



## One Minute Guide

# What is S47 of the Children Act 1989

Coventry City Council

### Introduction

When children services first become involved with you and your family, it can be worrying, but please be assured we want to work with you to address any issues or concerns. Children's Service can support you in many ways, and this is often determined through an assessment process to determine level of needs and any worries.

Sometimes Children's Service will receive a referral for children which is considered a Child Protection concern and this is usually where it is thought that a child is at risk of significant harm, in these situations a Child Protection Enquiry is undertaken.

### The Process

#### Duty to conduct section 47 enquiries

Where a child is suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required by Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries to enable it to decide whether it should take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

A Section 47 enquiry must always be commenced immediately whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant harm in the form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

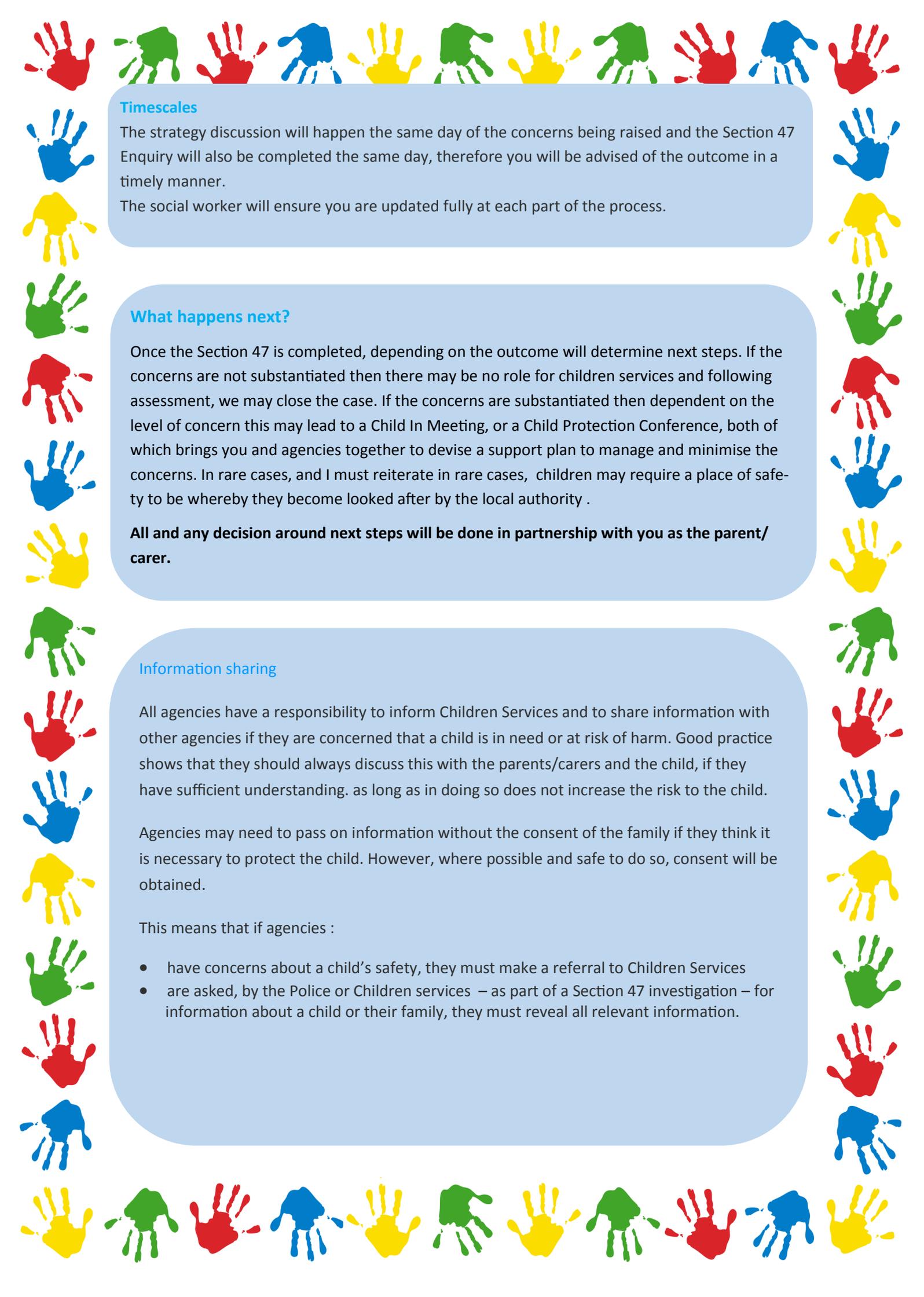
#### Strategy discussions and meetings

When there are concerns that a child may be at risk of significant harm, Children Services will talk to partner agencies about your child. Children Services, together with the Police, Health and often Education, will decide if the threshold for a child protection investigation has been met. If it has, they will also decide who should carry out the investigation – Children Service and the police (joint agency) or the police or children services alone (single agency). This may be done at a meeting or as telephone conversations, depending on the nature and urgency of the enquiries.

#### Section 47 investigations (Child Protection Enquiry)

A Section 47 enquiry means that Children Services **must** carry out an investigation when they have **'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'**.

The enquiry will involve an assessment of the child's needs and the ability of those caring for the child to meet them. The aim is to decide whether any action should be taken to safeguard the child. As a parent, you will be included and this will require you being interviewed, as well as the child (unless the child is too young). The assessment will also include information from the child's school, doctor and other professionals.



### Timescales

The strategy discussion will happen the same day of the concerns being raised and the Section 47 Enquiry will also be completed the same day, therefore you will be advised of the outcome in a timely manner.

The social worker will ensure you are updated fully at each part of the process.

### What happens next?

Once the Section 47 is completed, depending on the outcome will determine next steps. If the concerns are not substantiated then there may be no role for children services and following assessment, we may close the case. If the concerns are substantiated then dependent on the level of concern this may lead to a Child In Meeting, or a Child Protection Conference, both of which brings you and agencies together to devise a support plan to manage and minimise the concerns. In rare cases, and I must reiterate in rare cases, children may require a place of safety to be whereby they become looked after by the local authority .

**All and any decision around next steps will be done in partnership with you as the parent/ carer.**

### Information sharing

All agencies have a responsibility to inform Children Services and to share information with other agencies if they are concerned that a child is in need or at risk of harm. Good practice shows that they should always discuss this with the parents/carers and the child, if they have sufficient understanding. as long as in doing so does not increase the risk to the child.

Agencies may need to pass on information without the consent of the family if they think it is necessary to protect the child. However, where possible and safe to do so, consent will be obtained.

This means that if agencies :

- have concerns about a child's safety, they must make a referral to Children Services
- are asked, by the Police or Children services – as part of a Section 47 investigation – for information about a child or their family, they must reveal all relevant information.