

Strategy Discussions

Working Together 2013 states: “Whenever there is a 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, the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or phone calls or more than one discussion may be necessary”.

(Please see [Working Together 2013](#) for the full guidance for strategy discussions)

An improved response to Strategy Discussions and Enquiries will take place from 6th October 2014:

- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be able to provide a multi-agency arena for holding strategy discussions in the format of a meeting and will include direct participation by a number of agencies: Devon Social Care, Police, Education and Health will be the key agencies. In the future the MASH will also include representation from the adult mental health service, and an Early Years Manager by tele-conference.

These meetings will be held in the MASH, with partner agency workers based in the building attending in person and others by tele-conference. The Strategy discussion will be led and chaired by a manager from Children’s Social Care as per Working Together 2013 (WT2013).

When the threshold has been met, Strategy Discussions will be held in MASH in the following circumstances :

1. Following enquiries to MASH that are a new referral from Tier 2.

(If the child has been closed to social care within the last 8 weeks the child will be assigned to the previous Children & Families team for consistency and to ensure the child history is fully considered as part of the child’s current situation).

2. New and open children to Integrated Childrens Services (ICS), children with additional needs, and case assessment management and review team (CAMART) at Tier 2
 3. Cases open to ICS (that is Childrens Social Care Tier 3 for children with additional needs) will be referred by the ICS manager to MASH to share information and decide whether the threshold is met and if so the Strategy Meeting will be held in MASH with the ICS social worker and key agencies attending or by telephone conference. The Local Initial Response Team (IRT) social worker will lead any Section 47 Enquiries and be supported by the ICS worker and the key agencies.
 4. If the outcome of the meeting is a Section 47 Enquiry (either Joint or Single agency) then the case will be assigned to, and the actions will be carried out by the relevant IRT in the area where the child lives (or where the significant harm took place if child resides in another Local authority area). The IRT social worker will lead the Section 47 Enquiry and be supported by the area Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) and other key agencies.
- The Strategy Meeting will be chaired by a MASH Team Manager; however the expectation is that the appropriate IRT or Children and Families Team Manager/ Assistant Team Manager or duty social worker will participate by tele-conference in order that they contribute and hear first- hand what the issues are for the child.

Section 47 Enquiries

- The social worker and all other agencies will come prepared to share relevant and proportionate previous and current information about the child and their family members, and others living in the household or who has significant contact with them.
- In the event that MASH are unable to provide a Team Manager to chair this meeting, the relevant area IRT / Children and Families Team Manager will Chair (if not in the MASH building then by tele-conference).

(All attendees are expected to bring hypothesis, curiosity and challenge to the table on behalf of children. This will ensure that a robust plan of Enquiry is formed with the welfare of the child at its centre).

- The meeting will be recorded by a minute taker and the Minutes of the Strategy Meeting and the plan of Enquiry (the actions to be taken) will be completed and authorised within 24 hours.
- A summary of the agreed actions will be available within 1 hour in order that the agencies know and understand first- hand who is doing what and by when. The Police Sergeant, attending the strategy meeting will be responsible for sending the information to the local CAIU for inclusion on the relevant crime/enquiry record.
- The decisions made at the strategy meeting are multi agency decisions which have been agreed and therefore stand. This will include decisions about :-
 1. The impact on the child.
 2. Who needs to be visited and who needs to be seen/ interviewed as part of the Section 47enquiry
 3. Consider whether or not the child needs a medical and the reason.
 4. Whether the people with Parental Responsibility (PR) should be informed about the Section 47 Enquiry, this must include absent parents/ carers. Good practice is that anyone PR should be informed unless this will place the child at further risk or undermine a police investigation. When the decision is that parents should not be informed the rational will be recorded.
- Through the course of any Section 47 investigation these decisions may need to be reviewed and amended dependent upon further information gathered and what is assessed as being in the child/ Young Person's (YP) best interest.
- The timescales for immediate steps to be taken will be agreed at the meeting, however the planning of the overall investigation and safeguarding of the child/ YP will be agreed as part of the Section 47 investigation by the IR social worker, CAIU police officer and any other professional involved as appropriate.
- **Any disagreements from the IRT and local CAIU teams, over the action plan agreed at the Strategy Discussion, should be resolved after the Section 47 enquiry has taken place, by way of feedback in order to avoid any delay in taking forward the agreed actions to protect the child/ YP.**