

Leeds Children and Families Services

Strategy Discussions

Practice Guide for Social Work Team Managers

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the Police, Health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or phone calls and more than one discussion may be necessary.

A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process, and when new information is received on an already open case.

(Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children-July 2018).

Who should be involved?

As a minimum; Police, Health and Children's Social Work Service need to be part of the discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual situation.

What should be included?

When carrying out a strategy discussion, the following should be included:

- Reason for the strategy discussion;
- Information sharing; share relevant information held by each agency;
- Consideration of the needs of all children; siblings and other children in contact with the alleged abuser/s;
- Consideration of a Child Protection Medical. Where it is agreed a medical is not required, a rationale MUST be recorded;
- Agree who will see the child and when. Discuss whether any particular factors such as the child's race, ethnicity, language, disability or any other special needs should be taken into account and whether an interpreter will be required for the child and/or the family;
- Decision whether a Child and Family Assessment and or Section 47 Enquiry is needed;
- Planning the Section 47 Enquiry (if one is to be undertaken), including the need for further information, and who will carry out what actions, by when and for what purpose;
- Agree if a single agency or a joint enquiry is required;
- Agree what action is required immediately and in the short term to safeguard the child, including whether the child needs to be in a place of safety;
- Agree who should be interviewed as part of criminal investigation, by whom, for what purpose and when;

- Determine what information from the Strategy Discussion will be shared with the family, unless such information sharing may place a child at increased risk of harm or jeopardise any criminal investigation;
- Agree the need for feedback to each other (e.g. if single agency enquiries) and for further Strategy Discussions with clear timescales.

Recording a strategy discussion;

- Record details of who is involved including full names and roles;
- Record all children and adults details, check that all agencies have the right details including race, ethnicity, identity and any additional needs if known;
- Record all decision making from the above actions, including consideration of a Child Protection Medical. Where it is agreed a medical is not required a rationale must be recorded;
- At the conclusion of the Strategy Discussion, a list of action points, timescales, agreed roles and responsibilities points must be recorded;
- The record must be circulated to all parties within one working day.

Further strategy discussion

Where there is a need to review decisions taken at the initial strategy discussion a further strategy discussion should be held. For example if it is agreed that a child protection medical should be undertaken but the parents/carers do not consent this should be discussed at a further strategy discussion.

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