



# Professionals' Meeting Guidance

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership support children and their parents/carers involvement in multi-agency meetings or have their views represented. The presence of parents/carers and/or children in multi-agency meetings can be helpful in that it brings the child more clearly to mind, allowing for greater focus. Accuracy of information and facts can also be checked and clarity in respect of the parent/carer and child's views can be obtained.
- 1.2 In addition to routine planning meetings there are occasions when it is not appropriate to involve children or their parents/carers in multi-agency meetings.
- 1.3 Where professionals' meetings take place, they should be focused on outcomes for the child and family and form part of a continuous process of assessment, planning, implementation and review across all levels of need, including early help. Professionals' meetings facilitate the quality assurance of a case to allow for the effective sharing of information in order to reach a shared understanding of what can be complex issues. This may, in turn, lead to staff being able to challenge families (especially where there is disguised compliance, hostility and resistance).
- 1.4 It is important to recognise that professionals' meetings should supplement and not replace existing good practices of engaging children and their family members in assessment and planning.

### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 A multi-agency professionals' meeting is a tool to support practitioners and managers who have a genuine desire to work openly with families, but who may

need the opportunity to talk with other professionals without the child or their family being present.

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Professionals' meetings can also facilitate respectful challenge between professionals openly and effectively. Practitioners should be encouraged to give or receive professional challenge in a constructive and positive way. Successful joint working is reliant upon resolving disagreements effectively, and a genuine belief in a partnership approach to safeguarding children. Professionals' meetings may 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.

### **3. Information Sharing and Consent**

- 3.1 It is 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. 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.
- 3.2 It is good practice to inform parents/carers and the child, where appropriate, that information is being shared 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.
- 3.3 It is also necessary for agencies to apply the principles as set out in government guidance on information sharing. For further details see [Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers July 2018.](#)

### **4. Scope**

4. 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.  
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.

What is NOT covered:

- A child protection Strategy Discussion (Children’s Social Care, Police, Health, and others, as required).
- Professional advice and management meetings where the child or family name is not shared.

Attendance at multi-agency professionals’ meeting remain a statutory requirement for all involved professionals as defined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children](#) July 2018.

## 5. Criteria for Convening a Multi-Agency Professionals’ Meeting

5.1 This type of meeting should not be intended as a routine element in practice, since wherever possible professionals should aim to work in partnership with children and 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.
- 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 and their family is not resulting in improved outcomes for the child or to resolve disagreements regarding an agency’s response to a referral request, or concern raised regarding a child.
- The family or child’s needs cannot be met from within the agency’s own resources and the need or concern remains unresolved.
- Sharing of information by telephone 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.

## **6. Who can Call a Multi-Agency Professionals' Meeting?**

- 6.1 If a professional considers 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 line manager.
- 6.2 The designated safeguarding lead and/or line manager, if they agree, should authorise the meeting. In the case of an internal disagreement about the need for a professionals' meeting, this should be escalated according to that agency's policy. In the case of an external disagreement or concern about the lack of engagement from any invited party, the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) [Escalation Policy for the Resolution of Professional Disagreement](#) procedure should be considered to ensure that a positive resolution can be reached.

## **7. Chairing the Multi-Agency Meeting**

- 7.1 The Chair should be experienced in chairing meetings of a similar type and must ensure that the meeting focuses on the needs of the child. The Chair should have knowledge of the child protection procedures.

## **8. Administration and Recording**

- 8.1 The convening agency is responsible for initiating the meeting and should ensure the minutes of the meeting and agreed actions are distributed to all attendee's and where appropriate, the family. The minutes should capture the main areas of need and the action plan developed to address them.
- 8.2 Where there is an existing plan for the child/family, this should be reviewed and updated accordingly.
- 8.3 Each meeting should end with agreed actions to address the needs and concerns that have been raised. These actions should be:
- Specific – target a specific area for improvement.
  - Measurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
  - Assignable – specify who will do it.
  - Realistic – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
  - Time-related – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Where these relate to the child or family they should be discussed with the family. Members of the meeting should agree dates of further meetings to review and ensure the progress on tasks and outcomes.

## **9. Attendance**

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

## **10. Venue**

- 10.1 The venue should be a convenient and comfortable place to meet for a confidential discussion.

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

- 11.1 The agency who is requesting the meeting should consider whether the parents/carers should be informed of the meeting beforehand.
- 11.2 However, careful and considered professional judgment may need to be brought to bear on whether this is appropriate. If the parents/carers (or child, where appropriate) 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.
- 11.3 If the child and/or parents/carers, when informed of the meeting, raise an objection to it taking place, consideration should be given to whether concerns are enough to require a different approach (i.e., a strategy discussion).
- 11.4 Where the issues to be discussed relate to difficulties with engagement with the parents, then seeking permission for the meeting to take place is unlikely to yield the desired result.
- 11.5 Where the meeting is to discuss complex matters and to develop a more comprehensive picture of the family's circumstances it is not necessary to gain consent for the meeting to take place.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 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. This could be the case where the professionals disagree and airing these issues in a frank discussion would not be appropriate with the parents/carers or the child present.

- 11.8 Where the parents/carers have not been directly involved in the meeting, agreement needs to be reached on which professional will be expected to feedback to them on its outcome, if relevant.
- 11.9 If actions are not implemented as agreed, or they fail to meet the needs or address the concerns, a further multi-agency professionals' meeting can be requested by any professional before the agreed review date.

**The following format is suggested for the multi-agency meeting:**

- Date, time and venue.
- Introduction (who is in attendance and why).
- Attendance / Apologies.
- Aim of meeting (what is the issue to be addressed?).
- Strengths, Needs and Risks identified by convening agency prior to meeting.
- Additional or new information shared at meeting (from all agencies).
- Other Strengths, Needs 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 meeting 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).

Version	Date	Author	Comments
1	14.12.2020	Tim Sandle	