

Child Protection Conferences: Guide for parents and carers

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that brings together family members (and children where appropriate), supporters, advocates and those professionals most involved with the child and family to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. They are held when there are worries that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

Social workers, health workers, teachers and others who know the child and their family will usually attend. We want parents and carers to participate too. They have a really important role to play in helping us understand what is happening for their family and how we can help make things better.

The Conference will agree a plan with the parents / carers and all attendees, which will meet the child's needs, keep them safe and reduce the risk of harm.

The Child Protection Conference does not make decisions about legal or court action, or about where children should live. However, if the plan is not being successful in reducing risk of harm, then it may be recommended that this is considered.

Before the Conference:

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

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

You will be sent an invitation by email outlining how the Conference will take place and how you access it. If you have questions do speak with your social worker about this.

All attendees are asked to write a report and share this with you before the meeting. You are able to ask workers for their reports if you have not seen these before the meeting. You will see all reports on the day of the meeting, and be sent copies afterwards with the minutes of the meeting. You should not be surprised or hear new information during the Conference, and you will have the opportunity to question information that you do not agree with.

Who else will be at the Conference?

The Conference will be chaired by an Independent Chair. You will have an opportunity to talk to the Chair alone before the Conference meeting.

The views of your child(ren) will also be shared in the Conference either by them attending (if suitable) or a social worker or independent advocate sharing their views.

Hackney has a Children's Rights Service where a Children's Rights Officer can support your child and can represent their views and wishes on their behalf. The Children's Rights Service can be contacted on 020 8356 2444 or on childrensrights@hackney.gov.uk

You are able to have someone to support you at the Conference such as a family member, friend, or advocate. As personal information is often discussed at these meetings, it is

important that you trust the person who attends with you to hear this information and keep it private. While social distancing guidelines are in place to manage COVID-19 infection risks there are limited to people who can attend face to face meetings, so please do make sure your social worker and the Chair are aware if you want a support person to attend a meeting with you.

Professionals who work with your child and your family will be invited. If there are professionals you feel it is important that they are invited please tell your social worker. Your child(ren)'s social worker will always be at the Child Protection Conference. Usually, a teacher, a school nurse or health visitor will attend. A police representative will always attend the Initial Child Protection Conference, and information will be requested from your GP.

What happens on the day of the Child Protection Conference?

The Independent Chair will meet with you before the main meeting to get to know you, explain how the Conference will run, and to talk about the best way for you to contribute to the discussion and how sensitive issues can be best handled.

At the start of the Conference all the attendees will introduce themselves, and the Chair will ask professionals to summarise the most important parts of their reports. You will be invited to contribute to this discussion.

During the meeting four key questions are considered and everyone is asked to contribute:

- What is working well in your family?
- What are we worried about in relation to your child(ren) and your family?
- What needs to happen to make sure your child(ren) are safe and well cared for in the future?
- What information is not agreed upon and needs to be clarified?

A plan will be made with you and others present, after which a decision will be made about whether the risk of harm to your child(ren) is high enough that the plan should have the status of a Child Protection Plan. Each person present, including you is asked to give a view on this.

What is a Child Protection Plan?

The purpose of a Child Protection Plan is to provide support to your child(ren) and yourself to make sure that your child(ren) are kept safe from harm and that any risk is reduced. Our aim is to involve you and your child(ren) in the decision making around the plan.

If it is decided that the plan will be a Child Protection Plan, a Core Group of people will be identified who will meet regularly. This will include you and any supportive family and friends, as well as professionals. The role of this Core Group is to work out in detail how the plan will work and measure progress.

It may be agreed that your child does not need a Child Protection Plan, but the discussion has identified that there is certain support which may benefit your family. If this is the case then a Child in Need support plan may be developed.

What happens after the Conference?

After the Conference you will be sent a written record of the meeting and the Plan.

If a Child Protection Plan is made, you will be asked to attend regular meetings with other members of the Core Group. At these meetings, you will look at the Plan and discuss what progress has been made in relation to the actions identified.

The core group will meet within 10 working days of the Initial Conference and then at regular intervals (usually about 6 weeks) until the next conference meeting.

A Review Conference will be held after 3 months and then at least every 6 months until the risk has reduced and the Child Protection Plan ends. At each Conference a decision will be made about whether the Child Protection Plan remains necessary.

What can you expect from us?

We want to work in partnership with you and your family recognising your strengths and what is going well. As a parent/carer, you should expect to:

- be listened to
- be treated with respect
- be involved in decisions
- get any help that has been offered to you within the agreed time scales
- receive copies of all reports before Conferences (3 working days before an Initial Conference and 5 working days before a Review Conference)
- get a copy of the Conference minutes within 15 working days of the Conference

What do we expect from you?

We ask that you:

- attend the conference on time to ensure there is enough time for you meet with the Chair
- make sure that you have made childcare arrangements before the meeting
- inform us beforehand of any special assistance you may require such as hearing loop access, translators, or wheelchair access.
- do not take any substances such as alcohol or drugs prior to or at the meeting
- listen to the views of others and treat all attendees at the meeting with respect.
- We will not tolerate aggression and Chair can make the decision to the end the meeting or ask you to leave

Equal Opportunities

Hackney is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format, such as audio tape, or in another language contact your social work unit.

Contact

Please do not hesitate to contact your social work unit or the Independent Child Protection Chair by emailing safeguarding.childrensduty@hackney.gov.uk should you wish to discuss a Child Protection Conference or any part of the process.

Your rights

You are entitled to receive advice from a solicitor. Your solicitor can attend the meeting but cannot contribute to the discussion or decision making.

A list of solicitors experienced in family matters can be obtained from your local Citizens Advice East End. [Citizens Advice Hackney](#)

Phone: 020 3855 4472

Text 'Help' to: 07860041410

Email: advice@eastendcab.org.uk

If you would like independent advice, please contact
Advocacy for all Hackney

Telephone: 0800 011 6114 (Freephone) or 020 8525 2327

Text Relay: 18001 0208 525 2327

E-mail: advocacyforallhackney@cityandhackneymind.org.uk

Website: <http://www.advocacyforallhackney.org.uk>

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 on 020 8356 6115, laura.demetriades@hackney.gov.uk.

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