

Care and Risk Management Guidance

Donna McEwan, CYCJ

The Care and Risk Management (CARM) Guidance for children aged 12 to 18 years who present a risk of serious harm is an appendix to the [Framework for Risk Assessment, Management and Evaluation \(FRAME\)](#) planning for local authorities and partners: for children and young people under 18 (Scottish Government, 2011). FRAME defines the risk of serious harm as:

“the likelihood of behaviour of a violent or sexual nature, which is life-threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, may reasonably be expected to be difficult or impossible”

CARM is a multi-agency framework designed to assist with the early identification, assessment and management of children who display harmful behaviours whilst ensuring that, in line with [Getting It Right For Every Child](#), their needs are met and links are made with any Child's Plan and Child Protection procedures. The aim of the CARM Guidance is to ensure that the risks presented by children's behaviour are managed effectively and minimised through effective communication, information sharing, assessment, multi-agency decision making and the implementation of effective risk management plans. For services responding to the risks posed by this small group of children there can be tensions between promoting public safety and confidence whilst ensuring that children are treated as children first and are given opportunities to become [positive contributors to society](#).

Local [CARM](#) protocols should be signed off by Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and grounded within broader public protection structures and processes (e.g. Community Planning Partnerships). Additionally, local authorities should be cognisant of areas of overlap and the need for Care and Risk Management processes to complement rather than conflict with existing arrangements (e.g. secure screening panels).

CARM Guidance is applicable with children and young people aged 12 to 18 years where any or all of the following may be present:

- sexually harmful behaviour and/or violence is displayed
- intent and potential for harm requires formal risk management processes
- a pattern of behaviour suggests a more serious incident may be imminent
- where a child or young person has been involved in an incident of a serious nature (irrespective of the legal status of the incident)

CARM is designed to be applied in a tiered approach that responds proportionately to the level of risks associated with the child's concerning behaviours to address areas of assessed need and risk. With respect to on-going risk management arrangements, agreement is sought by multi-agency partners on one of three risk management classifications:

Aware: The concerns presented by the child/ young person's behaviour would be best met and responded to through universal services and there is no need for a further CARM meeting or CARM Core Group meeting.

Attentive: The CARM meeting agrees that attentiveness such as heightened monitoring and supervision of the child is a defensible position to take in relation to risk management and a risk management structure, including the establishment of multi-agency Core Group meetings. This would also involve the identification of a lead professional.

Active and Alert: This would involve a very active and alert approach to risk management as the only defensible position to take in terms of supporting the child/ young person to develop the capacity to manage the possible concerning behaviours and associated risk.

CARM guidance sets out the need for robust, strengths-based risk assessments that are holistic in nature and fully consider the child's or young person's existence within their wider systems and environments - family, school, peer and community. It is important to avoid merely listing risk factors. Instead, the assessment should build a narrative about an individual that integrates the many pieces of information available to us. By formulating an individual theory of risk this helps to make sense of risk, and therefore, how best to intervene and manage such risk through the conceptualisation of the roots of a person's problems with an eye toward intervention. This risk assessment and formulation should be informed by knowledge and understanding of child development, brain development, trauma, and the child's wider systems as noted above and identifying any vulnerabilities and their impact.

The child/young person and their family should be fully involved in the CARM process and agreed interventions to ensure their contribution, active participation and understanding. This is vital as often with children and young people it is the family who are required to take on significant aspects of any risk management plan and interventions. It must be recognised that in translating assessments into meaningful interventions, it may take some time for the child or young person to develop the capacity to manage their presenting risky behaviour and that initially, high levels of supervision and monitoring may be required. The CARM process could be utilised as part of a robust wraparound support that seeks to maintain a child or young person in the community where they are at risk of secure care or custody.

The risk management plan and associated actions should be SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-specific) and include the following:

- A range of strategies – assigned to a named individual/agency
- A priority rating assigned to each strategy
- Clearly set timescales
- Acknowledgement of any limitations
- Contingency plan in the event of any deterioration

Links with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

A young person's legal status may change during the period they are involved with the CARM process in the event that they are convicted of an offence of a serious nature within the Adult Criminal Justice System. A child under the age of 18 may become subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) where they are made subject to Sex Offenders Notification Requirements, are a mentally disordered restricted patient or assessed as presenting a high or very high risk of serious harm through other non-sexual behaviour. Particular agreement should be sought regarding managing and supporting the transition of a young person from CARM to the MAPPA risk management process and in relation to the arrangements for risk management when a child or young person attains the age of 18 and continues to present significant concerns, although not subject to MAPPA.

Exit from CARM Process

In regard to the minimum intervention principle children and young people should not be maintained within the CARM process longer than is required. Preparing a child or young person for their exit from the CARM process should be undertaken at a pace and level reflective of their needs and risks. To ensure that any positive gains which have resulted through supporting and engaging meaningfully with the individual and their family are maintained, the appropriate services and supports should remain available as required. Measurement of progress can be reflected through changes in the wellbeing indicators – Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI) and reduction in dynamic risks.