



# Child Protection Conferences



Information for families



**Hampshire**  
County Council

# Child Protection Conferences

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## Children's Services and child protection

If anyone – for example, a neighbour, a teacher, a doctor – has concerns about a child or children, they can ask Children's Services to find out what is happening. By law (under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989) we have to look into every case that we are told about.

We make enquiries and if we think it is necessary, a social worker will visit you. If the social worker believes that your child is likely to be at risk of injury, abuse or neglect we have to decide what should be done about it. One way of doing this is to bring together people who have information about what is happening and hold a Child Protection Conference.

## What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss areas of concern and decide what needs to be done.

A number of people, including you and your child, are invited to the meeting to give your points of view and to hear what other people think.

The meeting is usually held in a room in your nearest Children's Services office or in another Children's Services building, with everyone sitting round a table.



## What happens before the Child Protection Conference?

Before the meeting we need to get as detailed a picture as possible of what is happening.

A social worker is asked to do this and he/she will talk to you, your children and anyone who may be able to give us information about your family and your child. This could include your doctor, health visitor or your child's teacher.

The social worker will write a report for the meeting. This report will be shared with you at least 24 hours before the meeting. Some of the people your child's social worker speaks to will also write a report, which they will share with you and bring to the meeting. If you want to write down what you think and bring it to the meeting you can. Talk to your child's social worker about the best way of doing this.

Your child's social worker will tell you who will be at the meeting and why they will be there.

Don't forget that if you have any further questions, or you would like things explained in more detail, your child's social worker is there to help you.



## Who comes to the Conference?

There will be a number of people at the meeting, some of whom you will have met before. Your child's social worker will be there.

The Conference will be chaired by an Independent Officer from the Children's Services Department. There will be people who represent other organisations who may have had contact with you or your child, such as education, police, probation, or the health service.

Your child will be encouraged to attend the meeting if he or she wants to be there and is old enough to understand what it is about. If your child decides to come we will suggest they bring a friend or relative with them to give them support. If you don't want your child to be there, you should discuss this with your child's social worker.

## Do I have to come to the Child Protection Conference?

We think it is very important that parents and families are involved in Child Protection Conferences.

You might find the meeting upsetting, but families often feel that it is a relief to be able to speak openly about what is happening. However, if you don't want to come, you don't have to and it will not be held against you.

At the meeting you will be able to:

- gain an understanding of concerns raised about your child;
- give your views about what is happening;
- ask questions; and
- say what help you think your family needs.

You can ask a friend or relative to come with you to give you support or to help you put across your point of view. You may want to bring a solicitor with you, but he or she can only be there to support you, not to represent you legally.

If you want an interpreter or any other support at the meeting, please tell your child's social worker so that we can arrange this for you.

There are some circumstances which might mean it would not be advisable for you to attend all or part of the Conference. Your child's social worker will talk to you if this situation arises.

## What happens at the Conference?

The person chairing the meeting will explain why it is being held and the order in which things will be discussed. Everyone at the meeting, including you and your child, will be introduced.

The people who know you and your family will describe your child's situation and talk about any concerns they have.

You will be asked for your views and your child will also be asked to say what he or she thinks.

All this information will be discussed, so that the people at the Conference can decide what should happen next.

The Chair may ask for a confidential section at the beginning of the meeting where particularly sensitive information is shared with professionals only.



**What is said at the Conference will not be passed on to anyone else unless it is clearly in the interests of your child to do so.**

## What can be decided at the Child Protection Conference?

One of three things might be decided.

That your child is not at risk of significant harm and there is no need for a Child Protection Plan for you and your family.

OR

That more information is needed before a decision about what should happen can be made.

OR

That your child is at risk of significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is needed to help you and your family.

Whatever is decided will be put in a letter to you, even if you are at the meeting.



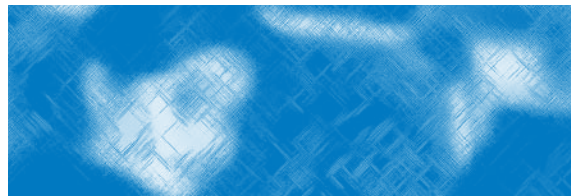
## What happens if the Conference decides that my child is not at risk?

Even if it is decided that your child is not at risk we – or you – may still feel that it would be useful for you to have some further help. Your child's social worker will discuss this with you. Sometimes a Child in Need plan is put together.

## What happens if the members of the Conference need more information?

If members of the Conference want further information about the situation, they will ask your child's social worker to gather it. When this has been done we will arrange another Conference so that a decision about your child's future can be made.

Your child's social worker will make sure that you know what is happening and why.



## What happens if the Conference decides that my child is at risk?

If people at the meeting decide your child is at risk, he or she will be made the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The Plan will be put together at the conference and will include regular visits from a social worker and perhaps help from other people, such as health visitors or education welfare officers. Help could include sessions at a Sure Start Children's Centre, having counselling or therapy, or a meeting where members of your family get together to plan for the future (a 'family group conference'). Your child's social worker will give you more details.

## The core group

The Conference will identify individuals who will form a core group of professionals and family members to develop the plan and work together to reduce the risk to your child and change things for the better. This group will meet between conferences.

## Child Protection Plan

The overall aim of a Child Protection Plan:

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

The Plan should be based on the findings from the assessment undertaken by your child's social worker. You will have opportunity, at the Conference and subsequent meetings, to add to the content of the Plan, anything you feel would help you to safeguard your child. You will be given a written copy of the Plan. It will tell you what to expect from the people named in the plan and what they will expect from you.

There will be an opportunity make changes to the Plan at a Core Group Meeting or at a Review Conference.



Review Conferences are held every 3–6 months and you will be told when the first Review will be held before you leave the Conference meeting. The Reviews will check how the Plan is working and decide whether your child still needs to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan and for how long.

If there is anything in the Plan you do not understand, or disagree with, you should talk to the social worker for your child.

Don't forget that if you have any further questions, or you would like things explained in more detail, your child's social worker is there to help you.

If you would like to talk about your situation to someone who is not connected with Children's Services you can contact:

**The Family Rights Group**  
The Print House 18 Ashwin Street  
London E8 3DL

**Advice Line**  
0808 801 0366 (Mon–Fri 10am–3.30pm)

**Textphone**  
18001 0808 801 0366

email: [advice@frg.org.uk](mailto:advice@frg.org.uk)  
web: [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

## Can my child be taken away?


We want to keep families together if it is at all possible, even when we believe children could be at risk. Most children who are made the subject of a Child Protection Plan stay at home.

However, if the people at the Conference feel there is a serious risk to your child's safety at home, they may recommend that he or she is cared for by someone else for the time being (this may be another member of your family, foster parents, or in a County Council children's home).

If you do not agree this should happen, your case will be taken to the Family Proceedings Court, so that the court can make a decision about your child's future. If this happens your child's social worker will discuss it with you and will suggest that you contact a solicitor for help and advice.

Don't forget that social workers cannot take your child away from you without your consent unless they have an order from a magistrate or judge.





## What happens if I disagree with what is decided at the Child Protection Conference?

If your child is considered to be at risk and is made the subject of a Child Protection Plan and you think the decision is unfair (or if your child is not made the subject of a Plan and you think they should have been) you should talk to your child's social worker.

Your child's social worker may be able to explain further why the decision was made and answer any questions that are worrying you. If you still disagree you can contact the person who chaired the Conference to explain why and an informal meeting will be arranged so that you can discuss it.

If after this meeting you are still unhappy with the decision made by the Conference, you have a right to ask for it to be looked at again by a panel of senior people from the health service, education, Children's Services and the police. This panel can make recommendations to the Conference after considering both your view and that of the Conference. However, the final decision about whether a child should or should not be made the subject of a Plan can only be made by the members of the Child Protection Conference.



## Complaints

If you want to complain about the way your Child Protection Conference was run (rather than the decision made), contact the person who chaired the conference in the first instance.

Your child's social worker will be able to tell you where they can be contacted.

Most complaints can be resolved at this level. If you are still not happy, ask for a copy of the leaflet *Making a complaint*. This outlines what you should do if you want to make a complaint.

For a copy of *Making a complaint* please call 0845 603 5620 or visit [www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/cs-complaints](http://www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/cs-complaints) - it can be made available in different formats or languages.

## Contact the Children's Services Department:

Phone: 0845 603 5620

Email: [childrens.services@hants.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.services@hants.gov.uk)

Web: [www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services](http://www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services)

Calls to 0845 numbers are free on some BT call plans but will cost between 4p (local rate) and 6p (national rate) per minute for BT customers not on a plan. Calls made using other service providers or mobiles may cost more. Alternatively call 01329 225 380 – standard and local rates may apply to this number.

## Equal opportunities

Whenever you have dealings with Children's Services you will not be discriminated against because of your age, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation, or because you have a disability.