

Children, Young People and Families

Addendum Management Guidance Notes 6: 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 discussion involving Children's Social Care CSC (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the police, health and other agencies who may be involved with the children, young people and their families. 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

CSC must convene a multi-agency strategy discussion, chaired by Team or Practice Manager, if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child/ young person is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Using Signs of Safety mapping tool, the agencies share information and agree whether any action should be taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment and child protection enquiry is carried out. The LADO should be involved in the strategy meeting if the referral involves a person who works with children who has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child, or has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.

MASH Enquiry, RAG rating and Strategy discussion/meeting Chair, CSC Team responsibility

MASH enquiry will be completed only on cases that require further information to assist in decision making, including strategy discussions and s47 enquiries. MASH enquiries will be RAG rated by Duty Manager as Red, Amber and Green based on presenting risks and the enquiries will be completed within 4, 24 or 72 hours from the date/time of the contact, gathering information from partner agencies. The information received will inform the decision making on a referral; strategy discussion or s47 enquiry.

RAG rating	Risk	MASH Enquiry	Chair and CSC team responsibility
RED	Child or YP has suffered or is at risk of significant harm	Within 4 hours of contact to inform decision making	MASH TM/PM CSC teams - AST/CIN/CP/PLO/Other TMs/PMs to be actively involved in decision making; agreeing a clear safety plan with timeframe and responsible person
AMBER	Child or YP is at risk of harm, but not imminent—where information gathering with partner agencies	Within 24 hours of contact to inform decision making	AST/CIN/CP/PLO TMs/PMs to decide regarding need for strategy meeting or if it needs to be held once children/ YP seen and/ or partner information is

	can help with informed decision making		available after MASH enquiry or if it is not required at all
GREEN	Concerns about welfare / wellbeing of child or YP that may lead to poor outcomes.	Within 72 hours of contact to inform decision making.	AST/CIN/CP/PLO TM/PM to decide if strategy discussion is required or not, based on presenting needs/ risk analysis after children/YP seen/ more information is available

Remit

Strategy discussions allow partner agencies to:

- share available information
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- plan how the investigation should be undertaken, including whether a medical examination is needed
- agree who will carry out which actions, by when and for what purpose
- agree specifically the date/ time when the child will be seen.
- agree what action is required immediately to protect the child, and provide interim services and support. If the child is in hospital, decisions should also be made about how to secure the safe discharge of the child
- determine what information will be shared with the family, and how this will happen. The specific details of the strategy discussion will not necessarily be shared with the family.
- decide whether enquiries under s47 should be undertaken
- determine if legal action is required.

Relevant matters will include

- the welfare of the child
- agreeing a plan for how the investigation will be carried out,
- what further information is required about the child and family, and how this should be obtained and recorded
- agreeing who should be interviewed, who by, for what purpose, and when
- agreeing how the child's views will be sought
- considering any arrangements necessary taking into account the race and ethnicity of the child and family

- considering the needs of other children who may be affected, for example siblings, other children living in the same premises, or children and young persons in contact with alleged abusers. Any child referred to in a strategy discussion should be opened as a new referral via enquiry to MASH. The MASH will then decide whether a strategy discussion is required for that child

Signs of Safety Tool for Safety Planning

Information gathering/ sharing by partners will follow the strength based Signs of Safety Mapping Tool and the information will be discussed with partners and recorded in the format below:

- **What are we concerned about** - presenting concerns/ risks past concerns, likelihood of future harm, complicating factors
- **What's working well**- what are the protective factors / existing strengths, safety for the children/YP
- **What do we still need to know**- grey areas, unknown information and likely impact on the outcomes for children/YP
- **What needs to be done** – action plan – risk management; safety planning with SMART actions, clear timescales and responsible person/ agency

Strategy meeting decision sheet with actions agreed should be shared at the end of the Strategy meeting with all partner agencies signing up the decision sheet at the end of meeting or agreeing via email. Minutes of the strategy meeting will be shared within 24 hours of the meeting.

Where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under S47, decisions should be made as to:

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

Following a strategy discussion there are seven possible outcomes:

- S47 Enquiries as part of an existing or new single assessment;
- Continue or start a new single assessment (s17);
- A Police investigation(s)
- Referral to another agency
- Disciplinary procedures
- No further action
- Strategy discussion outcome is deferred, pending further information gathering.

If the decision is to defer the strategy discussion to gather more information a second strategy discussion must be convened within 72 hours. A clear record should be made as to why the meeting was deferred, what extra further information was required and the agreed date for the deferred strategy discussion. There must be an agreed safety plan for the child(ren) that includes when the child(ren) should be seen by a social worker. The case can be transferred to the Assessment Team for a s17 Assessment

to begin before the deferred Strategy Discussion takes place. The deferred strategy discussion can be facilitated by the Assessment Team.

If a Strategy Discussion starts a s47 enquiry, and the decision is that significant harm is substantiated, and that the parents are viewed as committing significant (serious) harm or omitting protective behaviours, then the child(ren) must be seen within 24 hours (the same day if this is possible).

To be read in conjunction with LSCB Guidance

http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_invest_cp_concern.html#strategy

and Working together to safeguard children July 2018

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722305/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_-_Guide.pdf

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Author	Anjali Diwan, Service Manager, MASH, Early Help and Assessment
Owner	Kay Errington, Service Director
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