

What can the conference do?

The conference may decide that your child is being cared for well enough and there is no need for further action. The conference can also decide the following.

1. Whether to make a Child Protection Plan for one or more of the children (this is explained in another leaflet 'Core groups and Child Protection Plans – A guide for parents). If there is more than one child in your family we will want to talk about all of them.
2. Who the 'key worker' will be. This is the person who will carry the main responsibility for your child's plan and will usually be a social worker from Children's Services.
3. Who the core group of professionals that will work with you will be. This core group will usually be those professionals who know you, for example, the health visitor or social worker. Their task will be to work with you after the conference to assess your child's and family's needs and work on the Child Protection Plan.

The conference can identify;

- any significant needs which should be assessed;
- what services your family and children need, whether or not your child has a Child Protection plan

Can I appeal about the conference?

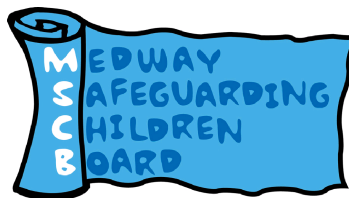
You can talk through any issues that you may have about the Conference with the Independent Chairperson. You can also complain about the way in which the Conference was carried out by using the Medway Council Complaints procedures and your social worker can help you do this. Details about how you can make a complaint can be found on the Council website or by calling **01634 333333**

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Child Protection Conferences



Information for Parents and Carers

Medway Safeguarding Children Board

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that is held because one or more professional workers have serious concerns about the care and protection of your child. They will want to discuss these concerns with other workers to see if any action needs to be taken or to make sure that your child is well looked after in the future.

Who will be at the Conference?

The Conference will be arranged by Children's Services, but there will be other people there too. Who they are depends upon the age of your child, but they are likely to include the health visitor, someone from the Police, a teacher or head-teacher, an Education Welfare Officer and your child's doctor.

Other people will also be invited if they have been involved with your family, for example nurses and doctors from the hospital, CAMHS, the NSPCC or a Probation Officer. The Social Worker's Team Manager may also be present. The conference will be chaired by a Chairperson who is independent from the Social Care Team and there will be someone who takes notes and make sure that what is said is properly recorded.

Can I take part in the Conference?

The Conference is about you and your children so it is important that you take part if you can. If you cannot attend, then talk to your social worker; they may be able to get the Conference rearranged or at least speak on your behalf.

Can I be excluded?

Parents and carers will only be excluded in exceptional circumstances, for example, if the person is likely to disrupt the conference or if their presence might have a negative effect on the welfare of the child. The final decision will be made by the Chairperson who must give the parent or parents the reasons for the exclusion in writing.

Which parent or carer will be invited?

The parent/s or carer who can contribute most to the assessment of any risk to your child and plan to protect your child will be invited.

Can I bring anyone to help me?

You may bring a friend or relative to support you. They will not be able to represent you or be an advocate for you and they may not take part in discussions. They can however sit with you and given you support before, during and after the Conference.

You may wish to bring a solicitor with you to help you to put your views to the conference and to understand the issues. It is important that the Chair of the Conference is aware of who you choose to take with you to support you before the Conference starts.

Can children attend?

Yes, if your child is over the age of 12 years and it is appropriate, he or she is welcome to attend if this is what they want. Younger children should not attend unless this has been agreed in advance with the Independent Chairperson who chairs the meeting. It is most unlikely that it will be appropriate for anyone under the age of 12 years to come and separate child care arrangements must be made. Your social worker may be able to help you with this. All children and young people will be given help and guidance in presenting their wishes and feelings, either in writing or orally, through the social worker.

Why have I been invited?

We recognise that you have an important part to play in discussions about your child. You also have the right to know about what professional workers think may be going wrong in the care and protection of your child.

What happens before the conference?

The social worker will meet you to explain in detail the purpose of the conference and what

might happen as a result of it. You should receive copies of the written reports which the social worker and other professionals will write for the conference. These reports will summarise the information they have about your family and children. The Chairperson may agree that it is not in the best interests of your child to see a report, but this is rare. If you decide to attend, it may be helpful if you write down any points you want to make so you won't forget when you go to the conference.

What happens if I choose not to attend?

You can write to the conference explaining:

- how you think your child is;
- what you think has happened to him or her;
- what you think the professional workers should decide to do in the future;
- what help should be offered to help you care for your child.

You may also attend at the end of the conference to be told what decisions and recommendations have been made if you cannot attend it all.

What happens at the Conference?

The Chairperson will meet you before the conference begins so that they can talk to you about what happens. In the meeting itself, it is the Chairperson's job to introduce everyone to each other and explain why the conference is being held. Everyone will then be asked to say what they know about your child and family. There will be a discussion about whether people's worries are justified and, if so, whether they are serious enough for further action to be taken. Your views will be considered and, if your child is old enough, his or her views too. The conference will then decide, as a group, what to do.