

Children and Families
“Working together to safeguard children”

A Guide for Children and Young People

Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Plans



This leaflet describes the purpose and process of Child Protection Conferences, emphasising the importance of obtaining your views in promoting your safety and wellbeing.

A separate leaflet is available describing what happens when someone is worried about your safety and initial enquiries are started. This describes the process leading up to the Initial Child Protection Conference.

(See leaflet on Child Protection Enquiries available from your social worker).

Produced by Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board

What is a child protection conference and does this involve me?

A Child Protection Conference is a multi-agency meeting held on behalf of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). At this meeting it will be decided if you are at risk of significant harm and if so to recommend a child protection plan. The law says that this has to happen.

The meeting is usually attended by you and your family members, the social worker, and people from other agencies such as your health visitor, GP, teacher, police officer. The first meeting is called the initial child protection conference and the meetings after that are called review conferences. Your invitation letter will list everyone invited and if there is anyone in particular that you would like to attend, speak to your social worker.

An independent chair person will discuss the conference and confirm the arrangements with you; this will include a discussion on whether it is in your best interests to attend or not (your age and understanding are relevant factors that are taken into account). Sometimes arrangements will be made for you to attend part of the meeting because things may be said about other people that are confidential to them. Your social worker or chair person will explain this to you if necessary.

Generally what happens at an initial child protection conference is:

- 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 welfare or safety will be read;
- you and your parents/carers 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 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 you; and, if there are continuing concerns will agree the outline of a multi-agency child protection plan for further consideration by the core group.

What if I have something to say but don't want to come to the conference?

If it is agreed that you will not attend the meeting, you can still let the meeting know what you think in any of the following ways:

- writing your views down on paper
- making a recording
- tell the chair person before the meeting, by phone or in person
- talk to someone independent called an advocate – your social worker or chair person will help you get into touch with one

You can also meet the chairperson after the meeting if you want to know what happened.

Your social worker will go through the child protection plan with you after the conference.

What if there is someone I don't want to attend?

The chairperson can decide not to invite someone to the meeting if they feel the person could threaten others or disrupt the conference. So, speak to your social worker about this and they will let the chair person know what you think.

What if don't want to speak with other family members present?

That's fine... you have a right to speak to the conference without any other family members present. Your parents will normally be invited to the conference but they can come in later if you wish to talk to the conference without them.

Can I bring someone along to support me?

Whether or not you decide to come to the meeting, your social worker can arrange an advocate for you – this is an independent adult from a children's rights group. You can tell them what you want to say and they will make sure your views are heard at the meeting. Or, you can bring along an adult that you trust.

How will the chair person help me?

The independent chair person acts on behalf of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and will:

- meet with you and your parents half an hour before the start of the initial child protection conference to make sure that you understand the purpose of the conference and what will happen;
- set out the purpose of the conference to all present, decide on the agenda and remind everyone of the confidential nature of the event;
- ensure that your views and feelings are taken into account and you receive the information you are entitled to and that your human rights are not breached;
- enable all those present, and absent contributors, to make a full contribution to the discussion and decision-making;
- forward a letter to you and your parents/carers within one working day confirming the decisions and recommendations of the conference, and
- distribute the full minutes of the conference within 10 working days.

What happens after conference?

If there are still concerns for your safety, you will be subject to a Child Protection Plan. Most children with child protection plans stay living at home with a plan of support from professionals and other family members. Sometimes, if the agencies attending conference think that it is too risky for you to stay at home, arrangements will be made for you to be cared for elsewhere. When this happens, we usually arrange for you to stay with other family members, but if that's not possible we arrange for you to stay with foster carers, unless a more permanent solution is considered necessary.

All the people who will be working with you and your family will meet again within 10 days of the conference. This will be a smaller meeting referred to as the "Core Group" and it will plan the help your family needs to make sure that are kept safe. You will usually be invited to attend this meeting.

You will receive a copy of your Child Protection Plan which has a list of actions for the Core Group to help make you safer, and when these need to be done by.

What is a child protection plan?

This is the plan that outlines the main areas of concern, what actions will be taken to reduce those concerns, how you 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 you are safe, and will remain safe, without any further help from people outside of your family.

When does the child protection plan end?

If the agencies attending a review conference agree you are no longer at significant risk of harm, the removal of your 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.

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 have direct access to the information held.

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 talk to your social worker or chairperson in the first instance so they have chance to put things right and/or fully explain the decisions made.

Where can I get help or advice?

If you need help or advice, you should speak to any of the following people:

- Your teacher
- Your school nurse
- Your health visitor
- Your family doctor
- Your social worker
- The independent chair person

- An independent advocate (ask your social worker or chairperson for details)
- A person you know and can trust which may be a family member or a friend
- The NSPCC ChildLine (24 hour service). Tel: 0800 1111
- The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) on 0800 32 88 759 during office hours or 07949 434 787 out of hours.
Email: advice@crae.org.uk
- The Children's Legal Centre, Child Law Advice Line (freephone) 08088 020 008

Further information

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

www.sandwellscb.org.uk

Notes

Notes