

## **Professionals Only Meetings**

One of the outcomes of the Child Q Serious Case Review (2015) was that 'professionals only' meetings must be able to be convened where there are concerns about the progress and management of a case.

These meetings do not replace other 'professional only' meetings, such as child protection enquiry Strategy Meetings.

Holding a professionals meeting will be of most value when cases are failing to progress or starting to drift or adults are hostile, reluctant or failing to comply. If a professionals meeting is necessary, the timing will be a matter of judgement but will need to be held within a timescale that will influence potential plans for the child.

Professionals meetings should only be held after careful consideration is given to the need to exclude parents from the meeting. Because parents have been excluded from one meeting is not enough reason in itself for exclusion at others.

A professionals meeting should always be considered before requesting case consideration at the complex case panel.

## **Purpose of Professionals Meetings**

Professionals meetings do not replace usual planning and review meetings. They will usually be a one off meeting to help:

- Resolve professional disagreement regarding case management.
- Agree how issues of adults being hostile, reluctant or failing to comply (including disguised compliance) can be addressed and safely challenged by all professionals.
- Identify better ways for inter-agency work to achieve outcomes for children where normal case planning and review mechanisms do not appear to be effective ( often referred to as "stuck cases")

Professionals meetings must agree how the decisions and actions arising from the meeting will be recorded and communicated to the family/ child concerned. When decisions have been made without the parents present, arrangements need to be made to inform them as soon as possible afterwards.

Professionals meetings provide an opportunity for professionals involved with a family to come together not only to share information, but also to help determine the direction of a case and the plan for a child; it may be held to resolve uncertainty,

controversy or inter-agency disagreement. They may be helpful where there are particularly complex family concerns, with extensive professionals/networks.

### **Who can convene Professionals Meetings?**

Any agency can ask for and organise a professionals meeting. This should be agreed by your line manager before a professionals meeting is convened. If Children's Social Care are to be involved the relevant team manager can be asked to convene this.

Initial attempts to resolve disagreement should already have been made by discussion between front-line workers and, if necessary, first line managers.

It is not acceptable to request a professionals meeting because there is concern about negatively affecting the working relationship with a family by disclosing information to them. If a professional is concerned about passing information on, or raising issues in front of the family then they should seek supervision with their line manager/ clinical supervisor to discuss the reasons for this. Where there is a legitimate concern over professionals' safety, then a professionals meeting may be appropriate.

### **Chairing Professional Meetings**

Managers or other senior staff from any agency may chair a professionals meeting.

### **Attendance at Professional Meetings**

Any professional who is involved or identified to be involved within a Child Protection/ Child in Need / Early Help plan.

Any worker who may hold a particular expertise that could inform discussion and help to identify more effective ways of working e.g. psychologist /systemically trained professional, named or designated health professionals, specialist social worker/manager and others. -

### **Timing and Duration of Professional Meetings**

If a professionals meeting is necessary, the timing will be a matter of judgement but will need to be held within a timescale that will influence potential plans for the child and family.

### **Minutes from Professionals Meetings**

There should be a record made of the decision reached at the professionals meeting. Minutes should be clear and brief, record attendance and outline actions from the meeting. The chair of the meeting would be responsible for completing them and sharing them with relevant parties including the family/parents/carers unless, exceptionally, the chair determines against this. One particular exception to routinely sharing information about the meeting, is if there are concerns about Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII), and these cases should be discussed with a Senior Manager or Named/Designated Doctor.

### **Informing the Family about a Planned Professionals' Meeting**

In normal circumstances it is only fair to inform a family that a professionals' meeting is taking place. In most cases families understand that professionals do need to discuss their case amongst themselves to establish the best course of action. In rare cases, before a section 47 meeting or escalation to child protection is decided upon, where there are significant safeguarding concerns and parental knowledge of a professionals' meeting may have adverse consequences for the child/children a decision may be made between senior professionals **not** to share details of a meeting with a family.

### **Reviewing Decisions taken at Professional Meetings**

A professionals meeting is likely to be a one off meeting, but there will need to be a plan made to ensure that the issues that it was convened to consider, have been resolved. If any professional is still concerned following the decisions of the professionals meeting, it should be referred to their line manager who will make contact with their opposite number in the relevant agency. (For further information see OSCB Escalation Policy/Guidance)

These procedures have been compiled with reference to similar procedures in other areas (Calderdale, Manchester, Nottingham, and Hackney and a Freedom of Information request in Northamptonshire County Council FR5004a).