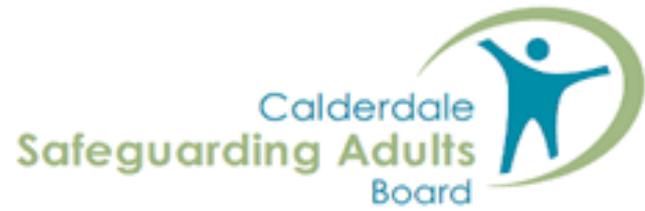




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Multi-Agency Professionals Meetings Guidance for Practitioners

September 2022

Introduction

A multi-agency professionals meeting (MAPM) or a multi-disciplinary team meeting (MDT) is a tool to support practitioners in all agencies who have a genuine desire to work openly and together with individuals and / or families. These meetings are not a replacement to the strategy meetings detailed in the [West Yorkshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding adults policy and procedures](#) and [West Yorkshire Interagency Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures](#).

A multi-agency meeting can and should be called by any agency who is working to safeguard a child or adult at risk where a response may be required from more than one agency.

The individual / carer / parent should usually be included, and consideration should be given to whether an advocate or supporter (through formal advocacy service procedures [Advocacy duties when commissioning independent advocacy | SCIE](#) or informal family / friend) could best support them to do this or to be their representative at the meeting. However, it is recognised that there are times when a professionals meeting needs to be held without the involvement from children, families or adults at risk, or have a professionals only section to the meeting. The reasons for this may include where there is disguised compliance or where professionals are facing barriers or are struggling to support people and need to consider how multi-agency working can strengthen this. Any decision to hold the meeting without the attendance from service users should be clearly documented.

Where a professionals meetings take place, they should be focused on outcomes for the individual(s) and form part of a continuous process of assessment, planning, implementation and review. They will facilitate quality assurance of the case and lead to staff being able to challenge facts, this may be especially useful where there is disguised compliance, hostility and resistance from the individual parent or carer and where there may be professional disagreement.

Purpose of Professional Meetings

Professionals meetings provide an opportunity for professionals involved with an individual / family to come together not only to share information, but also to help determine the direction of a case and agree a plan moving forward. They may be held to resolve uncertainty, controversy or inter-agency disagreement. They may be helpful where there are particularly complex concerns, with extensive professionals/networks and provide clarity on action plans and identify key professional roles.

When to call a Professionals Meeting

It is important to be transparent about the need, purpose and process of a Multi-Agency Professionals Meeting with individuals and carers from the outset in order to maintain an open and honest relationship, unless to do so would cause additional

risk. Consequently, it will usually be necessary to inform them of the possible requirement for a professionals only meeting and in circumstances where decisions have been made without individuals or advocacy being present, they should be communicated to the individuals and carers as soon as possible afterwards

Holding a Professionals Meeting will be of most value when:

- Cases are failing to progress or
- Starting to drift or
- There is hostility
- Agencies are not able to engage positively
- There is a significant event in their life, e.g. bereavement, health decline, eviction, incident of harm or risk, sudden disengagement, possible discharge from services etc

If a professionals meeting is necessary, the timing will be a matter of judgement but will need to take account of existing procedures and the presenting risk factors of the case.

A professionals meeting is often 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 who is still concerned following the decisions of the meeting, they should be referred to their line manager and follow their escalation procedures.

Who can convene Professional Meetings?

Any professional involved in protecting a child or adult at risk.

Chairing Professional Meetings

A manager or other senior staff who is not directly involved with the case from any agency should Chair the meeting and facilitate discussion. This person should have sufficient knowledge of child or adult safeguarding procedures and ensure that the voice or view of the child or adult at risk is represented. Pre-planning is key to a successful meeting and the chair should set the objectives and ground rules of the meeting and ensure they are shared together with an agenda to all the attendees in advance.

Attendance at Professional Meetings

Any professional who is involved with the family or potentially involved in any protection or support plan that is being considered should attend a professionals meeting in accordance with information sharing legislation. It is also useful to consider inviting an expert in a particular discipline for advice even if they are not

directly involved in the case, eg hoarding, substance misuse, harmful sexual behaviour, mental capacity

Minutes from Professional Meetings

There should be a record made of the decision to hold the meeting, decisions reached, and recommendations made at the professionals meeting and include a rationale if any individual or carer was not included. The record must record who will take responsibility for actions and what information was shared to support the decisions and any disagreement that may exist between professionals. The Chair of the meeting will have responsibility for ensuring that the record is made and distributed to those present, although any attending agency can take responsibility for taking minutes. An example agenda can be found at appendix A.

The decisions and recommendations made at a professionals meeting will need to be shared with the parents/ carers and individuals unless, exceptionally, the Chair determines against and records this.

Reviewing Decisions and Recommendations made at Professional Meetings

The decisions and recommendations made at professionals meetings should inform the development of the case and form part of the planning process. In this way, the decisions and recommendations will be reviewed formally at future meetings or as part of ongoing case management.

Considerations

It is unlikely that a single agency holds the whole picture and so practitioners may bring partial or biased information to the meeting and there may be competing interpretations of a situation. Any decisions reached need to be based on the multi-agency information available and be as objective and fair as possible. It is important to understand the relevance of any information and be open about the reliability of the provenance of the information. The voice of the child or adult must be heard as clearly as the views and information shared by the professionals and the minutes should clearly reference their voice.

Group decisions can be dominated by a desire to avoid conflict rather than a determination to establish the facts. The tendency to hold on to first impressions can result in fixed views and a reluctance to reconsider even in the light of new information.

The introduction of challenge from someone who does not have direct involvement with the case and use of standardised tools to measure progress will help to mitigate against unhelpful processes.

The opportunity for professionals to analyse information without individuals or carers present will reduce the risk of overreliance on information supplied by family members and may support a decision to have a professionals only section to the meeting.

The meeting must also consider if any legislation or statutory guidance is relevant to the case under discussion. This could involve child protection proceedings, mental capacity, tenancy laws etc. All decisions should respect the dignity and human rights of the individuals involved.

The information shared at the meeting may result in a need to refer into another agency or to commence a further safeguarding procedure. A multi-agency meeting does not replace the need to refer to Child or Adult Social Care where concerns around risks to a child or adult at risk are identified as meeting the threshold for safeguarding interventions. The meeting must also consider the risk to others involved who may not be the subject of the meeting. If concerns for another child or adult are identified appropriate action must be taken.

Information Sharing

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and multi-agency working. It is a key factor identified in many reviews where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take steps to protect children or adults a risk. GDPR, data protection and human rights legislation are not barriers to justified information sharing. Where possible share information with consent, but you may share information without consent where there is a lawful basis to do so. If you are unsure of your lawful basis you should refer to your own organisations information governance policy.

[scie safeguarding adults practice sharing information](#)

[gov.uk Information sharing advice practitioners safeguarding services.pdf](#)

[west yorkshire safeguarding children information sharing procedure](#)

[west yorkshire safeguarding adults policy and procedures](#)

Appendix A

Example of a meeting agenda.

1. Date, time and venue
2. Attendance / Apologies
3. Aim of meeting (what is the issue to be addressed)
4. Needs, Strengths and Risks identified
5. Additional or new information shared at meeting (from all agencies)
6. Information from the individual / carer / advocate
7. Action Plan / time scales agreed and responsible agency
8. Agreement about who is Lead Practitioner if required
9. Views of individual / carer / advocate on the action plan
10. Professional dispute / disagreement
11. Who will update individual / carer if not present
12. Date of next review (if the meeting agrees that this is required).