

Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board

Strategy Discussion/Meeting Agenda

Introduction:

This guidance is intended to for participants at strategy meetings convened under Lancashire's Safeguarding Children Procedures. A strategy discussion may take place at a meeting or by other means (for example, by telephone). In complex types of maltreatment a meeting is likely to be the most effective way of discussing the child's welfare and planning future action. More than one strategy discussion may be necessary.

The information shared, all decisions reached and the basis for those decisions should be clearly recorded by the chair of the strategy discussion and circulated within one working day to all parties to the discussion.

All professionals participating in strategy discussions/meetings should be aware of their responsibility to challenge practice and decisions where this is in the child's best interests. Professional challenge and critical reflection about the focus and intended outcomes of intervention should include questioning and being open to professional challenge from colleagues as well as being confident to challenge others. This is an essential element of effective multi-agency working.

Purpose of a Strategy Meeting:

- Share information
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- Decide whether section 47 enquiries should be initiated and how they will be carried out
- Coordinate and plan a section 47 enquiry, including any medical assessment
- Consider what action is required to ensure the immediate safeguarding of the child(ren) including safe discharge from hospital where appropriate
- Determine what information will be shared with the family
- Determine if legal action is required

Participants:

If the child is a hospital patient (in- or out-patient) or receiving services from a child development team, the medical consultant responsible for the child's health care should be involved, as should the senior ward nurse if the child is an in-patient. Where a medical examination may be necessary or has taken place a senior doctor from those providing services should also be involved. Where the parents or adults in the household are experiencing problems such as domestic violence, substance misuse or mental illness it will also be important to consider involving the relevant adult services professional(s).

Confidentiality:

A strategy discussion/meeting is a confidential professional meeting and parents would not usually be invited. Whilst the meeting itself is confidential it may be necessary to share information from the meeting with the family as part of any ensuing criminal or safeguarding investigation. Information sharing is specifically addressed under agenda item 13 below.

Agenda:

It is the responsibility of Children's Social Care (CSC) to convene and lead the strategy meeting. Statutory agencies (including the police and health) should always attend and other involved agencies as appropriate (for example, children's centre/school or services supporting the family). The multi-agency meeting should specifically consider the following:

1. Introduction/apologies
2. Chairperson checks family details for accuracy: names, D.O.B's, addresses, members of the household
3. Status of the meeting and confidentiality statement
4. Reason for the strategy discussion/meeting
5. Share available information including any agency reports. This should include any historical records held in respect of the child/family
6. Decide whether section 47 enquiries should be initiated and a core assessment undertaken
7. Plan (where appropriate) the section 47 enquiry, determining what further information is required about the children and family and how it will be obtained
8. Agree who should be interviewed, by whom, for what purpose and when. This should include the arrangements for the child(ren) to be seen alone by CSC so their wishes and feelings can be ascertained
9. Consider how enquiries by the Police, Health and CSC will be coordinated to minimise any distress to the family and to ensure the preservation of evidence. Consider and plan any medical investigations required
10. Consider how the race and ethnicity of the child/family will be taken into account and whether an interpreter is required
11. Consider the need for the child(ren) to be interviewed in accordance with Achieving Best Evidence
12. Determine what action is required immediately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child(ren) and what services and support are required by the child/family
13. Determine what information from the strategy discussion/meeting will be shared with the family, unless such information sharing may place a child at increased risk of suffering significant harm or jeopardise police investigations into any alleged offence(s)
14. Consider the need for any legal action
15. Determine how the actions from the strategy discussion/meeting will be reviewed
16. Consider whether the case meets the criteria for referral to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)