

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

Guidance for professionals invited to Child Protection Conferences

Q: What are child protection conferences?

A: Child protection conferences are multi-agency meetings involving professionals who already know the child/family and professionals who may work with the family in the future.

Professionals are invited to child protection conferences both to give and receive information about a child/ren and his/her family. The purpose of the conference is to plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

The meeting is chaired by a Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) in accordance with Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) procedures.

The CPC is a professional and independent of operational or line management responsibilities for the case, as required in Working Together 2013. The CPC is accountable to the Director of Children's Services for the conduct of the conferences they chair.

Parents/carers are invited to attend child protection conferences and are only excluded in exceptional circumstances. Children and young people are invited to attend conferences when it is felt appropriate, and their views are actively sought.

Q: What is the difference between Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC)?

A: Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) are held when child protection enquiries have concluded that concerns of significant harm are substantiated and a child is judged to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. The decision of the chair may be that the child is made subject to a child protection plan, and under which category of abuse. An outline child protection plan will be agreed upon at the ICPC and the core group of professionals and family members will be agreed who will develop and implement the child protection plan. The date for the RCPC will be set.

If the chair decides a child is not suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, then no plan will be made. It will then be considered whether the child should be considered a Child in Need, and a plan will be formulated by the child's social worker.

Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs) are held within 3 months of the ICPC and then at least every 6 months. The purpose of an RCPC is to decide whether the child is continuing to suffer, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and to review the

progress of the plan. It will be decided whether the child should remain subject to a child protection plan, and under which category of abuse.

A decision will be taken to end the child protection plan when it is judged that the child is no longer continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan.

Q. Do I need to provide a written report? What should I include in the report?

All professionals who directly know the child/family should provide a written report which should be sent to the child's social worker at least 24 hours before the conference. A format for a report to child protection conferences should be included in your agency practice guidance, or an NSCB template is available in the NSCB procedures in the templates section. If you need further advice on preparing a report please contact the safeguarding/child protection lead in your agency.

The views, wishes and feelings of the child must be ascertained and included in the report to the meeting. If the child is unable to communicate verbally this must be based on observation of the child and his or her interactions.

Wherever possible and appropriate the contents of this report should be shared with the parents and child, prior to the conference.

Q. How will I be expected to contribute at the Child Protection Conference?

You will be asked to summarise the information in your written report, contribute to the discussion about the level of risk to the child and contribute to the decision making.

You should always provide a written report even if you are unable to attend the conference.

You may also be asked to become part of the core group and to commit resources to the child protection plan.

Q. What is a child protection plan?

A: A child protection plan is a plan of work which is to be carried out with the family by the core group whilst the child or children are subject to a child protection plan.

Q. What is a core group?

A: A core group is a small group of key professionals and family members who develop the outline child protection plan and implement it as the detailed child protection plan. The social worker for the child will be the lead professional, coordinating the work of the core group.

For more detailed information about all of the above please refer to Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board's Safeguarding Children Procedures.

If you have any other questions about the child protection conference you have been invited to attend, please contact the safeguarding/child protection lead within your organisation, the child's social worker or the relevant CPC.