

Strategy Discussions in South Gloucestershire

Working Together 2018 states:

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.

Local authority children's social care convenes a strategy discussion when the above threshold is met. They should request the strategy discussion within 24 hours of the decision that threshold has been met.

Timescales

On requesting a strategy discussion the team manager, using their professional judgement, should clearly mark on the form that it is required (from the point of receipt by partners) either:

- Immediately
- Within 24 hours
- Within 48 hours
- In exceptional circumstances and with agreement from the service manager, this may be extended to ensure attendance of those with the necessary expertise, for example a case of suspected FGM. However, this extension will not exceed 5 days and, where appropriate, a risk management plan should be agreed between social care, police and health in the interim.
- When a strategy discussion is needed to deal with longer term concerns, such as ongoing neglect, it may be necessary to delay the meeting to ensure that all of the right involved people are able to attend. This should also be with the agreement of the service manager

This timescale is then adhered to by the three statutory partners, i.e. children's social care, the police, appropriate health colleagues.

The form needs to include the details of all of the children and adults who will be discussed, highlighting persons of concern and those that require checks to be made on, the conference call telephone number and a telephone number in case contact is needed. Should the strategy discussion be needed immediately, phone calls should be made to expedite arrangements.

Police Involvement in the Strategy Discussion

The police representative will be either a decision maker (DS or police staff equivalent) from within the Lighthouse Safeguarding Team or a member of investigations. Team manager to invite as appropriate/established.

SafeguardingCoordinationUnitNorthern@avonandsomerset.police.uk / 01278 644588

Health Involvement in the Strategy Discussion

To invite the community paediatrician if:

- There is ongoing involvement and the child is well known to the service
- SA/FGM
- A medical is needed
- But otherwise invite the most appropriate health professional
- Pre-school – Health Visitor
- School age – consider GPs. This would improve information sharing regarding parents and not just the child. However there are significant issues around availability and therefore timings would need to be taken into account if the GP was key
- MASH health representative to be invited if health invitee is unable to attend.
Sirona.safe@nhs.net

(Community paediatrician is the go to person, if cannot get other health involvement)

Other professionals to invite to the strategy discussion if applicable

- ✓ The referring professional/organisation
- ✓ The child's nursery, children's centre, school or college
- ✓ Any other health services the child or family are receiving
- ✓ IDVAs
- ✓ BASE

Team manager to consider the timing of the strategy discussion. Not always possible, but consider the following. Best availability:

- 🕒 Community paediatrician before 1.00
- 🕒 GPs – lunchtime (12.00-2.00)
- 🕒 Health visitors – no best time
- 🕒 Police – no best time but if possible completed before 3pm
- 🕒 First thing in the morning can be worth trying

Once the strategy discussion is booked, it should be added to the electronic strategy discussion diary held by ART.

- ✓ The strategy discussion should follow the South Gloucestershire strategy discussion agenda and determine the child's safety and welfare, and plan future action as well as determine whether there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under S47 of the Children Act 1989.
- ✓ In sharing history the 'first, last and worst' approach is useful to avoid lengthy discussions whilst ensuring the most pertinent information is shared.
- ✓ Minutes should be produced within 72 hours.

- ✓ Minutes always need to be shared with the police, the community paediatrician and the GP.

Catherine Boyce, Head of Safeguarding
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