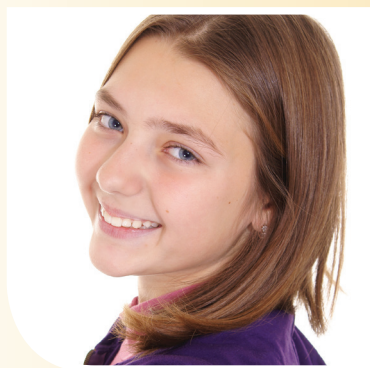




## Complaint Procedure

The Child Protection Conference Process



**Throughout the child protection process all professionals involved will have worked very hard to answer your questions and keep you fully informed.**

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss concerns that professionals have about a child or children and it can be a difficult meeting for parents and carers.

As parents or carers you are entitled to make a complaint in respect of one or more of the following aspects of the Child Protection Conference.

- The conference process
- The outcome of the conference and category of abuse
- The decision to not make the child subject of a child protection plan
- The decision to make the child subject of a child protection plan
- The decision to discontinue the child protection plan or continue the child protection plan

**You need to be aware that that this complaints process cannot change a Child Protection Plan decision and that during the course of the complaints process, the decision made by the conference stands.**

At the end of the complaints process several outcomes are possible:

1. A conference is reconvened under a different chairperson
2. A Review Child Protection Conference is brought forward
3. The conclusion of the original conference is confirmed

Complaints about individual agencies, their performance and provision (or non-provision) of services should be responded to in accordance with the relevant agency's complaints process.

There are several stages to the complaints process. These are:

### **Immediate resolution**

You can speak to the chairperson after the conference to express your concern and the issue can be resolved at the conference. The concerns and resolution will be documented.

## **Stage 1**

### **Exploration of complaint by conference chairperson**

If the initial attempt to resolve your concern fails, you will be given information about the complaints process and be invited (and if necessary assisted by the social worker) to write within 28 days of receipt of the notes of the conference, to the conference chairperson.

The conference chairperson will inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) business manager, relevant service manager (Children's Services) and the council's complaints manager within five working days of receipt of the complaint.

The chairperson will acknowledge your complaint in writing and explain what specific issues they will deal with specifically. Any issues in the complaint not dealt with under these procedures could be dealt with under another agency's complaints process.

The chairperson will take a detailed account of all communications and actions in relation to the complaint.

If you raise issues about other child protection actions which took place before the conference (such as strategy meetings, conduct of assessments etc) there will be discussions held with council complaints officer to agree next steps.

In exceptional circumstances complaints outside the 28 day time frame may be considered at the discretion of the conference chairperson.

The conference chairperson will then meet with you (you can be supported by a friend or relative) within seven working days of receipt of your complaint to:

- Ensure that you understand the child protection process
- Clarify the grounds for, and nature of, the complaint(s)
- Establish the outcome you want
- Ensure you understand the scope boundary and relevance of this complaints process with regard to your circumstances
- Gather relevant information

At this meeting the chairperson will make sure that notes are taken. These notes will include a clear outline of the nature of your complaint and the outcome you would like.

The chairperson will write to you with a response within seven working days of this meeting, and will include notes of the meeting. This letter will include information on how to pursue concerns further if you are still dissatisfied.

A copy of this written response will be sent to the LSCB business manager. This will include an order of events written by the chairperson.

## **Stage 2**

### **Formal consideration of complaint by LSCB business manager**

If you are still not satisfied you must write within 28 days of receipt of the Stage 1 letter to the LSCB business manager telling them that you remain dissatisfied, you must give details of why you are not satisfied. Arrangements will then be made to organise a complaints panel within 28 days.

The chair of the complaints panel will normally be a representative of the agency that has the least involvement in your case.

The complaints panel membership must include at least two professionals from the LSCB partners such as the police, Children's Services and health agencies. The people will have had no previous direct involvement in your case.

**The panel will be given:**

- A formal request to meet
- A copy of the relevant conference notes and the reports that were made available to the conference
- Meeting notes and correspondence from Stage 1 of your complaint

The LSCB business manager or representative will communicate with you throughout, and attend the panel meeting to give advice on relevant processes.

**The panel will consider whether:**

- Relevant inter-agency protocols and procedures have been followed; and
- The original decision was correct and based on the information presented

**The panel will:**

- Hear (either directly or in writing) from you, the chairperson of the relevant Child Protection Conference and any other relevant person
- Consider reports and letters
- Reach a decision
- Agree the content of their letter to you

**The panel will write to you within seven working days of its meeting and will:**

- Confirm membership of the panel
- State their decision
- Provide detailed information about how the decision was reached

At the end of the complaints process several outcomes are possible.

A recommendation will be made to restart the conference, under a different chairperson if:

- Procedures/protocols relating to the conference were not correctly followed; or
- Procedures/protocols were correctly followed but the decision of the conference was unreasonable

If the panel decides that the procedures relating to the conference were correctly followed and the decision(s) reached were reasonable, the decisions from the original conference will stand and they will be reviewed when the Review Child Protection Conference is held.

The panel will also consider any specific concerns which may be relevant to discuss with other agencies involved with the case and they can make recommendations relating to practice or procedures to any LSCB agency.

You need to know that any issues relating to actions taken in respect of individual staff cannot be shared.

### **Reconvened conference**

The conference chairperson of the Reconvened Child Protection Conference will make sure that everyone involved has seen or been briefed at the conference about the decisions reached by the complaints panel.

The conference chairperson will make a clear distinction between the need to discuss the conclusions of the complaints panel and the task of the Child Protection Conference, which is to consider the child's current circumstances.

### **Further challenge**

There are no further internal complaints processes for cases where the independent complaints panel decides that all relevant processes were followed and that the decisions which were made were reasonable.

In exceptional cases, where a conference has been restarted, and you do not accept the outcome, the LSCB complaints panel may, be asked to meet again and review any remaining and clearly specified concerns.

Useful documents can be downloaded from **[www.durham-lscb.org.uk](http://www.durham-lscb.org.uk)** in the 'parents and carers' section of the menu.

A full copy of the complaints procedure can be found at **[www.durham-lscb.org.uk](http://www.durham-lscb.org.uk)**

If you require any further information please contact:

The LSCB Business Manager  
Durham LSCB  
County Hall  
DH1 5UJ

Social worker's name:.....

Contact number:.....

Address:.....

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[www.durham-lscb.org.uk](http://www.durham-lscb.org.uk)

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