



# **Professionals' Meetings**

## **Guidance**

**December 2021 (Update)**

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*Acknowledgement: The CHSCP would like to thank Swindon Safeguarding Partnership for giving permission to use its policy on professionals' meetings to help develop this document.*

# 1. Purpose

- 1.1 A multi-agency professionals' meeting is a tool to support practitioners who have a genuine desire to work openly with families, but who may need the opportunity to talk with other professionals without the family being present.
- 1.2 Their use, as part of the local framework to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, is endorsed by the City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership (CHSCP).
- 1.3 A professionals' meeting may be important where there is uncertainty amongst professionals about the necessary steps to safeguard the welfare of a child; or where for example there is a concern that the family is undermining attempts to understand potential risks to children in the family.
- 1.4 They may also be helpful where professional disagreements arise that are impacting on effective work with the family, or where professionals need an opportunity to reflect on the plans for working with a family when progress is not being made.

# 2. Information Sharing and Consent

- 2.1 The London Safeguarding Children Board has recommended that '[legal obligation](#)' and '[public task](#)' (as defined in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)) are relied on as the primary basis for processing information to establish whether or not there is a need to safeguard a child.
- 2.2 This means that, whilst families will be informed when personal data is being shared or processed, their consent is not required. The significance of this change is that it is no longer necessary to seek consent to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child. This applies whether such sharing is undertaken in the context of a multi-agency professionals meeting or otherwise.
- 2.3 It does, of course, continue to be good practice to inform parents / carers that you are sharing information for these purposes and to seek to work cooperatively with them. Agencies should also ensure that parents / carers are aware that information is shared, processed and stored for these purposes.

2.4 It is also necessary for agencies to apply the principles as set out in government guidance on information sharing<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. Scope

3.1 A multi-agency professionals' meeting can take one of several forms, but only some are covered by this guidance and this is not an exhaustive list.

3.2 What is covered:

- **A professional planning meeting;**
- **A meeting to resolve professional disagreements regarding the management of a case with respect to a child or young person.**

3.3 What is **NOT** covered:

- **A child protection Strategy Discussion (Children's Social Care, Police, Health, and others, as required);**
- **An Initial or Review Child Protection Conference**
- **A Looked After Children (LAC) / Child in Care (CIC) Review**
- **Professional advice and management meetings where the child/family name isn't shared;**

### 4. Criteria for holding a Professionals' Meeting

4.1 This type of meeting would not be intended as a routine element in practice, since wherever possible professionals should aim to work in partnership with families, but could be considered in the following situations:

- an agency or agencies working with a family need to share information to clarify a concern or address difficulties in working with a family and to involve the family would inhibit discussion;

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<sup>1</sup> [Information Sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers July 2018](#)

- to resolve concerns within the professional group, such as understanding of the degree of risk, meaning given to information, the approach and priority actions and the reasonable expectations of other professionals;
- an agency or group of professionals feels that the work with a child or young person and their family is not resulting in improved outcomes for children
- to resolve disagreements regarding an agency's response to a referral request, or concern raised regarding a child or young person;
- the family/child/young person's needs cannot be met from within the agency's own resources and the need or concern remains unaddressed;
- sharing of information by phone or email is not considered adequate to facilitate discussion and decision-making.
- when there are concerns about Fabricated or Induced Illness and there is a need to clarify the nature and extent of the health concerns.

## **5. Who can call a Professionals' Meeting?**

- 5.1 If a professional feels that there is a need for a meeting that is covered by the above criteria, they should discuss the rationale with their relevant designated safeguarding lead and/or their line manager.
- 5.2 The designated safeguarding lead / line manager, if they agree, should authorise the meeting. In the case of a disagreement about the need for a professionals' meeting, or concern about the lack of engagement from any invited party, the [CHSCP Escalation Policy](#) applies.

## **6. Chairing the Professionals' Meeting**

- 6.1 This should be someone who is used to chairing meetings of a similar type (supervisory level), and must ensure that the meeting focuses on the needs of the child or young person. The Chair should have sufficient knowledge of local and Pan-London Child Protection procedures.

## **7. Administration and Recording**

- 7.1 The convening agency is responsible for initiating the meeting and should ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure the minutes of the meeting and agreed actions are distributed to all attendees and where appropriate the family. The minutes should capture the main areas of need and the action plan developed to address them.
- 7.2 Where there is an existing plan for the child/family, this should be reviewed and updated accordingly.
- 7.3 Each meeting should end with agreed actions to address the needs and concerns that have been raised. Where these relate to the child or family they should be discussed with the family.
- 7.4 The meeting should agree dates of further meetings to ensure progress on outcomes.

## **8. Attendance**

- 8.1 The meeting needs to bring together all those who can provide relevant information about the child/young person and family. After the meeting, a member of the meeting should be appointed to inform the child and family of the outcome.

## **9. Venue**

- 9.1 The venue should be the most convenient and comfortable place to meet for a confidential discussion. Meetings can also be held virtually via the use of video conferencing.

## **10. Permissions / Family Involvement / Confidentiality**

- 10.1 The agency who is requesting the meeting should consider whether the parents / carers should be informed of the meeting beforehand.

- 10.2 However, professional judgment should determine whether this is appropriate in all situations. If the parents / carers have not been informed of the meeting, then agreement should be sought from invited agencies that the meeting will take place without the family being informed. Any dissent should be recorded, but the disagreement of one or more agencies does not mean that the meeting cannot go ahead.
- 10.3 If the parents / carers, when they are informed about the meeting, raise an objection to it taking place, consideration should be given to whether concerns are sufficient to require a different approach (i.e. a strategy discussion). Again, this does not necessarily preclude the meeting from going ahead.
- 10.4 Where the issues to be discussed relate to difficulties with the engagement of the parents, then seeking permission for the meeting to take place is unlikely to yield the desired result.
- 10.5 Where the meeting is to discuss complex matters and to develop a fuller picture of the family's circumstances, it is not necessary to gain consent for the meeting to take place.
- 10.6 Where appropriate, a record of the meeting will be sent to the parents / carers that are subject of the meeting. Consideration should be given by agencies to the child's age for the most appropriate method of feedback.
- 10.7 Normal rules of confidentiality apply in that only information relevant to ensuring the safety and welfare of the children in the family should be shared. Any action plan developed as a result of the meeting should address how the issues discussed are then raised with the parents / carers, unless to do so would potentially place the children concerned at risk of further harm.
- 10.8 In some situations it may be appropriate to conduct the meeting in two parts involving the relevant professionals in the first part and inviting the parents / carers to the second part of the meeting.
- 10.9 This could be the case where the professionals are in disagreement and airing these issues in a frank discussion would not be appropriate with the parents / carers or child present.

10.10 Where the parents / carers have not been directly involved in the meeting, agreement needs to be reached on which professional will be expected to give feedback to them on its outcome.

10.11 If actions are not implemented as agreed, or they fail to meet the needs / address the concerns, a further multi-agency professionals meeting can be requested by any professional before the agreed review date.

## **11. Professionals' Meeting Format**

11.1 The following format for the Professionals Meeting is suggested:

- **Date, time and venue**
- **Introduction (who is in attendance and why)**
- **Attendance / Apologies**
- **Aim of meeting (what is the issue to be addressed)**
- **Needs, Strengths and Risks identified by convening agency prior to meeting**
- **Additional or new information shared at meeting (from all agencies)**
- **Other Needs, Strengths and Risks identified during the meeting**
- **How to address these needs? What has already been tried?**
- **Plan to support the family, identifying clearly who is responsible for which actions, with timescales clearly defined**
- **Has a Family Group Conference been considered?**
- **Agreement about who is to continue as Lead Practitioner, if a change is deemed appropriate**
- **Date of next review (if the meeting agrees that this is required).**