

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS

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 and/or Meeting for any child/ren living, or found, in Gloucestershire in order to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action.

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Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



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Document Revision Table

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1.0	25 th May 2021	GSCP Resolution Group Sign Off
1.1		
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STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS

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 and / or Meeting for any child/ren living, or found, in Gloucestershire in order to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action.^{1 2}
2. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies as appropriate, should be initiated where there are concerns about physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect. This includes female genital mutilation and other honour-based violence, as well as extra-familial threats including radicalisation and sexual or criminal exploitation, where the threshold of significant harm outlined above is met
3. A Strategy Discussion or Meeting (or both) may be required. These are defined as follows:
 - **A Strategy Discussion:** Immediate concerns requiring rapid action planning or non-immediate concerns of a non-complex nature where the decision and action required can be agreed swiftly, negating the need for a strategy meeting. This may include the need to Step Up about a child who is subject to a Child in Need plan where circumstances are not improving or are deteriorating and there is a requirement for an Initial Child Protection Conference to be considered.
 - **A Strategy Meeting:** Non-immediate concerns exist of a complex nature, requiring strategic yet detailed planning or where it would clearly be in the interests of the child for a broader variety of multi-agency professionals to work together.
4. The Strategy Discussion/Meeting should involve Children's social care and the police, health and professionals involved with the child, for example, children's centre/school and, in particular, any referring agency. If it is considered the child may require a Paediatric Safeguarding Medical assessment then inclusion of a Paediatric representative. In the case of a pre-birth Strategy Discussion/Meeting this should involve the midwifery and health visiting services. In respect of a child in care this should include their foster carer or residential worker and, where possible, a member of the Children in Care Nursing Team.
5. The Strategy Discussion/Meeting should be co-ordinated and chaired by a Children's social care manager. Children's social care is the lead agency for Section 47 Enquiries (Children Act 1989) and the Children's social care manager has responsibility for authorising a Section 47 Enquiry following a Strategy Discussion/Meeting.
6. At the same time, where there is a joint investigation, the Police will have to establish the facts about any offence that may have been committed against a child and collect evidence as they lead the criminal investigation. Police will need sufficient information about any potential offences that may have been committed against a child in order to ensure relevant evidence is secured and crimes are recorded and considered for investigation”

¹ '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' (HM Government, DfE 2018 – updated 9 December 2020)

² '[South West Child Protection Procedures](#)' - Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Procedures accessed online via <https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/gloucestershire/index.html#>

7. Professionals participating in Strategy Discussions/Meetings must have all their agency's relevant information relating to the child/adult available to be able to contribute to the discussion/meeting, and must be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.
8. In some circumstances Strategy Discussions may be appropriate to plan an enquiry and these should include the key agencies directly involved with the child.
9. For Strategy Discussions/Meetings, all agencies should make a record of the outcome of the discussion and actions agreed at the time. The record of the notes and decisions authorised by the Children's Social Care manager should be circulated as soon as practicable to all parties to the discussion.
10. It is the responsibility of the parties attending the Strategy Discussion/Meeting to confirm the accuracy of the notes and decisions which have been shared
11. The assessment of risk will:
 - Identify the cause for concern, its seriousness, any recurring events and the vulnerability and resilience of the child;
 - Evaluate the strengths, including the protective factors, and weaknesses of the family;
 - Evaluate the risks to the child/ren and the context in which they are living;
 - Consider the child's needs for protection; from whom and how;
 - Consider the capacity of the parents and wider family and social networks to safeguard and promote the child's welfare - this must include both parents, any other carers, such as grandparents, and the partners of the parents;
 - Risk factors that may suggest a higher level of vulnerability in the family and risk of significant harm such as parental mental health difficulties, parental substance misuse, and domestic violence or combinations of these);
 - Determine the level of intervention required to improve the outcome for the child to be safeguarded in the immediate, interim and longer term.
 - Determine the need to undertake a Paediatric Safeguarding Medical assessment.

STRATEGY DISCUSSION MEETING AGENDA

Introduction:

- **Welcome** - introductions and apologies
- **Reason** – Confirm reason for convening the Strategy Discussion/Meeting
- **Background details** – Confirm relevant background details of child/ren, parents/carers, family members and relevant others to be considered

Information Sharing:

- **Initial Strategy Discussion/Meeting** – Each Agency representative to share available information about the child/ren's relevant needs, risks and circumstances
- **Review Strategy Discussion/Meeting** - Each Agency representative to share the outcome of previously agreed action points with an updated assessment of risk

Child Protection Planning and Decision Making:

- **Criminal investigation** - Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- **Child Protection Enquiries** - Decide whether an assessment (under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 - Section 47 Enquiries) should be initiated, or continued if it has already been initiated, following an earlier Strategy Discussion/Meeting and address the following:
 - **Plan how the Section 47 Enquiry** should be undertaken (if one is to be initiated/continued), including, in liaison with the Paediatric representative, the need for any **medical assessment**, and who will carry out **what actions, by when and for what purpose**;
 - **Immediate protection** - 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;
 - **Seeing the child** – Agree when the child will be seen alone, if appropriate for the child, by the social worker during the course of these enquiries and agree the methods by which the **child's wishes and feelings** will be ascertained so that they can be considered when making decisions;
 - **Diversity and inclusion** - In the light of the race, ethnicity, beliefs and culture of the child and family, reflect on how these should be considered and establish whether an interpreter will be required;
 - **Other children** - 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/or in contact with alleged abusers);
 - **Sharing information with the family** - Determine what information from the Strategy Discussion/Meeting 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;
 - **LADO / Legal action** - Determine if a LADO referral or legal action by any partner is required.

Any Other Business:

- **Next Strategy Discussion/Meeting** – date, time and venue/virtual meeting details.
- **Meeting record** – Timescale for distributing authorised decisions and agreed actions (although all agencies should take notes of the actions agreed at the time).

- **Initial Child Protection Conference** – where agreed this should be confirmed by the Chair with the relevant Head of Service and convened by the Reviewing Service within 15 working days of the Strategy Discussion/Meeting at which it was decided to initiate the Section 47 Enquiry.
- **Children in Care** – Following a Strategy Discussion/Meeting about a child in care consideration should be given to convening a High-Risk Planning Meeting (HRPM).