

Strategy

Discussions/Meetings

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Aims and Objectives

- Ensure all practitioners attending Multi-Agency Strategy Meetings are clear about statutory and procedural expectations.
- Develop confidence in sharing information at Multi-Agency Strategy Discussions
- Ensure actions and outcomes are effectively tasked to the most appropriate agency with timescales for completion
- Provide clarity about the range of outcomes and actions resulting from Multi-Agency Strategy Discussions

Agenda

- What is a Strategy Discussion?
- When is a Strategy Discussion held?
- Structure of a Strategy Discussion
- Decisions of a Strategy Discussion
- Specific Circumstances

Feed back ?/Questions

What is a strategy Discussion

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, there should be a strategy meeting / discussion.

The Children Act 1989 (LA Duty):

- Under s17 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and promote families upbringing their children as far as possible.
- Under s47 (1) to make enquiries to decide on further actions to safeguard and promote the welfare.

Working Together (2018):

- Follows on to state in such cases (s47), there should be strategy discussions.
- Involve children's social care, the police, health and others such as the referrer.
- The discussion should be used to share available information, agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation, and decide on further actions such as s47, further information required and how it will be obtained, and immediate actions (by whom and when) and whether legal action is required.

Involving Parents & Children

- (Pan London Procedures 2022) Section 47 enquiries should always be carried out in such a way as to minimise distress to the child, and to ensure that families are treated sensitively and with respect. Local authority children's social care should explain the purpose and outcome of s47 enquiries to the parents and child/ren (having regard to age and understanding) and be prepared to answer questions openly, unless to do so would affect the safety and welfare of the child.
- The social worker has the prime responsibility to engage with family members. Parents and those with parental responsibility should be informed at the earliest opportunity of concerns, unless to do so would place the child at risk of significant harm, or undermine a criminal investigation.

When is a Strategy Discussion held?

- The local authority children's social care, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquiries under s47 of the Children Act 1989 **if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm**, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (Working Together, 2018).
- Local authority children's social care should convene a strategy discussion to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- A strategy discussion should demonstrate evidence of abuse or where there is a need to progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference because the parents are not engaging and the risk/harm remains significant.

Structure of a Strategy Discussion

- **Who should be invited:** A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include: • the practitioner or agency which made the referral • the child's school or nursery • any health or care services the child or family members are receiving.
- All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies.
- **Who is the Chair of the Meeting:** CSC Team Manager.
- **All attendees** need to be fully informed of the reason for why a strategy discussion has been held.
- **All professionals are responsible** for sharing of relevant information relating to the child(ren), parents and any other adults having a significant amount of contact with the child(ren). The information shared should relate to safeguarding.

Decisions of a Strategy Discussion (1)

The discussion should be used to:

- All agencies share available information;
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation; and
- decide whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 should be undertaken.

Where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, decisions should be made as to:

- what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded;
- what immediate and short term action is required to support the child/ren, and who will do what by when; and
- whether legal action is required.
- Consideration of CPME

Decisions of a Strategy Discussion (2)

Further decisions that need to be made in the strategy discussion:

- Agree on the nature of the alleged abuse;
- Consider the child's welfare and safety and identify the level of risk faced by the child;
- Decides what information should be shared with the child and family (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm);
- Agrees what further action is required, and who will do what by when. where an EPO is in place or the child is the subject of police powers of protection (**SMART actions, that is actions should be linked to the appropriate lead i.e. health should be the lead for health related actions and police for policing relating actions and so forth**);
- Record agreed decisions in accordance with your recording policy/procedures; and
- Follows up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done.

Decisions of a Strategy Discussion (3)

- Should consent for information gathering from parents be sought and if not, why not?
- Should any enquiries include a criminal investigation, and if not why not?
- Is a medical examination required, if so when and by whom (forensic or child protection)
- When should the child be seen and spoken to, where and by what agencies/workers?
- Will the child require particular support in interview(s) due to age, vulnerability or disability?
- Who should lead any pre-ABE interview with the child?
- When and who should speak to the parents, where and by what agencies?
- Should legal advice be sought and if so when?

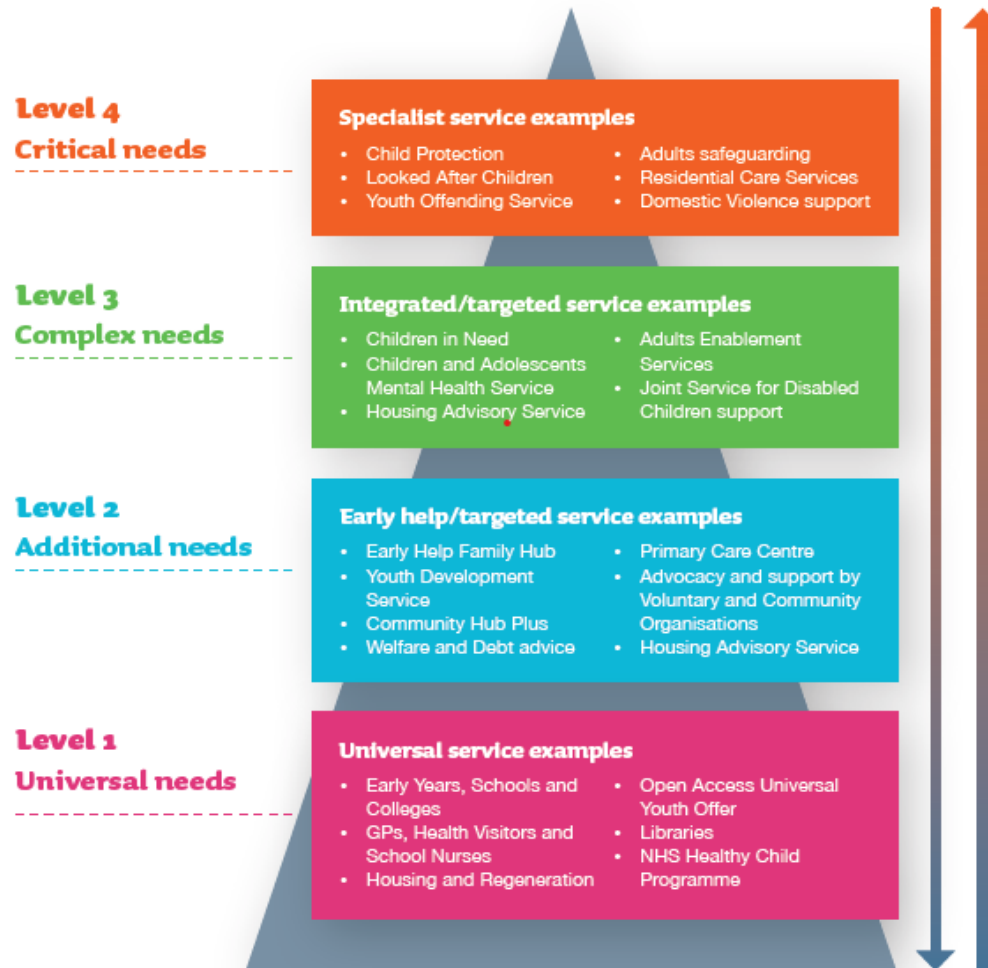
Roles and responsibilities

- The strategy meeting / discussion should, as a minimum, involve local authority children's social care, the police and relevant health professionals (Working Together 2018).
- The core agencies (children's social care, police, and health) must make arrangements to ensure that they will have staff available to attend strategy meetings at short notice.
- Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships should ensure that arrangements are coordinated across primary, secondary and tertiary health services in their area so that the most appropriate health representative can be identified and invited to attend strategy meetings.
- In some cases, there may be a need to convene a further strategy meeting/discussion to consider the contribution of any agency that was unable to attend the original meeting / discussion.
- A professional may need to be included in the strategy meeting / discussion who is not involved with the child, but who can contribute expertise relevant to the particular form of abuse or neglect in the case.
- Professionals participating in strategy meetings / discussions must have all their agency's information relating to the child to be able to contribute it to the meeting / discussion.

Thresholds

- Child Protection S47 – Level 4
- Child in Need S17 – Level 3
- Early Help – Level 2
- Universal Services – Level 1

The Four levels of need



Questions

What will you do differently?

