

Parents' Guide to Child Protection Plans and Child Protection Conferences

This information sheet explains:

What is a Child Protection Plan?

and –

What is a Child Protection Conference?

What is a Child Protection Plan?

A Child Protection Plan is made when a child is judged to be at risk of significant harm, significant harm being a level of harm that affects the health, welfare and development of a child. The Plan will say what the specific risks are to the child and the actions that will be needed to keep the child safe.

The Child Protection Plan is made following a meeting called a Child Protection Conference to which all of the people who are involved with the child including the parents are invited. It is the task of the Conference to decide whether there are significant risks to a child, what those risks are, and what is needed to be done to reduce or remove those risks.

The Plan will then be put into action and reviewed at regular intervals by a further Conference. When the risks to the child have been assessed as having been eliminated or reduced then the Conference will decide to close the Child Protection Plan and any further help will be provided by the usual child care services.

All Social Services Departments throughout Great Britain have a duty to make Child Protection Plans for children who are at risk of significant harm. When a child has a Child Protection Plan the sort of risk will be described using one of these categories: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse or emotional abuse.

Are Child Protection Plans confidential?

Yes. The names of the children who are the subject of Child Protection Plans are never made public.

The Child Protection Plan is recorded on the child's individual case file and can be only be seen by any professional person who is allowed to have access to that record.

Personal information is only given out to professionals who have been given responsibility for a child's welfare. They are only allowed details of the child or family they are concerned with.

What Happens when a Child has a Child Protection Plan?

1 Your social worker and other professionals will work with you to carry out the action plan made by the Conference.

2 Your child's situation will be looked at regularly at further Child Protection Conferences or review meetings. Both will include those involved in the Plan and, except in rare instances, you will be invited. The first review Conference will take place within three months of the Initial Conference. If the Conference agrees that a child is no longer at significant risk of harm it may consider closing the Child Protection Plan and providing help and support through the usual services. This decision will be made by the Conference Chairperson after taking into account the recommendations of the representatives from Social Services, Health Authorities, Police, Education and others who have specific responsibility for reviewing the work that has taken place.

Who Can I Talk To About This?

Please get in touch with your social worker if you want to talk more about this.

If you are unhappy with the help you have been given, and you cannot sort this out, then you can make a formal complaint. Your social worker will tell you how you can do this.

If you disagree that your child needs to have a Child Protection Plan, you can appeal against this decision. You should initially contact the child protection chairperson to discuss your concerns. There is an appeals procedure and a separate information sheet on this is available.

Also, at any time you can consult a solicitor or an independent adviser.

What Is A Child Protection Conference?

The duty of those involved in child protection work is to ensure the safety and well-being of children about whom we have concerns. It is very important that we make the right decisions about your child's needs, and your help and involvement is vital.

Before we have a Child Protection Conference an investigation (called a Section 47 investigation) will have been carried out to find out if it is necessary to hold a Conference. As part of this investigation, you will have met a social worker who will have talked with you about why we are concerned. A Child Protection Conference is held when agencies believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm.

The social worker will be responsible for preparing a report for the Conference setting out the concerns and what is going well for your child. The report will also include the views of your child/ren about what has happened to them. This report will be made available to you at least two days prior to the day of the Conference so that you are able to add your own views to the report.

If your child is of an age to be invited to participate in the Conference they will be contacted by Shout Out, our independent children's advocacy service run by Off the Record. A worker will meet with them to see how they can help them to have their views heard at the Conference. Your child will be able to participate by preparing with the help of the advocate what they would like to say to the Conference and if your child wishes they can accompany the advocate to the Conference

Who Can Come To The Conference?

It is very important that parents are able to attend Conferences about their children and are able to participate in the discussion. Someone from the Social Services Department, the Health Authorities and the Police are always invited to Conferences. This is also a true across the country. Your doctor, health visitor and the child's teacher may also be there to help make the right decisions. Your social worker will talk about this with you.

Very rarely parents may not be allowed to attend for all or part of the Conference and if this happens the reasons for this would be explained and your views reported to the Conference by the social worker. There are no facilities for young children at the Conference venues and you should contact your social worker if this presents any difficulties for you.

Your views are very important in putting together a plan to protect your child and to help you so we want you to be as comfortable as possible at the Conference. You may ask one adult to come with you to support you. This could be your solicitor, advocate or friend. The person who comes with you may listen and observe, but not speak for you – although they may ask for a short break in the Conference if this would help you. If you choose someone to come with you, remember that personal information about you and your family will be shared – this may include criminal convictions. If you want someone to come with you, please give your social worker their name and address before the Conference.

Conference members should be clear in identifying what they believe needs to change and parents should be clear about their own role and responsibility in keeping their children safe and know what they have to do in order for the risks to be reduced. Everyone at the meeting is bound by strict rules of confidentiality. Your family will not be talked about by anyone except those who need to know to help with the child protection plan for your child.

What Happens at a Child Protection Conference?

The Conference will:

- Clarify why the meeting has been called and share information
- Identify what needs to happen in order for the risks to the child to be reduced
- Decide what are the most important reasons why the child is at risk of significant harm
- Decide on the actions that are needed to make the child safe.

A copy of the Child Protection Plan will be sent to you shortly after the Conference. Following this a copy of the Conference notes (a summary of the main points discussed, the plan together with all reports) will normally be sent to you within ten working days.

What Happens After a Conference?

1 If your child or children has a Child Protection Plan then a social worker will be appointed as the Case Co-ordinator and a core group of professionals will work with you and carry out a core assessment on your child.

2 The aim of a Child Protection Conference is to look at the risks to a child within the home situation and the role of their parents in keeping them safe. Most children who have a Child Protection Plan stay living at home with a plan of support from professionals and other family members. It doesn't happen often, but if the Conference thinks it is too risky for a child to stay at home it will recommend that the child be cared for outside of the home. This could be either by extended family members or by the Social Services Department taking legal action in order to place the child in the care of the Local Authority. If this happens to you, your social worker will explain this to you and encourage you to take your own legal advice.

This document/publication/leaflet about 'Working in Partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board' can be made available in a range of community languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats. Please contact the Children's Safeguarding Administration Team.

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