

Professionals Meeting Toolkit

Effective relationship building, care planning and assessment identification requires an understanding of the individual needs of the children and families involved to maximise participation, agency and provide a fair and solid basis for robust decision making in line with equality and disability legislation.

When representing a child or young person with a complex profile, it can be difficult to identify:

- Any diagnosis in place or pending
- Any support in place or pending
- Any assessment / support gaps

Our siloed and fragmented social, health and education systems lack interagency communication and joined up working. Multiple professionals and voluminous paperwork compound the problem

Multi-disciplinary professional's meetings are an invaluable tool to bring together all of the professionals involved with a family (usually via an online meeting) to share information and improve care planning and decision making. They are cost effective, avoid duplication and encourage advance consideration of appropriate assessments in preparation for a CMH which in turn facilitates timely planning rather than rushed conversations at advocates meetings.

Professionals meetings help to:

- Identify the needs of both the child and parent(s);
- Identify the support and services the family is currently receiving and what further support/services are available;

- Identify where there are gaps in support / gaps in the care the parent is able to provide and how they can be addressed;
- Inform Part 25 applications for any necessary expert assessments; and
- Formulate a plan in the event that the court sanctions removal (including identifying a suitable placement).

Management of meetings

Professional's meetings are most convened by the local authority (as they will have access to the contact details for all professionals). The child's solicitor should chair. In some circumstances it may be beneficial for Part 25 experts to attend the meeting, even if they have not reported yet, as the discussion can help inform the assessment. Any related costs would need to be approved by the court if they fell under any party's legal aid certificate.

An effective minute (AI or as agreed) should be agreed by all attendees.

Timing

We recommend that a professionals meeting happens as early as possible in the case, ideally before the Case Management Hearing. In cases where a professionals meeting is indicated, Judges have been receptive to the suggestion that there should be a FCMH listed once the PM has taken place. However, effort should be made to hold the meeting prior to the CMH to avoid multiple hearings.

Professional's meetings can take place at any point during the proceedings and it can often be beneficial to have review professional's meetings (RPM) reviewing progress and avoiding slippage of agreed actions. These meetings are distinct from experts meetings, however, if approved by the court, it can be helpful in certain circumstances for part 25 experts to attend.

If necessary, a consent order can be agreed for the meeting to take place before the CMH. A consent order is necessary in circumstances where:

- a. The parties agree that court documents should be disclosed to attendees and therefore permission is required; and/or
- b. The child's solicitor will chair the meeting and requires the court's approval so that their time can be claimed under the child's legal aid certificate.

This toolkit is designed to assist by providing:

- A proposed list of key professionals to invite
- An example agenda

Professionals Meeting Agenda re [child]

Via [online] on [date] at [time]

(Meeting will be transcribed by [])

Microsoft Teams meeting Link

Attendees & email addresses

- *Chair – Child’s Solicitor/LA Solicitor/IRO/Other*
- *Social work team*
- *Children’s Guardian*

Health

- *GP*
- *School Nurse*
- *SEND Occupational therapist/speech and language therapist*
- *Educational psychologist*
- *CAMHS*
- *Clinicians*
- *Integrated Care Board (ICB)*

Education/SEND

- *Head teacher*
- *Class teacher/specialist teacher(s)*
- *SENCo*
- *Designated Safeguarding Lead*
- *Virtual School*
- *Short Breaks/respice*
- *SEND/Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) team*

Other

- *Children with disabilities team*
- *Housing*
- *Parent Advocate*
- *Family Support worker*
- *Contact supervisor*
- *Independent Reviewing Officer*
- *Police*
- *Representatives from any other key agencies working with the family*
- *Potentially Part 25 experts*

Apologies

Agreed list of pre-reading

(note here the documents that have been sent to attendees to read in advance. Permission will be required from the court to share court documents with third parties)

- *Parent All about Me document*
- *Child All about me document*
- *Key pre proceedings assessments (e.g. cognitive/parenting)*
- *Any other documents considered relevant*

Purpose of Meeting

(set out a summary of the concerns, why the meeting is being held and what you hope to achieve from the meeting)

Example:

The LA has issued care proceedings in respect of the child. The child has complex needs and an EHCP. The child resides with [insert]. The LA currently does/does not share parental responsibility under an interim care order made on [date].

There are concerns as follows:

[list concerns]

The next hearing is on [date]. The LA seeks interim removal and for the child to be placed in a foster placement whilst assessments are undertaken. This is opposed/supported by [insert]. The parents position is [insert].

At the next hearing, the court will decide whether any independent expert assessments of the child/parents are necessary, should any party apply for such an assessment.

The LA will undertake a parenting assessment. It is important that the assessment takes into account the parents ability to parent the child when in receipt of the necessary support/services required and that the family are legally entitled to receive, in order to assist with meeting the child's additional needs. If the parent requires reasonable adjustments and support in respect of these, then it is important this is also in place to ensure the parenting assessment is undertaken fairly.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- 1. Identify the support and services the family is currently receiving and what further support/services are available, if any;*
- 2. Identify the needs of both the child and parent(s);*
- 3. Identify where there are gaps in support / gaps in the care the parent is able to provide to the child and if and how they can be addressed;*
- 4. Inform Part 25 applications for any necessary expert assessments; and*

5. *Formulate a plan in the event that the court sanctions removal including identifying a suitable placement/attendees to comment on the suitability of any placement identified.*

Agenda Points

(Example)

1. Allocated social worker to provide an update on the family including any intervention/support and whether this has led to any improvement.
2. Which professionals/services are currently involved with the family and the nature of their involvement including:
 - a. Any services/support offered that the parent has/has not engaged with
 - b. Whether there is any additional support that should be offered including overnight respite (if applicable)
 - c. Whether any support carers require additional training and if so, the nature of that training to be identified
3. Whether the child's global needs are fully understood (including diagnoses, health and education needs) and whether an early annual review of the child's EHCP should be convened/whether it is necessary to apply for an EHC needs assessment), whether any referrals need to be made.
4. Whether it is necessary to apply to the court for permission to instruct any independent experts to assess the child and/or parent in order to address any gaps in the understanding of their needs.
5. The parent's needs (as set out in their 'All About Me' document, if applicable) ensuring these are understood by all professionals working with the parent and that reasonable adjustments are made in line with their needs.
6. How best to manage a move for the child if the court sanctions interim separation/suitability of any proposed interim placement and what

training/support any other person caring for the child might require, where this can be sourced from and timescales.

7. Any other issue(s) specific to the case.
8. Whether a follow up meeting will be required.

Summary of key points flowing from the meeting

Agreed Actions

Action	Timescale	Responsible professional/department	Notes