

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Conference

This information sheet is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

We hope that this information leaflet helps you to know more about the Child Protection Conference and what part you can play in it.

We understand you may be worried and unsure of the purpose of the conference and what will happen in order to ensure your child/ren are safe from significant harm, but Education & Children's Services want to work with you to help keep your child/ren safe from significant harm.

If you have any questions that are not answered in this information sheet or there is anything you don't understand, your child/ren's Social Worker will be able to help you.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that is arranged by Education & Children's Services when there are serious concerns about your child/ren's safety, or when you or someone else thinks that something has happened that has caused them significant harm. Its aim is to bring professionals and the family together to share information and plan how to help keep your child/ren safe from significant harm and give your family support.

The conference takes a Strength-Based Practice approach which will also involve you. You'll be asked what your views are and your child/ren will be asked to identify what is working well at the moment, what will help them to be kept safe, what the risks to them are and what steps they can make to get things 'good enough'.

The Social Worker will prepare a report setting out the concerns and what the priority risks are which will be shared with you. It is expected that other agencies e.g. the Police or your child/ren's school will also prepare a report.

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The conference will consider the evidence of how your child/ren is being looked after and this will include any significant harm they are suffering.

The conference cannot take your child/ren away from you, it can only make suggestions about how everyone will work together to keep your child/ren safe and well.

After this they have to decide if your child/ren are at risk of significant harm.

If the conference thinks that your child/ren are at risk of significant harm they will develop outcome goals to address this and name what the current risks are (step 2) and what needs to be happening for things to be 'good enough' (step 8). There may be up to 5 priority risks that are described in conference.

What happens during the conference?

This is what will happen:-

- The person chairing the meeting will meet with you before to explain what should happen and answer any questions you may have.
- Other professionals who come to the meeting should provide a report with information about how they know you and your family and the concerns that they have along with the positives you are doing to try and manage these concerns.
- At the start of the meeting everyone will be asked to say who they are and how they may be involved with you and your family.
- The child/ren's Social Worker will explain how they became involved with you and your child/ren and what concerns they have.
- Everyone including you will have the opportunity to discuss these concerns and ask you and your child/ren (if old enough) what you think.
- The Chairperson will provide a summary of the discussion and what decisions have been reached.
- If the child/ren's name(s) are placed on the at Child Protection Risk Register, the Conference Chair will help everyone at the conference to describe goals that need to be achieved for things to be good enough; as well as the current priority risk behaviours (step 2) and what good enough will look like (step 8).

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Who will be at the conference?

The people who are usually invited include your family doctor, school nurse, teacher, someone from the Police and your child/ren's Social Worker.

If there is someone you don't want to be invited to the conference, please let either your child/ren's Social Worker or the Conference Chair know before the meeting.

Can I bring someone to support me?

You can bring a friend, relative, advocate or solicitor with you to the conference. They will be able to support you. This support person won't be able to give their opinion or be involved in making decisions about risk or planning.

What is significant harm?

Harm can take several forms. Significant harm is when something happens to a child that impacts on their development and is unusual, considerable, noteworthy or important.

Conference will think about the severity of this harm as well as the context in which it has occurred. Conference considers four main groups; Emotional, Physical, Neglect and Sexual Harm.

What can conference decide?

The conference will decide if your child/ren's name needs to go onto Denbighshire's Child Protection Register, or if it is already on the register, whether it should stay on or if it should be removed.

What is the Child Protection Register?

This is a list of children and young people who are felt to be at risk of significant harm and in need of protection within Denbighshire. The register is kept confidential and only authorised staff get to see the information.

If the conference decides that your child/ren's name needs to go onto the register, a Care and Support Protection Plan will be agreed.

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What is a Care and Support Protection Plan?

A Care and Support Protection Plan is a written plan of what needs to be done and how this will happen to ensure your child/ren experience 'good enough' care.

What will happen next?

If your child/ren's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a small group of people (called a Core Group) will be put together to make sure that the Care and Support Protection Plan is put into action. They will help describe the steps to make the necessary changes and work together to help the family achieve each step so that your child/ren are safe and properly cared for. If such a meeting is to take place, it is important you attend and are an active part of the plan. There is a separate information sheet that explains the process in more detail.

How long will your child/ren's name stay on the Child Protection Register?

After three months there will be another conference (called a Review Conference) which will decide whether your child/ren still need a plan of protection and if they do, whether the plan needs to be changed. Review conferences will then be held at least every 6 months which you will be invited to attend.

If the people at a review decide that your child/ren are no longer at risk of significant harm and will remain safe without any further help from people outside your family, then the Care and Support Protection Plan will end and your child/ren's name will be removed from the Child Protection Register.

What happens if your child/ren's name does not go on the register?

Sometimes the conference decides that your child/ren are not at risk of significant harm and that their names doesn't need to go onto the Child Protection Register.

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If this happens, conference members could still decide that your family need some help and they might agree a Care and Support Plan. This will mean that a smaller group of people will meet regularly with your family to check that you are doing as well as you can and make sure your child/ren are supported until they and your family no longer need it,

Can I appeal against my child/ren's names being on the Child Protection Register?

If you are not happy with the meeting, you should talk to your child/ren's Social Worker, the Child Protection Conference Chair or the Education & Children's Services Complaints Officer. If you strongly disagree with the decision of a conference you can appeal against that decision. However, such a complaint will not lead to a reversal of the decision to make your child/ren subject of a Care and Support Protection Plan it will only lead to the reconvening of a conference.

If you want to appeal, please get in touch with the Conference Chair within 10 working days of the conference.

What if I want the conference to be held in Welsh or any other language?

If so, please get in touch with the Safeguarding Unit as soon as possible so arrangements can be made. This will make sure that everyone understands how you feel and know what has been happening.

Complaints

If you want to make a suggestion, compliment or complaint about any of the services provided by the Education & Children's Services you can contact the Complaints Officer in any of the following ways:-

Freephone number: 0800 032 1099

Email: ssdcomments@denbighshire.gov.uk

Core Groups – Information for Parents/Carers

Write to:- The Complaints Officer, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl,
Denbighshire, LL18 3DP

Web: www.denbighshire.gov.uk/yourvoice

This Information Sheet can be made available in alternative formats upon request