

One minute guide

October 2016

Child Protection Chair

What are Child Protection Conference Chairs?

Child Protection Conference Chairs (CPCs) are the people who chair initial and review Child Protection Conferences (there is a one minute guide on this). Initial conferences are held for children who are deemed to be at risk of significant harm, and review conferences are for when children become subject to a child protection plan. The first review is held within three months, and six monthly thereafter.

In Luton, a CPC is a qualified social worker from the Local Authority's Safeguarding Team who has no operational or line management responsibilities for the allocated social worker; this means that they are independent from the decisions made by the Children's Social Care Teams. They have a minimum of five years' social work experience, and the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out this sensitive and demanding role.

The CPC is responsible for reviewing care plans to a high standard, and ensuring that children and young people's participation is promoted at all times.

What do they do before and at the start of the conference?

The Chair meets the child and family members in advance of the conference, to ensure they understand the purpose of the conference and what will happen, to check they have received explanatory leaflets and any other paperwork, and to answer any queries the family may have.

At the start of the conference, they set out the purpose to all present, emphasising the confidential nature of the meeting and clarifying the agenda. In addition, they ensure that all those present introduce themselves and make clear their responsibilities, for the benefit of the family and other practitioners. The Chair also considers and manages any proposals that individuals are excluded from the conference, or from receiving the conference minutes.

A key role of the CPC is to enable all those present, including those who may not be able to attend the conference in person but have submitted information to it, to make their full contribution to discussions and decision making. This particularly applies when children are attending the conference. Also, if it has been agreed that the parents are not invited to attend the conference, the CPC records this.

What do they do during the conference?

The CPC is accountable to the Director of Peoples Directorate for the conduct of the conference. The CPC ensures that the conference maintains a focus on the child(ren) as the primary client, whose interests must supersede those of the parents/ family members.

They support those at the conference to use the available information provided by contributors and make recommendations that form the outline Child Protection Plan. This includes ensuring the appointment of a lead social worker if the child is to be subject to a Child Protection Plan.

It is hugely important that the conference is conducted in an anti-discriminatory manner and gives proper consideration to issues of race, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability; the CPC is responsible for this.

What do they do at the end of the conference and afterwards?

At the end of the initial conference, they make sure a date is arranged for the first core group, to take place within 10 working days. The core group is those people identified to develop and implement the child protection plan.

Other responsibilities include setting a date and time for the first review conference, for the distribution of accurate minutes of the meeting and for ensuring agreement about how non-attending children and young people, parents and carers are informed of the decisions and recommendations.

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