Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

Procedure for S47 Strategy Discussion

The Social Worker’s Guide to Children and Families Law states: The Statutory definition in the Children Act 1989 states that ‘harm’ means the likelihood or actual, ill-treatment or impairment of health and development. This includes ‘suffering’ from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment’

‘Risk of’ is when the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

**Definition of a Strategy Discussion**:

*Where information gathered during a Referral or an Assessment (which may be very brief) results in the social worker suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, a Strategy Discussion/ Meeting should be held to decide whether to initiate enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. Strategy Discussions/Meetings should be held as soon as possible, bearing in mind the needs of the child and must take place within 1 working day of child protection concerns being identified. The Team Manager, or Assistant Team Manager, is responsible for chairing the Strategy Discussion. Buckinghamshire Children’s Services Procedures.*

A discussion enables us to decide whether threshold has been met for a single or joint agency child protection investigation under S47 of the Children Act 1989. If threshold is met the discussion then enables us to plan that investigation and determine a time frame within which an IMMEDIATE safety plan is put into place and what each agency’s responsibility will be within that plan.

**What we should expect from a Strategy Discussion:**

**Checks:**

The purpose of carrying out agency checks under s.47 enables the information provided by the child, parents and agencies involved with the child/family to be triangulated. Are they all saying the same? Are they all measuring the risk in the same way? If not, why not? We must ensure that we are not just simply going along with what we have been told without triangulation and curiosity.

**Information Sharing:**

A central part of S.47 enquiries is the sharing of information so that all relevant partners know what has happened (this provides a layer of protection for the child)

**Strategy Meeting:**

Following on from a Strategy Discussion there may be the need for a Strategy Meeting. This allows the information being shared to be assessed; a judgement about risk can be made or reviewed and we can review the risk to determine whether it has changed from further information, from a visit, from talking to the child? A fundamental aspect of any strategy meeting alongside the sharing of information and assessment of risk is to plan within a multi-agency context how an investigation is to be approached, arranged and delivered. This is important to ensure any investigation is carried out in a way to ensure the gathering of further information is considered, coordinated and focused towards capturing what professionals need to understand in order to plan and promote safety. This needs to include what information can be shared and how the investigation needs to be conducted to protect children and the quality and reliability of the investigation itself.

**Safety Plan:**

In order to create a safety plan you must know what the triggers were for the behaviour and the plan must state who is going to do what to mitigate the risks. It might be very simple and practical, ie. Parents to hide/secure medication where a child is self-harming, or that a child is not left on their own, school can check in with social care on a daily basis that the child has turned up at school each day. The plan which MUST be written down and shared to enable all parties to know what the other is doing.

**S47 Investigations**

Means that Childrens Social Care, when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found in their area, to be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm must carry out an investigation.

These will be an outcome of a Strategy Discussion (see Strategy Discussion note) and can be Joint Agency (Police & Social Care) or Single Agency (Police *or* Social Care)

Referral where significant harm is determined

Child/Young Person not open to Children’s Social Care

Child already open to the service

Consideration given to S17 C&F Assessment and if met, pass to Assessment Team for assessment.

Safety Plan is agreed and documented

Agency representative notify their respective colleagues for whom the child/young person is known of the outcome.

Decisions are sent to the Assessment Team to Action

Assessment Team to follow up with a Reviews Strategy Meeting within 5 days to include all agencies involved with the child and family.

Threshold for S47 is not determined

Threshold for S47 is determined

Mash will convene a strategy discussion chaired by the Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager and will agency information about the child/young person from the Safeguarding Agency Lead for Health, Education, and Thames Valley Police.

Allocated Team hold a Strategy Discussion/Meeting chaired by the Team Manager to include referral information and key agencies involved with the child and family.

Referral is passed to the allocated team inbox and a phone call to the Team Manager/Assistant Team Manager to ensure that the information is received.