

YOUR CHILD

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

A restorative approach

A guide for parents in Warwickshire



Warwickshire
Safeguarding

You will know from your social worker that a conference is going to be held to discuss your child/children and the reason for this (the rest of this leaflet will refer to ‘your child’ although you may have more than one child who is the subject of a conference).

This leaflet aims to explain the purpose of the conference, how the conference will be managed and how we will aim to keep you and your child central to the process.

A separate leaflet is available for young people.

What is restorative practice?

Very simply, **restorative practice** is about doing things with others, rather than to them or for them.

A restorative approach to child protection provides a mechanism to address harm in a way that brings together the people affected and affords them the opportunity to make it better, and in particular to make the children safe.

What is a Restorative Child Protection Conference?

A Restorative Child Protection Conference aims to bring together the people in the family affected by the harm which has been identified, with the professionals who might assist them in making things better.

The family are at the centre of the meeting and supported to take a leading role in the discussion and the planning.

An approach that avoids blame and judgements whilst having high expectations of what can be achieved with people's contributions to making things better.

Who will chair the conference?

All Child Protection Conferences and Review Conferences will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. This is a team of experienced social work staff who, although employed by the Local Authority, work independently from the children's teams.

What is the purpose of the conference?

- Discuss the incident or events which have led to the conference
- Understand the impact this has had upon your child
- Agree what is needed to reduce any harm identified
- Decide the best way of protecting your child now and in the future and how best to help your family to do this

Who else will be there?

The other people who will be invited to the conference will be there as they have been identified as having a key role with your family or expertise in a given area. This may be providing support to you, teaching your child, or supporting their health and development. Before the conference the Social Worker will explain who exactly will be invited to attend and why this is.

How will I be prepared for the conference?

It is the role of the social worker to prepare you for the conference and ensure that all information has been shared directly with you. This will involve explaining:

- What happened to trigger the conference
- The impact this has had or is having on your child
- How your child feels about what has happened

And most importantly.....

- Working with you to agree how the harm can be repaired and what help is needed to achieve this

The social worker will meet with you at least three days before conference to do all of this.

What help is available at the Child Protection Conference?

- If you have particular needs which would prevent you from taking part fully in the conference, these should be discussed beforehand with your Social Worker. This could involve the support of an interpreter or advocate.
- If you have difficulties in transport or child care arrangements, you should also discuss these with your Social Worker.

- If you would like someone to attend the conference with you for support you can bring a friend, relative or Legal Advisor. This should be someone who you feel you can trust and who will treat information given in the conference as confidential.
- The chair of the conference will meet with you before the start to make sure you are fully prepared, supported and that you understand how the conference will be managed.

What if I cannot attend the conference?

It is important that you attend the conference so we will try to ensure that we can agree arrangements that make it possible for you to attend.

If you cannot or choose not to attend the conference, please discuss this with your social worker so that an agreement can be reached about how your views will be included.

What happens at the conference?

An agenda for the meeting has been included with your invite and this sets out how the meeting will be managed.

At the start of the conference everyone will be asked to introduce themselves and the conference chair will then explain why the conference has been called. Information will be shared and you will have an opportunity to give your views. If you are asked to leave for part of the conference (for example when legal advice is given), you will be invited back as soon as possible to give your views. You will be present whilst any decisions and recommendations are made.

What can a conference decide?

The main decision that will be made is whether a plan is required to ensure your child's safety and what type of plan this should be. You will have had an opportunity to share your views about this. If you do not agree with the decision of the conference you may lodge a complaint against this decision. A separate leaflet will be sent to you explaining this process.

What might a Restorative Protection Plan look like?

- A restorative plan will list the outcomes that need to be achieved and the list of actions by who and how soon is necessary to achieve them
- The plan will be written in simple language that makes clear what needs to be better to repair the harm identified
- There will be a clear focus on the family strengths and resources to support the necessary changes
- The plan will identify the professionals responsible for implementing the plan - this will be the Core Group

What does the Core Group do?

The core group and family members meet on a regular basis to ensure that the actions and support agreed within the plan are progressed.

Records of children subject to a Child Protection Plan

A central confidential record will be maintained of children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

What happens next?

A review conference will be held within three months of the initial conference, and then at a minimum frequency of six months to review the progress of the Child Protection Plan and decide whether the plan should be continued or discontinued.

When the decision is made that a child protection plan is no longer required all relevant professionals will be notified in writing.

The central records of children subject to a child protection plan will be amended to reflect this decision.



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