

Multi-agency meetings

What is the role of multi-agency meetings in developing a Contextual Safeguarding response? How can we navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with working across professional boundaries? This good practice briefing highlights the benefits of using multi-agency meetings as a practice forum to explore risk and develop safeguarding responses when young people experience extra-familial harm (EFH)

Why are they different?

What distinguishes these meetings is a focus on responses to peer groups, schools and neighbourhoods as well as children and families affected by EFH

Referral processes

Referrals, either written or verbal, should be structured by context. This helps meeting participants address concerns beyond the child and family. Contexts should include: child/young person; home/family; peers; school/education; neighbourhood dynamics and specific locations.

Effective chairing

Chairs should pay attention to whose voice gets heard at the meetings and what sort of information is presented. Professional testimony can dominate, so it is the role of the chair to create the space for community knowledge. If partners express the view that young people are responsible for the harm they experience, chairs have a unique role in challenging this and shaping practice.

A welfare led response

Maintaining a child welfare lens is the responsibility of everyone who participates in the meeting. Children must be talked about and viewed as children first and that their behaviours may be influenced by other people (like exploiting adults) or by a past traumatic experiences. It is important that all partners agree to working in this way.

Voice of young people and families

Young people or parents/carers are generally not invited to these meetings. But, you should ensure that they are aware of any referral that involves them and where personal information will be shared with other professionals. It is important that the views, experiences and rights of young people are foregrounded in the meetings. The focus of any action should be on building trusting relationships with young people and not increasing surveillance.

Beyond talking and tasking

Having many partners around the table can lead to different solutions being suggested. When its not clear what should happen next, it can be tempting for the action to be - scheduling another meeting! To avoid this, agree the change you want to see and who is most likely to bring that change about. Setting actions around outcomes like this can give partners clarity on the role they each have in altering the social conditions of harm in a context.