

Good Practice Guidance for the Child Protection Conferencing Process June 2010

This guidance pack sets out your responsibilities within the child protection conferencing process and will help enable you to contribute effectively.

Aim of this guidance

- To clarify role expectations for those contributing to the child protection conference process to enable LSCB partner agencies to fulfil their statutory responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and section 175 and 157 of the Education Act 2002.
- To ensure a better understanding of roles and responsibilities within the child protection conferencing process.
- To develop the skills and confidence of staff in all agencies in contributing effectively to child protection conferences and child protection plans.

Inter-agency approach to assessment and provision of services

“Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children – and in particular protecting them from significant harm – depends on effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise. Individual children, especially some of the most vulnerable children and those at greatest risk of suffering harm and social exclusion, will need co-ordinated help from health, education, early years, children’s social care, the voluntary sector and other agencies, including youth justice services.” (HM Government Working Together 2010 (1.12))

An essential component of an assessment, to see if a child is at risk of significant harm, is the knowledge your agency might already hold about a child and their family.

Using the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Appendix 2) for guidance helps us to assess families in a holistic way and bring our thoughts together to enable a thorough analysis of the child and family’s needs. This analysis will form the basis of an effective child protection plan.

Assessment is a continuing process and not a single event, however, reports to child protection conferences form an important basis of an assessment and contribute to a Core Assessment made by Children Services (Social Care) as the lead agency.

A Core Assessment is the means by which by which a Section 47 enquiry is carried out and although it will have been commenced, it is unlikely it will have been completed in time for the conference given the 35 day period that such an assessment can take place.

Those attending conferences should be there because they have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child or family or both. (HM Government 2010 (5.84))

Research shows that a written report from those invited to a conference enables their knowledge of the family and expertise to be available to inform the analysis and make realistic and workable plans for safeguarding the child.

The 4LSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures 2007 give detailed guidance on the child protection conference process <http://www.4lscb.org.uk>

The purpose of a child protection conference (CPC) is:

- *to bring together and analyse, in an inter-agency setting, the information that has been obtained about the child's developmental needs, and the parents' or carers' capacity to respond to these needs to ensure the child's safety and promote the child's health and development, within the context of their wider family and environment;*
- *to consider the evidence presented to the conference and taking into account the child's present situation and information about his or her family history and present and past family functioning, make judgments about the likelihood of a child suffering significant harm in future, and decide whether the child is continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm; and*
- *to decide what future action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, including the child becoming the subject of a child protection plan, what the planned developmental outcomes are for the child and how best to intervene to achieve these.*

("Working Together" HM Government 2010 (5.82))

The tasks of a child protection conference are Listed in "Working Together" 2010 at paragraph 5.105.

Responsibilities of practitioners attending Child Protection Conferences

Prior to the conference

- **All the agencies**, who have participated in the Section 47 enquiry or who have relevant information, **should provide a written, legible and signed report and make this available** to the Chair **twenty four hours in advance** of the conference. The Social Worker's report to conference should be with the Chair at least forty-eight hours in advance.
- If an agency representative is unable to attend the conference he/he must ensure that a written report is made available through the chairperson and, if possible, that a well prepared colleague attend in his/her place.
- Conference members will be expected to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the conference to allow time to read reports and speak to the Chair regarding any issues pertaining to the conduct of the conference.

At the conference

- The agency representative should come to the conference prepared to contribute to determining whether or not the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and therefore needs to be the subject of a child protection plan. **The representative should have a clear idea of how they/their agency may contribute to any child protection plan.**
- Learning from Serious Case Reviews highlights that analysis of risk is critical. All representatives at Conferences should be prepared to analyse the information presented at conference in order to determine risk of significant harm to the child from all known history.
- Effective decision making benefits from robust debate of differing professional perspectives. It may involve challenging alternative views where this is supported by professional opinion or research.

After the conference

- Record outcome of conference, liaising with any appropriate colleagues.
- Record the dates and times of any subsequent meetings.
- Make arrangements to attend the core group if you are a core group Member for this child and family.
- ***Be prepared to stay on after an Initial Child Protection Conference for a core group meeting which will follow on immediately afterwards.***

Reports from professionals to Child Protection Conferences

It is the **responsibility of all the agencies**, who have participated in the Section 47 enquiry or who have relevant information, **to provide a written, legible and signed report** containing the details below **and make this available** to the Chair **twenty four hours in advance** of the conference (having shared it with relevant family members). These reports will be made available to those attending the conference (Working Together 2010 (5.94)). The Social Worker's report to conference should be with the Chair at least forty-eight hours in advance. The following content is suggested by Working Together 2010 (5.92)

For Initial Child Protection Conferences

- **Details of agency involvement** with child and family
- **Information and knowledge of child's health and development**, under the dimensions of: health, education, emotional and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation and self care skills
- **Capacity of parents to safeguard child and promote child's health and development**, under the dimensions of: basic care, ensuring safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries
- **Expressed views, wishes and feelings of the child**
- **Analysis of implications** for the child's future safety, health and development, taking into account risk factors and family strengths.
- **Consideration of the impact of the current and past family functioning** and family history are having on the **parent's capacities to met the child's needs.**

For Review Child Protection Conferences

- **Details of planned and actual agency involvement** with child and family since last conference
- **Any new issues or concerns.**
- **Outcomes of the work carried out with the family** in terms of child's needs, under the dimensions of: health, education, emotional and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation and self care skills & parents' capacity to meet these, under the dimensions of: basic care, enduring safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries
- **Expressed views, wishes and feelings of the child**
- **Analysis of implications** for the child's future safety, health and development, taking into account risk factors and family strengths.

- **Consideration of the impact of the current and past family functioning and family history are having on the parent's capacities to met the child's needs.**

All those providing information must distinguish carefully between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. **Good practice dictates that this report should be shared with the parent/carer prior to the Conference.**

It is recommended that each agency uses a **standard report format** to include the recommended areas as above, based upon the Assessment Framework (DOH 2000). A copy of the Assessment Framework Triangle which will aid your assessment is available at **Appendix 2**. The suggested format, for adaptation by you agency can be found at **Appendix 3**.

The Child Protection Plan

The Child Protection Conference is responsible for deciding if the criteria for “significant harm” are met and the child/children therefore need to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan . The category of abuse or neglect that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering will be decided by the Chair of the conference. An interagency Child Protection Plan will then be drawn up by all attendees; this will be facilitated by the Chairperson. In exceptional circumstances, any aspects of the Plan that cannot be agreed at the Conference.

As a contributor to the assessment, you will be required to participate in the process of developing the details of the plan with other professionals and the child/parent/caregivers at the Conference. It is therefore important to be clear about how you/your agency may contribute to the Child Protection Plan before attending the Conference. You may need to think about whether you are authorised to commit your agency's resources or whether you need to discuss this with your manager prior to attending either type of meeting.

If any core members are missing from the conference, the Chairperson may write to them, to make them aware of any expectations that the Child Protection Conference about their/their agency involvement in the Child Protection Plan and Core Group Planning Meeting.

The overall aim of the Plan is to:

- ensure the child is safe and prevent him or her from suffering further harm.
- promote the child's health and development – i.e. his or her welfare; and
- provided it is in the best interest of the child, support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child.

The Plan should:

- clearly identify the risks to the child and what needs to be different for the child to be safe

- describe the identified development needs of the child, and what therapeutic services are required
 - establish which agencies need to be involved in different aspects of the plan
 - include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, including interim objectives
 - include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes, with timescales
 - include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action
 - clearly identify roles and responsibilities of professionals and family member, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members
 - lay down points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which progress will be judged
 - Set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of those professionals with routine contact with the child – e.g. health visitors, GPs and teachers – as well as professional providing specialist services or targeted support to the child and family.
 - determine the membership of the core group
 - determine the visiting frequency for the key worker to see the child
- (Appendix 1 Protection Plan format)

Distribution of the Child Protection Plan

Attendees of the Child Protection Conference will be asked to give both their and their manager's email address, prior to the start of the Conference. The stand-alone document "Inter-agency Child Protection Plan" will then, either be produced either at the Conference, or emailed to attendees within two working days of the conference. A hard copy of the plan will be sent out within 5 days to those without email access. The minutes will be forwarded to you by email or post, usually within ten working days.

Quality of the Protection Plan

If at any time the Conference Chair believes that the Child Protection Plan does not adequately safeguard a child, they will contact the relevant Team and District Manager and their own Service Manager to discuss the issues and the possible need for another Child Protection Conference.

The Core Group

A 'Core Group' of relevant Interagency professionals is convened to ensure that the child protection plan is developed as a detailed working tool and this group is responsible for implementing the day to day plan within the outline plan agreed at the initial child protection conference.

The chair of the core group will come from the social care team within the Children Services Department and will be either the Team Manager or

another experienced social worker. In Hampshire it will not be the allocated social worker who chairs this group as previous experience has taught us that this is not the safest option.

Membership should include the lead social worker, (also known as key worker, or allocated social worker), the child if appropriate, family members and professionals or foster carers who will have direct contact with the family. The conference itself will identify those agencies who should be part of the core group. Although the lead social worker has lead responsibility for the implementation of the child protection plan, **all members of the core group are jointly responsible for carrying out these tasks, refining the plan as needed and monitoring progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan.**

Hampshire's new procedure from October 1, 2010 is that following the Initial Child Protection Conference, and assuming the child is made subject to a child protection plan, the core group will follow on directly. Thereafter, core groups should meet sufficiently regularly to facilitate working together, monitor actions and outcomes against the child protection plan, and make any necessary alterations as circumstances change. They would usually be not less than every six weeks unless a full conference is held in between and any departure from these timescales would need to be agreed by the core group chair and the conference chair. Minutes are maintained from core group meetings and if it is believed that the protection plan is not working it may be necessary to refer back to the Child Protection Conference Chair.

Attendance at Core Group Meetings is key to taking forward the Protection Plan and should be given a high priority by all agencies.

Agencies should ensure that members of the core group undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively in accordance with the agreed child protection plan. (Working Together 2010 (5.116))

Core groups are an important forum for working with parents, wider family members and children of sufficient age and understanding. It can often be difficult for parents to accept the need for a child protection plan within the confines of a formal conference. Their co-operation may be gained later the core group. Sometimes there may be conflicts of interest between family members who have a relevant interest in the work of the core group. The child's best interests should always take precedence over the interests of other family members. (Working Together 2010 (5.117))

Essential Reading

- Working Together to Safeguard Children in Need and their Families – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. 2010. HM Government. [Working Together 2010](#)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. 2000. Department of Health.

Web access <https://www.open.gov.uk/doh/quality.htm>

- Hampshire Local Safeguarding Children Board
Procedures <http://www.4lscb.org.uk>

Inter Agency Child Protection Plan

Conference Chair:	Conference date:
--------------------------	-------------------------

Name	D.O.B.	Address

Core Group Members

OUTLINE OF WHAT ACTION NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE CHILD AT RISK PLAN, INCLUDING DETAILS OF CORE ASSESSMENT, ANY MEDICAL, PSYCHIATRIC, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT NECESSARY FOR ANY FAMILY MEMBER.

Risk	Task	By whom	Timescale	Planned Outcome

Assessment Framework Triangle



The Assessment Framework

DIMENSIONS OF A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

HEALTH

Includes growth and development as well as physical and mental wellbeing. The impact of genetic factors and any impairments should be considered. Involves receiving appropriate health care when ill, an adequate and nutritious diet, exercise, immunisations where appropriate and developmental checks, dental and optical care and, for older children, appropriate advice and information on issues that have an impact on health, including sex education and substance misuse.

EDUCATION

Covers all areas of a child's cognitive development, which begins from birth. *Includes* opportunities: for play and interaction with other children; to have access to books; to acquire a range of skills and interests; to experience success and achievement. Involves an adult interested in educational activities; progress and achievements, who takes account of the child's starting point and any special educational needs.

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT

Concerns the appropriateness of response demonstrated in feelings and an action by a child, initially to parents and caregivers and, as the child grows older, to others beyond the family. *Includes* nature and quality of early attachments, characteristics of temperament, adaptation to change, response to stress and degree of appropriate self-control.

IDENTITY

Concerns the child's growing sense of self as a separate and valued person. *Includes* the child's view of self and abilities, self-image and self-esteem, and having a positive sense of individuality. Race, region, age, gender, sexuality and disability may all contribute to this. Feelings of belonging and acceptance by family, peer group and wider society, including other cultural groups.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Development of empathy and the capacity to place self in someone else's shoes. *Includes* a stable and affectionate relationship with parents or caregivers, good relationships with siblings, increasing importance of age appropriate friendships with peers and other significant persons in the child's life and response of family to these relationships.

SOCIAL PRESENTATION

Concerns child's growing understanding of the way in which appearance, behaviour, and any impairment are perceived by the outside world and the impression being created. *Includes* appropriateness of dress for age, gender, culture and religion; cleanliness and personal hygiene; and availability of advice from parents or caregivers about presentation in different settings.

SELF CARE SKILLS

Concerns the acquisition by a child of practical, emotional and communication competencies required for increasing independence. Includes early practical skills of dressing and feeding, opportunities to gain confidence and practical skills to undertake activities away from the family and independent living skills as older children. *Includes* encouragement to acquire social problem solving approaches. Special attention should be given to the impact of a child's impairment and other vulnerabilities, and on social circumstances affecting these in the development of self care skills.

DIMENSIONS OF PARENTING CAPACITY

Basic Care

Providing for the child's physical needs, and appropriate medical and dental care. *Includes* provision of food, drink, warmth, shelter, clean and appropriate clothing and adequate personal hygiene.

Ensuring Safety

Ensuring the child is adequately protected from harm or danger. *Includes* protection from significant harm or danger, and from contact with unsafe adults/children and from self-harm. Recognition of hazards and danger both in the home and elsewhere.

Emotional Warmth

Ensuring the child's emotional needs are met and giving the child a sense of being specially valued and a positive sense of own racial and cultural identity. *Includes* ensuring the child's requirements for secure, stable and affectionate relationships with significant adults, with appropriate sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs. Appropriate physical contact, comfort and cuddling sufficient to demonstrate warm regard, praise and encouragement.

Stimulation

Promoting child's learning and intellectual development through encouragement and cognitive stimulation and promoting social opportunities. *Includes* facilitating the child's cognitive development and potential through interaction, communication, talking and responding to the child's language and questions, encouraging and joining the child's play, and promoting educational opportunities. Enabling the child to experience success and ensuring school attendance or equivalent opportunity. Facilitating child to meet challenges of life.

Guidance and Boundaries

Enabling the child to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. The key parental tasks are *demonstrating and modelling* appropriate behaviour and control of emotions and interactions with others, and *guidance* which involves setting boundaries, so that the child is able to develop an internal model of moral values and conscience, and social behaviour appropriate for the society within which they will grow up. The aim is to enable the child to grow into an autonomous adult, holding their own values, and able to demonstrate appropriate behaviour with others rather than having to be dependent on rules outside themselves. This includes not over protecting children from exploratory and learning experiences. *Includes* social problem solving, anger management, consideration for others, and effective discipline shaping of behaviour.

Stability

Providing a sufficiently stable family environment to enable a child to develop and maintain a secure attachment to the primary caregiver(s) in order to ensure optimal development. *Includes:* ensuring secure attachments are not disrupted, providing consistency of emotional warmth over time and responding in a similar manner to the same behaviour. Parental responses change and develop according to child's developmental progress. In addition, ensuring children keep in contact with important family members and significant others.

DIMENSIONS OF FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Family History and Functioning

Family history includes both genetic and psycho-social factors. Family functioning is influenced by who is living in the household and how they are related to the child; significant changes in family/household composition; history of childhood experiences of parents; chronology of significant life events and their meaning to family members; nature of family functioning, including sibling relationships and its impact on the child; parental strengths and difficulties, including those of an absent parent; the relationship between separated parents.

Wider Family

Who are considered to be members of the wider family by the child and the parents? *Includes* related and non-related persons and absent wider family. What is their role and importance to the child and parents and in precisely what way?

Housing

Does the accommodation have basic amenities and facilities appropriate to the age and development of the child and other resident members? Is the housing accessible and suitable to the needs of disabled family members? *Includes* the interior and exterior of the accommodation and immediate surroundings. Basic amenities include water, heating, sanitation, cooking facilities, sleeping arrangements and cleanliness, hygiene and safety and their impact on the child's upbringing.

Employment

Who is working in the household, their pattern of work and any changes? What impact does this have on the child? How is work or absence from work viewed by family members? How does it affect their relationship with the child? *Includes* children's experience of work and its impact on them.

Income

Income available over a sustained period of time. Is the family in receipt of all its benefit entitlements? Sufficiency of income to meet the family's needs. The way resources available to the family are used. Are there financial difficulties that affect the child?

Family's Social Integration

Exploration of the wider context of the local neighbourhood and community and its impact on the child and parents. *Includes* the degree of the family's integration or isolation, their peer groups, friendship and social networks and the importance attached to them.

Community Resources

Describes all facilities and services in a neighbourhood, including universal services of primary health care, day care and schools, places of worship, transport, shops and leisure activities. *Includes* availability, accessibility and standard of resources and impact on the family, including disabled members

Reference

Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families.
DOH. 2000. The Stationery Office.

*Insert agency name/logo***Confidential****Report for Initial Child Protection Conference****Date of conference:**

Name of service:	
Name and designation of report author:	
Name of child/children:	Date/s of birth:
Parent/carer details:	Address:
1.Details of service involvement:	
2. Information and knowledge relating to the child's health and development.	
3. Information and knowledge on the capacity of the parents/carers to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Include detail of previous family history that may influence risk to the child/children	
4. Family and environmental factors that influence resilience or risk:	
5. The child's view of the situation and what needs to change:	
6. The parent/carers view of the situation and what needs to change:	
7. Analysis of implications for the child's future safety, health and development including risk factors and strengths:	
Date of report:	Signature of author:
Report read by child/parent/carer?	
Date:	
Report sent to Chair 24 hours in advance?	Is a chronology attached?

Insert agency name/logo

Confidential

Report for Review Child Protection Conference

Date of conference:

Name of service:	
Name and designation of report author:	
Name of child/children:	Date/s of birth:
Parent/carer details:	Address:
1.Details of planned and actual service involvement since last conference:	
2. Any new issues or concerns:	
3. Outcomes of work carried out since last conference:	
4. The child's view of the situation and what now needs to change:	
5. The parent/carers view of the situation and what now needs to change:	
6. Analysis of implications for the child's future safety, health and development including risk factors and strengths:	
Date of report:	Signature of author:
Report read by child/parent/carer?	
Date:	
Report sent to Chair 24 hours in advance?	Is a chronology attached?