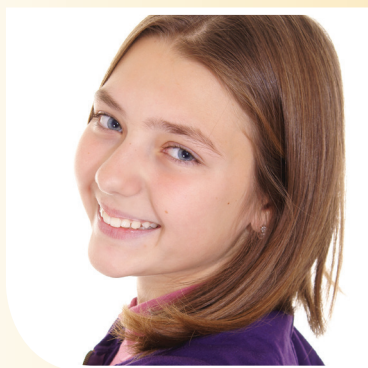


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Child Protection Conferences

Information for
parents and carers



This leaflet has been written to answer some of the questions parents and carers have about Child Protection Conferences.

If you have difficulty reading, the social worker can arrange for someone to help you understand what the leaflet says.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss the concerns that professionals have about the safety of your child, and to decide what is to happen next.

This is done by:

- Sharing information from the people who work with your family, and thinking about what that means for the safety of your child
- Making decisions about the risks to your child and how those risks can be reduced.
- Deciding whether your child is in need of a Child Protection Plan
- Agreeing a Child Protection Plan including what support and help is needed in order to keep your child safe

Where will the Child Protection Conference be held?

The conference will usually be held in a local council building. Your social worker will be able to tell you exactly where and help you to get there. He or she may also be able to arrange other help, such as childminding, to allow you to attend the conference.

Who will be at the conference?

People who work with your family will be at the conference. This includes social workers, health visitors, nursery staff or teachers. There will also be someone to take notes during the conference.

As well as these people some other people may be invited including:

- Your family doctor
- A police officer
- A manager from the social work team.
- A child protection advisor to the health workers
- A child protection advisor to the education staff
- A probation officer
- A police child protection officer
- A solicitor from the council's legal team who can give advice to the conference

Many of these people have special knowledge and experience in child protection work and represent their agency. There will normally be 10-12 people at the conference.

Who will run the conference?

The conference will be run by someone from the Quality & Review team who is not involved in your child's case or with your child's social worker.

You may hear this person called the "chair", "chairperson" or "independent reviewing officer". They will introduce themselves to you privately just before the conference starts. He or she will introduce all of the people at the conference (including you and your family) and make sure the conference is run properly.

Should I come to the conference?

Although it can be very difficult for parents to come to these conferences, your attendance will allow you to hear all of the information and you will be able to contribute and assist in planning in order to reduce the concerns about your child.

Normally both parents will be invited even if you are separated from each other, although it may be difficult for you both to be there at the same time. If there are worries about violence from your former partner, you or your social worker may discuss how to avoid any potentially difficult situations with the chairperson.

Will my child be there?

If your child is old enough to understand what is happening and they want to come, and it is agreed that it would be helpful for him or her, then they can be there, for part or all of the conference.

Can I bring someone with me?

You can bring a friend, a relative or a solicitor to support you at the conference.

Do my views count?

Your views are very important. You may find it helpful to write down beforehand what you want to say or what you want to ask and bring this with you to the conference. You might want to use the questions at the end of this leaflet to help you think about the most important things you want to say.

Will I know what the professionals think before the conference?

Reports written by the professionals will be shared with you before the conference. They will contact you before the conference to arrange a suitable time and place to share the report they will present at the conference. You will be able to say what you think of the reports. Reports written by professionals will be shared with you two days before an Initial Child Protection Conference or seven days before a Review Child Protection Conference.

Why will the police be at the conference?

The child protection police will be at the conference because of their special expertise. They will give information to the conference about any adults in your child's life, if they have cautions or convictions to do with children, violence or illegal drugs. Some other offences that are felt to affect children's lives may also be shared during the conference.

How will the conference be run?

After introductions have been made, the chair of the conference will check everyone has all of the reports and has had a chance to read them. Each professional will be given the chance to highlight information from his or her report. Once this is done the chair will ask you if you want to say anything about that report. Usually each of your children will be considered in turn.

There may be breaks in the conference if legal advice is needed by the social worker or any other professional, or for other reasons which may help the conference to reach the correct decisions, but this is very rare.

The next part of the conference is the decision making stage. You will be able to watch this and you may give your opinion; however, the professionals will reach the final decision about whether your child needs a Child Protection Plan. To do this they will look at the concerns about your child and also the things that are going well in your family.

If the decision is not to make a Child Protection Plan for your child, some recommendations may still be made, for example about any support which your family would find helpful.

What is a Child Protection Plan?

A Child Protection Plan will make it clear what needs to happen and who has to make those things happen and by when to make sure your child is safe. It will ask you to do things, it may ask a social worker and all other professionals involved to do an assessment and it may say that other services are needed for your family. You will have the most important part to play in making sure the plan works, as you are key to keeping your child safe. Following the conference, you will need to sign to say you agree to the Child Protection Plan. You will receive a written copy of the plan.

How long will the conference last?

Most first conferences take about one to two hours, although sometimes they may be a bit longer. Review Child Protection Conferences are held later to see how things are improving for your child and are usually shorter.

Can I take the reports away with me after the conference?

You will be able to take the social work report away with you. If you want other reports, you may need to seek permission from the people who wrote them. The chair will help you in this matter.

Later, you will be sent the recommendations and notes of what was said at the conference and what was decided.

What if it is decided that your child needs a Child Protection Plan

A core group will be set up. This is a small group of people who will work directly with your family. It involves you, the social worker, and health visitor if your child is under 5 years of age, or someone from your child's school if your child is of school age, and it could include professionals directly working with you such as probation, mental health services, etc. The core group will meet regularly to see how things are going and if the plan is working. They usually meet each month. The first meeting will be held within ten working days of the conference.

After three months a Review Child Protection Conference will be held. The conference will look at the progress that you and your family have made and decide if it is still necessary to have a plan for your child. The plan will be updated as necessary. Further Child Protection Conferences will be held every six months until it is agreed that a plan is no longer needed.

Who will know that my child has a Child Protection Plan?

Confidentiality is very important; everyone present at the conference will be reminded of this. Only those professional people who need to know are given information about your child. If someone tries to find out whether your child has a Child Protection Plan they will only be told after their identity has been checked, and it is agreed they need to know. You will need to consider who you want to share this information with and whether the people you tell will keep the information confidential.

Sharing information

If a Child Protection Plan has been made to keep your child safe, other organisations that need to know will be given the relevant details for their records. This is to make sure that all the information about your child is carefully considered, if they need action or attention from professionals who have not attended the Child Protection Conference.

Health professionals who may provide care for your child include:

- Health visitors
- School nurses
- GP practices
- Accident & emergency departments
- Paediatric wards
- Midwives

Organisations that will receive notification about children who have Child Protection Plans are:

- The police
- Your child's school or nursery

Other organisations may be informed of your child's circumstances if they need the information to help keep your child safe.

Can I complain if I do not agree with my child having a Child Protection Plan?

If you are unhappy about the way the conference was conducted, or feel that the decision made at the conference was the wrong one, you can speak to the conference chair, or their manager to make a complaint. There is a leaflet in this pack which tells you how to make a complaint about the decision of the conference.

You may wish to answer the following questions to help you express your views to the conference:

I want to say this about the worries I have about my child:

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I think it is important for the conference to know this about my child and family:

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I think is important to tell the conference about these things that I have done and will do in the future to make sure my child is safe and well cared for:

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Social worker's name:.....

Contact number:.....

Address:.....

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CAS15945 Children and Adults Services, CMI Team 2016