



WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

Information for Parents/Carers & Families about

Child Protection Conferences

What is the purpose of a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference brings together family members (and your child/ren where appropriate), supporters / advocates and those professionals most involved with your child/ren and family to make decisions about your child's future safety, health and development. If concerns relate to your unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference prior to your child's birth.

The Conference is held to consider whether your child/ren has suffered significant harm or likely to suffer significant harm in relation to their safety, health, development and welfare. If the conference decides there is evidence of your child/ren suffering or likely to suffer significant harm the conference professionals will work with you to develop a Child Protection Plan.

You will be invited to the Child Protection Conference and can bring someone to support you. This can be a family member, friend, an advocate or a solicitor.

Professionals at the Child Protection Conference will talk with you about the things that are working well in your family and the things that have caused worry about your child(ren) welfare and safety needs. You should receive a report from the Social Worker before the Conference outlining their assessment of your family's situation and any support needed/ could be offered.

You may hear the words Family Safeguarding Model mentioned; this is a way of working to ensure everyone works together with you to think clearly and openly about the strengths you have in your family; as well as the worries that have led to the concerns about the safety and welfare of your child(ren). The Family Safeguarding Model will also help the group to create a clear plan in partnership with you with agreed upon outcomes about what needs to be different by identifying needs and give support to change, to make sure your child(ren) is/are safe from harm and that their basic care and welfare needs are met consistently.

As a parent/carer or family member, it is really important that you participate fully and contribute to the plans that will be made for your family and understand the decisions made.

Who else will be at the meeting?

- An independent chairperson, who will lead the conference.
- A note taker.
- Other people from multi-disciplinary services that are involved with your family e.g. social worker, health workers, police, teachers, nursery staff or other important people in your family's life.
- Sometimes individuals from other services (who you may not have met before) are invited because of their particular expertise or background in supporting families and keeping children safe. e.g. family support worker, youth practitioner, adult specialist services- from (domestic abuse, mental health and drug and alcohol support and recovery services.
- Your child(ren) may attend for some of the conference if we think they are old enough so their voice about their lived experiences and wishes and feelings can be heard.
- Before the Conference the chairperson will talk with you to explain how it is run and about the best way for you to take part in the discussions.

What will happen at the Conference?

- A chairperson will lead the Conference to ensure everyone is treated fairly and with respect.
- All important matters about your child(ren)'s welfare and safety will be discussed.
- All professionals will discuss reports which will have been shared with you before the meeting.
- A diagram of your family tree may be presented to help professionals know who is in your family and support network.
- The chairperson will lead a discussion with the conference members, including you, to think about:
 - The worries you and professionals have about your child(ren)
 - What support may have been provided to your family historically and whether this had a positive impact for your child and your family unit.
 - The strengths that you have as a parent, and within your family including any support/strengths that your extended family /friend support network provide.
 - Your child(ren)'s individual needs and how best these can be consistently met.
 - Support that you may require as a parent/individual/family unit and consideration of your motivation and ability to make changes in your life and in terms of your adult behaviours and parenting (if required) to safeguard your child.
 - The offers of support that will be offered to your family and in particular: Who needs to do what to keep your child(ren) safe and well
- Consideration will also be given to what your child(ren) feel about their lives/lived experiences and their wishes and feelings will be discussed.

You will be an important part of these discussions and the end of the Conference the Chairperson will summarise important points so everyone is able to remember what is said; which will be captured in the minutes of Conference which will be shared with you after the Conference.

Decision Making and Categories of Harm

When everyone's views have been shared there will be a discussion as to what Plan is required which will identify any intervention and offers of support needed by your family and who might be able to provide this, including family members, friends and professional services. This may be a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need Plan.

- The Plan will also identify changes you may need to make to ensure the welfare and the safety of your child/ren.
- A decision will be made about which category of harm best fits for your child/children, this can be upsetting for some parents, the categories are defined by the Government, and we do not have any power to change them, so have to use what we think best fits in your circumstances.
- There are 4 main categories of harm that are considered: Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect (see end of leaflet for more detailed descriptions of the categories)
- You should leave the Conference clear about what needs to happen and why things need to change.

What is a Child Protection plan?

- A Child Protection Plan is created when it has been evidenced that a child is suffering significant harm, or likely to suffer significant harm.
- It is a formal Plan which says what changes need to happen to make ensure your child(ren)'s welfare and safety needs are met.
- It says what you, your family and multi-agency support services will do to ensure your child(ren) is/are safe; all their needs are met, and we are no longer worried about them.
- A Child Protection Plan does not affect your Legal Status as a parent or your Parental Responsibility towards your child(ren).
- It should say what the contingency plan is, if change is not achieved.

What happens after the conference?

- You will be sent a copy of the Conference Meeting notes.
- If a Child Protection Plan is made, you will be asked to attend regular meetings called Core Groups. At these meetings, you will look at the plan and discuss what progress has been made. The core group will also explore with you what else still needs to be done and what further offers of support and intervention are needed to support your family.
- You may also want to think about a meeting with your family and friends, who can offer support to you. If you think this would be helpful, ask your social worker about the Family Group Conferencing Service. This may have been discussed in the Conference already with you.
- A review Child Protection Conference will be held within three months and then at least every six months for as long as your child needs a Child Protection Plan.
- If a Child Protection Plan is not made, then alternative Plans will be looked at to support you and your family.

If you would like to offer feedback on the Child Protection Conference, please complete the feedback form provided within the invitation to the Conference or see at the of this leaflet links to feedback forms.

Things to think about when invited to a Child Protection Conference:

- Everyone involved will try and offer the best support for your child(ren) and your family.
- You might want to talk to someone you trust and think about whether they could attend with you to support you in the meeting.
- You may find it helpful to get young children cared for whilst you attend/ participate in the conference meeting , so they do not have to come with you. It will be easier for you to listen and be part of the conference.
- During the meeting you will be treated with respect, asked your views, and be encouraged to fully contribute to the development of the plan for your family and child(ren).
- Information about you and your family will be kept confidential and will not be passed on to others unless it is essential for the protection of a child.
- All meetings regarding your children and family are very important and it will be really important for you to attend and participate in all meetings

Where can I get more information and what can I do if I am unhappy about the Conference or Child Protection Plan?

- You can raise your concerns with the conference chairperson or with the service co-ordinator
- More information can be found on Surrey Safeguarding Children Board website: www.surreyscp.org.uk
- Compliments, comments and complaints: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/contact-us/complaintscomments-and-compliments/children-and-education-send>
- Surrey CC Customer Relations Team, Dakota, 11 De Havilland Drive, Brooklands Industrial Park, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 OYP county.complaints@surreycc.gov.uk
03456 009 009

General Feedback can be sent to:

- Feedback form for a child following a child protection conference - <https://forms.office.com/e/AdeBCXRxa8>
- Feedback form for parents and professionals following a child protection conference - <https://forms.office.com/e/sdvXyOX5z5>

Other helpful information:

- Holding a meeting with your friends and family to look for extra support - **What is a Family Group conference** – [The Family Group Conference - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](http://The Family Group Conference - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk))
- Information about **Independent Advocacy for children and young people** - Children & Young People Advocacy - Reconstruct UK

Key definitions as set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023:

Physical Abuse is a form of significant harm and abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse is a form of significant harm, which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse is a form of significant harm which involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect is a form of significant harm, which involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment provide suitable education It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional need

If you would like the above information in large print or in another language please contact us on 01372 833330