



## Strategy Discussion Guidance

### 1. Introduction

A Strategy Discussion should take place when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child(ren) / young person(s) is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The discussion should include Children's Social Care (including the Residential or Fostering Service, if the child is looked-after and Youth Justice Service, if involved), the Police, Health, and other professionals as required.

A Strategy Discussion can take the form of a multi-agency Strategy Meeting (in person or virtually) or via phone calls to the relevant agencies. There are times that more than one discussion may be necessary.

A Strategy Discussion / Meeting can take place at any time as required for the child(ren) / young person(s), this could be: -

- Following a referral to Children's Social Care
- During the Assessment process
- When new information is received on the child(ren) open to Children's Social Care.

The Strategy Discussion / Meeting should be held **within 24 hours**, however, where there is a risk to the life of a child(ren) / young person(s) or a likelihood of serious immediate harm and a single agency (Police or Children's Social Care) has had to act immediately to safeguard, a Strategy Discussion / Meeting should take place **within 2 hours** or as soon as possible after action has been taken.

### 2. Purpose of a Strategy Discussion

The purpose of a Strategy Discussion / Meeting is to: -

- Share available, relevant information in context to the reason for convening the Strategy Discussion / Meeting.
- Identify and agree whether there is evidence to suggest the child(ren) / young person(s) has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm.
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation, if required.
- Decide whether enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 should be undertaken.
- What further information is needed, if an Assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded.
- Identify the immediate and short-term action(s) required to support the child(ren) / young person(s) and ensure an appropriate Safety Plan is in place outlining who will do what by when.
- Agree what information will be shared with the child(ren) / young person(s) parents / carers and wider family where appropriate.
- Agree whether legal action is required.

- Decide whether a medical is required.
- Agree if any other action is needed, if decision is made that a Section 47 enquiry is not required.

Consent will always be sought from parents or those with parental responsibility to see the child(ren) / young person(s) and to contact relevant agencies, unless doing so would place the child(ren) / young person(s) at further risk of significant harm or where the police believe it might seriously damage a criminal investigation. In these circumstances, the rationale for not seeking consent must be clearly recorded in the minutes of the Strategy Discussion / Meeting.

Where there is more than one Strategy Discussion / Meeting, care must be taken to monitor the time frames involved so that no child / young person is left for too long without a decision as to what services should be provided or what actions should be taken.

Where an Initial Child Protection Conference is to be convened, this must take place within 15 working days of the Strategy Discussion / Meeting at which the Section 47 Enquiry was initiated and completed within 2 working days.

### **3 Strategy Meeting Request**

Team Manager's in the Bradford Children and Families Trust will make the decision regarding the requirement for a Strategy Meeting.

The Social Worker is required to complete all sections of a Strategy Meeting Request Form (see Appendix 10.2) with: -

1. Urgency of Strategy Meeting
  - a. within 2 hours for immediate Strategy Meetings due to risk to the life of a child(ren) or a likelihood of serious immediate harm.
  - b. or within 24 hours standard timescales
  - c. If requesting for the Strategy Meeting to be held outside the standard 24 hours timescale, rationale from the Service Manager is required.
2. A clear summary for reason for convening the Strategy Meeting including presenting issue.
3. Which professionals are involved with the child and are required to attend the Strategy Meeting.

The Team Manager send the completed Strategy Meeting Request Form to - [CSCSpecialistMinutes@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:CSCSpecialistMinutes@bradford.gov.uk).

The Specialist Minute Taker Co-ordinator will allocate an available meeting slot in line with needs of the child and urgency stated by the Team Manager.

Team Managers are to prioritise the Strategy Meeting date and time identified; Strategy Meetings are not to be cancelled / rearranged without Service Management approval.

Any availability issues are to be raised with the respective Locality Service Manager.

Invites will be made to all professionals required to attend the meeting, this could be by e-mail or telephone.

#### 4 Who attends the Strategy Discussion / Meeting

The Strategy Discussion / Meeting must involve -

- Bradford Children and Families Trust Social Worker and Team Manager (including the Residential or Fostering Service, if the child is in care)
- Police
- Health (Vulnerable Children's Team, Sexual Abuse Review Clinic – SARC, paediatrician etc.) See Appendix 10.3.
- Youth Justice Service Case Worker / Team Manager (if open / recently closed)
- Other relevant practitioners (listed on the Strategy Meeting Request Form Appendix 10.3) will depend on the nature of the child(ren)'s individual situation but may include:
  - the practitioner or agency that made the referral.
  - the educational provision the child attends
  - any health or care services the child or family members are receiving.

#### 5. Roles and Responsibilities

*Social Worker and Team Manager should:*

- Refer to [Continuum of Need](#) and use professional judgement to convene the Strategy Discussion / Meeting
- Consider the child's welfare and safety and identify the level of risk faced by the child.
- Ensure all children and absent carers are considered.
- Consider any impact from culture and heritage.
- Decide what information should be shared with the child and family.
  - On the basis that information is not shared if doing so put's the child(ren) at risk or could potentially jeopardise a Police investigation.
- Agree what further action is required, and who will do what by when, where a PO is in place, or the child is the subject of police powers of protection.
- Record agreed SMART decisions in accordance with local recording procedures and rationale for decisions made.
- Follow up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done.

*Service Managers should:*

- Observe a Strategy Meeting at least once a month.
- Chair a Strategy Meeting in the absence of the Team Manager

*Health Practitioners should (See Appendix 10.3):*

- Advise about the appropriateness or otherwise of medical assessments and explain the benefits that arise from assessing previously unmanaged health matters that may be further evidence of neglect or maltreatment.
- Provide and co-ordinate any specific information from relevant practitioners regarding family health, maternity health, school health, mental health, domestic abuse and violence and substance misuse to assist strategy and decision making.

- Secure additional expert advice and support from named and/or designated professionals for more complex child(ren) situations following preliminary Strategy Discussions.
- Undertake appropriate examinations or observations, and further investigations or tests, to determine how the child's health or development may be impaired.

*The Police should:*

- Discuss the basis for any criminal investigation and any relevant processes that other organisations and agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence gathering.
- Lead the criminal investigation (Children's Social Care lead the Section 47 enquiry and Assessment of the child's welfare) where joint enquiries take place.

*Any other involved Agency should:*

- Provide appropriate and proportionate information regarding the child and family members with an analysis of what this means within the current context to inform decision making.

## 6. Running of the Meeting

Children's Social Care lead on Strategy Discussions and it is the responsibility of the Social Work Team Manager to chair Strategy Meeting.

The key tasks for a Strategy Meeting are set out in Section 2 of this guidance and should be used to guide discussion in the Meeting.

It is important to note that the Strategy Discussion / Meeting is not a Child Protection Conference, therefore written reports are not required, however, each agency should come prepared to fulfil their role as set out in Section 5 as well as note their own actions to ensure prompt response from their Service.

Whilst there is no set length of time for Strategy Meetings, for the importance of focus, they should not be for any longer than **1 hour**.

The required areas to cover (complete on the child's record) as part of the meeting are: -

1. Reason for Strategy Discussion / Meeting
2. Relevant Children's Social Care information
3. Relevant Agency information
4. Summary and analysis
5. What does it mean for the child and impact
6. Partners views and decisions
7. SMART Actions – in a table
8. Outcome

## 7. Recording a Strategy Discussion

The minutes will not be a verbatim account of the discussion, they will be brief notes capturing: -

- Relevant key elements to support and gather an understanding of risk, need and vulnerabilities for the child(ren) / young person(s).

- Actions required to keep the child(ren) / young person(s) safe.

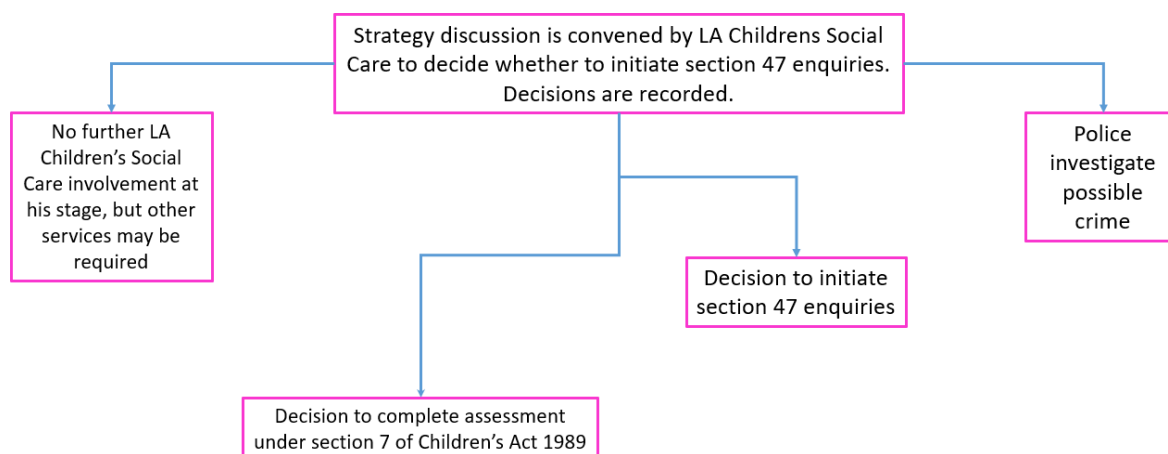
It is the responsibility of the Social Work Team Manager to inform the Locality Business Support Officer to circulate the minutes to all invitees within 24 hours of the Strategy Discussion / Meeting by secure e-mail. All invitees have can advise of any corrections by return e-mail within 24 hours of receipt.

Minutes and the contents within the minutes MUST NOT be divulged without the permission of the Chair.

We need to consider the views of the child(ren) / young person(s) and parents. If we have not made contact with the parents, we need to evidence reasons for setting this aside, for example: -

- Based on the information available, there is enough evidence to identify a potential risk to child if one/ both parents/ adults with parental responsibility are to be contacted and engaged in a discussion at this stage. Therefore, we are satisfied we have grounds to override parental consent and progress to information sharing.
- Attempts have been made to contact parents to no avail, however the evidence available warrants professional information sharing under the auspices of Section 47 of Children’s Act 1989.

## 8. Strategy Discussion Flowchart



## 9. Useful Links

[Child Protection Enquiries \(Section 47\)](#)

[CP Medical Request Guide](#)

[Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service](#)

[Complex Strategy Meeting Guidance](#)

## 10 Appendix's

### 10.1 Agenda / Hints and Tips

#### *Confidentiality:*

A Strategy Discussion/Meeting is a confidential professional meeting. Whilst the meeting itself is confidential it may be necessary to share information from the meeting with the family as part of any ensuing criminal or safeguarding investigation.

It is the responsibility of Children's Social Care (CSC) to convene and lead the Strategy Meeting.

Statutory agencies (including the Police and Health) should always attend and as well as other involved agencies as appropriate.

#### *Agenda:*

The Strategy Discussion/Meeting should specifically consider the following: -

1. Introduction / apologies
2. Accuracy of the family details (done by the Chairperson): i.e. names, D.O.B's, addresses, members of the household etc.
3. Status of the meeting and confidentiality statement.
4. Reason for the Strategy Discussion/Meeting (summary used to convene the meeting).
5. Share available information including, this should include a summary of historical information in respect of the child/family in context with the reason for the Strategy Meeting.
6. Decide whether Section 47 enquiries should be initiated and whether this is to be single or joint agency.
  - a. Plan (where appropriate) the Section 47 enquiry, determining what further information is required about the child(ren) and family and how it will be obtained.
7. Agree who should be interviewed, by whom, for what purpose and when.
  - a. This should include the arrangements for the child(ren) to be seen alone by Children's Social Care so their wishes and feelings can be ascertained.
8. Consider how enquiries by the Police, Health and Children's Social Care will be coordinated to minimise any distress to the family and to ensure the preservation of evidence.
9. Consider and plan any medical investigations required.
10. Consider how the race and ethnicity of the child/family will be considered and whether an interpreter is required.
11. Consider any disabilities of the child(ren) and family's members and any adaptations/adjustments required.
12. Consider the need for the child(ren) to be interviewed in accordance with Achieving Best Evidence.
13. Determine what action is required immediately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child(ren) and what services and support are required by the child/family.

14. Determine what information from the Strategy Discussion/Meeting will be shared with the family, unless such information sharing may place a child at increased risk of suffering significant harm or jeopardise police investigations into any alleged offence(s).
15. Consider the need for any legal action.
16. Determine how the actions from the Strategy Discussion / Meeting will be reviewed.
17. Consider whether there is any need to make a referral to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).
18. Ensure any different views are captured.

## 10.2 Strategy Meeting Request Form

### Strategy Discussion Request Form

**All sections MUST be completed in full and sent by Team Manager directly to the central e-mail box:**  
[CSCSpecialistMinutes@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:CSCSpecialistMinutes@bradford.gov.uk)

**Subject Title:**

Strategy Request (Surname, LCS Number) – (Locality)

**To ensure clear focus and meet demands for Strategy Discussions these booked within 1 hour slots  
 9.00am, 10.00am, 11.00am, 1.00pm, 2.00pm, 3.00pm and 4.00 pm**

Urgency	Guidance	Tick One
2 hours	Risk to the life of a child(ren) or a likelihood of serious immediate harm	<input type="checkbox"/>
24 hours	Standard timescales	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	If requesting for the Strategy Meeting to be held outside the standard 24 hours timescale, rationale from the Service Manager is required:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Team Information		Case Type		
Locality Area		New Referral	YES	NO
Team		Open Case	YES	NO
Allocated SW				
Team Manager				
Service Manager				

Full Name of child(ren) or Young Person(s)	DOB	Ethnicity	Disability	LCS Number	Full Address

Parent/Carer Name(s)	DOB	Full Address if different to the child	If known to CSC LCS no.

Other relevant children – not living in the household	DOB	Full Address	If known to CSC LCS no.

Other relevant adults – i.e., suspect / requiring checks	DOB	Full Address	If known to CSC LCS no.

<i>If you have any specific checks required e.g., intel, address check or health checks please state here</i>			

<b>Presenting Issue (including date of incident - if applicable)</b>

<b>Rationale for Strategy Meeting</b>

<b>ATTENDEES</b>		
<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Role and Organisation</b>	<b>Contact Number and Email</b> <i>Include email address</i>
	<b>Team Manager (Mandatory)</b>	Internal
	<b>Social Worker</b>	Internal
MASH	<b>Police (Mandatory)</b>	<a href="mailto:bd.childmash@westyorkshire.police.uk">bd.childmash@westyorkshire.police.uk</a>
GP		
Health practitioner from the BDCFT strategy team	<b>Health (Mandatory)</b>	<a href="mailto:VulnerableChildrenInformationteam@bdct.nhs.uk">VulnerableChildrenInformationteam@bdct.nhs.uk</a>
	<b>Paediatrician</b> – if injuries to a child and an urgent medical is needed / or has been completed	<b>Children living in Bradford &amp; Shipley:</b> Bradford Royal Infirmary - 01274 542200 – Paediatric Secretaries - Child Protection <b>Children living in Keighley/Airedale:</b> Airedale Hospital - 01535 292434 (Paediatric Secretaries)
	<b>SARC – Mountain Healthcare</b> If disclosure or professional concern of sexual abuse/assault.	0330 223099 hazlehurstcentre.paediatric@nhs.net FAO Strategy Coordinator
	<b>Education</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
Other professionals that may be relevant		
Case Worker Team Manager	<b>Youth Justice Service</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
	<b>Fostering</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
	<b>Probation</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
	<b>CAMHS</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>
	<b>Drug/Alcohol agency</b>	<b>Full Name and Email Address needed</b>



	<b>Safeguarding Midwife</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed
	<b>Midwife</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed
	<b>Mental Health Social Workers / Practitioner</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed
	<b>Early Help Worker</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed
	<b>Adult Services</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed
	<b>Housing</b>	Full Name and Email Address needed

### 10.3 Health Professionals

Currently being written jointly with Health colleagues to support this process.