

London Borough of Bromley

MULTI-AGENCY STRATEGY DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

The purpose of this protocol is to set out the shared responsibility for undertaking multi-agency strategy meetings. The principles of this protocol are based on the requirements as set out in the London Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance 2016 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.

The protocol highlights the importance of joint working practices and the shared responsibilities of Children's Social Care (CSC), the Police, Health and other partner agencies to work together to Safeguard children.

In the initial stages of an enquiry the sharing of information, the quality of the communication and the willingness to jointly respond are essential in deciding how child protection enquiries should be conducted, in particular, the circumstances in which Joint enquiries are appropriate. The enquiries must be child focused as well as addressing the parallel priorities of agencies.

It is appreciated that it is not possible for protocols to cover all eventualities. The over-riding principle must be safeguarding children and compliance with the law and good practice guidance and in consideration of each agencies own child protection procedures.

1. MASH, Referral & Assessment Procedure:

- The MASH Manager identifies the need for a Strategy Discussion. The referral is progressed immediately to R&A for a Strategy Discussion to be held within 24 hrs.
- The R&A Manager sends form 87A requesting a Strategy Discussion to the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). R&A contact the relevant health professionals involved with the child to be part of the Strategy Discussion. Health Visitors in MASH are consulted **only** where there is no health professional actively involved or who can give immediate input in to a Strategy Discussion. Every attempt should be made to involve those agencies that have current involvement with the child/family e.g. allocated Health Visitor and any other relevant agency / professional such as School or Nursery to participate in the Strategy Discussion.
- Where issues have significant medical implications (e.g. child sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, fabricated and induced illness), or a Paediatric

Examination has taken place or may be necessary; a Paediatrician should always be included in the Strategy Discussion. For children admitted to hospital, the Paediatric Consultant responsible for the child's care should be approached. For all other cases, referral must be made to the Community Paediatricians by emailing the completed form from Appendix A in the Procedure for Child Protection Medicals to bromh.safeguardingreferrals@nhs.net. This email must be followed up by telephoning 0208 466 8800 for the referral to be progressed.

The number 0208 466 8800 is the number for our Care Coordination Centre at Global House. The call is then diverted to our CP on call mobile. If, the first time that a practitioner calls this number and there is no answer, please can the practitioner be advised to call again in 10 minutes as it may be that our CP administrator is otherwise occupied. If there is still no answer please can practitioners be advised to call our reception on 0208 466 9988.

- If during a Strategy Discussion agencies consider the threshold is likely to be met to support convening an Initial Child Protection Conference, then Bromley Quality Improvement Service to be informed at this point to identify a potential ICPC date.

2. Strategy Meetings:

- Agencies will be invited to attend the Strategy Meeting and where an agency cannot attend the expectation is that the agency will participate in a conference call.
- **The Bromley Conference Calling System.** The Bromley R&A Administrator will telephone and email invitations to the Strategy Discussion giving a date and time for the Strategy Discussion to take place with the telephone and Pin number for the partner agency to telephone and join the conference call. It is an expectation that all partner agencies will attempt to attend the Strategy Meeting or if this is not possible to participate in the conference calling system to ensure that there is good quality information sharing and decision making between partner agencies.
- Agencies can provide a written report about the information they hold or wish to be taken into account. This will need to be securely emailed to the CSC Duty Manager leading the Strategy Discussion.
- All participants contributing to the Strategy Discussion are expected to bring hypothesis, curiosity and challenge to the discussion. This will ensure that a robust plan of action is formed with the welfare of the child at its centre.
- All participants of a Strategy Discussion should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.

- The Strategy Discussion participants will make decisions based on multi-agency information. This will include decisions about the immediate and short term action to be taken.
- Where a decision is made that an Initial Child Protection Conference is required the referral to the Bromley Quality Improvement Service must take place within **24 hours** of the decision being made.
- CSC will provide a record of the decisions made which will be shared with all invited agencies.
- For open cases in the service where information gathered during an assessment results in the Social Worker suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm a Strategy Discussion will take place to consider with other agencies whether to initiate enquiries under S.47.
- A Strategy Meeting rather than a Conference Call will take place for more serious/complex concerns.

3. A strategy meeting / discussion should be used to:

- Share available information and agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation.
- Decide whether an assessment under S.47 of the Children Act 1989 (S.47 enquiries) should be initiated, or continued if it has already begun.
- Where it is decided that there are grounds to initiate an S.47 enquiry, decisions should be made about whether this is a **Single or Joint Investigation**. In cases where a Single Agency investigation is agreed the reasons why the Police are not jointly investigating the concerns should be clearly recorded by CSC and Police.
- Plan how the s47 enquiry should be undertaken (if one is to be initiated), including the need for medical treatment, and who will carry out what actions, by when and for what purpose.
- Agree what action is required immediately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, and / or provide interim services and support for example, if the child is in hospital, decisions should also be made about how to secure the safe discharge of the child or if an Emergency Protection Order is in place or the child is subject to Police Powers of Protection and who will do what by when.
- Determine what information from the Strategy Meeting / Discussion will be shared with the family, unless such information sharing may place a child at increased risk of significant harm or jeopardise Police investigations into any alleged offence/s. Determine if legal action is required.

- The timescale for the assessment to reach a decision on next steps should be based on the needs of the individual child and no longer than 45 working days.

4. S.47 Investigation:

- Consider and make decisions about how the assessment under S. 47 will be carried out; what further information is required about the child/ren and family and how it should be obtained and recorded.
- Agree who should be interviewed, by whom, for what purpose and when? The way in which interviews are conducted can play a significant part in minimising any distress caused to children, and in increasing the likelihood of maintaining constructive working relationships with families when a criminal offence may have been committed against a child. The timing and handling of interviews with victims, their families and witnesses can have important implications for the collection and preservation of evidence.
- Agree when the child will be seen alone (unless to do so would be inappropriate for the child) by the Social Worker during the course of these enquiries and consider the methods by which the child's wishes and feelings will be ascertained so that they can be taken into account when making decisions under s.47.
- In the light of the language, race, ethnicity and religion of the child and family, considering how these should be taken into account and establishing whether an interpreter will be required.
- Consider the needs of other children who may be affected (e.g. siblings and other children, such as those living in the same household and in contact with alleged abuser/s).
- The Police should lead the criminal investigation (Children's Social Care have the lead for the section 47 enquiries and assessment of the child's welfare) where joint enquiries take place.

5. Strategy meeting / Discussion Record

- It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Strategy Meeting / Discussion to ensure that the decisions and agreed actions are fully recorded. All agencies attending should take notes of the actions agreed at the time of the meeting/discussion. A copy of the Strategy Meeting / Discussion record should be made available for all those, who had been invited, within 24 working hours of the meeting by CSC.

Agency Links to Guidance:

London Child Protection Procedures

<http://www.londoncp.co.uk/>

Working Together to Safeguard Children

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

Bromley Procedures online (Bromley Staff Only)

<http://bromleychildcare.proceduresonline.com/index.html>

13 Sep 2017