

Standards for Enabling Participation of Children and Young people in Child Protection Conferences

This guidance is governed by the [Child Protection Conferences Procedure](#). See in particular Section 4, Involving Children and Family Members.

1. Aim of this document

To ensure that children and families have the fullest opportunity to participate in Child Protection Conferences (CPC).

2. Reason

- 2.1** It is paramount to gain the wishes & feelings of children & young people, to be able to see the world through their eyes. This ensures that the services & support available are more effective in meeting their needs. Children tell us, that they want to be involved in the decisions that we are making about them.
- 2.2** Participation should be seen as a protective factor for vulnerable children & young people, leading to increased levels of confidence, self-efficiency, and self-worth. Research has shown that children and young people who don't have access to effective advocacy felt they were not important and that social workers did not listen to them. We do not want our children to experience this within Dorset.
- 2.3** The relationship between the social worker and the young person is the most important and significant factor in promoting participation. Our children and young people are reliant on us to provide this opportunity to them.

3. Outcomes

We want to make sure that:

- Our CPCs are held in a way that engages and promotes children & young people to contribute (whether directly or indirectly).
- All children & young people will have a meaningful understanding of the purpose of a child protection conference. Their social worker will talk with them about this prior to any conference or meeting.
- All reports will be shared with children & young people where appropriate. They will also be supported to allow them to contribute to the reports about them.
- Children & Young people will be given time at every CPC to express their views and thoughts and can be supported by an advocate where they wish to do so.

4. Deciding whether to invite a child to a Child Protection Conference

There may be occasions when it is not in the child's interest to attend, or when their attendance should be limited. You should consider and weigh up the following before deciding:

- Is inclusion going to benefit the child or young person?

- Has the process been fully explained in an age and stage appropriate way?
- What needs to happen for the child to attend for a proportion of the conference?
- What are the parent's views about the child attending?
- Will the conference be able to fulfil its aims of protecting the child if present?
- Has the decision about whether to invite the child been made in advance of the meeting and the reasons why clearly recorded?

5. Standards for Enabling Participation in Child Protection Conferences

Where the young person and/or their family are to be invited to attend a CPC, the following standards apply:

- 5.1 Social workers will share information with children, young people and their parents and help them to understand what the safeguarding concerns are and what needs to change.
- 5.2 The child's Social Worker will identify and wherever possible meet any specific communication needs the child has in respect of the meeting.
- 5.3 The Business Support team will send out the leaflet 'All about child protection conferences' for children, young people, and their parents 5 days before the meeting.
- 5.4 We will automatically request an advocate to support children & young people over the age of 8 yrs old, with the child protection process and meeting.
- 5.5 The social worker, advocate and Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO) will help children & young people to understand the process so that they are able to contribute to the plan. We want to make sure that every child and young person has a realistic and age appropriate understanding of what to expect. This will be through direct work with the social worker and the advocate.
- 5.6 The social worker and QARO will agree the level of the young person's participation in the meeting and will ensure the young person is supported outside of the meeting/after they have attended.
- 5.7 The QARO will meet with the child, young person and their parents before the conference takes place. We want to give children & young people every opportunity to feel heard and listened to.
- 5.8 The QARO will explain issues such as confidentiality and the expectation to treat everyone fairly, with dignity and respect. The child or young person will be made aware of the conduct expected of all who attend the meeting and of the QARO's responsibility to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion.
- 5.9 We will monitor the child or young person's welfare during their attendance at the meeting and arrange to have a break if necessary.
- 5.10 The QARO will make sure the conference minutes adequately reflect the contributions made by the child or young person.

- 5.11 The social worker and QARO will make sure that parents, children & young people are supported after the child protection conference so that they don't leave the meeting feeling agitated, anxious, or frustrated. The social worker will discuss what is best for each family before the meeting takes place.
- 5.12 The QARO will ask children, young people, and their parents to feedback after each conference so that we can understand their experiences and make changes where needed.

6. Our expectations of colleagues from other agencies

We expect that representatives of other agencies involved in CPCs will:

- 6.1 Be clear about information the child or young person knows and what will be shared with them before, during and after the conference.
- 6.2 Ensure that **ONLY** information regarding the child attending the meeting is discussed. Information about other family members (such as siblings) will not be shared.
- 6.3 Write their assessments, reports and plans in a clear, child-focused and strengths-based manner.
- 6.4 Complete reports for the meeting in a timely manner so they can be shared with the child or young person at least two working days before the CPC.
- 6.5 Treat the child or young person with respect.
- 6.6 Enable the child or young person to participate in the CPC in an honest and constructive manner.

Remember

Participation is an ongoing process rather than a single event.

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