

One minute guide

October 2016

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting between family members (and the child where appropriate), supporters or advocates and those practitioners most involved with the child and family. There are initial (ICPC) and review conferences. A review conference takes place within three months of the ICPC, and reviews progress. [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2015\)](#) provides statutory guidance on how conferences should be conducted and who should attend, as well as noting that all involved practitioners should: 'work together to safeguard the child from harm in the future, taking timely, effective action according to the plan agreed.'

Why would a Child Protection Conference be held?

Before a child protection conference takes place, an investigation (called a Section 47 investigation) will have been carried out to find out if it is necessary to hold a conference. The investigation involves talking to the parents and carers, the child, and other practitioners. An ICPC is held when agencies believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm; the aim of the conference is to discuss and decide what will ensure the safety and wellbeing of a child where we have these concerns.

Who attends the conferences?

If it is appropriate for the **child or young person** to be invited to participate in the conference, the social worker will discuss this with them and their parents and carers. The child may be offered an advocate from an independent advocacy service to support them to share their views.

It is very important that parents are able to attend conferences about their children, are able to participate in the discussion and contribute towards the development of a plan to meet the child's needs to keep them safe. Parents may ask another adult to come to support them who may be a solicitor, advocate or friend. This person may listen and observe, but not speak. Very rarely, parents may not be allowed to attend for all or part of the conference and if this happens the reasons for this would be explained and the parents' views reported to the conference by the social worker.

To enable effective discussion and decision making, **multi-agency involvement** is essential. Someone from Luton's Social Care, Health and the Police are always invited to attend conferences, plus others who are identified as needing to be involved. If an invited agency is unable to attend, they must submit a report setting out their views.

What happens before, during and after a child protection conference?

The social worker prepares a report for the conference setting out concerns and what is going well for the child. The report will also include the views of the child. This report will be made available to parents and carers at least two days prior to the conference, so that they are able to add their own views to the report.

The Child Protection Conference Chair (CPC - there is a one minute guide on this) meets with the parents before the meeting to explain what will happen, check that they have had the chance to read the reports that other practitioners have written, and ask if there are any specific issues that they would like to raise. In Luton, we use the Strengthening Families framework which looks at the family's strengths as well as the risks to the children.

At the conference, the CPC clearly highlights why the conference has been arranged. They lead discussions and ensure that the reasons why the child is at risk of significant harm are identified. Where required, those at the conference agree a clear plan of the things that need to happen to make the child safe and decide what sort of plan will best address the issues that have been raised (for example, a child protection plan or a child in need plan).

If the child becomes subject to a Child Protection Plan, a social worker is appointed and a Core Group of family members and practitioners (the people who are mainly involved) will be identified as the group who will work closely with the family to achieve the actions outlined in the plan. The first core group takes place within 10 days of the conference. A copy of the Child Protection Plan is shared with parents and others invited to the conference. Following this, a copy of the conference notes (a summary of the main points discussed, plus the plan and all reports) is normally shared within fifteen working days.

What is expected of practitioners?

If you are invited to a child protection conference, this is because you have a valuable contribution to make to developing appropriate safeguarding arrangements for the child(ren). It is expected, in accordance with Working Together guidance, that you will attend the conference(s) and Core Groups or, if this is not feasible within your role, that you will submit relevant information relating to your involvement with the family for consideration.

Effective safeguarding requires all practitioners to contribute to child protection arrangements; without access to all the information available about a family, we cannot make fully informed and appropriate decisions about risk in order to safeguard them.

With thanks to Leeds City Council

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