

**Children and Families**  
**“Working together to safeguard children”**

## **A Guide for Parents and Carers**

# **Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Plans**



**This leaflet explains what happens in Child Protection Conferences and what Child Protection Plans are for and how they work to help you to have a better understanding of your role in the process and the importance your contribution makes for the future of your child and family.**

**A separate leaflet for parents and carers to explain about Child Protection Enquiries is also available.**

**Produced by Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board**

## What is a child protection conference and who attends?

A child protection conference is a meeting attended by yourself and your child where applicable and professionals from various agencies that know you and your family, or play a key role in your child's wellbeing. It usually includes your GP, your child's school nurse, health visitor, teacher, a representative from the police and your child's social worker. The conference is held on behalf of the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) and its purpose is to decide if a child is at risk of suffering from harm and, if it believes this is the case, to, recommend a child protection plan. This is a legal requirement. The first meeting is referred to as the initial child protection conference; all subsequent conferences are referred to as review conferences.

Members of the conference will share and discuss information about your family and their legal responsibility is to consider whether they think that your child is "continuing to, or likely to suffer from, significant harm?" "Significant harm" is the term used to describe situations where a child is injured or where a child may not be progressing properly for various avoidable reasons to the point where their life becomes unhappy or at risk.

The social worker is responsible for preparing a report for conference, setting out the concerns and including the views of your child. This report should be available to you before the conference so that you can say what you think. Reports from other agencies should also be shared with you.

The general format of the Initial Child Protection Conference is as follows:

- Chairperson meets with you before the meeting and explains what will happen and answers any queries.
- At the start of the meeting, everyone will introduce themselves.
- Reports about the concerns for your child will be read.
- You and your child will be asked about the concerns expressed.
- The social worker will talk about the concerns and explain what has happened since they came to light.
- General information will be shared and your child's health and development discussed.
- The chairperson will then summarise what has been said before asking everyone in the meeting whether they feel your child needs a plan to keep them safe.

- The meeting will then talk about any future risks there may be to your child; and, if there are continuing concerns about your child.
- Where it is decided that a child protection plan is needed, the meeting will agree the outline of the plan for further consideration by the core group.

### **Is the meeting confidential?**

Yes, everyone at the meeting has to agree to the strict rules of confidentiality. Information about your family will not be shared with anyone except those who need to know to help make sure your child is protected.

### **Will I be invited to attend conference?**

As a parent or carer your attendance at this meeting is very important and it is usually in your best interests to do so. Occasionally, however, you may be asked to attend for just part of the meeting but if this happens the reasons will be fully explained to you by the chairperson.

### **Am I allowed to bring someone with me?**

You may bring someone along to act as your “supporter”. This could be another member of your family, a friend or solicitor. This should be someone you trust to keep your personal information confidential, who will provide you with support but he or she will not be required to give their views and opinions.

### **What happens after conference?**

You should receive a letter confirming the decisions of conference within one working day. If it is decided that action must be taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of your child you will be sent a copy of the Child Protection Plan, together with the conference minutes, within 10 working days.

Most children who have child protection plans continue living at home with support from professionals and other family members where it is needed. Occasionally, if the agencies attending the conference think it is too risky for a child to stay at home, there will be a recommendation for the child to be cared for outside the home. This could be by members of the extended family or alternative care such as foster care. If it is considered necessary to have your child cared for outside the home, you will be asked to give your permission voluntarily as this will be the preferred option but, if you don't agree, you must understand that legal action will be sought in order to place the child in the care of the local authority.

You will be invited to the smaller “Core Group” meeting to be held within 10 working days of the Conference. Only those people working closely with you and your family will be invited and we hope you will take a full part in these meetings as it is your opportunity to ask questions or make your views known on how things are going as well as saying what you are doing to keep to your part of the agreements. The meetings are usually held once a month.

A review conference will also be scheduled to take place to see how things are going.

### **What is a child protection plan?**

This is the plan that details the main areas of concern, what actions will be taken to reduce those concerns, how your child will be kept safe, and how we will know when progress is being made. The agreed actions will be followed up at a review conference and progress measured to determine whether your child is safe, and will remain safe, without any further help from people outside of your family.

### **What are review conferences and how often are they held?**

The review conferences are meetings which are held to check on progress with agreed actions and to decide whether the protection plan should continue or be changed. It is very important that actions you have agreed to are done when they should be done as this will be one of the things that the meeting will take into consideration when deciding on further action. However, it will also be your opportunity to say if you think anyone has not kept to their promised actions.

The first review conference takes place within three months of the initial child protection conference (or within one month of the child’s birth, whichever is the sooner).

Subsequent review conferences are held within six months of the previous review and continue for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan.

### **When does the child protection plan end?**

If the agencies attending a review conference agree that your child is no longer at significant risk of harm, the removal of your child’s name from the list of those with child protection plans will be considered at that meeting. This decision will be guided by the independent chairperson after taking into account the recommendations of those agencies invited to attend.

## **Will my child return to live with me?**

In most cases where children are removed from their parents, they do return once the issues of concern have been addressed and the child is no longer considered at risk. That is why it is really important that you keep to any actions you have agreed to.

## **Is the list of children with child protection plans kept confidential?**

Yes. The names of children with child protection plans are never made public. Only identified, authorised, professional staff who need to know will have direct access to the information held.

## **Where can I get help or advice?**

The outcome of a child protection conference may have a significant impact on children and families. It is therefore in your interest to seek appropriate help or advice and you may wish to contact any of the following organisations:

- Family Law Solicitor
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Family Rights Group

## **What if I am not happy with the outcome or the way things have been handled?**

If you are not happy with the decision or the way things have been handled you should contact your social worker or the independent chairperson and let them know why you are unhappy. This gives them the opportunity to put things right and/or fully explain the decisions made. If you are not satisfied with the response you get you are entitled to follow the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board complaints procedure, which the social worker or chairperson will advise you about.

## **Further information**

Further information on child protection conferences is available on the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board website at:

[www.sandwellscb.org.uk](http://www.sandwellscb.org.uk)

## Useful contacts

Social worker

Phone number

Conference chairperson

## Other key people

## Notes

## Notes