



Child Protection Conferences Guide for Professionals



CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES

Purpose

A Child Protection Conference is convened when there are concerns that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm. The purpose of the Conference is to develop a plan to increase safety of the child and effectively address risks in partnership with the family.

Watch a short video which explains the Child Protection Conference process here; [Child Protection Conferences | chscp](#)

Prior to the Conference

When you are invited to a Child Protection Conference, you will be asked to prepare a written report and talk through it with the family at least two days before an Initial Child Protection Conference and five days before a Review Child Protection Conference - it is really important that family members know what you are going to say, feel that you are working in partnership with them and that they are not met with any surprises.

Reports should also be submitted with the same timescales to; Satwinder.Bhachu@cityoflondon.gov.uk and Children.Duty@cityoflondon.gov.uk

The social worker report will be shared with all Conference attendees via secure email, within the same timescales. This is a sensitive and confidential document which must not be shared with any third parties. All agencies must comply with their internal policies around secure storing and disposal of confidential information.

Timing and Location of the Conference

A calendar invite for a Child Protection Conference is sent to all attendees; all must be ready to join the Conference at the time outlined. Most of our Child Protection Conferences take a blended approach with the parents, social worker and Chair being present in a face-to-face meeting at The Guildhall, EC2P 2EJ and most professionals joining virtually online. A parent may say that they would find it helpful and supportive to have specific professionals in person in the meeting with them and we will let you know if we need you to attend in person.

Working Together 2018 requires that all professionals attending contribute to the plan and decision-making process, this means that you need to attend for the whole of the meeting. At times this may require you to attend two halves of a single meeting where we have made arrangements for parents to attend separately, for example where there are concerns about domestic abuse.

During the Conference

For parents, attending a meeting with a large group of professionals can be daunting they may already be traumatised by their own experiences, the harm that their child is experiencing, and anxious about being judged even if the source of harm may not be within their power to control and address.

During the discussion in the Conference, we will ask you to share your assessment of the family's strengths that can be built upon and will ask you to focus the discussion on the Conference upon the source of harm, and what you and your agency can do to intervene to help reduce the risk of harm and increase safety for the child(ren).

We will ask you to take a trauma informed approach to the conversation, recognising the power differentials between parents and professionals and actively thinking about how

racism, discrimination and oppression can play out in meetings and enacting the City of London commitment to being anti-racist in our work.

We will ask you to talk to family members in the meeting, not talk about them, in line with our principles of working with, not doing to. We will ask you to use plain English, be balanced in your presentation of strengths and concerns and avoid use of any jargon or acronyms.

Together with the parents we will spend time in the meeting creating a plan, each of us taking responsibility for our role in reducing the risk of harm to create safety for the child, working with parents as partners in safeguarding, doing with not doing to. The Conference coordinator will be making notes throughout the Conference to inform the minutes and Plan.

Children's Views

Children, when of an age and understanding, may feel confident to attend the Child Protection Conference and either speak for themselves or have the support of one of the professionals working with them or an advocate to share their views. The Chair will explore in advance how much of the Conference the child wishes to attend and whether they wish to speak first or wish to hear from others first.

The Chair will ask each attendee (including the family) to share in child focused language their views about the child's daily lived experience of the, what is working well, what they are worried about, what needs to change, and how this can be achieved. Professionals should avoid use of jargon and be considerate of any sensitive information that may not be helpful to share directly with the child in the context of a meeting, requiring further consideration as to who and how this information is shared with them. This may mean that there needs to be two parts to the meeting- a section which children attend and a section which is with parents and professionals only.

Making a Decision about the Plan

At every meeting 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 or a Child in Need Plan, their rationale for this and under what category of harm (emotional, neglect, physical, or sexual). Your recommendation should be based upon the information that you have heard in the meeting and the likelihood of continuing significant harm. The Chair will make a final decision on the status of the Plan and the category.

After the Conference

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

This plan will be reviewed and progressed through six weekly Core Group Meetings and Review Child Protection Conferences at three months and then six-monthly intervals.

Importance of Confidentiality

Child Protection Conferences often include the sharing of highly sensitive and confidential information. Information shared within the Conference should only be shared on a need-to-know basis. As the Conference is a confidential meeting 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 you must be in a secure and confidential place when attending a Conference online.

As a virtual Conference attendee, you must:

- be fully focused on the meeting without any background distractions e.g., phone/emails
- have devices muted when attending virtually and not speaking
- have cameras switched on so that family members can see that you are engaging in the discussion in the interests of being open and transparent
- 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.

Anti-Racist Practice, Equality and Diversity

The City of London is committed to addressing all forms of racism, discrimination, and inequality. We understand that racial and cultural stereotypes and prejudices – conscious and unconscious – underpin structural racism within our society and organisations, and we are all susceptible to these. Therefore, all Conference attendees are expected to actively consider implications of racism and prejudice within their work with children and families, and within the wider actions and procedures of their agencies.

Complaints

Should you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of a Child Protection Conference please contact:

The Complaints Officer on 020 7332 3498

Email the Complaints Officer at CYPscomplaints@cityoflondon.gov.uk

If the concern relates to the actions of a professional which impacts on 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. By contacting; LADO@cityoflondon.gov.uk or calling 020 7332 1215 or 07795 090649.