Strategy Meeting Operating Guidance

March 2019

This guidance must be read in conjunction with WBC policies and procedures;

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

**1.0 Strategy meeting/discussion**

1.1 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 local authority children’s social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or a telephone call if the matter is urgent. More than one discussion or meeting 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 or the assessment has identified increased or unmanageable risk to the child/ren. (Working Together 2018)

**2.0 Urgent Strategy Requests**

2.1 In the event of immediate risk to a child/ren the social worker or Team manager will make contact by telephone with Merseyside Police Sgt. Each day, Monday to Friday (09.00 -17.00) there will be a dedicated Sergeant available for any urgent telephone strategy discussions. The number to use in the event if an emergency is 07967348834.   (This number will only operate between Monday to Friday – 0900- 1700)**.**

2.2 A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Therefore, **conference facilities** must be used for all telephone discussions to ensure compliance with Working Together 2018. Telephone conference facilities are available in the strategy room in Solar Campus. In this instance you must provide your direct contact number and the contact of other professionals you wish to be involved in the strategy. The telephone strategy will be facilitated from Solar Campus.

2.3 Where appropriate a telephone strategy should be followed up no later than 5 working days with a strategy meeting. The outcome of the Section 47 enquiries will be shared at this meeting to consider the findings and action required.

2.4 To arrange either a telephone conference or face:face Strategy Meeting the social worker will;

* Complete the strategy request form and email to the nominated TSO based in Solar Campus
* The form **must** be authorised by the Team Manager or Advanced Social Work Practitioner
* The form should include details of the relevant professionals including contact details
* The Strategy Meeting Business Support Assistant will forward the strategy request to West.MASH@merseyside.pnn.police.uk and will book the meeting with the SW/Police Officer/Health Worker/School any other relevant agencies. The SW/AP/TM must follow up with a phone call to the Business Support Assistant to confirm receipt of the strategy request and to indicate availability for the meeting.
* At the time of booking the strategy meeting the Business Support Assistant must ensure that all relevant agencies are advised to submit all relevant information to the Business Support Assistant via secure email. On the occasion that this is not achievable the information will be made available at the strategy meeting.
* The Business Support Assistant will pre-populate the strategy document template with the information
* Actions will be recorded live in the strategy meeting by the Business Support Assistant
* The strategy meeting minutes and actions will be agreed at the end of the meeting
* An action agreement log will be signed by all the attendees and uploaded to LCS in documents
* The strategy meeting minutes will be sent via secure email to all attendees within one working day

**3.0 Compliance**

3.1 Adherence should be made to ‘working together 2018 and  <https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/procedures/5-3-strategy-discussionsmeetings-section-47-enquiries-part-social-work-assessment-needs-strengths/>  The current strategy request processes in the Wirral are as follows:

3.2 Strategy Discussions / Meetings should be held within 24 hours of the Referral/ incident of concern for a child known to Children’s Specialist Services, or decision by a multi-agency network that the Child in Need Plan is not meeting the child’s needs except in the following circumstances:

* For allegations / concerns indicating a serious risk to the child e.g. serious physical injury or serious neglect), the Strategy Discussion/Meeting must be held the same day;
* During this time, the Assessment Team (Assessment Practice Manager) must decide on any immediate action to be taken, to protect the child in conjunction with Police Vulnerable Persons Unit;
* The child must be seen and spoken to (observed for non-verbal children), within twenty-four hours of the Referral to Children’s Specialist Services;
* For allegations of penetrative sexual abuse, the Strategy Discussion/Meeting must be held on the day the Referral is received if this is required to ensure forensic evidence;
* When emergency action is or has been taken by the Police or Children’s Specialist Services, the Strategy Discussion must be held the same day;
* If the child is in a hospital setting and there are child protection concerns a Strategy Discussion/Meeting must take place within that setting before the child leaves it;
* When the concerns are particularly complex e.g. organised abuse, the Strategy Meeting must be held within a maximum of 5 working days, but sooner if there is a need to provide immediate protection to a child – see Complex (Organised or Multiple).

This list is not exhaustive and consultation with the Team Manager/HOS should take place if required.

**4.0 Escalation:**

4.1 Safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with the arrangements for their area, and will be expected to work together to resolve any disputes locally. Public bodies that fail to comply with their obligations under law are held to account through a variety of regulatory and inspection activity. In extremis, any noncompliance will be referred to the Secretary of State.