

Child Protection Conferences

A good practice guide for interpreters

This guide is designed to help support interpreters in their role during a Child Protection Conference. This is a very emotional area of work and it is important that interpreters feel informed about the task. Interpreters need to know about the nature of the agency involvement as well as the situation for the family, in order for the family to feel more at ease and for the Conference to run as smoothly as possible. It is the responsibility of the employing agency to ensure that interpreters are clear about the purpose of the meeting.

Purpose

Protecting children at risk of significant harm requires essential skills and understanding from all involved professionals, including the interpreting service. A Child Protection Conference is convened when there are concerns that child/ren are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm. Conferences aim to share and analyse information about the child/ren and their parent's capacity to safely care for them within the context of wider family support and their environment. Child Protection Conferences establish the likelihood of children suffering significant harm and what needs to happen to safeguard and promote the child/ren's welfare.

Expectations

Interpreters used for child protection work should have been subject to references and DBS checks and have a written agreement regarding confidentiality. Wherever possible they should be used to interpret their own first language and have received training in child protection and safeguarding issues.

Interpreters should not have any personal involvement with the family they are interpreting for. If it becomes apparent that an interpreter and the family know each other on a personal level or have strong links within the community, this needs to be raised immediately with the employing agency, the Chair or named social worker. This may represent a conflict of interest and impact the impartial nature of the role.

When employed as an interpreter for a child protection conference, Hackney Children Services has expectations that you will:

- Interpret faithfully what the family member is saying without anything being omitted, added, or summarised
- Be prepared to describe difficult concepts and translate the exact words that are likely to be used - especially in cases of sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and issues of neglect
- Be competent at interpreting the language that the family understands.
- Show that you are impartial, confidential and respectful at all times
- Be mindful of the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Any concerns about anyone's safety, including your own, must be communicated to the Chair or the named social worker. If the concern arises after the meeting you must inform your agency or if there is immediate danger, the Police.

- Explain any cultural issues that might have been overlooked, alongside the family (usually at the end of the Conference, unless any issue is impeding the Conference).

Principles

When families feel hopeful, family resources and strengths are understood, and consistent and positive professional relationships are in place, children are more likely to have good outcomes. Hackney's approach to Child Protection Conferences aims to maximise these things.

- All those attending the Conference should feel respected and listened to
- Family strengths and what is working well must be highlighted
- A common understanding is reached regarding what the concerns are and how these impact on the child(ren) now and in the future
- A plan is formulated to address harm and ensure children's needs are met
- Family and their extended network are supported to play a central role in ensuring their child/ren are safe and protected from harm
- Professionals work cooperatively towards mutually agreed goals, which increase child safety

The Conference Process

It is important that the interpreter understands the Conference process so that they are fully prepared for the meeting, and can fully explain this to the family.

Parent(s) will have been advised by the social worker to call in/attend at **10am** or **2pm** to talk with the Chair about how the Conference will run and to answer any questions they may have before others join the meeting.

At 10.30am or 2.30pm professionals should join the meeting

The Chair will introduce themselves, confirm who the Conference is in respect of and clarify who is in the meeting. All attendees are expected to introduce themselves and when asked summarise their involvement with the family.

It is important that the Conference considers the views and experiences provided by the child/ren concerned. Where appropriate children and young people may attend or contribute to the meeting directly or through an advocate.

The Chair will ask one attendee at a time (including the family) to share the views/information they have regarding the daily lived experience of the child/ren, what is working well, what they are worried about, what needs to change, and how this can be achieved.

Where the meeting is taking place face to face key information shared during this session is recorded visually on paper that is displayed on the wall. This covers:

- Child(ren)'s view and daily experiences
- What is working well? (strengths and safety factors)



- What are we worried about? (current and historic issues)
- Other issues (grey areas and complicating factors)
- The Plan - what are we worried about, what needs to change, who will do what by when

After each person has spoken others will have the opportunity to ask any question and parents have a chance to respond to the information professionals are presenting.

If something is not understood, attendees should let the Chair know.

A Plan will be formulated to address harm and meet each individual child's needs within the family. All attendees will be asked to give their view as to whether a Plan should have the status of a Child Protection Plan, rationale for this, and under what category of harm (emotional, neglect, physical, or sexual) the Plan should sit. The Chair has the overriding final decision on Plan status and category.

If a Child Protection Plan is agreed, a Core Group of family members and professionals will be identified to work out in detail how the plan will progress and monitor the progression between Conferences.

A record of the Conference (minutes of the meeting, social work report and other agency reports) will be circulated as a bundle within 15 working days of the Conference. The Conference Decisions and Plan will be circulated within 24 hours of the meeting taking place.

Equal Opportunities

Hackney is committed to equality of opportunity. We aim to treat everyone with respect, and expect that Conference attendees do the same.

Complaints

Should you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of a Child Protection Conference in the first instance please contact the Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing, Laura Demetriades; laura.demetriades@hackney.gov.uk or 020 8356 6115.

Should you not be satisfied with your response from the Service Manager please contact the Children and Families Complaints Team on 020 8356 5800 or children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk

If any staff member of Hackney Children and Family Services or the interpreting agency has a concern about the practice of an interpreter, it is expected that this will be followed up in line with statutory complaint processes and conduct procedures. If the concern relates to the safety of a child, guidance and advice may be sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who deals with allegations against staff or volunteers who work with children.