

Pan Bedfordshire Multi-Agency Stop and Review Meeting Guidance

Findings from local/national case reviews, indicate that the commitment to working in partnership with families has inadvertently led to an assumption that practitioners cannot meet together without the family being present. Although working in partnership with and involving children/families in decisions and meetings about them should be the norm, there will be times when it is beneficial for practitioners to come together not only to share information, but also to explore and understand differing views to help determine the direction of the plan for a child(ren). Whilst this is guidance and refers to **STOP and REVIEW** meetings some Children's Services already have in place meetings that could and do address the following such as Complex Case Discussions.

Purpose

A multi-agency **STOP and REVIEW** meeting should be used to safeguard children. They are a tool to support practitioners who may need the opportunity to talk with other practitioners without the parents/carers being present. A **STOP and REVIEW** meeting may be important where there is uncertainty amongst practitioners about the necessary steps to safeguard the welfare of a child; or there are difficulties in working co-operatively with the child(ren)/family. These meetings may also be helpful where there are disagreements between practitioners that are impacting on effective work with the child(ren)/family, or where practitioners need an opportunity to reflect on the plans for working with a child(ren)/family when progress is not being made or is starting to drift. These meetings do not replace usual planning and review meetings or child protection Strategy Meetings, etc. A **STOP and REVIEW** meeting could be a one-off meeting held to influence and progress plans to safeguard the child(ren). These meetings will be particularly beneficial in respect of long term neglect cases.

Criteria for convening a STOP and REVIEW meeting

STOP and REVIEW meetings should not be considered routine in practice because wherever possible practitioners should aim to work in partnership with families. However, they should be considered in the following situations:

- work with a child(ren) and their family is not resulting in improved outcomes for the child(ren) or is drifting from the plans in place.
- sharing of information to clarify a concern or address difficulties in working with a child/family and to involve the parents/carers would inhibit discussion;
- resolving concerns within the practitioners group, such as understanding of the degree of risk, meaning given to information, the approach and priority actions and the reasonable expectations of other practitioners;
- the child(ren)/family's needs cannot be met from within the agency's own resources and the need or concern remains unaddressed.

Who can convene a STOP and REVIEW meeting?

Any agency can convene a **STOP and REVIEW** meeting. Where a practitioner feels 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 their line manager. The designated safeguarding lead/line manager, if they agree, should authorise the meeting. In the case of a disagreement about the need for a **STOP and REVIEW** meeting, or concern about the lack of engagement from any invited party, the [Pan Bedfordshire Multi Agency Disagreement and Escalation Procedure](#) applies. Where a practitioner is concerned about their own safety or passing information on, or raising issues in front of a family, they should seek supervision with their line manager/ clinical supervisor to discuss the reasons for this.

Leadership of the STOP and REVIEW meeting

The agency responsible for initiating the **STOP and REVIEW** meeting should agree the following with involved practitioners prior to the meeting:

- Whether the parents/carers should be informed of the meeting beforehand
- A venue, date and time for the meeting or if it is to be held virtually ensure all participants have access to the required technology
- Invitations sent to all attendees, a chair and minute taker identified.

Chairing STOP and REVIEW meetings

The meeting should be chaired by someone who has experience of chairing similar solutions focused meetings, centred on the needs of the child. This should be agreed between the involved agencies and could be a manager, senior practitioner, Lead Practitioner or keyworker.

Attendance

A **STOP and REVIEW** meeting needs to bring together all those who can provide relevant information about the child/family. In addition to practitioners directly involved with the child/family, this may include any worker with 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 practitioners, specialist social worker/manager and others. A Multi-Agency Chronology should be used to evidence needs and risks, and to help understand the impact, of events and changes on the child(ren)/family's progress. The meeting should agree who is the most appropriate person to inform the child(ren)/family of the outcome.

Permissions/Family Involvement/Confidentiality

In normal circumstances a family should be informed that a **Stop and Review** meeting is taking place. Most families will understand that practitioners do need to discuss their case amongst themselves to establish the best course of action. In rare cases, e.g. where there are significant safeguarding concerns and parental knowledge of a **Stop and Review** meeting may have adverse consequences for the child(ren), a decision may be made not to share details of the meeting with them. If the parents/carers have not been informed of the meeting, then agreement should be sought from those attending that the meeting will take place without the family being informed. **Stop and Review** meetings must agree how the decisions/actions from the meeting will be sensitively and respectfully communicated to the child(ren)/family. When decisions made without the parents present, arrangements should be in place to inform them as soon as possible afterwards. Where appropriate the minutes of the meeting will be shared with the family. Consideration should be given by agencies to the child(ren)'s age for the most appropriate method of feedback. Normal rules of confidentiality apply in that only information relevant to ensuring the safety and welfare of the child(ren) in the family should be shared. For further advice please see the [Seven Golden Rules for Information Sharing](#).

Minutes from the STOP and REVIEW meeting.

Minutes should be brief, clear and capture the main areas of need and outline the agreed actions to address the needs/concerns raised. Any action plan developed as a result of the meeting should address how the issues discussed are raised with the family, and by whom, unless to do so would potentially place the child(ren) at risk of further harm.

Reviewing decisions taken STOP and REVIEW meetings

A **Stop and Review** 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 practitioner is still concerned following the decisions of the **Stop and Review** meeting, the [Pan Bedfordshire Multi Agency Disagreement and Escalation Procedure](#) applies.