

What to expect: Section 47 Enquiries and Strategy Meetings



A Section 47 Enquiry might also be referred to as a Child Protection enquiry, a Child Protection Investigation, or a S47. These investigations are carried out to assess if there is the risk of significant harm to a child or children. As part of the investigation professionals will consider what needs to happen to help ensure that a child or children are safe.

When Children's Services or the Police receive information that a child might either have suffered significant harm, or is likely to suffer significant harm, they have a statutory duty to investigate this information.

This investigation is called a Section 47 enquiry.

Section 47 Enquiries can be led by either Children's Services or the Police or by both working together.

The first step in any enquiry is to gather information to clarify what has happened.

Unless the professionals are very concerned about the information they have received, it is likely that in the first instance you will be contacted and asked what has happened. **This discussion can be carried out either by telephone or during a formal meeting.** If it is unclear if there is a risk to a child, or professionals are still concerned about any of

the information they have received a **Strategy meeting** will need to take place.

The purpose of the strategy meeting or discussion is to allow the sharing of any information that is known by the professionals working with a particular child. These professionals might be Social Workers, the Police, Health Professionals, Teachers or any other relevant professionals.

Strategy discussions help Children's Services to build as full a picture as possible of what has happened.

Family members are not invited to attend strategy meetings. However, unless a decision has been made that sharing information after the strategy discussion would place a child at greater risk of harm, any information that has been shared by professionals during a strategy discussion will be shared with appropriate family members.

During the Strategy Meeting the professionals will assess

- **If any criminal investigation needs to be undertaken**
- **If any immediate safeguarding measures need to be put in place**
- **If a Section 47 enquiry needs to be started, either by Children's Services, by the Police or by both working together**



What to expect: Connected Persons Assessment

If it has been decided that a case needs to progress to a Section 47 enquiry **Children's Services** will always **try to work** with those people who have Parental Responsibility **and will try to get agreement from them before starting to collecting information.**

However, in line with legislation, **information can still be gathered even if those with parental responsibility have not given consent.**

Possible Outcomes of a Section 47 enquiry

- If following information gathering, there is evidence that any of the concerns which have been raised can be substantiated and **a child or children are considered to be at risk of significant harm**, it is likely that Children's Services will recommend that an **Initial Child Protection Conference** takes place.
- If it is assessed that it would be helpful for a family to be offered **additional support**, Children's Services are likely to continue their **assessment using the Child In Need guidelines**. This enables Children's Services to work with a family to develop a **Child In Need plan**. (This might also be called a CIN plan or a S17). Once the support needs have been identified, Children's Services will make a **referral** to the most **appropriate service or organisation**. This support does not have to come directly from Children's Services.

- **If no risk is identified**, the concerns are **not substantiated** and **no additional support needs** are identified, **the case will be closed** and a **no further action letter** will be sent out.

You should not be surprised by any information that is shared with you following a Section 47 enquiry. Your child's Social Worker should keep you up to date and informed about the decisions or recommendations that are being and made.

Children and Family Services want you to understand how we can best work together to put the needs of your child or children first.