



Child Protection Conferences A Guide for Parents/Carers

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting which is held when Children's Social Care or another agency are concerned that your child or children are at risk of suffering significant harm. It may be that an 'enquiry' has taken place, often referred to as a Section 47 enquiry. A social worker will start to complete an assessment to look at all aspects of your family life and the care of your child/ren.

What is the purpose of the Child Protection Conference?

As a parent / carer, you should always be invited to attend a conference unless there are really good reasons given as to why you should not attend (see note about exclusions below).

The professionals who are attending the conference will have written a report. Where appropriate they should have talked to you about the issues contained in their report prior to conference.

The chair of the conference will ensure that you have a key role in contributing to the conference and will be asked to express your views, ask questions and correct information given by other people present.

You may bring a friend, relative or Solicitor to a conference to support you. The conference chair will meet with you and your supporter before the conference begins. **However**, this supporter will not be able to speak on your behalf or take part in the discussion, but they can take notes and remind you of things you want to say.

It is important to remember that if you are bringing a friend as a supporter, this needs to be someone you can truly trust as they may hear information about you and your family you may not wish them to know.

If you need any assistance so that you can attend the conference, such as transport or child care, you should contact the allocated Social Worker as soon as you receive the invitation.

Exclusion of a parent from a Child Protection Conference?

The decision not to allow you to attend a conference is a very serious step, and the final decision about such an exclusion is made by the Independent Safeguarding & Reviewing Manager and the chair of the conference.

Some of the reasons may include:

- The threat or risk of violence towards another family member or professional attending the conference (this may be based on information given by the Police)

- Evidence that your child may be placed at risk of harm if you attend
- Evidence that taking part in the conference may be harmful to your health or well being
- Evidence that you are under the influence of drugs / alcohol

The exclusion will usually be to the **Initial** child protection conference only until any risks identified above can be assessed or understood.

If I decide not to attend the conference or I am excluded, how will my voice be heard?

If you decide that you would rather not attend the conference, or you have been asked not to attend on this occasion, it is still important that your views are included in the discussion. You may give information to the Social Worker, or by writing/emailing/telephoning the conference chair, who will read out your information at the conference (please use the address/email address or telephone number on your invitation).

The Conference Process:

The conference chair will make sure that everyone in the meeting has the chance to say what they think and take part in the discussion.

If you are attending the conference, the chair will meet with you before it starts to let you know who will be there, what will happen during the meeting and check that you have received copies of the reports prepared by the professionals who know your child/ren, for the conference.

The conference will use the 'signs of safety' approach which may be different to child protection conferences you have attended in the past or in other areas of the country but it is hoped that you will feel more included in the meeting and able to discuss your worries more openly.

Any information gathered at the conference will be written up on whiteboards/paper for everyone to see. A summary of the discussions of what is said at the conference will be taken by a 'child protection administrator'. After the conference, a record of these discussions will be sent to you within 20 working days of the conference taking place.

At the start of the conference, everyone will be asked to introduce themselves before the chair explains why the conference has been called and what the worries are for your child/ren's safety and welfare. All the people at the conference, including yourself, but not your supporter, will then be able say what they think needs to be done to protect your child/ren.

If it has been decided that you will be excluded for part of the discussion, the chair will tell you before the conference starts and will arrange for you to be taken into another room when the time comes.

At the end of the conference, the chair will go over the main points of what has been discussed and agreed, so that everyone at the conference understands what needs to be done. Although you have been asked to contribute to the conference it is the professionals in attendance who will make the decision whether to place your child/ren on a 'child in need plan' or a 'child protection plan'.

The content, although not the detail, of the **outline child protection plan** will be agreed at the conference and written down, and you will be sent a copy of this. A more detailed plan will be drawn up at the first meeting of the **core group**.

What is a Child Protection Plan?

Government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2015) requires all local authorities to hold a list of all children who have a child protection plan. The list contains information about:

- The child and his / her family
- The Professionals involved with the family
- The category of abuse or neglect
- Decisions and recommendations of Conferences

A child protection plan does not affect your legal status as a parent or your responsibility for your child.. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' sets out a number of categories for making a child the subject of a child protection plan. These are; **Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse & Neglect**

What does having a Child Protection Plan mean for my child and myself?

If the conference decides that a child protection plan is necessary, a group of professionals, who will mostly be involved with you and your child, will meet regularly with you. This is called a **Core Group**. (a separate leaflet will be given to you if appropriate)

The core group will meet on a regular basis, to discuss the details of the child protection plan and will to formulate a safety plan for your child/ren.

Within three months of the initial conference, a child protection review must be held to make sure that the actions agreed at the conference to improve your child/ren's safety have taken place. Further review conferences must be held at least once every 6 months for as long as your child/ren is the subject of a child protection plan. At each conference a decision will be made to either continue the child protection plans or cease them.

You are expected as the parent/primary care giver to attend all conferences relating to your child/ren. Failure to attend may mean important decisions cannot be made about your child/ren. Please keep in touch with the allocated social worker if you are unsure about the conference process.

What if I want to make a complaint?

There is a complaints procedure if you or your child feels:

- Unhappy about the way a Conference was organised
- Unhappy about something which happened during a Conference
- The decision was not reached properly

A separate leaflet can be obtained from your Social Worker, the Chair of Conference or directly from the Children's Social Care Customer Relations Team

Telephone Number: 01482 393939
E-mail - Customer.relations@eastriding.gcsx.gov.uk