

A Young Person's 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 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, but the Education & Children's Services want to work with you to help keep you 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 Social Worker will be able to help you. If your family has been referred to Education & Children's Services because of child protection concerns, this information sheet will explain what will happen next.

What is significant harm?

Significant harm is when something is happening to you that is preventing you from living your life to the full and could present serious risks to your health and development.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting arranged by the Education & Children's Services if people are worried about your safety or there are concerns about how you are being treated by the people caring for you.

It takes on a 'Signs of Safety' approach which will also involve you. You'll be asked what your views are, identify what you are good at, what will help you to keep you safe, what the risks to you are and what could cause you significant harm. The Conference Chair will also ask what your parent(s)/carer(s) think. If you would like more information on 'Signs of Safety' please ask your Social Worker

If the meeting decides they are worried about your safety and what help your family might need to keep you safe in the future, you will get a chance to help work out a plan of action to make things better for you. This is called a Care and Support Protection Plan.

What happens during the Conference?

This is what will happen:-

- The person chairing the meeting will meet you before to talk about what should happen and answer any questions you may have about the meeting.

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- You will also have the chance to see what other professionals have written for the meeting about why they have concerns. The Chair Person will support you to have your say and encourage you to ask any questions.
- Everyone at the meeting will be asked to say why they are involved and how they know you and your family.
- Your Social Worker will explain why they are worried about you and why they feel you may be at risk.
- You will be encouraged to say what you feel about the concerns and what you feel may help you and your family.
- Everyone at the meeting will discuss all the information and reach a decision about what needs to happen to help make you feel safe.

Who will be at the Conference?

The people who are usually invited include:-

- Your parent(s)/carer(s)
- Your Social Worker
- Someone from your school
- A chairperson (someone who runs the meeting)
- A minute taker (someone who will take notes)
- Someone from the Police
- Your family doctor
- A school nurse
- Any other person giving support to your family

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

What is an advocate?

An advocate does not work for the Education & Children's Services. They are someone who is just there to help you and others to have your voices heard. An advocate is there to help you and will only tell the people at the conference what you have told them to say. If you want an advocate for your conference please speak to your Social Worker. An advocate will then come to visit you at a time and place you are happy with. They will talk to you about the conference to make sure you understand about it and will help you to think about what you want the people at conference to know about your wishes and feelings. They will then either attend the meeting with you or can go in your place if you don't want to go.

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Can I attend the conference?

Yes, if you would like to. You should talk to your Social Worker, advocate or another adult you feel close to before you decide.

If you don't want to attend, but you have something you would like to say, you can either talk to the Conference Chair or write them a letter. Your Social Worker, advocate, or another adult at the conference can also pass on your views at the meeting.

What is the Child Protection Register?

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

What happens if my name goes on the register?

If the conference decides that your name needs to go onto the register, a Care and Support Protection Plan will be agreed and a Core Group established.

What is a Care and Support Protection Plan?

The Care and Support Protection Plan is a written plan which clearly spells out what needs to be done, by who and when to try and help your family to look after you safely and make things better for you.

It will be checked regularly to see that it is working and your Social Worker will share it with you. They will also ask you how you think it is working and whether you would like to add anything.

Can I be taken away from my parents?

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

What will happen next?

If your 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 you 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.

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How long will my name stay on the Child Protection Register?

After three months there will be another conference (called a Review Conference) which will decide whether you 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 you 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 name will be removed from the Child Protection Register.

What happens if my name doesn't go on the register?

Sometimes the conference decides that you are not at risk of significant harm and that your name doesn't need to go onto the Child Protection Register.

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

Can I appeal against my name being on the Child Protection Register?

Yes, you can if you are old enough to understand fully about the Child Protection Register and why your name is on it. Your parent/carer can also appeal.

An appeal hearing can only ask for a Conference to re-convened. It does not have the power to remove names from the register.

Ask your Social Worker or advocate on how to appeal.

How long does the conference last?

Most conferences last a maximum of 90 minutes

The chair of the conference

The Conference Chair is not involved in day to day work with you and your family. They are independent and the Chair will be keen to meet with you before the conference to make sure your voice is heard and also explain to you how the conference will be organized.

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Can I come to the meeting?

Yes you can if you want to and it is felt you are old enough to understand. Your Social Worker and parent(s) or carer(s) will also be asked if they think it is a good idea for you to be there.

If you do attend, the Conference Chair may decide that you can only attend part of the meeting and you may be asked to leave when the meeting is discussing confidential information about other people in your family.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes, this will need to be an adult and could be a relative, someone that you know well and can trust or an advocate. Your Social Worker can talk to you about this.

How can I be involved if I don't want to go?

Your wishes and feelings are really important and you can still let the meeting know that you think even if you decide not to go. You can still be involved by:-

- Speaking to Social Worker so they can write your wishes and feelings in their report.
- Writing down what you want the meeting to know for your Social Worker to take to the meeting with them.
- Having an advocate to go to the meeting for you.
- Having another adult, who the Conference Chair of the meeting agrees is suitable to go for you.
- Meeting with the Conference Chair before the meeting to tell them what you want to say.
- Complete a Child Protection Pre-Conference Young People's Feedback Form.
- If you do not go to the meeting, your Social Worker will visit you as soon as possible to explain what happened, what decisions were made and what will happen next.

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

If you speak to your Social Worker arrangements can be made. This will make sure that everyone understands how you feel and know what has been happening.

Can I complain?

We listen to your views and we will always try our best, but we can't always promise that what you want is possible.

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If you are unhappy with what any person working with you has done, you have a right to make a complaint. You can contact the Complaints Officer in any of the following ways or ask your Social Worker or advocate to help you to do this:-

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.