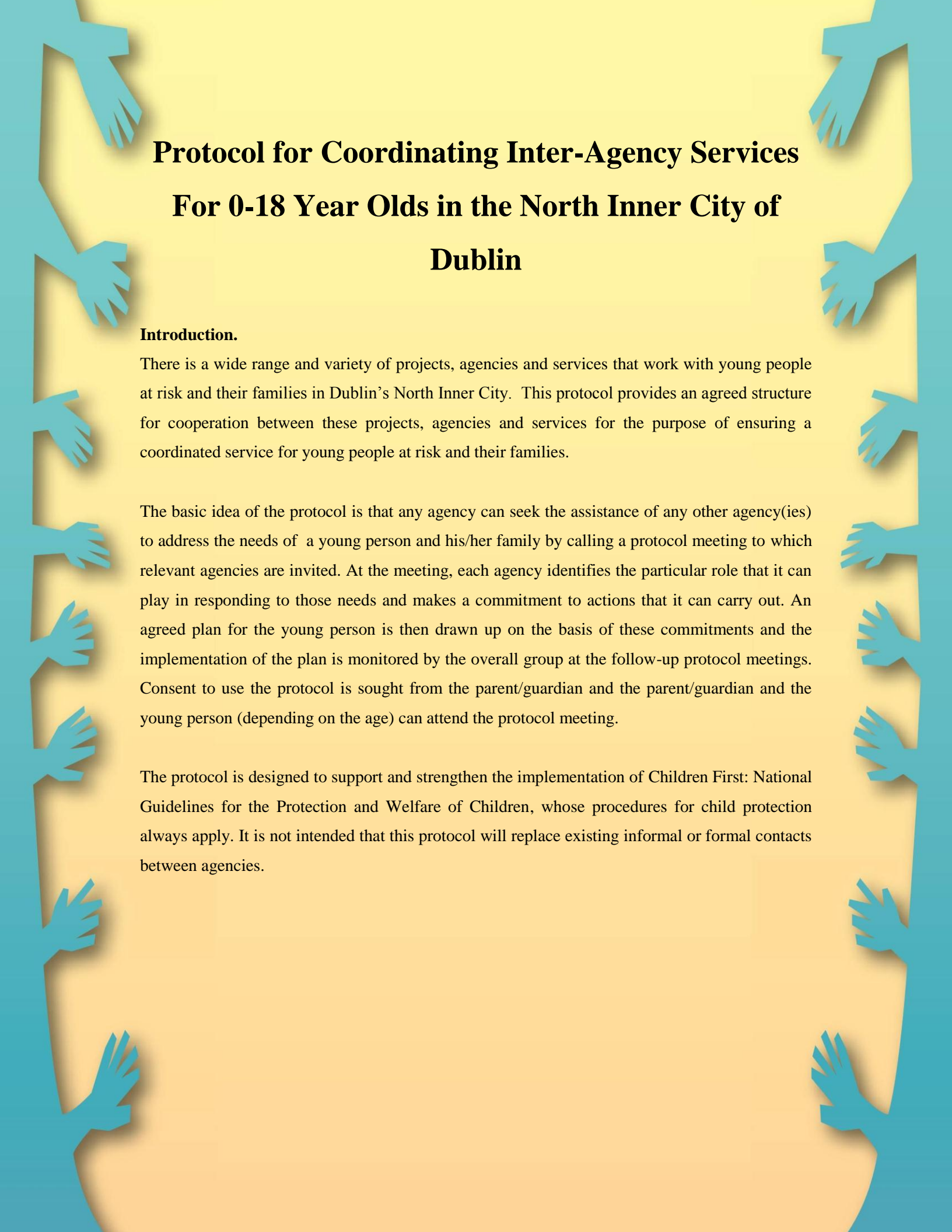


# Coordinating Services for 0-18 Year Olds in North Inner City Dublin

## The YPAR Protocol





# **Protocol for Coordinating Inter-Agency Services For 0-18 Year Olds in the North Inner City of Dublin**

## **Introduction.**

There is a wide range and variety of projects, agencies and services that work with young people at risk and their families in Dublin's North Inner City. This protocol provides an agreed structure for cooperation between these projects, agencies and services for the purpose of ensuring a coordinated service for young people at risk and their families.

The basic idea of the protocol is that any agency can seek the assistance of any other agency(ies) to address the needs of a young person and his/her family by calling a protocol meeting to which relevant agencies are invited. At the meeting, each agency identifies the particular role that it can play in responding to those needs and makes a commitment to actions that it can carry out. An agreed plan for the young person is then drawn up on the basis of these commitments and the implementation of the plan is monitored by the overall group at the follow-up protocol meetings. Consent to use the protocol is sought from the parent/guardian and the parent/guardian and the young person (depending on the age) can attend the protocol meeting.

The protocol is designed to support and strengthen the implementation of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, whose procedures for child protection always apply. It is not intended that this protocol will replace existing informal or formal contacts between agencies.

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## **The Protocol**

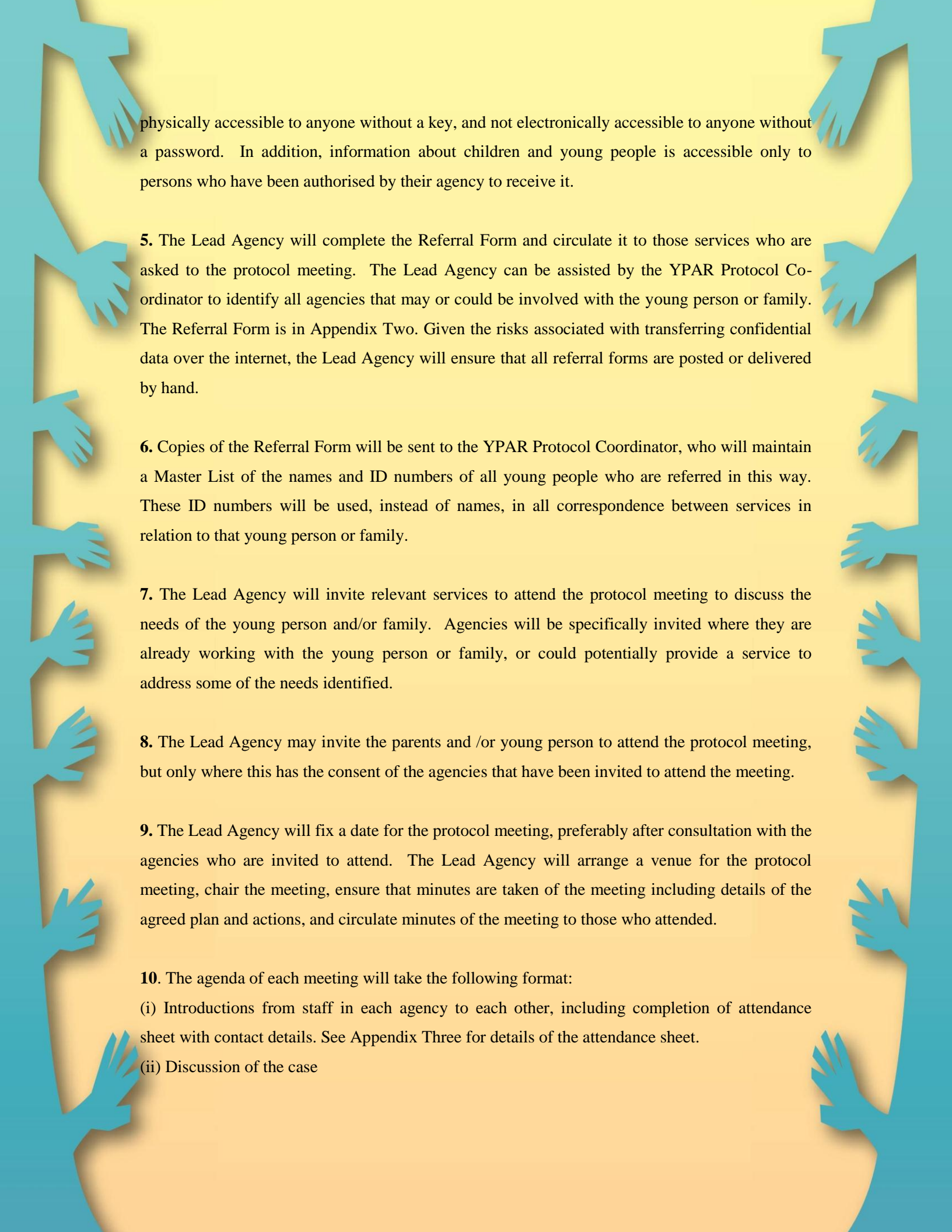
**1.** The agency in initial contact with a young person or family will be called the Lead Agency. Where the needs of a young person or family cannot be met by the Lead Agency on its own, it will seek support from other services by:

- (i) Obtaining the consent of a parent / guardian and young person to make contact with other agencies
- (ii) Preparing a referral form and sending it to other relevant agencies who subscribe to the protocol
- (iii) Inviting other relevant agencies to a protocol meeting for the purpose of preparing an agreed plan to meet the needs of the young person and/or family
- (iv) Ensuring that the plan is implemented, and that participating agencies deliver on their commitments.

**2.** The Lead Agency will seek the consent of a parent / guardian to contact other services. In order to ensure informed consent, the Lead Agency will offer an explanation of the Consent Form prior to signing. The Consent Form is in Appendix One.

**3.** The procedures in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, always apply. No part of this protocol can limit or interfere in any way with the statutory function of the Health Services Executive to protect children, or the statutory function of An Garda Síochána to investigate crime. All information shared under the auspices of this protocol is voluntary. The Health Services Executive and An Garda Síochána will indicate if, in any particular case, the voluntary sharing of information under the protocol conflicts with the exercise of their statutory functions.

**4.** All information about young people and families which is shared between agencies is designed to promote their welfare and protection. Sharing information in this context is not a breach of confidentiality because, according to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children: “Giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality” (page 41). Agencies which subscribe to this protocol recognise that information about young people is shared on a ‘need to know’ basis, and only where it is in the best interests of the young person or family. All agencies also undertake to ensure that information about young people and families is kept safe and secure. This applies to information which is held in hard copy as well as electronically. Keeping information safe and secure requires that it is not



physically accessible to anyone without a key, and not electronically accessible to anyone without a password. In addition, information about children and young people is accessible only to persons who have been authorised by their agency to receive it.

**5.** The Lead Agency will complete the Referral Form and circulate it to those services who are asked to the protocol meeting. The Lead Agency can be assisted by the YPAR Protocol Coordinator to identify all agencies that may or could be involved with the young person or family. The Referral Form is in Appendix Two. Given the risks associated with transferring confidential data over the internet, the Lead Agency will ensure that all referral forms are posted or delivered by hand.

**6.** Copies of the Referral Form will be sent to the YPAR Protocol Coordinator, who will maintain a Master List of the names and ID numbers of all young people who are referred in this way. These ID numbers will be used, instead of names, in all correspondence between services in relation to that young person or family.

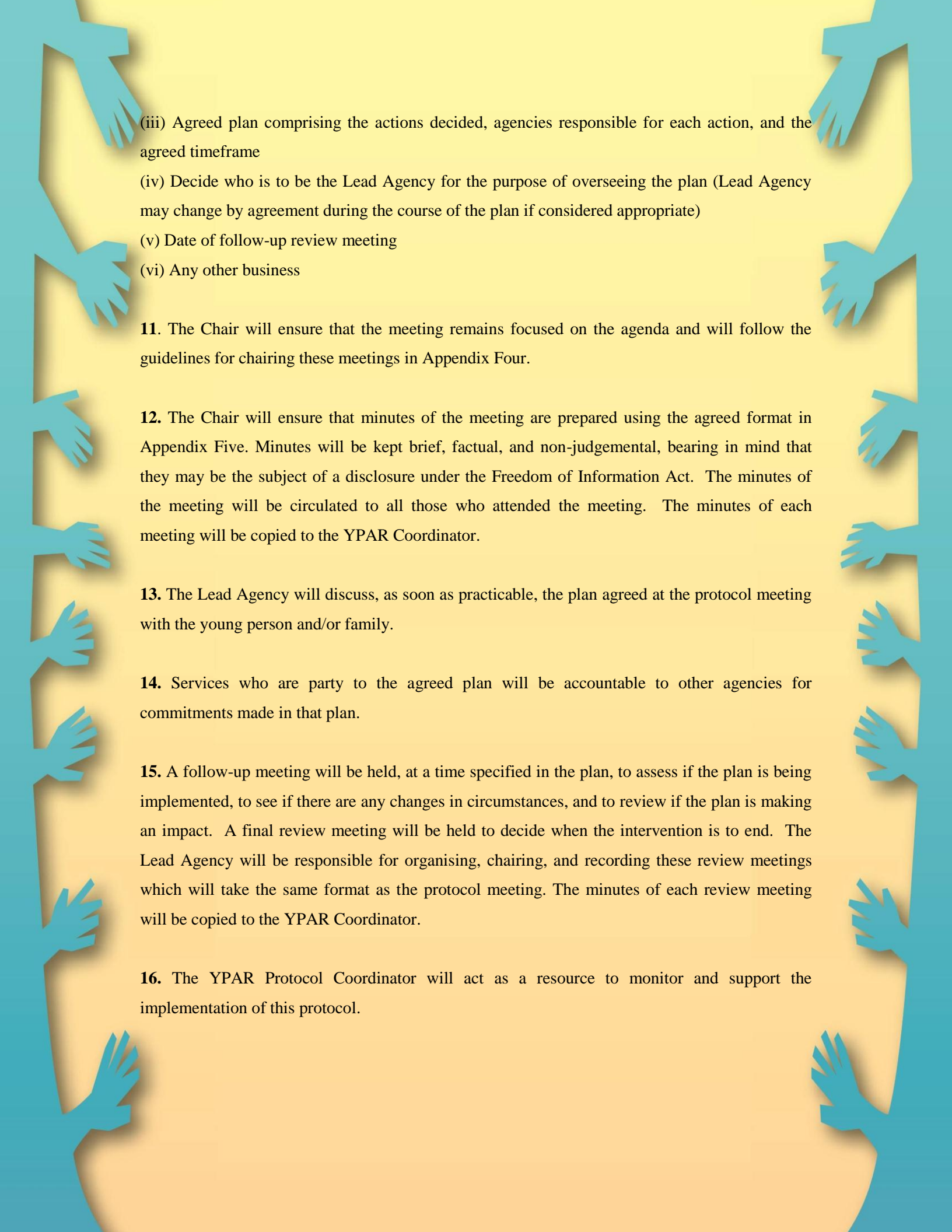
**7.** The Lead Agency will invite relevant services to attend the protocol meeting to discuss the needs of the young person and/or family. Agencies will be specifically invited where they are already working with the young person or family, or could potentially provide a service to address some of the needs identified.

**8.** The Lead Agency may invite the parents and /or young person to attend the protocol meeting, but only where this has the consent of the agencies that have been invited to attend the meeting.

**9.** The Lead Agency will fix a date for the protocol meeting, preferably after consultation with the agencies who are invited to attend. The Lead Agency will arrange a venue for the protocol meeting, chair the meeting, ensure that minutes are taken of the meeting including details of the agreed plan and actions, and circulate minutes of the meeting to those who attended.

**10.** The agenda of each meeting will take the following format:

- (i) Introductions from staff in each agency to each other, including completion of attendance sheet with contact details. See Appendix Three for details of the attendance sheet.
- (ii) Discussion of the case



(iii) Agreed plan comprising the actions decided, agencies responsible for each action, and the agreed timeframe

(iv) Decide who is to be the Lead Agency for the purpose of overseeing the plan (Lead Agency may change by agreement during the course of the plan if considered appropriate)

(v) Date of follow-up review meeting

(vi) Any other business

**11.** The Chair will ensure that the meeting remains focused on the agenda and will follow the guidelines for chairing these meetings in Appendix Four.

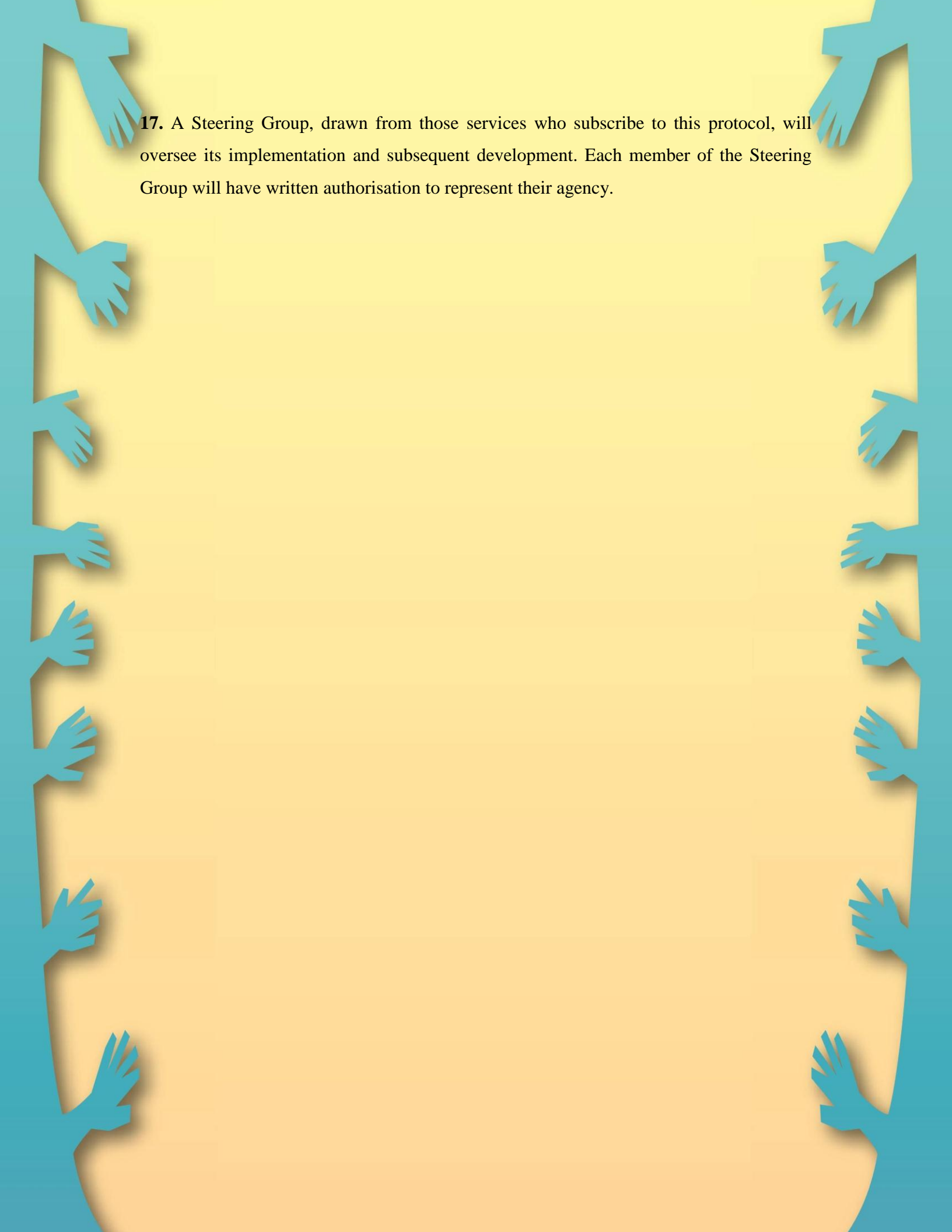
**12.** The Chair will ensure that minutes of the meeting are prepared using the agreed format in Appendix Five. Minutes will be kept brief, factual, and non-judgemental, bearing in mind that they may be the subject of a disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The minutes of the meeting will be circulated to all those who attended the meeting. The minutes of each meeting will be copied to the YPAR Coordinator.

**13.** The Lead Agency will discuss, as soon as practicable, the plan agreed at the protocol meeting with the young person and/or family.

**14.** Services who are party to the agreed plan will be accountable to other agencies for commitments made in that plan.

**15.** A follow-up meeting will be held, at a time specified in the plan, to assess if the plan is being implemented, to see if there are any changes in circumstances, and to review if the plan is making an impact. A final review meeting will be held to decide when the intervention is to end. The Lead Agency will be responsible for organising, chairing, and recording these review meetings which will take the same format as the protocol meeting. The minutes of each review meeting will be copied to the YPAR Coordinator.

**16.** The YPAR Protocol Coordinator will act as a resource to monitor and support the implementation of this protocol.



17. A Steering Group, drawn from those services who subscribe to this protocol, will oversee its implementation and subsequent development. Each member of the Steering Group will have written authorisation to represent their agency.