

SECTION 2: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

SECTION 2.26: JOINT POLICE/SOCIAL WORK INVESTIGATIONS

(a) This procedure has been agreed by Greater Manchester Police and Stockport Children's Social Care (now part of the Children and Young People's Directorate) as the basis for a joint police/social work approach to Child protection investigations.

(b) The criteria for joint investigations under Section 47 of The Children Act 1989 is that the local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The decision as to the most appropriate method of undertaking the investigation should be decided at a strategy meeting/discussion.

Note in addition joint investigations into allegations against Professionals should follow the Allegations management guidance

(c) On receipt of a referral there should be prompt communication between the two agencies in order to determine previous knowledge, current involvement and the need for a police/social work investigation. It may be at this stage a joint police/social care investigation is not warranted and that further enquiries by one agency is more appropriate. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that lines of communication remain open.

(d) **Strategy Discussion/Meeting :**

- Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer Significant Harm, there should be a strategy discussion/meeting, which must be recorded using the agreed form. The police officer and Social care manager should sign a copy of the agreed actions. The original form will be retained by the police officer and the social worker will be given a copy of it.
- A strategy Discussion/Meeting should be used to:
 - Share available information
 - Agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigations
 - Decide whether a Core Assessment and Section 47 Enquiry should be initiated, or continued if it has already begun
 - Plan how the S47 Enquiry should be undertaken (if one is to be initiated) including the need for medical treatment, and who will carry out what actions, by whom and what purpose
 - The investigation team will also decide on who is to be video interviewed by whom, the timing and venue. This will include consideration of whether the child should be formally interviewed as a potential witness for criminal proceedings.

Note only specially trained police officers and social workers can conduct video taped interviews with child witnesses

- Although a strategy Discussion/Meeting is most commonly held where there is a specific incident, there may also be occasions when such a meeting is appropriate in cases of neglect or other situations where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- Best practice would expect that the discussion takes place at a meeting. However, this can take place by telephone on exceptional circumstances.
- The strategy Discussion/Meeting should be co-ordinated and chaired by a Children's Social Care manager.
- Children's Social Care should convene the Strategy Discussion/Meeting. In addition to Children's Social Care and the Police, the strategy Discussion/Meeting must involve the other agencies (e.g. schools and health services), which hold information relevant to the concerns about the child, although they do not have to be present at the meeting.
- Professionals participating in Strategy Discussions/Meetings must have all their agency's information relating to the child to be able to contribute it to the discussion and decision making processes.

(e) **Visually recorded interviews:**

Visually recorded interviews must be planned and conducted jointly by Children's Social Care and the Police Public Protection Investigation Unit (PPIU) in accordance with the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) guidance. All events up to the time of the video interview must be fully recorded.

(f) **Medical examinations:**

- The strategy Discussion/Meeting will decide on the need for a child to be medically examined as part of the investigative process. This decision will take account of the timing of any medical examination and the need to ensure that it is performed by a person who is suitably qualified to conduct a forensic procedure if that is required.
- Medical examinations in child protection are highly skilled procedures and must be carried out by a doctor who is suitably trained to achieve the purpose of the examination, for example a Paediatrician or a Police Forensic Medical Examiner. The advice of the Paediatrician should always be sought in making the decision about who is the most appropriate person to examine a particular child
- The decision should take full account of the child's needs and aim to avoid or minimise any distress to the child. It must reflect the purpose of the medical examination and ensure that when, where and by whom it is conducted will meet this purpose, and avoid the need for further examinations.

Note, except for in exceptional circumstances, medical examinations for cases involving a physical assault will be arranged by Children's Social Care and those involving sexual assault by the Police

(g) **Consent:**

The following may give consent to video interviews/medical examinations:

- A child of 16 years and over (unless lacking mental capacity)
- A child under 16, who is able to fully understand what is proposed and its implications (often referred to as Gillick/Fraser Competence). The more serious the circumstances, the greater the need for the child to have a full understanding of the implications, otherwise the Consent may be held to be invalid.
- Any person with Parental Responsibility. When a child is subject to a Care Order the person with Parental Responsibility will include the local authority.
- The local authority, when a child is accommodated and the parent/carers have abandoned the child or are physically or mentally unable to give such authority. In other circumstances, a parent with Parental Responsibility should give specific consent for assessment and treatment of an Accommodated child – the general consent obtained at the time the child was accommodated should not be relied upon for this purpose.
- The court, when a child is subject to an Interim Care Order, Emergency Protection Order or Child Assessment Order. Note that consent for examination or assessment requires the court to make specific direction.
- The High Court when the child is a ward of court

(h) **Risk Assessment:**

- The Social Worker must ensure that the children of the family are effectively protected. Consideration should be given to the attitude of the non-abusing parent and extended family/carers in forming a judgement about the safety of the child, and all other children of the family, even when the suspected perpetrator leaves or is removed from the home.
- Where children are to be placed outside the family home and urgent Police checks are required a request should be made to The Greater Manchester Police Headquarters Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons Unit. The following information must be included in the request :-
 - Name and DOB of child(ren) concerned
 - Name(s) and DOB of adult to be checked
 - Address(es)
 - Exact circumstances of why the request is necessary
 - When an answer is required
 - Contact details of the person requesting the check. Including fax or E mail address.

- The scope and focus of the assessment during the enquiry will be that of a risk assessment which:
 - Identifies the cause for concern
 - Evaluates the strengths of the family
 - Evaluates the risk to the child or children
 - Considers the child's need for protection
 - Evaluates information from all other sources
 - Considers the ability of the parents and wider family and social networks to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

(i) At the culmination of every investigation there should be a review of all information obtained and the adequacy of the current protective arrangements for the child. A Child Protection Conference should be considered.