



One minute guide

Child Protection Conference

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What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting between parents/ carers, the child (where appropriate), supporters or advocates and those practitioners most involved with the child and family **to discuss the risk of harm to the child/ children**. There is an initial conference (ICPC) which is followed by review conferences (RCPC). The first RCPC takes place within three months of the ICPC to review progress of the Child Protection Plan; then again, at least every six months while the Child Protection Plan remains in place.

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#) 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 are Child Protection Conferences held?

Before a Child Protection Conference takes place, an investigation (called a Section 47 Enquiry) will have been carried out to determine if it is necessary to hold an ICPC. The investigation requires the allocated Social Worker to talk to the parents/carers, the child, and other practitioners. An ICPC is held when agencies believe that a child(ren) may be at risk of significant harm; the aim of the conference is to discuss the situation, then decide what will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren) where such concerns have been identified.

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 or carers. The child may be offered an advocate from an independent **children's advocacy** service and/or a **Children's Meeting** to enable meaningful engagement and share their views during the Child Protection process.

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 keep the child(ren) safe. Parents may ask another adult to come to support them; this may be a solicitor, advocate or friend. On rare occasions, a parent may not be allowed to attend for all or part of the conference. If this occurs the reason will be explained and the parents' views reported to the conference by the conference chair or social worker.

To enable effective discussion and decision making, **multi-agency involvement** is essential. Representatives from Leeds Children's Social Work Services (CSWS) and health agencies are always invited to attend conferences. Police provide written information to all conferences and attend where necessary. Other professionals who are identified as needing to be involved will also be invited. If an invited professional is unable to attend, they must submit a written report setting out their views, and an appropriate colleague should attend the conference to represent the service/ agency.

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

The social worker prepares a report for the conference setting out the identified Concerns, as well as what is going well for the child. The report will also include the child's views. This report should be made available to parents/ carers at least three days prior to the conference so they have opportunity to read, seek clarification, share their own views and be prepared for the conference.

The [Child Protection Conference Chair](#) makes contact with the parents/ carers prior to the conference to explain the format of the meeting. On the day of the conference they meet again, to check that parents/ carers have had chance to read the reports provided by other practitioners and ask if there are any specific issues that they would like to raise. In Leeds, we use the **Strengthening Families Framework** (SFF) which focuses on the family's strengths as well as risks to the child(ren). SFF enables the Chair to manage the conference in a restorative, outcome focussed, family-facing manner.

At the conference, the Chair clarifies why the conference has been arranged. They lead discussions aimed at identifying what may be causing a child to experience, or be at risk of, significant harm, and what the strengths in the family are. Where necessary, those at the conference agree a clear plan of actions which are needed to promote the child(ren's) safety. Professionals are then asked to agree what level 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 as the lead practitioner, and a Core Group made up of family members and practitioners who are involved with the child or family will be identified to work closely to achieve the actions outlined in the Child Protection Plan. The first Core Group meeting must take place within ten working days of the ICPC. A copy of the Child Protection Plan and a summary of the decision is sent to the parents and professionals within 48 hours of the conference.

What is expected of practitioners?

If you are invited to a Child Protection Conference, this is because it is likely you will have a valuable contribution to make regarding safeguarding arrangements for the child(ren). It is expected, in accordance with [Working Together](#) guidance, that you will attend the conference(s) and Core Group meetings, 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 available information about the family, it is difficult to make fully informed and appropriate decisions about risk, in order to safeguard children.

Further information

The Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership offer training for practitioners on engaging in child protection conferences. For more information, please see their [website](#).