

A Quick Guide to Strategy Discussions



Operational guide for strategy discussions

Where relevant safeguarding information gathered during an assessment results in Children's Social Care, Police and/or Health suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority should hold a strategy discussion. This enables a multi-agency decision on whether it must initiate enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Who should always attend?

- Children's Social Care (usually a social worker, and a team manager to chair)
- Police representative
- Health representative (ideally someone who is involved with the family)

All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies.

Who may attend?

- The referring agency
- Residential or fostering service social worker (if the child is looked after)
- The child's school, college or nursery
- Any health or care services that the child or family members are receiving, eg Acute Trusts, GPs, Public Health Nurses, Mental Health Services
- Other agencies essential to the discussion eg housing

Aside from the three mandatory agencies; only agencies that have information pertinent to the decision about significant harm should attend. Other agencies can provide information in advance and subsequently.

Agenda for a strategy discussion

- Introductions, purpose of the strategy discussion, time allocated for strategy, confidentiality reminder
- Information sharing between agencies
- Agree the conduct/timing of any criminal investigation
- Decide if Section 47 enquires should be undertaken and if so, by whom, and completion timescale
- Decide if further information is needed and how will this be obtained
- Identify the immediate steps needed to safeguard and support the child
- Agree whether legal action is required
- Timescales for assessment, decisions and further meetings to be agreed

Minutes / action plan from the strategy discussion

To be sent to all participants, and key agencies involved with the family who were not present

**You should continue to support the family after a strategy discussion.
Ongoing multi-agency support is key to effective safeguarding.
More detailed guidance can be found within [Working Together 2018](#) and the [South West Child Protection Procedures](#).**