

# Parents and Families - Information about Child Protection Conferences



## What is a Child Protection Conference?

Child Protection Conferences are held when there are serious concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing. Everyone present is asked to share information about their involvement with your family and to consider what changes need to take place to reduce any risks, putting together a plan to support these changes. It gives you the opportunity to work in partnership with professionals to make things better for you and your family.

As a parent you can bring someone to support you. This can be a family member or friend, but it is important to remember they will be hearing all your sensitive information.

You can bring a solicitor to listen, but they cannot talk in the conference or ask people questions.

## Who Chair's the Meeting?

The conference will be chaired by a Child Protection Co-Ordinator who is independent from your child's social work team. They will meet you just before the conference to talk about the meeting and how they can support you to take part. The Chair is responsible for the final decision about whether or not the plan is called a child protection plan.

## Who will be at the Conference?

Everyone who is invited is detailed on the invitation you receive to attend. Professionals who have involvement with your family will be invited such as your child's social worker, teacher and health worker. There may also be some people who you may not have met before invited because of their knowledge of your family, or because they might be able to provide support.

If your child is 12 years or older they may be invited to attend part or all of their conference if the Chair agrees it would be appropriate. They can also share their views in other ways for example by writing a letter, through an advocate or talking to the Chair.

## Reports:

All the professionals attending the conference must provide a report about how they support you and your child, what they think is working well and what they are worried about. The social worker writes an assessment. Each professional is responsible for their own report and for sharing this with you two working days before the first conference, and five working days before any other conferences.

The Police attend initial conferences and share any relevant information they may hold, this report is not shared but the Chair will read key information from it within the conference. They would not usually attend any others unless they have a role within the plan around your child.

## Can the Conference decide to take my children away from me?

No, although professionals present might believe that your child is not safe at home and recommend that Children's Social Care Services consider the need to take legal advice.

## Do I have to attend?

We highly recommend you attend the conference as it is about your child and family, it is your opportunity to share valuable information, your views and your concerns and to be involved in the planning. You know best how people can support you to make any changes that are needed. You are not obliged to attend, but if you don't the conference will still go ahead, information will be shared and a plan will be drawn up.

## How can I prepare?

You may want to make some notes to help you remember things you would like to say in the meeting. You may also need to think about childcare. If

your child has not been invited you are responsible for organising childcare for all your children. If you are having difficulty with this please speak to the social worker as soon as possible, as uninvited children (regardless of their age) are not allowed to be part of the meeting.

## The Decision:

When all information has been shared in the meeting, the professionals are asked to each give a view about whether they think a Child Protection Plan is required. If they do not think your child requires a Child Protection Plan the plan of actions will be a Child in Need Plan.

## The Plan:

Everyone present in the meeting then agrees what needs to be in the plan to help to reduce any concerns or needs that have been identified. It is likely that as part of this plan you are going to be asked to do things and make changes. You need to be realistic with yourself and the meeting about whether you are able and willing to make the changes needed. However, the social worker will be asked to clearly state what will happen if you cannot keep to the agreed actions.

## Recording the Conference:

The meeting will be audio recorded and this recording will be held securely on your child's record within the Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service's records. Should you require a copy of the discussion you can formally request a copy of the minutes from your child's Child Protection Chair via [cadmin@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:cadmin@westberks.gov.uk) and a typed copy will be sent out to you.

The resultant plan for your child(ren) and a letter setting out the decisions made within the meeting will typed up and sent to you:

- within one working day of the meeting, if your child remains subject to a child protection plan
- within 5 working days of the meeting, if the child protection plan is ended and your child becomes subject to a child in need plan.

## What happens next?

If your child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan a date will be set for a Review Child Protection Conference to take place. The first one would need to be held within 3 months and if the plan continues after the first review they will occur every 6 months until the plan is ended.

Between conferences you will also be asked to attend regular meetings chaired by the social worker called Core Groups.

It may be that your child has a Child In Need Plan and no more child protection conferences are required. Instead, the relevant professionals will meet with you from time to time to discuss how this plan is progressing.

## What if I do not agree with the Conference decision?

There is a complaints procedure. The complaints information is sent out to you with the decision letter following the conference and is also explained within the Pan Berkshire Child Protection Procedures accessible via this link:

[Welcome to the West Berkshire LSCP Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

## Equal opportunities:

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation. If you need this information in a different format, such as audio tape or in another language, please ask an English speaker to email the Complaints Manager at [ccsc@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:ccsc@westberks.gov.uk)

