take in to consideration when considering whether or not a case is complex are as follows.

2.1 Initial Test

- **Nature of condition** – complexity is not condition specific – a case is not complex simply because a person has a dementia for example, however, combine this with other factors and the case may become more difficult to manage and may require a range of skills and experiences to be drawn upon to support the allocated worker effectively
- **Type of service** – complexity is not service specific – a case is not complex simply because a person is in a residential setting for example, however combine this with other factors and the case may become more difficult to manage and may require a range of skills and experiences to be drawn upon to support the allocated worker effectively

- **Environmental factors** – complexity is not determined by lifestyle or environment alone, for example, a person may have a hoarding problem which taken in isolation may not be considered too challenging, however when considered in conjunction with a particular condition or service then this may become a more complex case to manage
- **Type of task** – complexity is not determined on the basis of specific tasks that a worker may be required to undertake in order to see the case through to closure. The requirement to undertake court work for example does not make a case complex in its own right.
- **Family dynamics** – complexity is not determined on the basis of family dynamics - however a case involving complicated family dynamics may be considered complex when combined with two or more of the other factors aforementioned.

2.2 Secondary Test

Other factors which may be taken into account when judging the complexity or otherwise of a case include:

- Consideration of **how long** the case is likely to take to support to conclusion

3. Determining Cumulative Impact

As previously stated, there is no single defining factor that makes a case complex or otherwise. Moreover, it is the cumulative impact of a number of different factors that should lead to one case being considered complex and another less so.

For the purposes of making an initial judgement about complexity in Knowsley, the following guidance should be taken in to account:

- If a person is considered to meet three or more of the factors outlined at 2.1 (Initial Test) then this case should be considered complex in the context of this practice guidance
- If, post initial assessment and a period of preventative intervention, a case is considered to require longer term input from an allocated worker, then this may be considered a complex case but consideration should still be given to how long the case might take to draw to closure, and to whether or not any of the factors outlined at 2.1 are present.

4. Making Allocation and Reallocation Decisions

If at the point of allocation, a person is known to meet three or more of the factors outlined at 2.1 (Initial Test) then this case should be considered complex and it may be appropriate to allocate this case to a Social Worker rather than an Assistant Care Manager. If a decision is taken to allocate such a case to an Assistant Care Manager, then this should be on the basis that the Assistant Care Manager is appropriately skilled to undertake the required work and consents to doing so as part of their ongoing professional development.

If, post initial assessment and a period of preventative intervention, a case is considered to require longer term input from an allocated worker, then this may be considered a complex case however consideration should still be given to how long the case might take to draw to closure, and to whether or not any of the factors outlined at 2.1 are present.

If the above is not known at the point of allocation but becomes apparent later, then consideration should be given to whether or not the person to whom the case has been allocated has the necessary training, skills and experience to effectively manage the case, and whether or not this is considered to be appropriate given the difference in role and expectation of different worker types. The allocated worker themselves must take some responsibility for identifying when cases become more complex and / or they require additional support and oversight in order to safely and effectively continue to act as the case coordinator in such cases.

Where it is determined that the allocated worker is unable to continue to manage the case independently or this is considered to be inappropriate, then the responsible manager / practitioner will either:

- a) Identify a Social Worker or more experienced member of staff to provide support in relation to specific tasks or interventions
- b) Reallocate the case to a Social Worker or more experienced member of staff

Regardless of complexity or cumulative impact in all cases it is important to ensure that allocation decisions take account of:

- The **skills** required to manage the case
- Any **training** that may be required in order to safely and effectively manage the case

5. Reserved Social Work Tasks

In addition to providing greater clarity regarding the factors to consider when determining complexity and subsequently allocation / reallocation, this guidance document is intended to clarify the additional duties and responsibilities that Social Workers may be required to undertake.

Duties include:

- The completion of safeguarding investigations
- The production of safeguarding plans
- Signing off the Decision Support Tool (DST)
- Chairing Best Interest Decision meetings
- Chairing MARAMs or MARACs

Additional responsibilities aligned to the Professional Capabilities Framework include:

- Supervision / Mentoring / Coaching
- Practice Education
- Advanced Mental Health Practice
- Best Interest Assessment
- Practice Development
- Maintain record of Continuous Professional Development for HCPC registration purposes