

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Conferences

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 and its aim is to bring professionals 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 on a 'Signs of Safety' approach which will also involve you. You'll be asked what your views are and your child/ren will be asked to identify what they're good at, what will help them to be kept safe, what the risks to them are and what could cause them significant harm.

The Social Worker will prepare a report setting out the concerns and what actions should be taken 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.

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, and what help your family might need to keep your child/ren safe in the future.

If you would like more information on 'Signs of Safety' please ask your child/ren's Social Worker.

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What happens during the conference?

Your child protection plan is reviewed at core group meetings, and your social worker will tell you if it is decided that anything needs to change to make things better for you. Hopefully you will have helped to make the plan. If you have not or you are unhappy with it in any way, you should speak with to your social worker. You can tell them what you are not happy about and why. This will be discussed at the next core group meetings where they will talk about any changes they might make to the plan.

Who will be at the conference?

The core group meetings are about you and your family. You can decide if you want to go to the meetings. If you do go, you will be listened to – what you think is important. If you like, you can write down what you would like to say and ask a professional or a member of your family to take it to the meeting. Or you can ask for an advocate to help you.

Can I bring someone to support me?

An advocate is someone who can go with you to meetings to help you say what you want and how you feel. If you don't want to go to the case conference, but you still want everyone there to hear what you think and feel, the advocate can go for you. If you would like an advocate to help you, please tell your Social Worker.

What is significant harm?

The Core Group meetings happen about every 6 weeks, and there will be at least two meetings between the initial case conference and the first review. The first review happens three months after your name is put on the child protection register. The first core group meeting happens within 10 working days of your case conference.

What can the conference decide?

If you want to ask anything else about Core Groups, you can ask any of these people:-

- Your family
- Health visitor
- Social worker
- Teacher

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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.

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 who should do it to try and help you look after your child/ren's safely.

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 check that everyone is doing what they agreed in the plan and that your child/ren's are safe and properly cared for. If such a meeting is to take place, you will be invited to attend and given an 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 doesn't 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.

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

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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 name being on the Child Protection Register?

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

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; large braille, audit tape or disk.