



Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility

Brent LSCB

Child Protection

Conference Complaints

Procedure

July 2014

1. Introduction

- 1.1. **Child Protection Conferences can be very emotional occasions for parents, carers and possibly children who are faced with a number of professionals considering the very personal details of their lives. While agencies will endeavour to focus on the strengths of families, inevitably discussions will need to address areas of difficulty and in the case of conferences reach conclusions as to whether or not there is a risk of abuse.**
- 1.2. **It is understandable therefore, that on occasion, there is discontent with the meeting / conference or the outcome.**
- 1.3. **This policy is intended to set out the procedure for making complaints by:**
 - **Parents**
 - **Carers**
 - **Professionals**
 - **Children; where they are of sufficient age or understanding. (This could include someone acting on their behalf.)**

2. Procedure

- 2.1. **The invitation to all Child Protection Conferences should include the following wording:**

Complaints Procedure

If, following the conference/ meeting, you are unhappy and feel that:

a. The way the Child Protection Conference dealt with the case was unreasonable

OR

b. The final decision of the conference was made on a flawed basis, (perhaps due to a lack of information, or incorrect information being presented)

OR

c. You are unhappy about the registration/deregistration or outcome.

Please contact the Chair of the Case Conference. It is essential that all complaints are firstly addressed to the Chair of the Case Conference for informal resolution. This can be done in person, by letter or by telephone. If the complaint is about the Chair, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair's Line Manager.

- 2.2. If the Chair of the Case Conference (or their line manager) receives a complaint about the Case Conference she/he will set up a meeting with the Complainant within 10 working days.**
- 2.3. If the complaint is regarding the Chair of the Case Conference, she/he will set up a meeting with the Complainant, the Chair's Line Manager and the Chair of the Case Conference within 10 working days.**
- 2.4. At this meeting, the Complainant should have full opportunity to explain their complaint and express their views. If the complaint is reasonable, the Chair or their Manager should decide on the appropriate course of action. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved at this stage.**
- 2.5. If the complaint is resolved, the Chair of the Case Conference or their line manager will explain to the Complainant exactly what, if any, action is to be taken and will also provide a letter within 5 working days to the Complainant setting out the outcome of the meeting.**
- 2.6. A copy of this letter should be kept within a Children's Social Care file.**
- 2.7. If the complaint is about a particular agency, the Chair of the Case Conference will pass the complaint to that agency for it to be taken up within their own formal complaints procedure.**
- 2.8. The Chair of the Case Conference will explain to the Complainant what has been done and give details of the contact point for complaints to that agency.**
- 2.9. The Complainant will be provided with a copy of the letter sent to that agency within 5 working days referring the complaint, so that the Complainant is fully advised of the action taken.**
- 2.10. A copy of this letter should be kept within a Children's Social Care file.**
- 2.11. If the issue is not resolved at the initial meeting, the Chair of the Case Conference (or their Line Manager) will refer the complaint forward to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Business Manager who will advise the Independent Chair of the LSCB.**
- 2.12. The Chair of the Case Conference or their Line Manager will explain the next stages of the process to the Complainant and provide the Complainant with a letter.**
- 2.13. This should occur within 5 working days of the initial meeting. In addition, a note of the initial meeting should be made and circulated to the Complainant and the Independent Chair of the LSCB. This note should set out clearly the views of each party, the discussions that took place and the final outcome.**

- 2.14. The Independent Chair of the LSCB will then appoint an Investigating Officer from a pool of approved Investigating Officers drawn from the agencies who are members of the LSCB.**
- 2.15. The Independent Chair of the LSCB will write to the complainant, the Chair of the case Conference and their Line Manager within 10 working days. This letter will explain the procedure and give details of the Investigating Officer.**
- 2.16. The Chair of the Case Conference, their Manager and the Complainant have the opportunity at this stage to put their views of the complaint in writing, if they so wish.**
- 2.17. Copies of the minutes, the notes from the initial meeting and any further written details will be sent to the Investigating Officer.**
- 2.18. The Investigating Officer has 6 weeks to compile their report after receipt of these documents. The Investigating Officer can interview all relevant parties and would be expected to meet with the Complainant to discuss the case.**
- 2.19. The Investigating Officer sends a copy of their final report to the Complainant, the Chair of the Case Conference, their Manager and the Independent Chair of the LSCB. The Investigating Officer should include a summary of their findings.**
- 2.20. The Independent Chair of the LSCB can, after reading the report of the Investigating Officer, suggest that a further meeting take place, between the Complainant, the relevant Line Manager and the Case Conference Chair in the light of the Investigating Officer's report.**
- 2.21. The Complainant can decline the suggestion of the meeting and continue to point 2.23 of the procedure.**
- 2.22. If the complaint is resolved following the investigation, Case Conference Chair or their Line Manager should write to the Complainant, setting out the outcome of that meeting within 5 working days.**
- 2.23. If the complaint is not resolved at a meeting, or if the meeting does not take place, the Complainant can have a complaint dealt with either on a paperwork basis, or by way of a meeting with a panel drawn from the LSCB.**
- 2.24. The Independent Chair of the LSCB should explain this to the Complainant and establish the way the Complainant wishes to proceed.**

- 2.25. If the case is to be dealt with by an LSCB Panel, it should consist of an Independent Chair, a representative from Children's Social Care, a representative from health and one other member.**
- 2.26. All complaint documentation will be sent to all members of the Panel as well as the Complainant, the Line Manager, Case Conference Chair and Investigating Officer with a copy.**
- 2.27. If the Complainant has chosen for the matter to be dealt with on a paperwork basis, the documentation will be considered at the next meeting of the LSCB Executive group and the Independent Chair of the LSCB will write to all parties within 5 working days of this meeting.**
- 2.28. If the matter is to proceed with a LSCB Panel meeting, the Independent Chair of the LSCB will send details of the LSCB Panel meeting to the Investigating Officer, Complainant, the Line Manager and Case Conference Chair at least 5 working days in advance.**
- 2.29. At the Panel meeting, the procedure to be adopted should be explained to the Complainant. The Complainant may have a person present to support them. This person can be a solicitor if the Complainant wishes.**
- 2.30. The Panel will hear from the Line Manager, Case Conference Chair, the Investigating Officer and the Complainant, as appropriate. They will also have read the supporting documentation.**
- 2.31. The Panel may decide to:**
- Uphold the complaint and request to reconvene the case conference**
- OR**
- To dismiss the complaint.**
- 2.32. In either case, the Chair of the Panel will confirm the outcome to all parties and explain the reasons. The Chair of the Panel will also write to all parties to set out the reasons in writing. This should be done within 5 working days of the hearing. A copy should be kept on the LSCB file.**
- 2.33. With regard to complaints about Child Protection Case Conference, if the complaint is upheld, the Panel will refer the recommendations the Independent Chair of the LSCB regarding registration, de-registration, continuing registration or change of category to a reconvened child protection conference.**
- 2.34. The Line Manager of the Case Conference Chair will ensure that the reconvened conference has a different chair.**

- 2.35. Taking into account any recommendations made, the reconvened conference will again consider whether the test for registration is met and, if so, the relevant category for registration.**
- 2.36. A complainant who continues to be dissatisfied with the outcome of the reconvened conference may seek a further review of the position from the LSCB Executive group or LSCB Review Panel.**
- 2.37. The Manager of the Case Conference Chairs will maintain a record of all complaints together with outcomes. This will be reported annually to LSCB.**

3. Summary

- A. Complaint received by Case Conference Chair or their Line Manager if the complaint is about them.**
- B. Meeting convened between Case Conference Chair, and the Complainant. If the complaint is about the conduct of the Chair, the Chair's Line Manager also attends.**
- C. The meeting attempts to clarify the issues and resolve the complaint. If the complaint is one which should be dealt with by an individual agency, the complaint is referred to that agency.**
- D. If the complaint is not resolved, the Case Conference Chair or Line Manager contacts the LSCB Chair, who appoints an Investigating Officer, drawn from a pool of approved Investigating Officers.**
- E. The Investigating Officer has 6 weeks to prepare a report, which should include a summary of findings.**
- F. The Independent Chair of the LSCB can suggest a further meeting to the Complainant, particularly where the report of the Investigating Officer gives some range for resolving the complaint.**
- G. If the complaint is still pursued, the Complainant can opt for either a paperwork hearing by the LSCB Executive Group or LSCB Panel meeting.**
- H. Once the Panel have considered the case and reached their conclusion, the Panel Chair communicates the decision to all relevant parties and gives reasons for the decision.**
- I. If the complaint is upheld, the recommendations are referred to a reconvened child protection conference, under a different chair.**