

Strategy discussions need to be held when it is believed that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering 'Significant Harm'

The Children Act 1989 introduced Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. Physical, Sexual, Emotional Abuse and Neglect are all categories of Significant Harm.

Harm is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that it may include, "for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another".

Suspicions or allegations that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm should result in an Assessment including a Section 47 Enquiry.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Sometimes a single violent episode may constitute significant harm but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, damage or change the child's development.

What's the purpose of the discussion?

The purpose of the discussion is to assess if a Section 47 Enquiry is required. If it is required it plans how the Section 47 Enquiry will be conducted. Who will do what, when, a rapid plan of action. It may need more than one strategy discussion, but we need to be mindful not to leave children without a decision for too long.

Who should be involved?

As an absolute minimum the discussion needs to involve a Social Worker, Police and Health representative

The referring agency should also be included as well as all those who know the family.

Consideration should be given to services that the adults may receive around domestic abuse, mental health or substance misuse and include these.

For an unborn need midwifery should be included and if the child is in hospital then the relevant medical staff should be invited.

It may also be appropriate in some circumstance for PCC legal services to attend.

For all strategy discussions there must be appropriate management oversight and support.

When should it be a meeting?

A strategy discussion can take place either over the phone, virtually or by a face to face meeting. Given the progress with virtual meetings and the use of Microsoft Teams across agencies, we need to use these tools to maximise agencies attendance.

There are times when it has to be a face to face meeting chaired by a manager in Children Social Care:

- Suspicions of organised or multiple abuse
- Concerns relate to fabricated or induced illness
- Concerns are considered to be complex
- Following the death of a child, where there are child protection concerns and there are surviving siblings



One Minute Guide Strategy Discussions



What are the tasks of the Strategy Discussion?

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 clearly outlines that the discussion should be used to:

- share available information
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- decide whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 must be undertaken

Where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, decisions should be made as to:

- what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded
- what immediate and short term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when
- whether legal action is required

After the Strategy Discussion?

You can either step down from the Section 47 enquiry or progress the enquiry and complete a single assessment - this may or may not then progress to Initial Child Protection Conference

Working Together to Safeguard Children - July 2018 clearly outlines this in the flowchart at Appendix 1:

Recording the Strategy Discussion

Strategy Discussions are recorded on Mosaic using the Strategy Discussion step. This can be a Next Action from the following places:

- Contact and Referral;
- Child and Family Assessment;
- CIN Plan,
- Review or Visit;
- Significant Information on an Open Case (Children's Services)
- Age Assessment;
- Child Exploitation Screening or Meeting and Record of Missing Child or Young Person

This step has 4 sections -

Section 1 for the details of the family,

Section 2 for recording strategy discussions,

Section 3 if a multi-agency meeting is required and

Section 4 to add Next Actions; which can include Section 47 Enquiries, Child Exploitation Screenings or Meetings, updating Child and Family Assessments and whether legal discussions are required.

Strategy discussions will be recorded on MOSAIC by the Social Worker. When a strategy meeting is needed it may be appropriate to have a minute taker present. We need to be mindful that we are only requesting a minute taker when we really need one and the situation is complex. If a minute taker is needed this should be from the business support in the relevant team.

Don't forget to make sure this recording clearly evidences all involved in the strategy discussion and the management oversight

Remember:

- ✓ The purpose of the discussion is to decide whether a Section 47 enquiry is necessary and if so plan how this will be undertaken
- ✓ As a minimum it must include Children Social Care, Police and Health. But we expect it to be informed by those agencies that know the family



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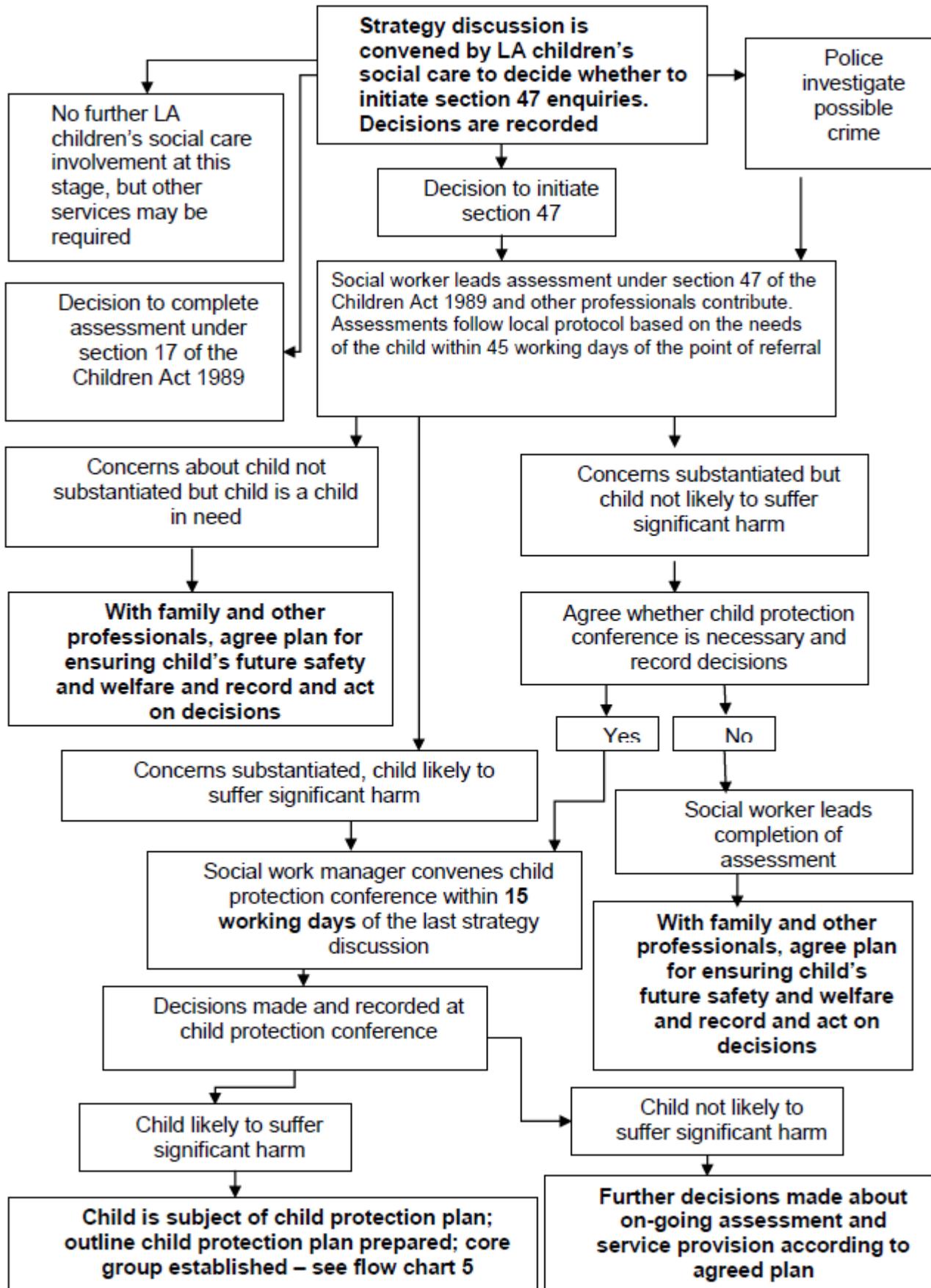
- ✓ Use the virtual tools at our disposal to maximise attendance
- ✓ You have 15 days from Strategy Discussion to Initial Child Protection Conference if that is how progressed, so we need to get ICPC requests to the Service Quality Team by day 8.
- ✓ The decision to progress to ICPC or not is clearly shared by the multi-agency team
- ✓ Make sure this is all clearly recorded within the child's computerised records, with clear rationale for decisions and management oversight.

For more information:

Working Together to Safeguard Children, July 2018:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

APPENDIX 1





One Minute Guide Strategy Discussions

