



# child

protection

# conferences

A guide for Parents and Carers  
2013



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# Child Protection Conferences

## A Guide for Parents and Carers

You will be aware that enquiries have been made about the safety and welfare of your child. Following these enquiries an initial child protection conference is now required. This leaflet is to tell you what will happen at a child protection conference.

## Why is a child protection conference being held?

Because an assessment has been undertaken that suggests there are concerns that your child may have suffered harm or be at risk of continuing harm.

This is based on

- The concerns passed to children's social care, regarding your child's safety
- Information gathered from people in other organisations who know you and your family

## What is a child protection conference?

It is a meeting to:

- Share all relevant information and decide whether your child is at risk of being harmed or abused in the future
- Discuss what action is needed to safeguard and promote your child's welfare
- Decide whether your child needs to have a child protection plan

## Who will be at the child protection conference?

Those who may attend include:

- You and your child (if appropriate)
- Other family members (including any absent parent)
- Your child's social worker
- Police (if involved)
- Your family doctor

- Your child's health visitor or school nurse
- Your child's teacher or nursery staff
- A probation officer (if involved)
- Adult mental health workers (if involved)
- A solicitor for the local authority or your solicitor, (if one is required)
- An interpreter if required
- Any other worker with significant involvement with you or your family



You may not know all the people who attend the conference. Some of them may be there because they may be working with your family in the future or to give specialist advice.

Sometimes it is not possible to involve all family members in the whole conference, for example if there is conflict between parents, or if this would stop a child attending. Tell your child's social worker before the conference if there is someone you do not want to speak to.

Your child will be invited if they are old enough to understand what is happening. They may be invited to attend for part of the meeting or asked for their views separately.

The person leading the conference is called the 'Chair' and is there on behalf of the Nottinghamshire/Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board.

The Chair is independent from the line management responsibility of the case and will consider all the information presented about your family objectively in order to assist with their decision making.

### How will information be shared at the conference?

Your child's social worker and other people from organisations who know your family will be asked to write a report for the conference. They will show you the report before the conference wherever possible.

Your child's social worker's report will include your views on the concerns being raised about your child.

You will be given the opportunity prior to the meeting to speak with the Chair to share your views. Your views will also be sought throughout the meeting.



You may also want to write something to be shared at the conference.

All the relevant information will then be discussed at the conference including any reports from people from organisations who are unable to attend.

### Can I bring someone with me?

You may bring an advocate (this is a friend or a supporter) who may help you participate in the meeting. Personal information about you, your child and other family members will be discussed at the conference, so please think carefully who you want to bring. You may also bring a solicitor (if one is required).

### What if I'm unable to attend?

Your child's social worker should help you to sort out any practical problems about attending, for example transport.

*Please note: children who have not been invited to the conference, including very young children, should not come with you to the conference. Please talk to your child's social worker if this causes you a problem.*

If for some reason you cannot or do not wish to attend, you should speak to your child's social worker about how to make your views known to the conference. For example someone could attend on your behalf or you could write down what you would like to say and this will be given to the chair of the conference.



If you do not come, your child's social worker will tell you what has been decided. The Chair of the conference will write to you telling you what has been decided and you will get a copy of the minutes (a written record) of the conference.

### **Might I be asked to leave the conference at any point?**

All those attending the conference will want to hear what your child thinks and you may be asked to leave briefly if your child finds it easier to talk without you there. You may be asked to leave the conference if the solicitor for Children's Social Care is asked for legal advice or if information confidential to a police investigation needs to be discussed.

If you are asked to leave, your supporter will have to leave too. When you return, the Chair will explain what has been discussed.

In some circumstances, the Chair can exclude you from the conference if:

- They believe you may intimidate another person who needs to be at the conference
- They believe you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- You have a health condition that would prevent you contributing or be made worse by attending
- Your attendance would prevent the child attending

Tell the Chair if you wish to leave the conference for a short break or to speak in confidence to your solicitor. The conference will usually break whilst you do this.

### **What will happen at the conference?**

The Chair of the conference will:

- Meet with you before the conference to tell you what will happen
- Make sure that all information is made available and that everyone present has an opportunity to contribute

- **Ensure that those attending the conference make the decisions and recommendations that are needed to keep your child safe**

The concerns that have led to the conference will be discussed along with relevant information that has been gathered about your family. If you have any questions or disagree with what is said, you should tell your child's social worker or the Chair of the conference so your views can be heard at the meeting.

### **What can the conference decide?**

The people at the conference will decide whether or not your child is at a continuing risk of harm and needs a formal child protection plan.

This is a plan of what you and other people will need to do to keep your child safe.

A formal child protection plan will be made if it is felt that your child is likely to suffer harm without a plan.



The Chair of the conference will decide what category of abuse or neglect your child has suffered or is at risk of suffering and this will be recorded on your child's social care record.

It may be decided that your child does not require a child protection plan as there is no risk of continuing harm, but you may still be offered support if it is agreed it is necessary.

### **What happens next?**

If the conference decides that your child needs a child protection plan a 'core group' of people will meet within 10 days of the conference. This group will decide how the services that you and your child need will be provided. The group will include you and other appropriate family members (if you agree), your child's social worker and the people from other organisations who will be delivering the services.

The group will then meet regularly to make sure that the services are being delivered. These meetings continue for as long as your child requires a child protection plan.

### **Review child protection conferences**

Within three months of the first conference there will be a review conference to look at progress made and to decide whether your child still needs a child protection plan.

If this is the case it will be reviewed every six months until a decision is made that your child is no longer at continuing risk of harm.

If it is decided that your child is no longer at risk of harm and does not require a child protection plan, your child's social worker will decide with you if any other support services are required.

### **What if I wish to complain after the conference?**

If your complaint is about a particular worker then if possible raise it with them or their manager straight away. If this is not successful, contact the organisation they work for.

If your complaint is about

- **The process of the conference**
- **A decision for the child to become, or not to become, the subject of a child protection plan or a decision to continue or discontinue a child protection plan**
- **The category of primary concern agreed as the reason for the child protection plan**

you may complain using the Safeguarding Children Board Complaints Procedure.

A separate leaflet is available to describe this procedure in more detail which you can get from your child's social worker or the manager of your local Safeguarding Children Board tel: 0115 977 3935 (Nottinghamshire)

**This publication can be made available in alternative formats and languages upon request.**

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/protecting-and-safeguarding/nscb](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/protecting-and-safeguarding/nscb)

