

Strategy Discussions



Background

In March 2021 an audit was conducted on strategy discussions that were held for children under the age of 1. Recent [Rapid Reviews](#) have highlighted common themes with strategy discussions including timeliness of communication, information sharing and decision making that involves all agencies. The audit identified some key areas of learning which are explored further within this 7 minute briefing.

Impact of COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on all children has been significant and the impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come. It is important to consider how the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted on a child and their family.

Jargon

The use of jargon is common place in every professionals day to day work and there are occasions where it can be useful. However, it is important practitioners are mindful of other multi – agency partners, children and families understanding of our professional jargon and ensure information is fully explained. For tips on managing the use of jargon click [here](#)

Analysis of Risk

The ability to analyse the risks is an integral aspect of a practitioners contribution to Strategy Discussions. Effective analysis of information goes beyond describing what is happening and relies on a practitioners expert to interpret the risks posed to the child based on the information. It may be helpful to consider any relevant theories or research along with the knowledge of a child's general health, wellbeing and development stages.

Minute Briefing

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Voice of the Child

The voice of the child is important and hearing the voice of a child who can not verbalise their thoughts and feelings requires practitioners to be the voice of the child. This can be explored by looking at parent-child interaction, how they act around familiar adults. Find out more about capturing the voice of the child [here](#)

Fathers

When fathers do not live within the family home they can often be forgotten however, they play a key role in their children's lives and should be given equal consideration to other adults within the home.
Think – Have I considered the children's father in this discussion?

Explicit Identification of Risks

The purpose of a Strategy Discussion is to decide whether there are grounds for a Section 47 Enquiry and determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Therefore, it is essential that the risks to the child are clearly named within the strategy discussion and the records reflect the conversations regarding risks identified.

Additional Resources



Voice of the Child Resource

Practice resource with helpful tips and advice on capturing the voice of the child in documentation available on the [SSP website](#).

Professional Disagreement and Escalation Process

[7 minute brief](#) explaining the steps in managing professional disagreements and escalation.

Safeguarding Standards

[The Multi – Agency Standards for Safeguarding Children](#) sets the multi – agency standards for Strategy Discussions.

Threshold Framework

The [Threshold Framework](#) provides a guide to assessing levels of need and identifying the most appropriate support.

Effective Information Sharing and Consent

[Practice briefing](#) showing how effective information sharing underpins integrated working, a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding.

Neglect Framework and Practice Guidance

[Practice briefing](#) on the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical/psychological needs, resulting in serious impairment of the child’s health and development.

Professional Curiosity Resource

Practice resource to share learning and improve practitioners practice in relation to [Professional Curiosity](#).

Support during COVID

Practice briefing from the Child Safeguarding National Review Panel on [Supporting Vulnerable Children and Families during COVID-19](#).

Practitioners guide for strategy discussions



Prior to the Strategy Discussion

When the decision is made that a strategy discussion needs to be conducted, an invite will be sent to relevant practitioners.

When preparing to attend a Strategy Discussion you should:

- Ensure you are clear why the Strategy Discussion is being held.
- Ensure you have the necessary information to dial into the Strategy Discussion
- Have identified somewhere you can join from that is confidential and free of distractions
- Ensure you have the correct details to access the child's/parent's records.
- Ensure you adequately research those named on the Strategy Discussion Request
- Ensure you are clear about what is expected from you as your agencies representation at the discussion
- Consider if there is anyone not invited to the Strategy Discussion who may be an important person to contribute

What to consider in the Strategy Discussion



During the Strategy Discussion

It is important all attendee's appropriately contribute towards the Strategy Discussion. Where necessary, practitioners should professionally and respectfully challenge others.

Things to consider during the discussions are:

- Are the risks clearly identified?
- Is there a clear analysis of the risks to the child?
- Have I analysed the risks from my agencies perspective and speciality?
- Is the child's voice being heard?
- Is this strategy discussion being held in a timely way? If not, this should be escalated (see Multi Agency Standards for Safeguarding Children)
- Is there evidence the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm?
- Is a Child Protection Medical required?
- Do I agree with the outcome of the Strategy Discussion? If not, have I considered the Professional Disagreement and Escalation process?
- Agree what action is required immediately to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, and/or provide interim services and support.
- Are there 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)
- What further information is needed and how will it be obtained?
- What further action is required and who will do what and by when?
- Consider any actions and ensure they are SMART.

What to Consider Following a Strategy Discussion



After the Strategy Discussion

Following a Strategy Discussion, all practitioners should ensure appropriate documentation and follow through of any actions assigned to their agency.

Things to consider following a Strategy Discussion include:

- Is my documentation accurate and recorded correctly?
- Do I have any actions to complete?
- Do I need to hand over anything from the Strategy Discussion to another person in my team?
- Do I need further support with this case?
- Seek support if it was a particularly challenging discussion, your emotional wellbeing is important.
- Have I received the actions within 1 working day and the minutes within 5 working days?