



One minute guide

Preparation for Initial Child Protection Conferences

No. 115, November 2024

What preparation is needed for Initial Child Protection Conferences?

An initial [child protection conference](#) (ICPC) is a meeting held when agencies believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm or has suffered significant harm. The aim of the conference is for the family and professionals to meet and share information with each other about the risks and the strengths. They will then think about and decide - with the family and, where appropriate, the children and young people - what will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people where these concerns exist.

Parents, carers, children and young people should be well prepared for the ICPC. This is an important meeting and the process should be as restorative as possible, which relies on the parent/ carer being able to fully participate in the ICPC. They can only do this if they have had full access to all of the information and understand what is being discussed. Care should be taken to include all parents and carers, including fathers not living with their children, where this is appropriate.

All agencies involved are responsible for being fully prepared for the ICPC by providing their reports to the family in a timely fashion and answering any questions the family may have about this (at least three days before the ICPC and five days before a Review Child Protection Conference). Ideally, the representatives attending the conference should be the people within each agency who know the family best, and/ or who are currently working with them. Attendees should be prepared to share their views on whether a Child Protection Plan is needed.

What are the timescales for an ICPC?

The timescale for convening an ICPC following a strategy discussion is 15 working days. This is a national timescale set by the government and all local authorities in England are expected to meet this timescale. The urgency of the situation, however, may dictate that the timescale is shorter.

It is recognised that this can put pressure on practitioners to meet these timescales in terms of producing a report prior to ICPC, sharing this with the family and attending the ICPC, so good preparation and planning is essential.

What should practitioners or agencies do when invited to an ICPC?

When practitioners or agencies are invited to an ICPC, this is because it has been identified that they have a contribution to make to safeguarding arrangements for the child(ren) and family.

It is expected, in accordance with [Working Together \(2023\) guidance](#), that they will attend the ICPC and provide a report, as well as ensuring that this report is shared with the family prior to the meeting.

When should agencies share their reports?

Sharing reports with parents and carers

All agencies must share their reports with parents and carers prior to the ICPC, to give them time to consider what has been said, highlight any mistakes and talk to other family members and/ or an advocate about what the reports say. They may want to prepare a response to the report.

It is important to share reports in advance because if the first time a parent sees a report is at the meeting, they have no chance to absorb the information and are placed at a significant disadvantage. They will feel less able to participate, less able to contribute to the plan and may feel angry and upset by the process. If English is not a family's first language or they do not have good literacy skills, they will be further disadvantaged.

If the reports have been submitted on time and shared with the family before the day of the meeting, the conference is more likely to start on time with all participants being clear about the information. This enables the discussion to be more focused and analytical and for families to be more involved in contributing to the plan and therefore plans will be more specific and effective.

Sharing reports with Child Protection Chairs

Reports should be sent to the Integrated Safeguarding Unit no fewer than three working days before the meeting, including any feedback that the family has provided. This then allows the Chair to consider what has been submitted and establish if any key information is missing. In Leeds, Conference Chairs offer to meet, or have a phone call with families (including fathers and involved men) before the day of the conference to introduce themselves and explain the process. This has had a positive impact on the ability of families to contribute to the meeting, fully participate in the discussion and think about what might help.

What should reports include?

Reports prepared for the ICPC should include:

- The voice and views of the child and family, including how they feel their needs might be met;
- Details of the agency's involvement with the child and family, including positive information about progress and family strengths;
- Information concerning the agency's knowledge of the child's developmental needs;
- The capacity of the parents to meet the needs of their child within their family; and
- Any other wider environmental factors.

Reports should be clear and consider the strengths/ protective factors and risks within the family and extended family networks. Clear reports ensure that the ICPC has the necessary information to properly understand the needs of the family, which in turn enables the development of effective plans that the family can understand and fully contribute to.

Key contacts and further information

For more information about the importance of quality agency preparation for ICPCs, you can contact the Integrated Safeguarding Unit:

Telephone number: 0113 37 82833.

You can also consult the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership [website](#).