

Child Protection Conferences: Guide for Parents and Carers

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that brings together family members (and children where appropriate), supporters, advocates and those professionals most involved with your child(ren) and family to make decisions about your child(ren)'s future safety, health and development. They are held when there are worries that your child(ren) have experienced, or are likely to experience significant harm.

What is decided at the case conference?

The Conference will agree a plan with you and all attendees to support your child(ren)'s needs being met, keeping them safe and reducing risk of harm. We want all the professionals who know your child(ren) or could provide support to think about the actions that need to be taken to keep your child(ren) safe, and help them grow and develop into healthy young people.

Preparing for the conference

During the Conference you will be given the opportunity to talk about what others are saying, and to give your own information and views. Many families who have attended conferences in the past tell us that they were very nervous and didn't say as much as they would like to. To help overcome this it is useful to do some preparation in advance. Please fill out the form at the end of this leaflet and bring it to the conference.

Who will be at the Conference?

The Conference will be chaired by an Independent Chair (a Hackney employee equivalent to a social work manager level or above). You will have an opportunity to talk to the Chair alone before the Conference meeting.

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.

All professionals who work with your child and your family will be invited. 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.

A plan will be made with you and others present, after which the Chair will make the final decision about whether the risk of harm to your child(ren) is significant enough that they require the support of a Child Protection Plan or whether it can be provided through a different framework such as a Child in Need Plan. Each person present, including you is asked to give

a view on this.

Recording of the Conference

You will receive a copy of the Child Protection Conference Record and Decision of the meeting within 1 day of the Conference which serves as a record of the meeting.

Should you wish to audio record the Conference, you must make it clear in advance of the meeting and a declaration must be signed before any recording takes place (hard copies will be available on the day of the conference for you to sign). Records of meetings are for parents' only personal use, they should not be shared with third parties or on public forums/social media. Recording of meetings should not be used to try and professionally or personally discredit or intimate professionals present.

If covert recording is discovered during a meeting, you will be asked to stop recording, and/or the Chair of the meeting has a right to end the meeting.

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. The Chair will stipulate the category at the Conference and this will be one of the following: physical harm; emotional harm; sexual harm; or, neglect.

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 within 1 day.

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.

Social Worker visits to see your child(ren) will need to occur at least every 10 days on a Child Protection Plan.

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 and support 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 Child Protection Conference Record and Decision of the meeting within 1 day of the Conference

Equal Opportunities

Hackney is committed to anti-racist practice and equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation. We recognise the systemic and institutional racism that exists in our structures, agencies, and procedures, which disproportionately impacts children and families from Black and Global Majority backgrounds. We seek to acknowledge and challenge racist assumptions, stereotypes and decision making within our Conferences.

If you require this information in a different format, such as audio tape, or in another language contact your child(ren)'s social work unit.

Contact

Please do not hesitate to contact your child(ren)'s 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 Hackney](https://eastendcab.org.uk/hackney/) <https://eastendcab.org.uk/hackney/>

Phone: 020 3855 4472

Text 'Help' to: 07860041410

Email: advice@eastendcab.org.uk

If you would like independent advice, please contact

Family Rights Group

Telephone: 0808 801 0366

Website:

<https://frg.org.uk/a-guide-to-using-our-advice-and-advocacy-service/#about-our-advice-and-advocacy-service>

Complaints/Feedback

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

The Service Managers for Safeguarding and Reviewing:

Sam Duggan, on 020 8356 5443 or Sam.Duggan@hackney.gov.uk.

Or Marissa Gardner-Wright, on 07483431368 or Marissa.Gardner-Wright@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.

Form for Parent/Carers to complete and take to the conference

Thinking about these questions and making some notes will help you contribute to the Child Protection Conference		
What things work well for my children and keep them safe?	What are the things I am worried about for my children?	What things need to change for my children and who can help us make these changes?
Why are professionals worried about my children?	What things do professionals need to know more about?	What things do I need to know more about?