

A guide for parents and carers

Child Protection Conference

Bexley



Local Safeguarding Children Board



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This handout is to explain Child Protection Conferences to parents and families.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting between families and professionals that is held when there is a concern about the safety of a child within a family.

The purpose of the conference is to:

- Share information about a child's health, safety and wellbeing
- Assess whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- Identify the strengths within the family

- Identify any support needed by the family and the professionals / agencies who might be able to provide this
- Identify changes needed (if any) in order to ensure the safety of the child
- Decide if the child needs to have a Child Protection Plan or can be helped through a Child in Need plan

A Child Protection Conference does not make decisions about legal or court action, or about where children should live.

As a parent, you are invited to attend the conference and we would encourage you to take an active part and prepare for it by using the form. You may also bring someone with you as a supporter if you would like to. This can be another member of your family, a friend, or some other person of your choice.

Who else will be at the Conference?

An independent person will chair the Conference. There will also be someone to take notes at the meeting.

A number of professionals will also be invited to the meeting and prepare a report which they should share with you in advance.

Examples are:

- Social Workers
- Health Visitors, Doctors

- Teachers
- Education Welfare Officers
- Police

All professionals who have had involvement with your family will be invited, but there may also be some individuals and some agencies represented whom you may have not met before. These individuals are invited because of their expertise or because they might be able to provide help. You will be introduced to everyone at the start of the conference.





What happens at the initial conference?

The Chairman will meet with you immediately beforehand to welcome you, to explain how the conference will run and to talk about the best way for you to contribute to the discussion.

The chairman will also ask you to help confirm your family details which will be put at the front of the room on a white board.

At the start of the conference all of the participants will introduce themselves and the chairman will then summarise the information

he or she has gathered about why the conference is happening. You will then be invited to contribute to the discussion, after which a decision will be made about whether the risks to your child are significant enough that a child protection plan is needed.

The conference is then followed by a smaller meeting where the child protection plan is developed. This is called the core group and these meetings will happen throughout the length of the child protection plan

How can you prepare?

During the conference you will be given the chance to comment about what others are saying and to give your own information and views. You will also be asked what you think should happen in the future, including any help that you feel is necessary.

Many families who have attended conferences in the past tell us that they were very nervous and don't say as much as they would like to. To help overcome this, it is useful to do some preparation in advance.

The professionals who come to the conference will have already prepared a report – setting out the facts, as they are known, their views and ideas. Some families do the same. If you would like to do this you can use the format that was sent with your invitation and your social worker can help you with it if you need assistance.

If you don't want to produce written information, you could still do some preparation before the meeting. Below are some suggestions which may help you in the meeting.

Strengths

- What do you think are the strengths in your family?
- What are the things that you think you do well?
- What positive things would you like professionals to know about you and your family?

Risks/concerns

- What (if anything) do you think needs to change in order for your child to be safe?
- Any particular difficulties you are experiencing.

☐ Services/support needed

- Does your family need any additional services or support?
- How would this support help?

☐ Next steps

- What do you think needs to happen after this conference?
- What do you think you or others could do to improve the current situation?

What happens after the conference?

After the conference you will be sent a copy of the minutes (notes that are a summary of the key discussion and decisions)

A Review Conference will be held after three months and then at six monthly intervals for, as long your child is the subject of a child protection plan.

It may be that your child does not receive a child protection plan, but that the discussion has identified support that may benefit your child and family. If this is the case, then a Child in Need (CIN) plan will be developed instead.

What can you expect from us?

We want to work in partnership with you and your family. As a parent/carer, you should expect to:

- Be listened to
- Be treated with respect
- Be kept informed and involved in decisions
- Get all the help and support that has been offered to you within the agreed timescales
- Receive a reliable service, with professionals doing what they say they will

- Receive copies of all reports two days before an initial conference and five days before a Review conference
- Get a copy of the conference record/minutes within 15 working days of the conference
- Confidentiality is very important and you will find that the Chairman will remind everyone present at the conference about this

If you don't feel we are meeting these standards, you should let us know.



Contact information

You can call: Your Social Worker or if you would like to speak to the Chairman please call the Safeguarding Children Service on 020 3045 3260.

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It sets a standard for those who provide public services to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

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If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different format, please call 020 8303 7777 and ask for Communications/Graphics. The reference to quote is 606021/1.15



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