**Policy 2:** Access, Engagement and Case Completion Policy

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| Access, Engagement and Case Completion Policy |
| Preparing For Life Home Visiting |
| Approval date: September 2020 |
| Revision date: September 2024 |

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| 1. Responsibility for approval of policy | ?? |
| 2. Responsibility for implementation | *Preparing For Life Home Visiting Team Leader* |
| 3. Responsibility for ensuring review | *PFL Manager with PFL Home Visiting Team Leader* |

1. **Policy Statement**
   1. Preparing For Life Home Visiting is committed to good practice regarding access & engagement and case completion. The Home Visiting team aims to provide each family with a consistent standard of support.
   2. The aim is to support an environment where access and engagement to the programme is promoted including a consideration of how families are supported when they complete the programme or disengage.
   3. The families have the right to disengage from the programme. PFL Home Visiting strives to keep options for re-engagement open whenever possible.
2. **Purpose**
   1. To seek maximum accessibility through the initial engagement process by families in the catchment area so that the process will be transparent, accountable and fair.
   2. To outline the strategies that PFL Home Visiting takes to support the initial engagement of families in the area, including recruitment and quick allocation to build on the motivation of families.
   3. To outline the strategies that PFL Home Visiting takes to support continued participation in the programme
   4. To outline how PFL Home Visiting will support a family who has completed the programme or disengages unexpectedly.
3. **Scope**
   1. This Policy is intended to cover all contact between families and the PFL Home Visiting Service as well as referrals from other agencies
   2. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Case Allocation and Management Policy
4. **Roles and Responsibilities**
   1. Staff
      1. Employees are responsible for complying with the PFL Home Visiting Access, Engagement and Case Completion Policy.
      2. Inform the PFL Home Visiting Team Leader immediately if they are aware of any concerns.
   2. PFL Home Visiting Team Leader
      1. To ensure that all staff members comply with the PFL Home Visiting Access, Engagement and Case Completion Policy requirements.
      2. To ensure that staff are aware of the policy and adhere to its requirements.
      3. To support the process as required
5. **Procedure**
   1. **Recruitment & Referrals**
      1. **Recruitment**
         1. To support the active inclusion of a diverse range of families in the programme, PFL Home Visiting engages in recruitment activities. This involves attendance at local antenatal clinics, ensuring the programme is represented in local forums or meetings, presenting to services/groups, and representing the programme at local promotional and other events.
         2. This role involves active engagement with families at local events and by attending the antenatal clinics bi-weekly (where feasible)
         3. There is also engagement with services who may wish to direct their service users to the programme, such as Tusla, Public Health, Occupational Therapy, Addiction Services, youth Services, Schools, Hospitals, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Homeless services, and GPs.
      2. PFL Home Visiting has assigned this role to a particular staff member supported by the rest of the team as required.
      3. Any individuals who express an interest in the programme during recruitment activities should complete the PFL Referral Form (see Form 2)

**5.1.2 Referrals**

5.1.2.1 PFL Home Visiting encourages agencies to refer families to the programme. Agencies should submit referrals using the PFL Home Visiting Referral Form with the explicit consent of the family and in line with the PFL Home Visiting Referral criteria as follows:

- Mother who is currently pregnant

- Mother living in the Dublin 17 and Dublin 5 catchment area (some cases in the surrounding area will be accepted on a case-by-case basis depending on the level of need)

* + - 1. PFL Home Visiting Team Leader aims to report to agencies whether a family engages. This can only be done with consent from the family (ideally as indicated via the consent box on the referral form)
      2. Some families may self-refer. In this scenario, they should complete the PFL Home Visiting Referral Form and leave the Referral Agent section blank.
      3. The PFL Home Visiting Team Leader should record all potential participants in a spreadsheet including the following information: name, address, phone number, baby's due date, hospital, the date referred in, a referral from, potential Home Visitor (for use at a future date), Actions to date (such as a list of phones calls/contact or attempted phone calls/contact)
    1. Recruitment and referrals are a rolling item at PFL Home Visiting Home Visitor's meeting to identify the potential new referrals and any recruitment activities required. Recruitment activities may be distributed across the team if the PFL HV Recruitment Officer cannot attend or is on leave. An overall progress update is also provided at the overall PFL Team Meeting
    2. In addition to the above, the PFL Home Visiting Team Leader invites services into the programme so they can learn about the support provided by PFL Home Visiting and present opportunities for Home Visitors to develop referral pathways to other services for existing families.
    3. All Referral Forms should be stamped with the date the PFL HV service received them.
  1. **Initial Engagement of Families**
     1. PFL Home Visiting believes that families need flexibility, understanding, transparency, trust, non-judgemental attitudes, and respect to engage in the process. PFL Home Visiting aims to ensure that barriers families face to participation are addressed collaboratively as much as possible. The building of strong relationships between the programme staff and the family is key to the delivery of the intervention.

This is delivered through the following processes

* + 1. **Initial Phone Discussion**
       1. The PFL Home Visiting Team Leader phones all potential families (identified during recruitment, agency referrals or self-referrals) to have an ***Initial Phone Discussion***. This discussion includes: a) an overview of what is involved, b) where the family heard about the programme, c) an opportunity to answer any questions the family has, d) confirming and checking contact details, e) an overview of the first visit and what will happen (including list of forms) and preparation for this process f) mothers preference for father(s) or partner(s) involvement g) agreement of a date for the Registration Meeting including discussion of where this first registration meeting will occur i.e. in home, in centre or another location (this should ideally be based on the preference of the family).
       2. This phone discussion is important to help the family decide if this is the right service for them and if they would like to proceed to the programme's registration. This supports the family to make an informed decision about their commitment to participate. Furthermore, it also prepares the family for the Registration Meeting and gives them an idea of what to expect.
       3. The phone discussion also helps the PFL Home Visiting Team Leader get an initial sense of the family's needs and fill in any gaps in the initial information received.
       4. The Initial Phone Discussion will also inform families about PFL/NSP consent processes, and families will be invited to complete these online via the NSP Invitation to Consent Process. A paper version can be completed at the Registration Meeting if the family would prefer to complete a paper form.
       5. PFL Home Visiting recognises that families can disengage during this initial period between a referral, the Initial Phone Discussion and the Registration Meeting. Therefore, the Initial Phone Discussion should occur within a maximum of two weeks of the Referral Form being received by the service (each form should be stamped as per 5.1.6 above).
    2. **Registration Meeting**
       1. The PFL Home Visiting Team Leader meets a family to complete the ***Registration Meeting*** at a place and time that is convenient for the family. This meeting should be offered within the two weeks following the Initial Phone Conversation above. Where there are potential safety concerns, a referral agent should accompany the Home Visiting Team Leader to this meeting
       2. A text reminder should be sent to the family a couple of days before the Registration Meeting and the morning or day before the meeting.
       3. During this meeting, the following documents are completed:

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| **Form** | **Purpose** |
| PFL HV Registration Form | This form aims to gather some initial information about the family to generate a picture of them and their potential strengths and needs. Furthermore, it also helps to assess the potential complexity, which supports case allocation. The forms gather information on background demographics, initial indication of potential supports that may be required to support participation, historical and current agencies that the family is linked to |
| Programme & Evaluation Consent Form | This form aims to ensure the family understands what is involved in partaking in the programme is still interested and has an overview of how the process will work. The family should also be aware of the PFL Home Visiting research process and agree to use their information anonymously for this purpose. |
| Child Protection Form | The purpose of this form is to explain the limits of confidentiality in relation to child protection concerns to ensure the family is aware of the duties of PFL Home Visiting in this regard. |
| Information Sharing Consent Form | What information and to whom does the family currently consent to. This may be information by the disclosure of agencies that a family is currently linked with as completed on the Registration Form. |

* + - 1. Following the meeting, the family should have clarity about how the programme works and transparency as to the consent and limits to the confidentiality process.
      2. The PFL Home Visiting Team Leader completes the Case Allocation Complexity Form after the meeting (see Form 1). This is to support the allocation of the case while being mindful of the fit for the family and the Home Visitors (for further information, see the Case Allocation and Management Policy). Ideally, this allocation occurs within two weeks of the Registration Meeting. Furthermore, the PFL Home Visiting Team Leader may refer or link the family to additional support to overcome any potential barriers to participation. It may also be recommended that the Home Visitor potentially arrange a meeting with the family and existing agencies.
      3. PFL Home Visiting recognises that families can disengage between the Registration Meeting and the first visit. Therefore, there is a number of calls and contacts in between as follows: a) the Team Leader phones the family to let them know who their Home Visitor will be, b) the Home Visitor phones the family to introduce themselves and agree on a date for the First Visit c) the Home Visitor sends a text reminder to the family a few days before as well as the morning or day before the meeting.
    1. **First Visit**
       1. The PFL Home Visitor should ideally offer a date for the First Visit within one month of the Registration Meeting.
       2. During this meeting, the PFL Home Visitor should answer any questions from the family. It is also intended that the Home Visitor will complete the following documents/processes (however, the flow of the meeting should be dictated by the family, and it is recognised that it may be necessary to complete over more than one visit- where this occurs it should be noted- in particular for research purposes):

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| **Form** | **Purpose** |
| PFL HV Initial Visit Questionnaire | This form aims to gather information about the family to generate a picture of them and their potential strengths and needs. It looks at four key areas: a) background, b) prenatal care and well-being, c) support network and social support, and d) maternal prenatal attachment. It also covers baseline areas to be included in the research process. It is intended that this will also help to stimulate goal-setting conversations between the Home Visitor and family (for more information, see Home Visiting and Visits Policy) |
| PFL HV Expectation Agreement | This form aims to set out the expectations of the process from the perspective of the family and the Home Visitor. It also provides an opportunity to review GDPR and child protection and to answer any questions. |
| Provide PFL HV Tip sheet Folder | Beginning of process |

* + - 1. It is important that a family feels comfortable asking any additional questions about the programme as they will have had time to digest the information received during the Initial Phone Conversation and Registration Meeting.
      2. Following this First Visit, the family should have a clear idea of what the programme involves and may have received some initial Tip sheets/information. The Home Visitor should have a deeper understanding of the family. Both should have a plan for what will happen in the next visit (with the flexibility to change based on the family's needs). Again, there should be a reflection on any additional support identified with the family to support their engagement and participation. An onward referral or interagency meeting may be required in this regard.
  1. **Supporting continued participation of families** 
     1. PFL Home Visiting utilises a number of different strategies to support the continued participation of families in the programme following their initial engagement and to enhance relationship building and rapport between the Home Visitor and family. These should be provided in line with the PFL Practice Principles such as relationship-based family partnerships, mutual competence, and parallel process.

The strategies are as follows:

* Ensuring the support delivered aligns with each family's wants and goals. Families should be kept at the centre of all processes
  + Families should be able to decide on the content for each subsequent home visit (in line with the PFL Home Visiting Service objectives and/or tip sheets)
* Support should be strengths-based and help the family identify their capabilities/choices and aspirations. Families are seen as the experts on their child (mutual competence). This includes regular goal-setting meetings to help sustain momentum and support families to see potential progression (as relevant)
* There is flexibility regarding where, when, and how often visits occur. Some families may want more or less frequent support. Furthermore, the pace of visits should fit the family's needs.
* Case Coordination is provided where families have multiple needs to ensure coordination of the process and to work collaboratively to address needs that may impact a parent's ability to engage or participate in the content of the programme (with the consent and agreement of the family)
* Clear and regular communication with families via phone calls and messages or social media platforms such as Messenger as required.
  + Families receive a reminder text or message a few days before each home visit as well as a further reminder on the previous day or morning of the visit
  + If there is additional support required, then there may be additional calls or messages between visits
* Providing opportunities to reflect on and review the support provided and check families' satisfaction in terms of what has gone well and if there is anything that could be improved, e.g. phone, more formal satisfaction questionnaires, etc
* Families are treated with sensitivity and respect, and Home Visitor cultivate a non-judgmental and welcoming attitude
* If families are starting to miss appointments and there is a risk of disengagement, then efforts are made to support the family to help their continued participation (as per 5.4.2.3 below)
* Family photoshoots and developmental packs are provided to families to acknowledge progress to date towards different milestones
* Acknowledgement via a card of key milestones in the family life including celebrations of babies' birthdays, new house, starting preschool/school, deaths in the family, weddings
* Coffee mornings to provide opportunities for families to come together and connect with staff and each other.
  1. **Case completion/disengagement**

The PFL Home Visiting Service aims to work with a family until the child starts school.

* + 1. The PFL programme may come to a close with an:
* **Expected** **Planned endings**, where the child has started school, and the programme comes to a natural conclusion. This also includes an **Early Planned Endings,** where there is a planned early ending to the programme, i.e., the full programme has not been completed, but the family is in contact and still attending visits. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as the family have moved out of the area; the family do not wish to continue for personal reasons from a specific date and notifying the service
* **Unexpected Unplanned Endings,** where the family has disengaged without discussing with their Home Visitor.
  + 1. Expected Planned Endings
       1. The PFL Home Visitor will work with the family to prepare for the end of the programme over the six months before the programme finish date. This is important as some families experience the end of the programme as a challenge and loss. As part of this process, the following should occur:
* Share information from the remaining tip sheets (as led by the family)
* Where the family have completed the full programme, support the family with the child’s transition to school, for example, using the school readiness checklist to identify any final areas of support required.
* If a family may require additional support from now on, then the Home Visitor should support their linkage into other services and supports as required and as agreed with the family. If there are already a number of agencies involved, it may be helpful to organise an interagency meeting with the family to discuss.
  + - 1. The final meeting with a family should include a brief review of the programme and the family's experience to date. An Exit Form should be completed with all families.
      2. Early Planned Ending
* Some families may leave the programme before the child starts school. A family can decide at any time that they would like to stop participating in the programme. For example, a family’s circumstance may change where participating in the programme is no longer feasible or desirable. This may occur if a family moves outside the area, has health reasons, or has a change of Home Visitor.
* All efforts should be made to support the family’s continued engagement until the child starts school. A variety of approaches can be taken, which should be chosen in consultation with the PFL HV Team Leader as part of the supervision process. The strategies include:
  + Offering the family the option of bi-monthly rather than monthly meetings.
  + Pausing the programme for a period of time for the family, during which the Home Visitor will have no contact with them. The Home Visitor should discuss and agree on the duration of this period with the PFL HV Team Leader and the family. It is recommended that this is not more than six months unless there are exceptional circumstances. After this period of time, the Home Visitor should contact the family and discuss if they would like to continue with the programme.
  + In very special circumstances, for example family loss/bereavement or illness, you can maintain ‘remote’ contact with the family, by posting the tip sheets to the family home. This approach may be used to respond to a family’s needs at a particular time. However, this is only a temporary solution and should not be used as a long-term response to patchy family engagement.
* If after the above approaches, a family chooses to end participation in the programme, then a final meeting should be held as per 5.4.2.2 above. Furthermore, suppose a family may require additional support from now on. In that case, the Home Visitor should support their linkage into other services and supports as required and as agreed with the family. If there are already a number of agencies involved, it may be helpful to organise an interagency meeting with the family to discuss. The Home Visitor will aim to support the family until any transitions have been made.
* As part of closing the case before a child starts school, you should actively let families know that PFL will still be available to them if they wish to rejoin the programme over the next three months. If the gap is longer than three months, the potential to rejoin the programme is assessed on a case-by-case basis with the PFL HV Team Leader.
  + 1. Unexpected Unplanned Ending
       1. Families are expected to participate in the PFL programme from before the birth of their child until that child starts primary school. Some families may disengage with little or no contact during this time. If you are concerned about a family’s engagement with the programme or if a family is consistently missing or avoiding visits or contact, then this should be discussed with the PFL HV Team Leader during supervision or otherwise.
       2. It is recommended that the following approach is adhered to for missed visits:

Missed Visit

1. If a family misses a visit, the Home Visitor should contact the family by text, phone or social media. Sometimes, families forget about appointments. If the family is not responding to phone or social media, then efforts should be made to contact the family via post or potentially through another agency (if consent is in place to share this information)
2. If contact is made, then efforts should be made to reschedule the visit
3. If the Home Visitor has exhausted all the options above and no contact can be made, then the Home Visitor should inform the PFL HV Team Leader. The PFL HV Team Leader will then try to contact the family via the options above.
4. If there is no response from the family to the HV Team Leader within three attempts at contact (not exceeding a six-to-eight-week period), then the formal disengagement process will be initiated.
5. The family is sent a formal letter to advise them of the need to respond to keep their case open. This happens over a period of up to 6 weeks, with a first formal letter sent in the first two weeks and then a monitoring period, and then a second letter sent the following two weeks with another monitoring period. Then, a final standard letter of disengagement is sent in the final two weeks stating that the case is closed.
6. If a family subsequently contacts the programme, then their continued participation in the programme will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the PFL HV Team Leader

Ad hoc engagement

1. If a family is consistently missing or avoiding visits or contact, then the Home Visitor should discuss it with the PFL HV Team Leader as part of supervision. Strategies to support the family's continued participation should be considered as outlined in the Early Planned Ending section in 5.4.2.3 above.
   * + 1. Ideally, follow-up via PFL Home Visiting Exit Form should be made with all families who have an unplanned ending to capture their experience of the service and to understand more about why they disengaged to allow for any potential learning from their experience.
   1. **Involving Fathers/Significant Others/Partners** 
      1. PFL Home Visiting engages with the birth mother and, as long as supportive to the family unit, encourages and supports engagement as applicable with the following:  birth father, mothers in same-sex relationships, stepfather/mother and other significant others.  In recognition of the fact that there may be domestic abuse or frayed relationships in the family, the mother is initially the gatekeeper to engagement.
      2. The PFL HV Team Leader will ask about mothers' preferences during the Initial Phone Discussion. This is to ensure an opportunity to discuss involvement without others present. If Mum indicates that she does not want other family members involved, it will not be discussed at the Registration Meeting. It will also be noted in the case allocation and complexity form, and the Home Visitor allocated to the family should be informed. It will also be suggested to the mother that a separate Home Visitor could be assigned to the father/partner/significant other to support engagement, but the mother's decision is final.
      3. Where initial agreement has been provided as per 5.5.2 above, the Home Visitor will speak to the mother about the mother's desire to involve others in the programme (as outlined on the Initial Questionnaire). These questions should not be asked if the mother has indicated to the PFL HV Team Leader that she doesn’t want others involved

* If the mother agrees to the father/partner/significant other's involvement, then visits are ideally scheduled for a time that suits the mother and father/partner/significant other (as much as possible). If monthly is not possible, the mother may continue with monthly visits, but the father/partner/significant other may attend bi-monthly or as frequently as possible. If they can’t attend a visit, tip sheets can be left with the mother or posted separately. As mentioned above, flexibility should be provided regarding where and when visits happen to meet the needs of the family unit.
* If mother and father are no longer together then they are offered the choice of joint sessions as per above or separate sessions with the Home Visitor .
* All fathers/partners/significant others partaking in the programme will be invited to complete the Initial Registration and Consent Form for Fathers/partners/significant others at this stage.
* Any fathers/partners/significant others involved in the process should complete the Case Closure/Disengagement process as outlined above in 5.4 as individuals in their own right.