**Child Protection Conference**

**Information for parents and families**

This leaflet is intended to explain Child Protection Conferences to parents and families.

**What is a Child Protection Conference?**

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting between families and professionals that is held when there is concern about the safety of a child.

As a parent, you are invited to attend the conference and we would encourage you to take an active part. You may also bring one person with you as a supporter if you would like to. This can be another member of your family, a friend, or some other person of your choice. Please remember that this person is going to hear all your information.

**Who else will be at the Conference?**

The conference will be chaired by an independent person. There will also be someone to take notes at the meeting.

If your child is aged 10 years or older they may be invited to attend all or part of the conference. A number of professionals who have involvement with your family will be invited, such as social workers, teachers, health visitors and Police. There may be some professionals invited because of their expertise or because they might be able to provide help, whom you have not met before.

The professionals invited to conference are expected to write a report about what they think and they should share this with you before the meeting. They are expected to share this with you two working days before the first conference (called an Initial) and five working days before any other conferences (called a Review).

**What happens at the Conference?**

The Chair of the conference will meet with you immediately beforehand to welcome you, to explain how the conference will run, and to talk about the best way for you to contribute to the discussion.

At the start of the conference everyone introduces themselves, and the Chair will ask professionals to summarise the most important parts of their reports. The Chair will be really interested to hear your view on the information that is shared and on what is happening. The Chair writes key points on boards behind them.

The Chair will ask everyone to say how worried they are about your child using a scale. This helps to understand what everyone is thinking.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

**0** - Would mean the concern was at a level that potentially meant your child should not be in the house, and ideally this would have been addressed prior to conference.

**10** - Would be that you did not see any risk to your child - this would not be common in an initial conference.

The meeting looks at support that is needed and this is put into a Plan that everyone agrees to. This can take quite a long time as it is really important that we get the Plan right for your child.



****The Chair will then ask the professionals to give a view about whether your child is ‘at risk of significant harm’ and they will explain what this means. The Chair will give the decision of the conference and whether the Plan should be called a Child Protection Plan.

**How can you prepare?**

During the conference you will be given the chance to comment about what others are saying and to give your own information and views. You will be asked what you think should happen in the future, including any help that you feel is necessary.

You might find it useful to think about the following:

Strengths

What do you think works well in your family?

Risks

What are you worried about for your child?

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Next Steps

What do you think needs to happen after this conference?

What do you think you or others could do to improve life for your child?

**What happens after the conference?**

After conference you will be sent a copy of the notes, usually within 3 weeks.

If a Child Protection Plan is made, you will be asked to attend regular meetings called Core Group meetings. At these meetings you look at the plan and discuss what progress has been made.

The social worker will visit your child at least every 10 working days, usually at home.

A Review Conference will be held 3 months later, and then at 6 monthly intervals for as long as the Child Protection Plan lasts. A decision to end the Child Protection Plan can only be made at a conference.

It may be that your child does not have a Child Protection Plan, but a Child In Need Plan. If this is the case, then professionals will meet with you from time to time to discuss how the plan is progressing.

If you have any questions about the conference please speak to the social worker.

**What if you do not agree with the decision of the conference?**

You can challenge the decision of the conference if:

* The factual content of the significant risk and harm factors discussed in conference was incorrect and this discrepancy led to the incorrect decision being reached.
* The conference was not run in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures and this led to the incorrect decision being reached.
* The category of significant harm was incorrect.

A formal challenge would involve sending a letter or email to the Chair within 5 days of the conference, explaining why you are challenging the conference decision and providing evidence. If you would like someone to help you to write this you can speak to the Chair. The Chair would meet with you within 7 working days to see how your concerns can be resolved and explain any next steps. During the course of a challenge, the decision made by the Conference stands and any meetings regarding the welfare of the child must take place.

If you want to compliment or complain about the behaviour of the Chair, you can email: complimentsandcomplaints@buckscc.gov.uk