



Convening a Strategy Meeting

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, there should be a strategy meeting/ discussion.

[Child Protection Procedures: s47 thresholds and the multi-agency assessment.](#)

1. A strategy meeting should be used to:

- Share information
- Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- Decide whether an assessment under s47 should be initiated or continued
- Consider the assessment and the action points
- Plan how the s47 enquiry should be undertaken, including the need for medical treatment, 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
- If the child is in hospital, decisions should also be made about how to secure the safe discharge of the child
- Determine what information from the strategy meeting will be shared with the family
- Determine if legal action is required.
- It is the responsibility of Children Social Care to convene a Strategy Meeting but if an agency does not agree with the decision made, please follow the [escalation process](#).

2. Relevant matters include:

- Agreeing, or reviewing how the assessment under s47 will be carried out - what further information is required about the child and family and how it should be obtained and recorded.
- Agreeing 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 increasing the likelihood of maintaining constructive working relationships with families and can have important implications for the collection and preservation of evidence.
- Agreeing when the child will be seen alone
- Considering how race and ethnicity of the child and family, should be taken into account and establishing whether an interpreter will be required
- Considering the needs of other children who may be affected.

3. Strategy discussions by telephone will usually be adequate to plan an enquiry, but meetings are likely to be more effective where:

- There is concern that the child is suffering complex types of neglect or maltreatment
- There is an allegation that a child has abused another child - separate strategy meetings should be held for both children
- There are concerns about extra familial risk
- There are ongoing, cumulative concerns about the child's welfare and a need to share concerns and agree a course of action
- There are concerns about the future risk of harm to an unborn child.

This list is not exhaustive.

4. The strategy meeting / discussion:

- The strategy meeting should be co-ordinated and chaired by the local authority children's social care first line manager.
- The strategy meeting must involve local authority children's social care, the police and relevant health professionals. The referring agency may need to be included, as may other relevant agencies which are likely to include the child's nursery / school.

- Professionals participating in strategy meetings / discussions must have all their agency's information relating to the child to be able to contribute it to the meeting / discussion and must be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.
- Where issues have significant medical implications, or a paediatric examination, a paediatrician should always be included.
- If the child is receiving services from a hospital or child development team, the meeting should involve the responsible medical consultant and, in the case of in-patient treatment, a senior ward nurse.
- A professional may need to be included in the strategy meeting who is not involved with the child, but who can contribute expertise relevant to the form of abuse or neglect in the case.
- More than one strategy meeting may be required. Reconvening a strategy discussion should not be a routine process and, if reconvened, there should be a clear rationale for doing so. When more than 1 strategy discussion is necessary, the reconvened discussion should take place in a timely manner. Attendance requirements are the same as the first strategy discussion.
- Where it is decided that there are grounds to initiate a s47 enquiry, decisions should be made about whether this is a single or joint investigation. Protocols in place in local areas should be followed.

5. Strategy meeting / discussion record:

- It is the responsibility of the chair of the strategy meeting to ensure that the decisions and agreed actions are fully recorded using an appropriate record.
- All agencies attending/ participating should take notes of the actions agreed at the time of the meeting/discussion.
- A copy of the record should be made available for all those, who had been invited, as soon as practicable by local authority children's social care.

6. Timing of strategy meeting / discussion:

- Strategy meetings should be convened within three working days of child protection concerns being identified, except in the following circumstances:
 - For allegations / concerns indicating a serious risk of harm to the child (e.g. serious physical injury or serious neglect) the strategy meeting should be held on the same day as the receipt of the referral
 - For allegations of penetrative sexual abuse, the strategy meeting should be held on the same day as the receipt of the referral if this is required to ensure forensic evidence
 - Where immediate action was required by either agency, the strategy meeting must be held within one working day
 - Where the concerns are particularly complex (e.g. organised abuse / allegations against staff) the strategy meeting must be held within a maximum of five working days, but sooner if there is a need to provide immediate protection to a child
 - Where the concerns relate to an extra familial risk and more than one child is the subject of the concerns, additional time may be required to ensure the attendance of all the relevant agencies but the strategy meeting must be held within a maximum of five working days, but sooner if there is a need to provide immediate protection to a child.
- The plan made at the strategy meeting should reflect the requirement to convene an initial child protection conference within 15 working days of the strategy meeting at which it was decided to initiate the enquiry. In exceptional circumstances, such as Fabricated and induced illness for example, enquiries will be more complicated and may require more than one strategy discussion. If the strategy meeting / discussion concludes that a further strategy meeting is required, then a clear timescale should be set and be subject to regular review by the social work manager bearing in mind the safety of the child at all times.
- If the conclusion of the strategy discussion is that there is no cause to pursue the s47 enquiry then consideration should be given to continuing the multi-agency assessment to establish the needs of the child for any early help or family support services as a child in need.