

What happens next?

If the decision is that a Child Protection plan is required to protect the child/ren then a decision will be made about the membership of the Core Group and who the 'key worker' will be. This person carries the main responsibility for the execution of the plan

All members of the core group are jointly responsible for:

- Collecting information to assist the lead professional in updating the Core Assessment
- Formulation and implementation of the child protection plan as a detailed working tool
- Monitoring progress of the plan against specified objectives
- Making recommendations to subsequent review conferences about the need for and content of any future protection plans

What if I disagree with the decisions of the Conference?

If you feel a decision reached by the chair places a child at (further) risk of significant harm, or the child has been inappropriately made subject to a child protection plan, you should seek advice from your named/designated/lead professional or manager and follow procedures for resolution of professional disagreement described in the Kent & Medway Safeguarding Procedures in Module **14.6**.

THIS GUIDANCE MUST BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE KENT & MEDWAY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURES MODULES 8 AND 9

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Child Protection Conferences and Core Groups



Practice Guidance for Staff

Medway Safeguarding Children Board



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What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a multi-agency meeting that brings together family members, the children and those professionals most involved with the family to:

- Share and evaluate information about the child's health, development and functioning and the parent / carer's capacity to ensure the child's safety and promote her/his well being within the context of the wider family and environment
- Make judgements about the likelihood of the child suffering significant harm in the future and requires a child protection plan
- Decide if the child should be the subject of a child protection plan and if so the category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered
- Decide what future action is needed to safeguard the child and promote her/his welfare, how that action will be taken forward and with what intended outcomes and time-scales

Child Protection Conferences must always consider all children in a household

There are three types of Child Protection Conference:

1) Initial

This will usually take place as a result of an assessment or part of a s47 Child Protection Investigation or at the request of any professional who has concerns about a child can request that a Conference is convened. Any decisions should be discussed with the designated Child Protection or Safeguarding person within your organisation.

2) Review

The first review Conference will take place 3 months after the initial conference and at 6 month intervals thereafter. The purpose is to evaluate the progress of the Child Protection Plan and the work of the Core group (see below). It should be exceptional for a decision to be made to discontinue a

Child Protection plan and any decision to do so must be reviewed by the Assistant Director for Children's Care

3) Pre-birth Conference

A pre-birth conference is an initial child protection conference concerning an unborn child. Such a conference has the same status and purpose and must be conducted in a comparable manner to an initial child protection conference

What happens before the conference?

You will be required to compile a report which outlines clearly your involvement with the children and his/her family. It is important that your report makes clear distinctions between fact, your assessment and your opinions. You should consider carefully what recommendations you may make to the conference about how risk might be reduced.

This report must be shared with the parents or carers of the child and, if it is appropriate, the report should also be shared with the child or young person about whom the report is written. You should think carefully about how you do this to ensure that they understand what your concerns are and give them an opportunity to make any comments. You should record these clearly, particularly if the child does not attend the Conference.

Your report must be given to the Chairperson at least 24 hours prior to an initial conference and 3 working days prior to a review conference.

Who needs to attend a Conference?

Conferences tend to be arranged by Children's Services, but as an absolute minimum, Conferences should be attended by Children's Social Care, the Police and health. It is likely that other professionals such as EWO's, nursery nurses, GPs, Probation Officers, hospital doctors or nurses and teachers will also be present, dependent upon the age and circumstances of the child.

Will parents or carers be invited?

It is really important that parents and carers are encouraged to attend as they will make a vital contribution to the assessment of risk to their child. They also clearly have a right to hear what is said about them, their child/ren and their family. 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.

What happens at the Conference?

Conferences are chaired by Independent Chairpersons. When all of the information has been shared, the Conference must consider whether the child/ren should be made the subject of a Child Protection plan by considering the question:

Is the child at continuing risk of significant harm?

The test is that either:

- The child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of abuse or neglect, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely; or
- A professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this case or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health and development as a result of abuse or neglect

If the child is at continuing risk of significant harm, then s/he will require inter-agency help and intervention delivered through a formal child protection plan.

The chair of a conference is responsible for the conference decision. S/he will consult conference members and aim for a consensus, but ultimately will make the decision and note any dissenting views.