Guide to Requesting a Strategy Meeting

1. Initial analysis of MASH referral or analysis of a CASS case indicates that a **child is in need** (see overleaf) and there are concerns that there is either **likelihood of**, or there is ongoing **harm through one or more of the following**:

   (a) **Physical or sexual abuse**,  
   (b) **Neglect**,  
   (c) **Emotional Harm**  
   (d) **A crime against a child (including criminal or sexual exploitation and...**

   **The harm appears to be significant and/or the child is in need of immediate protection**

2. **Front door practitioner** must consult with Children’s Social Care (CSC) Designated Decision Maker (DDM) outlining the concerns. The CSC DDM is the MASH team manager.  
   **CASS practitioners & case supervisors** must consult with their team manager

3. **The DDM or team manager CASS** decide if either the criteria is met for requesting a Strategy Meeting or if further information is needed or the case could or should be managed as S17

4. Case supervisors should then consult with police DDM (MASH police Rep) to confirm:

   (a) That the criteria for requesting a strategy meeting as outlined in (1) is met;  
   (b) Whether there are any reasons why police may not be required to attend, given that Working Together (2018), stipulates police should attend all strategy meetings.  
   If the concerns are solely about emotional harm, asking the questions below may help to confirm:  
   (c) Is the impact of harm evidenced and clear and if not, is further assessment needed?  
   (d) Whether a S17 should be conducted before deciding on a strategy meeting.

5. **For planned ‘non-emergency’ strategy discussions, the questions below should be asked:**

   (a) Has a family network meeting been held or considered?  
   (b) Are there existing robust strong safety plans established in this case?  
   (c) Have Case supervisors considered why safety plans have not been or are no longer effective  
   (d) Have all children, including unborn & children staying with the family been considered

**NB Humberside Police criteria for Strategy Meetings** are where a crime against a child is alleged or immediate and significant safeguarding needs are indicated due to: Physical or sexual assault or injury/abuse; Fabricated or induced illness; Any complex cases (i.e. combined harms or multiple children/abusers etc.); CSE; LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) cases; Witchcraft; HBV (so called Honour Based Violence), E.g. Forced Marriage, and FGM, (Female Genital Mutilation)

Where DDMs cannot agree that a strategy meeting is needed, escalation processes should be followed via delegated lines of management or command to advise whether to (a) gather more information prior to going to Strategy Meeting; (b) hold a strategy meeting; (c) decline the request.

**Case supervisors & police reps attending must ensure that S17 & S47 enquiries are considered at all strategy meetings and that the significant harm criteria are met prior to conducting a S47.**
GUIDANCE NOTES & DEFINITIONS

Child in Need: S17 (Children Act 1989) requires local authorities to provide services to children in need. The 1989 Act defines the Child In Need Criteria as: “A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled.”

Duty to make enquiries: S47 of the Children Act 1989 requires that where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child (who lives in their area) is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it feels necessary. “Harm” is defined as:

(a) Ill treatment, (this includes sexual, physical, emotional, psychological abuse and neglect)
(b) the impairment of physical or mental health (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment);
(c) the impairment of physical intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).

Significant Harm: Defined as impairment of the child's health and development compared with that reasonably expected of a similar child. (Section 31(9), Children Act 1989.) The meaning of "significant" in case law has developed to mean enough to justify state intervention. Ask the following questions to decide if the harm the assessment indicates is significant:

(a) Can we demonstrate the ways in which this has ‘impaired’ the child’s health and development compared to what we could reasonably expect of a similar child/ren?
(b) Would the ‘impairment’ be sufficient to warrant and justify state intervention?
(c) If no to either of the above, should we be considering further assessment or child in need?

Emotional Harm: Significant Emotional Harm is rarely seen in the absence of any other abuse. Emotional distress may for example be due to illness, bereavement or family separation. Therefore, it may help to ask questions about the lived experience of the child to help decide to go to Strategy Meeting and or if this is a police matter.

(a) Does the emotional harm involve some physical abuse; neglect, witnessing harm to others, e.g. severe domestic abuse; or exposure to inappropriate sexual information, racial abuse or abuse of someone else?
(b) Is there evidence the harm is significant? E.g. can it be seen to be adversely affecting the child’s health and development?
(c) Does it involve exposure to online child pornography, threats and coercion of a child via CSE/CCE, or fear caused by threats of reprisals if children ‘tell’ what’s going on?
(d) Are there identifiable factors causing emotional harm that are not reasons for strategy meetings or police involvement?

E.g. Are there issues of parental mental ill-health; physical health; sibling disability; young carer responsibilities or parental learning difficulties that impact on parenting capacity?
(e) Is the Emotional harm due to parent-family relationships; such as reconstituted families, same sex relationships; or social isolation through parents restricting contact with relatives or friends?

The issues above can cause significant distress for children, but on their own they are not criminal offences and will rarely be sufficient to hold strategy meetings. The questions above are not exhaustive but can assist in deciding whether the harm is significant; whether it is appropriate to hold a strategy meeting and to determine whether or not the child is in need of support or in need of protection.