

Child Protection Conference

a guide for young people

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Who will be at the meeting?

If you are felt to be old enough you will be invited to attend for all or part of the meeting. Your parents/carers will also be invited. Your Social Worker will always attend a Child Protection Conference. Other people that will be invited include

- ▶ Teacher
- ▶ Health workers such as Health Visitor, School Nurse, GP, Hospital Doctor etc
- ▶ Police Officer
- ▶ Probation or Youth Offending Officer
- ▶ Other important people in your life e.g. Connexions Advisor, Youth Worker etc

Can I bring someone with me?

Young people who attend Child Protection Conferences may bring a supporter or a trusted adult friend with them. Your Social Worker will talk to you about this. Your parents may also bring a supporter or trusted friend with them to the conference. Sometimes young people or parents ask for their solicitor to attend the meeting with them. If you or your parents need an interpreter or signer your Social Worker will make arrangements for a suitable person to be invited.

A Child in Need Plan

Sometimes the Child Protection Conference members will decide that you are not at serious risk of harm and that you do not need a child protection plan.

It may be that you and your family need some help and support even though you are not at risk of harm; when this happens conference members suggest a plan and a smaller group will meet regularly with you and your family to make sure that you are doing as well as you can. The support should go on until you no longer need it.

What is a child protection plan?

If the members of the Child Protection Conference decide that you are at risk of harm they will start to make a child plan which will set out what is needed to make sure you are safe and properly cared for.

The plan will say:

- ▶ What Children's Social Care and all the other agencies must do to help you and your family
- ▶ What you and your family can do to improve the situation
- ▶ That the chair will make sure that everyone knows what is expected of them.

What happens next?

If a child protection plan is made a group of people, called the core group will meet together with you and your carers to make sure that everyone is doing what they agreed in the plan and that you are safe and properly cared for.

After three months there will be another conference to see whether you still need a plan of protection and if so whether the plan needs to be changed.

Who will be in charge of the meeting?

The meeting will be chaired by a Safeguarding Children Manager who will not have had any part in the child protection investigation or in managing the staff involved. You will meet with the chair before the meeting, he/she will explain how the meeting will run and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

How long will it last?

It is difficult to say exactly how long each meeting will last but a first (initial) conference is likely to last for about one and a half hours and possibly longer. Review conferences are usually shorter.

What will happen at the meeting?

Before the meeting starts you and your supporter will meet in private with the Safeguarding Children Manager who will be chairing the meeting. They will explain to you exactly what will happen at the meeting and how you will be involved, you can discuss any questions or worries about the meeting with them. They will have a similar meeting with your parents/carers.

The point of the meeting is to make sure that all important matters about your safety are discussed and that everyone present has an opportunity to give their views.

The meeting will be told about enquiries that the Social Worker and/or the Police have made and will also hear from other professional workers who know you and your family. Each person who makes a contribution at the meeting will have prepared a report. You and your family will have had copies of the report two days before the conference so that you can think about what they say and whether you have any questions or points that you want to make.

How can your views be shared at the meeting?

Every young person and parent is given a 'Take Part' leaflet to help you tell the chair and members of the meeting what your views are.

Before you come to the meeting it may be helpful to make a note of the things that you would like to say. Your supporter or Social Worker may be able to help you to do this.

When you meet with the chair of the meeting you will have the chance to talk with them about what you want to say. You may feel confident enough to say these things for yourself in the meeting or you may prefer for the chair or your supporter to say them for you.

You may prefer to write your views on the 'Take Part' form, so that everyone can read it, or to make a recording that they can listen to. The chair of the meeting will make sure that your views are heard and that people in the meeting treat you with respect.

It is really important for the members of the meeting to hear what you have to say so that they can make the best plans for you.

What if you don't attend?

Even if you are not able to come to the meeting it is still important that your views are heard. Your Social Worker will ask you about your views and will record them in the report. They will also give you a copy of the 'Take Part' form so you can put your views in your own words and they can be read out or you can make a recording that can be played at the meeting.

Even if you are not able to attend the meeting your Social Worker can arrange for you to meet with the conference chair before the meeting so that you understand everything that is going on.

If you do not go to the meeting your Social Worker will visit you as soon as possible to explain what happened, what decisions were made and what will happen next.