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**Practice Guidance**

**Child Protection**

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**What you need to read…**

Guidance Notes for Practitioners should be read in conjunction with the LSCB Child Protection Procedures:

**http://www.darlingtonsafeguardingboards.co.uk/children-safeguarding-board/professionals/multi-agency-child-protection-procedures/**

**How to do it…**

**Strategy Discussion:** the purpose of a strategy discussion is to decide whether to start an enquiry into suspicions about significant harm (S.47). Only Managers can record a strategy on LCS, and if it is decided that a Section 47 enquiry is to take place, this starts the clock on a **15 day** countdown to an ICPC.

The Manager must outcome the strategy to start the process, however workers may not find the minutes of the strategy until **day 3** of the child protection pathway

**Section 47 Enquiry:** If it is determined from the strategy discussion that a Section 47 enquiry is to take place, the Manager must allocate the case to a social worker.

Ideally by **day 9** the Section 47 enquiry should be completed to allow sufficient time for managerial authorisation, as the deadline for the enquiry’s completion is **day 10**.

Ensure that you accurately complete all the mandatory fields of the enquiry as this will reduce delays in convening a correctly set-up ICPC.

**NB-** By outcoming the Section 47 to go to an ICPC, the attendees list must be accurately checked, as these are the people that will be ultimately invited to the ICPC.

**Invitation to ICPC:** By the **4th day** of the enquiry, the social worker must notify the Children’s Safeguarding Unit (CSU) that they wish to have an ICPC (day 15 at the latest). A list of attendees must be provided, amongst whom, but not exhaustively must be invited; child, parents and professionals who know the family.

If an ICPC is not required, the CSU need to be advised accordingly to allow sufficient time to stand-down the ICPC.

**Social Worker’s Initial Child Protection Conference Report:** as soon as the Section 47 has been authorised, you will receive in your worktray the conference report. Ensure you copy forward which will pre-populate many of the fields.

You will be asked to produce a proposed child protection plan within the conference report, this requires that:

* There must be one or more identifiable incidents which can be described as having adversely affected the child. These may be acts of commission or omission and can be physical, sexual, emotional or neglectful. It is important to identify a specific occasion or occasions when the incident occurred. Professional’s judgements are that further incidents are likely.
* The professionals involved believe that the child is likely to suffer significant harm, based on the findings of the investigation, which has taken place.

Once the conference report is complete, it must be submitted and authorised by 10am on **Day 13** to allow distribution of the report to ICPC attendees.

**Initial Child Protection Conference:** By **Day 15** at the latest the ICPC must be convened. Child protection conferences are integral to the child protection system in this country.

They are formal, often large, interagency meetings with the purpose of:

* Bringing together and analysing information about the child and family
* Arriving at a judgement about the likelihood that the child has been abused or harmed or might suffer abuse or harm in the future
* Jointly deciding what needs to happen and developing a plan for change, which may be a child protection plan or a child in need plan, and which responds to the child’s assessed needs and specific circumstances. In the case of review conferences, progress of the plan and achievement of desired outcomes is evaluated.

The aim of child protection conferences is to combine individual knowledge, expertise and opinion to maximise analysis and decision making and to ensure robust planning to improve the child’s outcomes. (See *Rough Guide to Outcomes*.) This will involve rigorous exploration of danger/harm alongside indications of family strengths and safety to provide answers to the following questions:

* What are we worried about specifically with regard to this child? (ANALYSIS)
* What is working well for this child and in this family? (ANALYSIS)
* What are the results we want for this child? What is the desired future? (OUTCOME STATEMENTS )
* What do we need to see to know that the outcome is being or has been achieved and stops us being worried? What will show us that the child is safe? (OUTCOME INDICATORS )
* What needs to happen to achieve the results or outcomes and who will do what? (ACTION PLANNING )

By the end of the conference, all participants should understand what the specific concerns are, what the desired results for the child are, what needs to happen (which should be communicated in positive rather than negative terms such as someone stopping doing something) to achieve those results and what the priorities are. The plan should be individualised, going beyond pre-set, traditional service packages (eg parenting classes) to respond to the child’s assessed needs and specific circumstances and build on existing supports and family strengths.

**Child & Family Assessment:** if the case is new, a Child and Family Assessment (C&F) may not have been produced before, which will mean that when your manager allocated the Section 47 enquiry to you, statutorily you must also complete a C&F within 45 days from the end of the referral date, twin-tracking both the enquiry and assessment. As you will become aware, as both documents are being written concurrently, no copy-forwards can be made, ergo, you should copy and paste where necessary across the homogenous fields within the forms, i.e. analysis, domains/ sub-domains etc.

**Core Group:** please read the separate practice guidance on Core Groups.

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