Practice Matters 

Strategy Discussion

What is a Strategy Discussion?

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a multi-agency Strategy Discussion. This should be chaired by the social work team manager and must always involve the three key safeguarding partners: children’s social care, the police and health. It is good practice, where possible, to also involve other partner agencies who are involved with the child and family, including a representative form education for example and any other agencies relevant to the case. This should take place following a referral or at any other time, including during an assessment process and when NEW information is received on an open case. Strategy discussions can take place through the use of virtual technology as well as on a face to face basis, whichever method that is decided to be the most suitable to the circumstance.

Why have a Strategy Discussion?

A strategy discussion is held to determine the child’s welfare and plan future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. It should be used to share available information, establish what further information is required, agree immediate and short-term actions and determine if Section 47 threshold is met in order to continue assessment and support around a child.

How to ensure an effective strategy discussion is achieved?

* The timing of a strategy discussion must find a balance between maximum attendance and urgency; however it is expected that it will take place within 24 hours.
* It is essential that the correct professionals are around the table in order to share relevant accurate information, this should include at a minimum, Team manager, social worker, police, and health professionals.
* The meeting should confirm the details of concern, evaluate content and assess the risk, evaluate urgency and agree the next actions.
* Once the information is shared, the meeting will determine if Section 47 investigation threshold is met or if further assessment is required under a Section 17chld in b=need basis. The rationale for this decision needs to be clearly recorded.
* Ensure it is clear what action is needed immediately to safeguard the child and/or provide interim services and support; also determine what information from the strategy discussion should be shared with the family and if legal advice is required.
* The meeting will determine if this is a joint investigation with the police or single agency; a joint investigation may involve joint visits/interviews together with the police to establish an accurate account from the child.
* The discussion must consider the needs of other children who may be affected, and any risk posed to them from adults or children linked to the referral.
* The discussion must determine whether a child protection medical examination is required, if so then a clear contingency plan must be developed should a parent refuses consent for an interview or medical assessment of the child
* A clear log of the meeting should be made and include who attended the meeting, their role, information shared, an assessment of risk to the child(ren), Decisions reached and the basis for those decisions and actions along with timescales agreed.
* The notes of the strategy discussion must be distributed to all participants