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One Minute Guide: Strategy Meetings and Discussions

What is the purpose of these?

Strategy meetings or discussions are the means by which Children's Social Care determine the child's welfare, plan future action and determine if the threshold for a Section 47 Children Act 2009 enquiry is met. The strategy discussion plans the enquiry, if the threshold has been met.

When do they take place?

Strategy discussions should be convened within 3 working days (72 hours) of a child protection concern being identified, except where there are allegations / concerns indicating a serious risk of physical harm or neglect or of penetrative sexual abuse when the strategy discussion should be held on the same day as receipt of the referral / information.

Who should attend?

As a minimum, strategy discussions should be attended by a team manager, social worker, police representative and health. Ideally all professionals working with the family should contribute to the strategy discussion.

The strategy meeting or discussion should:

- Share all available information;
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation; and
- Determine whether enquires under Section 47 should be undertaken.

If Section 47 enquiries are initiated, the strategy meeting / discussion will:

- Plan the enquiry;
- Determine the need for any paediatric assessment, including timescale;
- Agree if an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview is needed;
- Consider how the child's wishes and feelings will be obtained
- Decide when, how and who will undertake interviews with the child;
- Any further action required if consent by the parent / person with parental responsibility is refused for interview or medical assessment;

- The needs of others in contact with the alleged abuser/s, including all children in the household;
- What information should be shared with the parent / person with parental responsibility;
- Who other than the family should be interviewed, by whom and when, taking into account the possibility of information sharing placing a child at risk of significant harm or jeopardising police investigations;
- Agree what other actions may be needed to protect the child or provide services or support;
- Any legal action required;
- Records agreed decisions on a [decision sheet](#) timescales, agency and individual responsibility for agreed actions; and
- The need for further strategy discussions, for reviewing the completion of agreed actions.

There may be a need for more than one strategy meeting or discussion, e.g. initial strategy meeting with the police, to plan immediate action, followed by a meeting / discussion with the professional network within 3 days, to determine if a Section 47 enquiry should be initiated.

The strategy meeting / discussion which agrees threshold for Section 47 enquiry, determines the 15 day timescale for Section 47 enquiry.

How can I find out more?

If you want to know more about this area of Child Protection, please contact Veronica Service Manager, Child Protection and Assessment Team (CPAT).