

Strategy Discussions and Section 47 Enquiries - Practice Guidance

The statutory framework is set out in the governments – Working Together to Safeguard Children:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

Pan Lancashire's guidance for Section 47 enquiries can be found here: [Section 47 Enquiries](#)

When is a Strategy Discussion required?

A strategy discussion is a multi-agency discussion between key stakeholders (minimum of Police/Social Worker/Health) and any other relevant party where there is cause to suspect a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, the purpose of this discussion is to share information and determine if this should be a single or joint agency enquiry or whether a strategy meeting is required to share complex information and to plan the investigation if a section 47 enquiry is agreed. If health cannot attend due to the matter requiring an urgent discussion between CSC and the police, the recording should state this and clarify how information sharing and discussion with health will take place.

The strategy discussion can take place as a virtual teams discussion or face to face. More than one strategy discussion may be needed. For allegations / concerns indicating a serious risk of harm to the child (e.g. serious physical injury or serious neglect), the strategy discussion should be held on the same day the referral is received.

Any agency can request that a strategy discussion is held (pathway is through CADS/allocated social worker), should they have a concern that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Timescales for Strategy Discussions

- For allegations / concerns indicating a serious risk to the child the strategy discussion should be held the same day;
- When the concerns are particularly complex e.g. organised abuse, the Strategy Meeting must be held within a maximum of 5 working days, but sooner if there is a need to provide immediate protection to a child;
- If the strategy discussion concludes that further discussions are required, then a timescale should be set for this;
- If following assessment, there is a recommendation that concerns that a child is at risk/potential risk of significant harm then CSC can share that information on the day and a time and date for a strategy discussion be arranged, for example an unborn child following a pre-birth assessment.

Who should attend?

As a minimum: Social Care, the Police and Health. If a child is of school age, then school should also be in attendance. Attendees should include people who know the child and family and can allow meaningful information sharing and risk analysis to take place. All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organization and agencies.

When is a Strategy Meeting required?

Following the strategy discussion, a decision will be made as to whether a strategy meeting is required. This should be considered on a case by case basis and these are guiding principles:

- Where there are suspicions of organised or multiple abuse - see **Complex (Organised or Multiple) Abuse Procedure**;
- Where concerns relate to fabricated or induced illness - see **Fabricated or Induced Illness Procedure**;
- Where concerns are considered to be complex;
- Following the death of a child, where there are child protection concerns and there are surviving siblings or other identified children who are vulnerable.

Strategy discussions / meetings must achieve the following:

- Share available information including relevant history;
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation;
- Decide whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 must be undertaken, how, when and by whom these will be undertaken;
- Articulate a clear multi-agency risk analysis with an immediate plan to secure safety.

Section 47 Enquiries:

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

- What immediate and short-term action is required to safeguard and support the child, and who will do what by when;
- What further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded;
- 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);
- Whether legal action is required.

Where a section 47 enquiry has been agreed, the child should be seen and met within a maximum timescale of 24 hours or sooner depending on the immediate risk factors.

An updated C and F assessment should be completed to evidence the outcome of the section 47 enquiry, which will inform the threshold application.

Social Worker and Team managers' role and responsibilities:

- SW will arrange and convene the strategy discussion;
- The Team manager will chair the meeting;
- Both will consider the child's welfare and safety taking into consideration the multi-agency views, and identify the level of risk;

- Agree what further action is required, and who will do what by when;
- Lead the assessment in line with practice standards, KSS;
- Consider whether enquiries should continue under S47 of the CA 89.

Professional Challenge:

It is vital that all strategy attendees meet the statutory requires as set out in working together to safeguarding children. Professional challenge is healthy and when required, it should ensure the outcome for the child is right. Please access the practice guidance and process for professional challenge from the safeguarding partnership website:

[Resolving Professional Disagreements \(Escalation and Conflict Resolution\)](#)

Escalation

If a strategy meeting is required on the same day due to the need to safeguard a child in the immediate, and/or unable to take place within the required timescales due to the police availability, the below escalation process should immediately be triggered by the team manager/service lead:

- Discussion with the duty Detective Inspector.

Recording Standards:

- We will endeavour to write up Strategy Discussion/Meetings **within 24 hours on the strategy discussion/meeting taking place and should be recorded on the template 'strategy discussion/meeting' in LCS**. Full write up and practice management sign off - within 24 hours and minutes disseminated to invitees wherever possible.