

Child Protection Conferences A Guide for Professionals

Purpose

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.

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

Importance of Confidentiality

Attendees at Child Protection Conferences are party to highly sensitive and confidential information. Where attendees have paper copies of reports they must ensure that they are stored and disposed of confidentially. Information shared within the Conference should only be shared on a need to know basis.

The Conference is a confidential meeting and that it is imperative that no one else outside of the Conference attendee can hear or see any part of a virtual meeting. This means that ideally, no one else has the opportunity to come in and out of the room you are in whilst the Conference is taking place.

All attendees should;

- be fully focused in the meeting without any background distractions e.g. phone/emails
- have devices muted when attending virtually and not speaking
- use headphones and privacy screens if working in a location where others are also working
- not access the meeting from a public place



If the Chair notices that anyone else is heard or seen during a virtual Conference they have the discretion to remove an attendee from the meeting video/call.

Expectations of Attendees

All attendees must provide a written report for the Conference. This report must be shared and discussed with the family by the attendee prior to the meeting. For Initial Conferences this must take place at least 3 working days before the meeting and with Review Conferences 5 working days. Reports must be submitted to HackneyCYPsreports@hackney.gov.uk

Attendees must be on time for the meeting, prepared for the discussion, and if attending virtually located in a quiet and appropriate space.

Attendees must direct their information to the family members (not talk about them) in a respectful and balanced manner, avoiding the use of jargon and acronyms.

All attendees must contribute to the decision making process,

The Conference Process (including virtual, blended and face to face meetings)

Conferences consist of the following broad stages:

Prior to the conference, the Chair and the social worker to agree how the Conference can be best facilitated:

1. Virtually via Google Meets Video/Conference Call, or
2. Blended a mix of some face to face attendees (prioritising the Chair, social worker and family) with all other attendees accessing the meeting virtually
3. Face to face with all attendees being present in a meeting room

All Conference calendar and email invites will outline how the meeting will take place; providing details for both Google Video and Conference call options (both options take attendees into the same meeting), or the venue for any face to face meeting. All invites and requests for reports will be sent from this email account; childprotectioninvitereportrequest@hackney.gov.uk

When calling in to a virtual meeting all attendees must prioritise using the video call function, so that the family can see everyone in the meeting, as this upholds the principle of working transparently and openly with families.

Chair's pre-meeting with the parent(s):

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.

Please note that the calendar invite for all Conferences will commence at 10am or 2pm. **However, professionals are not to join the meeting until 10:30am or 2:30pm**

The Conference 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.

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. The Chair and the Conference coordinator will be making notes throughout the Conference to inform the minutes and Plan.

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, 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