



CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES
Information for
Parents and Carers





This leaflet has been written to answer some of the questions parents or carers have about child protection conferences.

- If English is not your first language, you may ask the social worker to arrange for an interpreter to explain the contents of this leaflet.
- This leaflet may also be produced in large print.
- If you have difficulty reading, the social worker can also arrange for someone to help you understand.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting arranged to discuss the concerns that professionals have about 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 in order to keep your child safe.



Where will the Child Protection Conference be?

The meeting will usually be held in a local Children & Young People's Service 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 meeting.

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

- Your family doctor.
- A Manager from the social work team.
- A Solicitor from the legal team who can give advice to the meeting.
- A Child Protection Advisor to the Health Workers.
- A Child Protection Advisor to the Education staff.
- A Probation Officer.
- A Police Child Protection Officer.

Many of these people have special knowledge and experience in child protection work and represent their agency. The average number of people attending the meeting will be 10-12.



Why are the Police at the meeting?

The child protection police are at the meeting 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 within the conference.

Should I come to the Conference?

Although it can be very difficult for parents to come to these meetings, 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.

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 meeting.

Can I bring someone with me?

If you want to bring a friend, relative or solicitor with you, you can.



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 meeting. 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 meeting?

Reports written by the professionals will be shared before the conference. You will be able to say what you think of the reports.

Who will run the meeting?

The meeting will be run by someone from Children & Young People's Service who is independent of your child's case and your child's social worker. You may hear this person called the "Chair" or "Chairperson". He or she will introduce themselves to you privately just before the meeting starts. He or she will introduce all the people at the meeting (including you and your family) and make sure the meeting is run properly.

How will they run the meeting?

After introductions have been made, the Chair of the meeting will check everyone has all 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 meeting 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.

The next part of the conference is the decision making stage. You will be able to be present right through this and you may give your opinion; however, the professionals will reach the final decision. 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 things have 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 to do an assessment and it may say that other services are needed for your family. You will be the most important person in the Plan, as you are key to keeping your child safe. Following the conference, you will need to sign your agreement 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 1-2 hours, although sometimes they may be a bit longer. Child Protection Conferences held later to see how things are improving for your child are usually shorter.

Can I take the reports away with me after 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 notes of what was said at the meeting and what was decided.

If your child is deemed to be in need of 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, the Health Visitor if your child is under 5 years of age, someone from your child's school if your child is of school age, and any other person felt necessary. The Core Group will meet regularly to see how things are going and if the Protection Plan is working. They usually meet each month. The first meeting will be held within 10 working days of the conference.



After 3 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 Protection Plan for your child. The Protection Plan will be updated as necessary. Further child protection conferences would be held every 6 months until it is agreed that a Protection Plan is no longer needed.

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

Confidentiality is very important; everyone present at the meeting 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.

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 council services for children.

Social Workers name:

Contact Number:

Address:


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www.durham-lscb.gov.uk

If you need this information summarised in another language or format such as Braille or talking tape, please call the number below.

 (0191) 383 3305