

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE FORMAT IN BRENT

PURPOSE

The purpose of a Child Protection Conference is to share information and make a decision as to whether a child has suffered or is at risk of significant harm. If so, a plan needs to be put in place in order to provide support and monitoring to the child and the parents/carers in order to reduce the risk of harm to the child; this is called a Child Protection Plan.



THE CHAIR

The conference is facilitated by an Independent Chair. This person has no line management of the Social Worker for the child and has no prior knowledge of the case, unless they have chaired a previous conference for the child. The Chair's role is to ensure the conference proceeds in a timely manner, that people treat one another respectfully, that relevant participants have an opportunity to express their views, that the focus remains on the child's safety and welfare, and to decide whether a child needs a protection plan.

***** The Chair is available 30 minutes prior to the start of the conference to meet with the parents/carers and the child (if appropriate) to explain the process. *****

THE PROCESS

The Chair will begin by explaining the purpose of the conference, the ground rules, how the meeting will proceed, and confirm the family's details by completing a genogram. As information is shared during the conference the Chair will write any relevant issues into the following five categories:

- Current Risks/Concerns** - What the current risk factors and concerns are for the child
- Historic/Complicating** - Previous concerns for the child or issues that may complicate matters
- Grey Areas** - Areas that remain unclear or require further assessment or information
- Safety/Protective Factors** - What factors help protect or ensure the child's safety
- Strengths/Positives** - What is being done well or helps support the child's safety and welfare

The Chair will then open discussions on formulating a plan for the child. This will be done in the following format: **Desired Outcome** **Actions** **By Who** **By When**

The desired outcome is what is hoped to be achieved for the child. The actions are what needs to be done, by who and when in order to achieve the desired outcome.

EXAMPLE OF A PLAN

Desired Outcome	Actions	By Who	By When
Susie no longer experiences the emotional harm impact of her parents fighting at home.	The Social Worker will refer mother to the Women's Aid for domestic violence support and safety planning.	Social Worker Mother	One Week

The Chair will then ask the professionals their view on whether the child is at significant risk of harm and if the plan developed needs to be a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan. Their input helps to inform the Chair's decision.

If the Chair decides on a Child Protection Plan, the Core Group members will be selected and will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the plan. They will meet regularly (at least every 6 weeks) until the next review conference when the Chair will review the progress on the plan.

Code of Conduct for the Conference

- All people in attendance should participate and share information relevant to the conference when asked to do so by the Chair.
- All information shared is confidential and should not be shared outside the conference without proper consent.
- Participants must treat one another with respect, even if they do not agree with what is being said.
- Being respectful means not using any language or actions that is or could be deemed to be offensive, abusive, violent, discriminatory, bullying, or coercive in nature.
- Being respectful also means people are allowed to speak without interruption, except by the Chair when necessary.
- Professionals need to be mindful of any abbreviations or jargon they use, and explain the meaning behind them.
- If an interpreter is present, people will need to make frequent pauses to allow for interpretation.
- Mobile phones must be turned off or set to silent or vibrate. People must not answer their phones or send messages during the conference, unless prior agreement is given by the Chair.
- Electronic recordings of the conference, in any format, are not allowed. Anyone wishing to take notes for their own records during the conference may do so, but may not distribute them to others.
- The Chair is responsible to ensure the conference proceeds in a timely, focused and respectful manner. For this to happen, the Chair's directions need be respected at all times.
- The Chair will warn anyone who does not honour this code of conduct. Anyone who continues to do so may be asked to leave the conference by the Chair.



ACTIONS AND DECISIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

The conference should consider the following questions when determining whether the child should be the subject of a Child Protection Plan:

- 1. Has the child suffered significant harm? and**
- 2. Is the child likely to suffer significant harm in the future?**

The conference needs to decide if the child is at continuing risk of significant harm. In reaching this decision, all professionals need to consider all relevant reports, assessments, and information shared during the conference.

The test for the likelihood of suffering harm in the future should be that either:

- 1. The child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment are likely; or**
- 2. Professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect.**

If the above criteria are satisfied, then a Child Protection Plan will be required in order to provide inter-agency support and intervention to safeguard and promote the child's welfare whilst preventing future recurrences of harm. In consultation with all professional members of the conference, the Chair will make the decision as to whether a child has a Child Protection Plan and which is the most appropriate category of abuse or neglect.

In making the decision regarding which category to register the child under, all professionals and the Chair will take into consideration the following categories of abuse:

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-givers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

CHILD PROTECTION PLAN (CP)

Where a child is to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan, it is the responsibility of the conference to consider and make recommendations on how agencies, professionals and the family should work together to ensure that the child will be safeguarded from harm in the future. This should enable both professionals and the family to understand exactly what is expected of them and what they can expect of others. Specific tasks include the following:

- Who the allocated Social Worker will be and how often they will see the child
- Ensure that the child (if appropriate) is included in all core groups and conferences, or that other means of ensuring their wishes and feelings are sought and included in all key decisions
- Outline the Child Protection Plan to include what needs to change or occur and by whom in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and to prevent future occurrences of harm
- Identify contingency plans if agreed actions are not achieved, or if there are significant changes that may result in the child being at additional risk of significant harm
- Which family members and professionals will be included in the core group
- Establish how the child, parents, and family members will be included in assessments and plans, and how they may access relevant advocacy, advice, and support services
- Establish the timescales for the core group, statutory visits, and the review child protection conference
- Identify what further action is required to complete the core assessment
- Ensuring that all members of the core group are clear about their responsibilities to implement and monitor the progress of the plan
- To ensure the plan is realistic, relevant, and achievable without compromising the child's safety or welfare

CHILD IN NEED PLAN (CIN) or COMMON ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (CAF)

A child may not be the subject of a Child Protection Plan, but he or she may nonetheless require services to promote his or her health or development. In these circumstances, the conference members together with the family should consider the child's needs and what further help would assist the family in responding to them. Subject to the family's views and consent, it may be appropriate to continue with and complete a core assessment of the child's needs to help determine what support might best help promote the child's welfare. Where the child's needs are complex, inter-agency working will continue to be important. Determining the most appropriate level of intervention will be dependent on the assessment and complexity of a child's needs.

Under a Child in Need Plan, a child will be allocated a Social Worker with Social Care who will see the child regularly, help formulate a plan of inter-agency support, and convene regular review meetings of family and professionals to ensure the plan remains relevant and appropriate to meeting the child's needs.

Under a Common Assessment Framework, a lead professional who has the most relevant involvement in a child's life will be identified who, with parents consent, will complete an assessment of the child's needs using information shared in the conference. A team around the child meeting of family and professionals will be convened regularly to ensure the level of support being offered remains relevant and appropriate to meeting the child's needs. This does not involve Social Care.

DISCONTINUING THE CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

A child should no longer be the subject of a Child Protection Plan if:

- **It is decided that the child is no longer continuing to, or be likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore require safeguarding by means of a Child Protection Plan;**
- **The child and family have moved permanently to another Local Authority area, (the receiving authority should convene a transfer-in child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified)**
- **The child has reached 18 years of age, has died, or has permanently left the UK;**
- **In most cases, when the child becomes looked after by the Local Authority**

When a child is no longer the subject of a Child Protection Plan, notification will be sent, as minimum, to all those agency representatives who were invited to attend the initial child protection conference that led to the plan.

A child who is no longer the subject of a Child Protection Plan may still require additional support and services and discontinuing the Child Protection Plan should never lead to the automatic withdrawal of help. The Social Worker should discuss with the parents and the child whether further services and support may be required or of benefit under a Child in Need Plan or the Common Assessment Framework.