

**GUIDELINES FOR
PROFESSIONALS
INFREQUENTLY
ATTENDING
CHILD PROTECTION
CONFERENCES**



What is an Initial Child Protection Conference?

This meeting draws together families and professionals in order to discuss the issue of protection in relation to a child or children. The findings from this meeting will inform a decision as to whether or not the child needs to be subject to a Child Protection Plan.

This is a multi-agency forum in which information is exchanged and conclusions are reached which are aimed to ensure that a protective and caring environment is in place for a child.

A Child Protection Conference will involve statutory agencies that work with children and families, as and when there is actual involvement in a child's situation:

- Children's Services
- Schools, Colleges, Nurseries etc
- Police
- Probation
- Health

There are a variety of voluntary organisations from which representatives may attend when appropriate

The initial conference may be called at short notice. Existing guidelines stipulate a Conference must be held within 15 working days of the last strategy meeting that decided that a child may be at risk of harm.

Conference members will consider whether a child subject to the conference is at risk of significant harm from physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. The criteria to be met before the Child becomes subject to a Child Protection Plan are set by the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). Copies of the criteria and categories for a child subject to a Child Protection Plan will be available at the conference and are also included in WSCB Interagency Child Protection Procedures. A decision that a Child will be subject to a Child Protection plan will be made in light of these findings. On occasions where a Child Protection Plan is not required then the conference will consider whether other services are required eg a 'Child in need' plan.

Parents are expected to be present and fully participate throughout the meeting. The views of young people subject to the conference will be ascertained and where appropriate they will be encouraged to attend. There will be some occasions however when parents and children may be excluded from part of the conference. This only occurs in exceptional circumstances eg an ongoing police investigation or legal advice to conference. If after discussions with your line manager or designated/named professional you have information that you believe the parents should not hear (at this point), then you must contact the Chair prior to the conference.

Following any decisions by conference that a Child Protection Plan is required a Keyworker and core group of people will be identified to work with the family. The core group and the parents/carers will meet within ten days of the conference. The purpose of this meeting is to agree the details of the Child Protection Plan and work that must be completed to ensure the child's ongoing safety and to reach a point where the Child protection Plan is no longer required. The Initial Child Protection Conference will also set the date of the first review conference within 3 months.

Do I need to attend?

The Highest priority must be given to attending Child Protection Conferences

Only Those that have direct involvement with the child(ren) and/or family or who have a valuable perspective are required to attend a Child Protection Conference.

If you are unsure about your contribution to a conference it is worthwhile discussing your participation with your manager. All agencies have a designated/named professional who is familiar with Child Protection. Part of their role is to provide you with guidance and support.

What is required of me?

- Be clear about your role and professional involvement
- Be honest in your assessment of your relationship with family members
- You, or your agency will be required to prepare a report for the meetings, (using your agency format)
- Make your views known within the conference so they are recorded in minutes including disagreements or concerns.
- Ensure that ample time is booked in your diary- approximately 2-3 hours-to take part in the whole meeting
- Be sensitive to the social, physical and cultural needs of a child and family
- Be prepared to take part in the risk discussion and decision making process. You will be expected to give a view of all the children being considered at conference, as to whether their situation meets the criteria for a child Protection Plan
- be clear about your role and professional involvement following the conference (whatever the outcome)

Who chairs the conferences?

The Chairperson is an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) with knowledge and experience in child protection. They are independent from the Children's Services Teams.

The Chair will enable all of those present to contribute fully to the discussion and decision making process and ensure that all those present focus on the safety of the child(ren).

What should I do if I am unable to attend?

Discuss with your manager in the first instance, to agree how your information and views will be represented.

You may appoint a colleague to deputise on your behalf

- Inform the allocated social worker/Keyworker of the Children Service Team and the Independent Reviewing Officer that you are unable to attend
- You should send a report to the chairperson (IRO) and allocated social worker
- Your apologies and views will be included in the minutes which will be forwarded to you.

The Core group

You may be identified as a member of the core group responsible for the implementation of the Child Protection Plan. The Keyworker will be the allocated social worker and is responsible for co-ordinating the work of this group. Be clear about your role as a member of this group which will include monthly meetings and maintaining regular communication links with other core group members, in particular the key worker.

What is a Review Conference?

This meeting draws together members from the Initial Child Protection Conference and Core Group members to review the implementation of the Child Protection Plan, to share any new knowledge and to decide if the Child Protection Plan needs to be altered or can be discontinued. Similar to the Initial Conference the review conference will be chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer. The first review conference will be held 3 months following the Initial Case Conference and thereafter at a minimum of 6 months. If you are unable to attend please follow the process as outlined in the Initial Conference.

When will the Child Protection Plan no longer be needed?

When the group who are working with you decide that the child/children are no longer at risk from harm. This decision will be made at the Child Protection Review Conference.

Useful telephone Numbers:

Children Services Teams: 01926 410410

Independent Reviewing Officers: 01926 742368

Fax: 01926 742368

For further details on Child Protection Conferences, please refer to the WSCB Inter Agency Child Protection Procedures the Blue book Section 7 or on: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wscb



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