



Child protection conferences: Information for parents

What is a Child Protection Case Conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting of people who, in their work, are concerned about the care or safety of children. A conference has been arranged because concerns have been raised about the care or safety of your child. The social worker will explain to you the reason why a meeting has been called about your child.

Before the Conference

Parents should attend child protection conferences if they want to. You will receive a letter inviting you to the conference. Only in exceptional circumstances will parents not be allowed to attend all or part of the meeting. If this happens a full explanation will be given to you.

The social worker will ask you for information about your family and will include this in their assessment. The social worker will write a report for the conference, but you will be given the opportunity to read it before hand. If you do not agree with any part of the report, you will have the opportunity to share your views in the conference.

If you find it difficult to talk in a large group you can have your comments written down so the chairperson can read them out.

You will meet the chairperson before you go into the conference so that he or she can tell you what is going to happen and you can share your views with him or her.

Getting to the Conference

Young children should not be brought to the conference. You will need to make alternative arrangements for their care. If this is difficult, discuss it with the Social Worker in plenty of time before the conference.

If you have problems getting to the conference you need to discuss this with your Social Worker.

The Social Worker can help if you need advice on:

- Child care arrangements
- Wheelchair access
- Someone to sign for you if you have a hearing difficulty
- An interpreter if you do not speak English

Can I bring a supporter?

You may want to bring someone to the meeting to act as a supporter or to explain anything you don't understand. This may be a relative or friend, or you may want to

bring a solicitor. Whoever you bring to support you may sit in the meeting with you, but they would not normally be able to join in the discussion and they cannot be involved in any decision making.

Who will be there and what will happen?

The conference will be chaired by someone who is not directly involved in work with you and your family. They are there to ensure that the meeting is held in a proper manner and that the right decisions are made about your child.

Other people there may include:

- Social Workers
- Health Visitor
- School Nurse
- Teacher or Headteacher
- Police
- Education Welfare
- Probation
- Local Authority Solicitor
- Doctor (GP or Paediatrician)
- Family Centre Workers

The people at the meeting will share information about your family and the concerns raised during the investigation. Your views are very important and the Chair will make sure that you have the opportunity to speak at the meeting. Your comments can be written down if you feel unable to share them in the meeting.

The conference has to decide whether your child should be made subject to a Child Protection Plan. It will also consider any action that needs to be taken to protect your child.

What will the Conference decide?

The Child Protection Conference has to decide whether your child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed in the future. If this is the case your child will be made subject to a Child Protection Plan. A plan will be agreed between you and the professionals at the conference to reduce the risk of harm to your child in the future. If you disagree with the decision, this will be recorded.

A report outlining the decisions made at the conference will be sent to you within a few days.

Will my child be removed from me?

The conference cannot make this decision though it might believe your child is not safe at home and recommend that Children's Social Care Services take legal advice about his or her removal.

The decision about whether your child will continue to live with you will be made by the court. If the matter goes to court you can be represented by a solicitor.

However, the majority of children who do have a Child Protection Plan remain at home with their parents or carers.

What is the Child Protection Plan?

The Child Protection Plan outlines what needs to happen to reduce the risk of harm to your child. It gives an opportunity for you to work in partnership with professionals to make things better for you and your family.

After the Child Protection Conference

If your child has a Child Protection Plan:

- A key worker will be named. This is a social worker who has the responsibility to oversee work with your family and they will visit your family regularly.
- A Core Group will be named. This is a small group of professionals who will meet with you to agree the detail of the Child Protection Plan and to decide who will do what and when. This group meets regularly to review the progress of the plan.
- Professionals want to work with you because it is the best way to protect children.

How long will my child have a Child Protection Plan?

A review conference is usually held at least every six months and you will be invited to attend. The review will consider whether your child is still felt to be at risks or whether the risks have been reduced to the point that they no longer need a Child Protection Plan.

Will I see a copy of the minutes?

A note taker will record what is said throughout the Conference, and you will receive a copy of the Chairperson's report which contains a summary of the main discussion topics, including the decision, and key recommendations (excluding any information shared in a confidential section).

What if I am unhappy about the Conference?

If you do not agree with the decisions made, a note will be made of your views.

If you wish to complain about any aspect of the Child Protection Conference, including the outcome, then please raise your concerns with the Conference Chair in the first instance.

Please contact your social worker if you want to ask any further questions about the conference.