

Barriers to effective multi-agency meetings

1. Power Dynamics & Culture

- **Hierarchy** and individuals “pulling rank” can silence others. A senior manager dismisses a junior colleague’s input without discussion.
- A **blame culture** or **scapegoating** discourages open dialogue. When something goes wrong, the focus is on assigning fault rather than solving the issue.
- **Political agendas** and **self-fulfilling narratives** can skew discussions. A participant pushes their department’s goals regardless of the meeting’s purpose.
- **Lack of neutrality** and **bias** undermine trust and collaboration. A chair consistently sides with one agency, undermining trust.

2. Poor Chairing & Facilitation

- A **demanding or ineffective chair** can dominate or derail the meeting. The chair dominates the conversation, leaving little room for others to contribute.
- **Talking shops** with no clear outcomes waste time and reduce engagement. Meetings become repetitive discussions with no clear decisions or actions.
- **Time pressure** and **no space between meetings** limit reflection and follow-up. Back-to-back scheduling prevents reflection or preparation.

3. Lack of Clarity & Preparation

- **Poor distribution of information, lack of prep,** and **unclear expectations** lead to confusion. Key documents are sent last-minute or not at all.
- **Acronyms** and jargon can exclude or confuse participants.
- **Poor records** make it hard to track progress or accountability. No minutes or action logs make it hard to track progress.

4. Disrespect & Disengagement

- **Dismissiveness** toward client needs or colleagues’ input erodes trust. A participant brushes off concerns about a adult’s wellbeing.
- **Lack of professional respect** and **understanding of roles** causes friction. One agency questions the legitimacy of another’s input. Confusion about who does what leads to duplicated or missed work.
- **Conflict and disagreement**, when unmanaged, lead to disengagement. Heated disagreements cause some attendees to withdraw.

5. Confidence & Inclusion

- **Lack of confidence** in one’s role or agency remit can silence valuable contributions. A new team member hesitates to speak up, fearing they’ll be wrong.
- **No Adjustments for Needs** (e.g., accessibility) excludes participants. A participant with hearing loss isn’t offered captions or transcripts.
- **Online meetings** make it harder to read body language, build rapport, and stay engaged. A participant turns off their camera and disengages due to feeling unseen or unheard.

The material in this document was produced through our multi-agency Locality Safeguarding Adults Partnership (LSAP) county meeting in May 2025, sharing their experiences and views