

***Child Protection Chair Handbook***

Guidance for independent Child Protection Conference Chairs and functions in relation to initial Case Conferences, monitoring arrangements and Review Case Conferences for children in need of protection.

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**Kirklees Childrens Services.**

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 Kirklees Children’s Services Trust and par

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**Chapter 1. Introduction**

This guidance seeks to provide clarity of the local arrangements and expectations of the Child Protection Conference Chair role (Chair) with regards to how they should discharge their responsibilities for children in need of protection. The Handbook aims to bring together the guidance available regarding Child Protection conferences, the monitoring arrangements for children in need of protection, and the role of the independent Conference Chair.

The guidance contained in this Handbook draws on local policy and procedural arrangements, various local guidance documents, and the statutory arrangements for Child Protection conferences. The statutory arrangements specifically referred to are:

* The Children Act 1989
* The Children Act 2004
* Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (revised version 2018)
* IRO Handbook 2010
* Kirklees Children Safeguarding Partnership (KCSP) procedures
* Kirklees Childrens Social Care (KCSC) procedures

This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the above.

The guidance also draws on models of best practice, already established in the Service. It is published as a ‘handbook’ with the aim of providing a format that Conference Chairs will find easy to use and enable them to share information about their role with those with whom they work with, for example:

* Children’s Social Care
* Other Children’s Services staff
* Wider Council staff
* Elected Members
* Partnership professionals
* Children / young people
* Parents and other relevant adults.

**Chapter 2. An Overview of the Child Protection Conference Service**

The Kirklees Child Protection and Review Unit (CPRU) is situated within the Resources, Improvement and Partnerships (RIP) directorate within Children’s Services. The service is independent from Children’s Social Care operational services and directly reports to the Service Director of RIP. This ensures independence from operational practice and allows for challenge and scrutiny without conflict of interest.

As the Child Protection Conference service is independent from operational management responsibility, this allows for independent scrutiny free from practice demands and other considerations such as financial matters. However, the service provides scrutiny of practice and aggregated data pertaining to practice and practice themes.

**Service structure overview**

Director of Childrens Services

Quality and Innovation

Service Director of Resources, Improvement and Partnerships

Service Director of Children’s Social Care

Heads of Service

Head of Service for Quality Assurance

Service Manager Child Protection

Service Managers

Conference Chairs

Team Managers

Social Workers

**The Practice Context**

The Child Protection chair’s primarily focus on quality assuring the safety planning and review process for each child subject to a Child Protection plan. To be successful, the role must be valued by senior managers and operate within a supportive service culture and environment. There is an expectation that the service is managed by a Service Manager with a professional social work qualification and relevant managerial and leadership experience; and that all Child Protection Chairs are social work qualified and have 5 years post qualifying experience in children’s safeguarding and managerial experience. This is to ensure that they have a high level of safeguarding expertise, the leadership qualities needed to engage with professionals from different agencies and disciplines, and an understanding of managerial responsibility. Within the culture of Restorative practice there is an expectation that there will be a Quality Assurance overview with high support and high challenge and an ability to execute this effectively.

The Child Protection Chair should be an authoritative professional with at least equivalent status to an experienced Children’s Social Work Team Manager. To be appointed, a prospective Chair should be able to provide evidence that s/he has:

* Sufficient relevant social work experience in children’s social care
* The ability to communicate with children and young people
* The confidence and ability to work constructively with senior managers, offering a critical perspective and appropriate challenge
* A thorough understanding of the legal framework relating to safeguarding children
* Experience of providing social work supervision and support
* Knowledge and understanding of what good quality safeguarding practice is when working with children and families to safeguard children and promote their welfare

An effective Child Protection Conference service is vital in ensuring Kirklees Children’s Social Care (KCSC) achieves improved outcomes for vulnerable children.

Every Child Protection Chair should feel confident in their role and professional authority and understand their responsibilities to monitor and review cases and, where necessary, challenge areas of practice which they identify requires improvement. This guidance recognises that it is not the responsibility of the Child Protection Chair to manage a Child Protection case, supervise Social Workers or devise a Child Protection Safety plan. Whilst the Child Protection Chair’s quality assurance role is important as is their relationship and interactions with the child and their family, this should not undermine or replace the relationship between the allocated Social Worker, the child and their family or undermine the functioning of the Child Protection Core group.

**The Role of the Child Protection Conference Chair**

Child Protection Conference Chairs have a statutory function to chair Child Protection Conferences, independent of case management within Children’s Social Care.

Child Protection Chair core functions, tasks and responsibilities include:

* To ensure that Child Protection Conferences and associated activity is child focused and the safeguarding of children is paramount, the centre of intervention, support, and planning.
* To ensure the voice of the child is heard and that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child are given full consideration
* To monitor and review the progress of Child Protection plans and safeguarding arrangements
* To review the safety planning to ensure that it reflects current concerns and the needs of the child, and that actions are timely, balanced against risk and safety, and achievable, together with ensuring contingency planning is in place
* To facilitate discussions, offer guidance, and ask questions in the pursuit of clarity of safety planning
* To monitor the performance of the safeguarding social work practice and highlight areas of good and outstanding practice, and those which would benefit from improvement in relation to cases where children are subject to Child Protection Plans, or other cases encountered in the delivery of Quality Assurance.
* To monitor the performance of the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding the child and ensure that they are compliant with relevant statutory guidance.
* To manage the safety and welfare of professionals, and children and families in attendance at Child Protection conferences
* To ensure that Conference meetings are conducted in a professional manner

These functions can be separated into three separate aspects: Chairing conferences, monitoring Child Protection cases and monitoring and reporting on safeguarding practice standards.

**Administration of the Conference Process**

An administrative support service must be in place to facilitate the delivery of an efficient and effective Child Protection Conference process, enabling Conference meetings to take place in accordance with legislation and local policy and procedures.

There are clear procedures and standards for booking an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) and subsequent Review conferences. Invitations to a Child Protection conference are sent out to all those participating in a conference in advance of the meeting at the earliest opportunity; for Initial case conferences and for Review conference meetings, at least ten working days before the meeting is due to take place. Where a delay in the process is encountered, phone contact should be made with the professionals to verbally invite them. This task is undertaken by the Business Support Officer in the Child Protection and Review unit, allocated to the case. However, there may be occasions when it is more appropriate for the Child’s allocated Social Worker to undertake this task, i.e. where a Child Protection conference needs to be rearranged; in such instances arrangements are to be agreed between the Child Protection Chair, the CPRU Business Support Officer and Child’s Social Worker.

All Child Protection conferences are allocated a dedicated minute taker, from the CPRU Business Support team. This is to ensure that the Child Protection Chair is able to focus on the meeting and those in attendance, and on the information that is shared, and that they have the opportunity to query and challenge information, together with being alert to safeguarding opportunities. A record of the Conference meeting will be distributed at the earliest opportunity to ensure the information is available to all in attendance. Conference minutes should be distributed no later than the required statutory timescales of 20 working days.

**Role and Functions of the Child Protection Service Manager**

Each Child Protection Chair must be managed by a designated Service Manager who is accountable for the quality of the service that is offered to each individual child subject of a Child Protection plan. The role and responsibilities of the Service Manager include providing oversight, professional advice, and management support to each Child Protection chair.

The Service Manager must be a qualified Social Worker who should be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the legal framework surrounding Child Protection and how Children’s Social Care is expected to meet the responsibilities towards children who are subject of a Child Protection plan.

The Service Manager is responsible for:

* Monitoring and ensuring that Child Protection Chairs have a manageable case load
* Ensuring Child Protection Chairs receive appropriate training on a regular basis
* Ensuring that Child Protection Chairs are supported and supervised monthly
* Supporting Child Protection Chairs in managing internal and external challenge and escalation, and that escalation is appropriate and proportionate to the concern
* Ensuring that Child Protection conferences are held within statutory time scales
* Ensuring Child Protection conferences are multi-agency meetings; the Service Manager must be prepared to challenge partner agencies and raise concerns where appropriate, both with individual partners agencies and via the Kirklees Safeguarding Children Partnership
* Developing a Service that meets the needs of the organisation and which is compliant with statutory regulations.

**Chapter 3. The Strategy Meeting**

A strategy meeting is convened by Children’s Social Care whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. The strategy discussion must involve representatives from:

* the Local Authority Children’s Social Care department,
* The Police, and
* Health

and where appropriate, other professionals /agencies such as the referring agency. (Attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies).

The meeting might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or a phone call and more than one discussion may be necessary. A Strategy meeting /discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the Children’s Social Care assessment process.

A Strategy meeting/discussion will consider and make decisions in regard to initiating s47 enquiries, (Children Act 1989) and/or if there are continued concerns about risk of significant harm, and at the conclusion of those enquiries whether to make a referral for an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).

The strategy meeting/discussion must consider all options available to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. This includes planning under Child in Need, referrals to Family Group Conference, convening family network meetings and in extreme cases legal options.

**Chapter 4. The Child Protection Conference**

A Child Protection conference is convened following s47 enquiries which substantiate concerns that a child has sustained or is likely to sustain significant harm, and a multi-agency strategy meeting has agreed that a Child Protection conference is required.

The purpose of the Conference is to bring together and analyse, in an inter-agency setting, all relevant information, to plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. It is the responsibility of the Conference to make recommendations on how agencies work together to safeguard the child.

An Initial Child Protection Conference must be held no later than 15 working days after the Strategy meeting/discussion that agreed to the Conference. To ensure this time scale is met the allocated Social Worker must make the request for the conference no later than **Four** working days after the Strategy meeting/discussion. This is to ensure that:

* The details of the professionals to be invited are provided in a timely manner
* Agencies /professionals receive adequate notice of the conference meeting, to ensure their availability to attend
* Agencies have adequate time to review their records and prepare a Conference report
* The CPRU has time to arrange a venue and a Child Protection Chair
* The Child Protection Chair has time to review information and query / manage any issues that may be relevant such as, (but not only) young person participation and attendance, accessibility to the building, exclusions, and communication and translation issues.

It is the role of the child’s allocated Social Worker to inform the Child Protection Chair of any issues or concerns (including those stated in the above list) which may require additional consideration and actions, i.e. booking an interpreter or a referral to Advocacy services; both of which are the responsibility of the Child’s Social Worker.

Review Child Protection Case Conference meetings will be held no later than three months after the ICPC and then no more than on a six monthly cycle until the Child Protection plan is deemed no longer required. It is the responsibility of the child’s allocated Social Worker to confirm the invitation details for Review Conferences with the CPRU, five weeks in advance of the meeting.

**Transfer in and out Child Protection Plans**

**Transfer Out**

When it becomes known that a child who is subject to Child Protection plan has moved out /is to move out of the Kirklees area, either on a temporary or permanent basis, the child’s allocated Social Worker should notify the CPRU immediately. A CPRU Business Support Officer will inform the relevant Child Protection Chair and the Conference Service in the local authority that the child has moved to/is moving to. The CPRU will provide written conformation and relevant paperwork to the new relevant local authority, to arrange a transfer Child Protection Conference

The child’s Kirklees allocated Social Worker retains case responsibility until transfer of the Child Protection plan has formally taken place. This includes statutory visits and core group arrangements. However, there may be occasions when it is appropriate for the child’s allocated Social Worker to negotiate with new local authority Children’s Social Care Service to undertake some of these tasks on behalf of Kirklees Children’s Social Care for reasons such as distance.

A Child Protection marker will remain on the Child’s electronic case file until the new local authority have held a Child Protection Conference and accepted case responsibility. The allocated Kirklees Social Worker must keep the Kirklees Child Protection Chair informed of progress until the case formally transfers to the accepting local authority.

**Transfer In**

When it becomes known that a child subject to a Child Protection plan has moved into Kirklees, the CPRU must be notified. The CPRU will then place a temporary Child Protection marker on the child’s electronic case file. The CPRU will also contact the transferring in local authority to clarify that a referral has been made to request a ‘Transfer- in’ Child Protection Conference meeting.

Following scrutiny from the Kirklees Front Door Duty & Advice team to ensure criteria for responsibility is met, which will include exploration that the family have moved to reside permanently in Kirklees, and that there are no ongoing legal proceedings in the originating authority, the case should be allocated to a Kirklees Children’s Social Care Social Worker in a locality team, who should then commence an assessment and make a request to the CPRU for an Initial ICPC date and time. The CPRU will then allocate a Child Protection Chair to the case to track the transfer-in process and safeguarding plan. The allocated Kirklees Social Worker must review the child’s case file including Child Protection Conference reports from the originating authority. The Social Worker should always consider the risk identified in the previous area and consider how this may have altered with the child moving and what the safeguarding arrangements are to address this or any newly identified risk. This should be recorded and analysed in a Single Assessment as a report for the Transfer-in conference.

A Transfer- in Child Protection conference must take place 15 working days after it has been agreed that the child has permanently moved to Kirklees; the first Review conference should be held three months later, followed by a six-monthly cycle until the plan is ended.

**Social Work report**

A social work report for a Child Protection Conference, (**Child and Family Assessment** on Liquid Logic) must be available for the Conference Chair **two working** days in advance of an Initial Child Protection Conference, and **five working days** in advance of a Review Conference meeting.

The report in the form of a Single Assessment should provide information on:

* The reason for the Conference
* An assessment of the child’s needs
* Parental capacity, family and environmental context and evidence of how the child has been abused or neglected and the impact of this on their health and development.
* Safety goals and danger statements
* An outline of the Child’s Protection plan

The report should be shared with the parents and child (if age appropriate and the child has the ability and resilience to manage the information) at least **three working days** in advance of the Conference meeting. This is important as it allows the child’s parent’s time to digest the information, formulate a response for the meeting and compose themselves in preparation to engage and contribute to the Conference.

The Child’s Social Worker is responsible for providing the Conference a copy of the plan for consideration and review. At the end of the Conference meeting the plan and decision will be distributed via secure email and a printed copy will be provided to family members in attendance, or provided to them by the Social Worker within 24 hours of the Conference being held, to meet the 24-hour statutory requirement.

**Cancellation and rearranging of Child Protection Conferences**

The decision to stand down a Child Protection Conference remains with the Chair. If decision to stand down a Conference is made, this will be clearly recorded on the child’s electronic case file.

A Conference may be stood down for the following reasons:

* Invites not being sent out in timescales, preventing parents / adults with Parental Responsibility (P/R) and /or professionals / agencies from being able to attend or provide a written report.
* A Conference not being quorate and therefore not in accordance with the West Yorkshire Child Protection Procedures
* The Social Work report not being completed and signed off by their Team Manager
* The Social Work report not being shared with the child’s parents / adults with PR at least 3 working days prior to the Conference date, to enable them to access legal advice, and/ or support required to enable them to participate or attend.

Should a Conference be stood down for and the above reasons the Conference Chair will raise a formal dispute through the Child Protection Escalations Process, and it is expected that the child’s allocated Social Worker and their Team Manager will:

* Hold a Child in Need (CiN) meeting instead of the planned Conference; to ensure statutory timescales are adhered to with regard to CiN arrangements.
* Put in place a multi-agency Safety plan to ensure safeguarding of the child (ren) pending a re-arranged Conference
* The Safety plan will be uploaded to case notes on Liquid Logic and emailed to the Child Protection Chair.

<https://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/procedures-local-protocols-and-guidance/>

**Confidentiality and information sharing**

If conferences are attended in person, a Conference attendance / signing in contains a statement around confidentially and information sharing and should also act as an agreement for professionals to share information under agency data sharing agreements, store information securely, and to destroy information in line with agency data sharing agreements.

The Conference signing in/attendance sheet for parents /carers also acts as an acknowledgment and agreement that they have been informed of how their information will be shared and held in line with the data protection legislation.

If for any reason the meeting is not able to held with attendance in person and is held in a virtual/hybrid capacity, this information will be contained in the invite to the meeting. The Conference Chair will start each meeting with a request for an acknowledgement that this has been understood and is agreed. There will also be a statement regarding the policy around the recording of these meetings and the agreement for the purpose and use of any such recording, as per Kirklees policy and procedure around recording of meetings by parents.

Insert Link to recording policy when available!

**The Conference**:

In Kirklees the ‘Strengthening Families’ approach to Child Protection Conferences is used. This approach is designed to help families participate more easily in assessing risks to their children’s safety, and to be more engaged in the development of a plan.  It also enables professionals to clearly articulate risk; assess if the family can instigate and maintain significant behavioural change; and provide a robust evidence base for decision making.

A key element of a Conference meeting is the development of a Safety plan.  Under the “Strengthening Families” approach the plan is developed in response to the concerns, and the strengths, identified by professionals and/or family members. The plan should focus on building safety and making best use of identified protective factors.  Crucially, the plan is developed **before** attendees decide whether the child(ren) should become subject to a Child Protection plan.  This is to ensure that families are engaged with the process of developing the plan and have ownership of the actions they are to undertake.

**Mapping tool**

An example is below

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What are we worried about?** | **What’s working well?** | **What Needs to Happen/Safety Goals?** |
| **Past harm:** * Action/Behaviour: Who did what, where and when and

how do we know?* Severity – How bad is the harm?

Acuteness? Seriousness? * Incidence (Chronicity) - How

often? What were the first, worst, and last time the harm happened? * Who, where and when?
* Impact – What was the

impact on the child?**Danger Statement/s:** * Who is worried about whose behaviour and what is the possible impact on the child?

**Complicating Factor/s:** * What have you seen and

heard or do you know that makes addressing the worries for the future more difficult to sort out?**Complicating Factors?*** Condition/behaviors that contribute to greater difficulty for the family. presence of research-based risk factors
 | **Strengths:** * Action/Behaviour: Who is

doing what for the child where and when that reduces the worries and how do we know? * Incidence – How often?

What were the first, best and last times these actions/behaviours happened? * Who, where and when?

Impact on the child? What change has what made? **Safety:** * What strengths have been demonstrated as protection over time relative to the future danger and equate to safety

for the child? | **Safety Goal/s:** * Who needs to see who doing what for whom for how long to be satisfied that the child will

be safe enough that the child can stay in the home/go back to living in the home/ the case can be closed? * What does the family want generally, and regarding safety?

**Next Steps:** Who needs to do what and when as a next step towards reaching the goal/s?**Grey Areas.*** Things we do not agree on or areas that we may need to know more information about.
 |
| **Safety Scale:****0………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………10**Given the danger and safety information, rate the situation on a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 means recurrence of similar or worse abuse/neglect is certain and the situation is so risky that that are no protective factors and 10 means that there is sufficient safety that has been demonstrated over time to address future danger. |

**Level of recognised risk for agreeing a Child Protection Plan**

The Initial Child Protection Conference should consider if a child **has** suffered significant harm and is **likely** to suffer significant harm in the future. Each child in the household should be considered separately.

The following criteria should guide the Conference members when determining whether a child should be the subject of a child protection plan:

* The evidence shows that a child has suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect, and professional judgment is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely; **or**
* Professional judgment, substantiated by the findings of enquiries or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect; **and**
* Where the child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, then s/he will require coordinated interagency help and intervention delivered through a formal Child Protection plan to prevent the child suffering harm or a recurrence of harm in the future; **and**
* The harm suffered or likely to be suffered will have a significant and enduring impact on the child’s well-being if action is not taken to remedy their situation.

There are **four** categories for child protection planning:

* emotional harm
* physical harm
* sexual harm
* neglect.

The category that most appropriately fits the experience or predicted experience of the child should be the agreed category for a Child Protection plan. A plan can only be put in place when the above criteria is met in relation to one of the four categories, and the plan will be attributed to only one category. The Conference Chair must seek consensus from the professionals in the meeting. The Conference Chair can however overrule the category or decision if, in their professional opinion, the needs of the child are not best recognised by the consensus of the meeting.

The category must be the most appropriate to the concerns for the safety and welfare of the child and provide an indicator to those not in the meeting of what the key concerns are. It must be reflective of what the possible or likely consequence for the child is and not necessarily the issues and behaviours which led to the Conference being convened. For example, in cases of Domestic Abuse the concern is that the child would experience emotional harm and /or physical harm if they became caught up in the middle of an incident.

**Physical abuse**

A form of abuse which may involve: hitting, punching or using an object to inflict injury, shaking throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical abuse may be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. The child may also sustain physical harm when caught up in the middle of a domestic abuse situation. It may also include situations including branding, female genital mutilation and other medical procedures that are not a medical necessity but meet the needs of an individual or group such as religious motivations.

**Impact of physical abuse**

Physical abuse can lead to neurological damage, injuries, disability, or death. Harm may be caused to children both by the abuse itself and through the emotional experience of the abuse taking place. Physical abuse has been liked to aggressive behaviour in children, emotional and behavioural difficulties and poor educational achievement. Physical abuse of children often coexists with domestic violence

**Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the ***persistent*** emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause ***severe and persistent adverse*** effects on the child’s emotional development.

Emotional abuse might involve the following: conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person (high criticism/low warmth). This can include: not allowing the child opportunities to express their views, ridicule, developmentally inappropriate expectations, limitation of exploration and learning, preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction, being exposed to the serious ill-treatment of another; for example witnessing the abuse of another child or adult, some levels of bullying (including cyber bullying), inducing feelings of fear or danger, exploitation or corruption of children.

**Impact of emotional abuse**

There is evidence that there are long term adverse consequences for children’s development where there is sustained emotional abuse, including serious bullying. Emotional Abuse has a significant impact on a developing child’s mental health, behaviour, and self-esteem. Domestic Abuse, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may be features of family life where children are exposed to emotional abuse.

**Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. These activities may involve: physical contact including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching directly or through clothing. It may also include involving children in looking at, or being connected in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual acts, being encouraged to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming another child in preparation for abuse.

It may also be the exploitation of a child for sexual purposes (Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)) and cases of CSE are a form of sexual abuse. Trafficked children for the purpose of sexual abuse would fall into this category. The child may not be aware of what is happening or that they are being abused, and a level of coercion or violence is not required for the situation to constitute abuse.

**Impact of sexual abuse**

The severity of the impact of sexual abuse on a child is believed to increase the longer the abuse continues, the more extensive the abuse, and the older the child. The relationship of the abuser to the child, the extent of premeditation, the degree of threat and coercion, sadism and unusual elements are also important. The child’s ability to cope with the experience of sexual abuse once recognised or who believes the child and the provision of services to help the child understand the abuse. The reaction of practitioners also has an impact on the child’s ability to cope with what has happened, and on his or her feelings of self-worth.

**Neglect**

Neglect is the ***persistent*** failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the ***serious impairment*** of the child’s health and/or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of parental substance abuse.

Neglect may involve a parent or carer persistently failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical, sexual and emotional harm or danger (however in such cases an alternative category may be more appropriate), ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers), ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child’s basic emotional needs however again the category of Emotional harm may be more appropriate.

**Impact of neglect**

Severe neglect of young children has adverse effects on their ability to form attachments and is associated with impairment of growth and intellectual ability. Persistent neglect can lead to serious impairment of health and development and long term social functioning, relationships and educational progress. Neglected children very often suffer from low self-esteem, feelings of being unloved and reject the love of others. It can also make children vulnerable to other forms of abuse as it can include apathy in parental ability to see risk and take appropriate action to safeguard. Also identified as a potential factor to push children towards the need to find self-worth, love elsewhere, increasing the risk of exploitation.

The impact of neglect varies on the length and severity of the neglect and the age of the child. In severe cases neglect can result in death.

**Decision not to make a child subject to a Child Protection Plan**

In cases where a Conference agrees that the level of significant harm is not met, a Child Protection plan is not required, and the child’s Social Worker should consider the child’s circumstances within the Child in Need framework. Where this applies the Social Worker will set the first Child in Need review date at the end of the Conference meeting. This applies equally to those cases where an Initial Child Protection Conference has made the decision not to make the child subject to a Child protection plan as well as those children who step down from a child protection plan. It should never be the case that a child whose circumstances do not meet the assessed requirement for a Child Protection plan is not assessed as potentially a Child in Need.

**Criteria for ending a Child Protection plan**

A Child Protection plan may end when:

* A Child Protection Conference is satisfied that the abuse or risk of abuse is no longer present. The decision must be based on careful and thorough analysis of current and future risk
* A Conference decides that an alternative plan is more appropriate to meet the needs of the child including managing risk (this must be agreed at a team manager level or above). An example could be a risk management plan, managed by a risk management meeting, a multi-agency response to contextual safeguarding, where for example the lead agency may be the Youth Offending Service.
* The child has reached the age of 18.
* The child is deceased. In these cases, any Conference must be managed sensitively, whilst also recognising any other children in the family home still subject to Child Protection planning.
* The local authority transfers the plan to another local authority
* The child has left the United Kingdom. For such cases a strategy meeting must be convened to consider options such as working with the organisation Children Across Boarders and Interpol.

Child Protection plans must only be ended at the first Conference Review stage under exceptional circumstances. This must be agreed by the Social Care Team Manager and discussed with their Service Manager. Assessed risk of significant harm, and a reduction of this, is rarely resolved within three months, and a testing out period, in addition to change; removing children from Child Protection planning and oversight at the first review, should therefore only occur in exceptional circumstances

**Dual planning**

Duel planning for children is to be avoided to prevent duplication and confusion in the nature, allocated actions, timescales, and purpose of planning. i.e., reducing risk or securing a Permanence plan. For cases where children have become subject to a legal order and the case has transferred to a Child Looked After Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), the IRO will assume responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the case, including the safeguarding needs. These will be addressed in the Care plan. The IRO will liaise with the Child Protection Chair with regards to threshold for continuation or removal of the Child Protection plan. For example, is a Child Protection plan appropriate once the child is a Child Looked After, should these reviews be tied together and attended by both the IRO and Child Protection Chair or can the Child Protection plan end outside of a Conference meeting with consultation with the Core group members?

**The Conference outcome and minutes**

The Conference service is responsible for recording on the child’s electronic file the outcome of a Conference meeting. Each Conference has a dedicated Business Support Officer in the CPRU; the minutes of a Conference are an important document; they provide a record of the meeting, and contribute to the child’s chronology, they also may also be used for other purposes such as evidence in legal proceedings.

Conference minutes must:

* Be an accurate and comprehensive record of the meeting, information shared and the plan
* Contain the views of those in attendance including scaling and threshold statements.
* Record all decisions and dissenting views
* Be presented in compliance with legislation and procedures and written in a professional manner that is accessible to the family and the child (ren).

The Conference chair is responsible for the minutes of the meeting. Conference minutes are not a verbatim record; they provide a succinct version of the information shared under the Strengthening Families headings.

Conference minutes should be completed at the earliest opportunity and distributed within **20 working days**.

Completion of a monitoring form on Liquidlogic is also required to be completed by the Conference Chair. This assists to collate accurate data regarding Conference attendance, submission and quality of the Conference reports and other information used for the analysis and improvement of service delivery.

**Child Protection Plans**

Towards the end of an Initial Child Protection Conference, a SMART **outline plan** will be completed for parents/adults with PR and professionals to take away from conference. If the conference is a virtual meeting (due to exceptional circumstances, i.e. Covid -19) the plan will be sent to all in an email within 1 working day.

At the first core group meeting, it is the role of the core group members and the allocated social worker to build on the outline plan agreed at the Initial Child Protection Conference and produce a **complete SMART plan** in line with **Strengthening Practice.**

**Chapter 5. Participation and Consultation**

The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that the voices, wishes and feelings of young people and children who access services are used in a meaningful way.

It is important that the Conference process is proactive in capturing the views of children, young people, and their families. This promotes good practice and effective relationships, together with ensuring that the voices of children and their families are heard, and they have the opportunity to contribute to planning to effect change.

Consideration to attend their Child Protection Conference should be given to all children over the age of ten years old. If a child is to attend, their Social Worker must inform the Conference Chair in advance of the meeting and discuss the child/young person’s ability to engage and contribute cognitively and emotionally. The Conference Chair and Social worker should discuss the arrangements for making the child/young person feel welcome and safe and consider how they can contribute to the discussion and planning; i.e. if they will be in attendance for all or part of the meeting as per their preference, how information will be shared, will an advocate present their wishes and feelings on their behalf and/or support their attendance.

Social workers and Conference Chair’s need to be mindful there may be children younger than age ten that have the cognitive ability, emotional maturity and resilience to contribute to their Conference meeting, and who may wish to attend their conference. Therefore, a child’s age needs to be considered as a guide rather than an absolute rule.

A referral to the Children’s Rights team should be proactively made for **all** children over the age of 10, or younger if deemed appropriate; the referral should **clearly state** it is for a Child Protection Conference; the form is generated in Wisdom in the Child Protection Folder and is called

“Referral for Children’s Rights Advocacy at CP Conference”

The child/young person may want to contribute in person and/or verbally, write a letter, provide a presentation. The child’s allocated Social Worker should explore this with the child/young person prior to the Conference meeting and discuss with the Conference Chair how the Child’s voice is to be shared in the Conference meeting. Any discussions with the child will need to be reflected on a case note on Liquid logic. Any conclusions or documentation should be captured on the child’s electronic file (in Wisdom) but also contained within the Conference minutes. This should also capture if the child did not wish to participate or attend.

The child/young person may wish to have an Advocate attend a Conference with them or on their behalf. It is the responsibility of the child’s allocated Social Worker to arrange this. This may include making a referral to the Childrens Rights, Advocacy service, or exploring with the child/ young person an alternative advocate. Where this occurs, this person must understand their role as Advocate and meet with the Conference Chair prior to the Conference meeting to discuss the arrangements and their role.

It is an expectation that all children of a reasonable age and level of understanding are enabled to contribute to their Conference meeting. This includes consultation documents, words and pictures direct work, and any other media they choose to use.

Children/young people over the age of ten years who do not attend their Child Protection Conference should still be offered the opportunity to meet with the Conference Chair to discuss the meeting and the plan that was agreed, and to explore if they would like to attend a future Conference. This meeting is to be documented on the child’s electronic file, in a case note by the Conference Chair.

A Conference meeting should agree who is the best person to provide feedback to a child. This should be clearly recorded in the Conference minutes.

There may be younger children, including in the same family, who would like to meet with their Conference Chair. The allocated Social Worker should consider each child separately in these circumstances and also consider if the Conference Chair or Social Worker is the best person to provide feedback from the Conference to the child (ren).

**Chapter 6. Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance in the Child Protection service is about placing an emphasis on quality of outcomes for children. This means that children and young people have the opportunity to participate and contribute and have their voices heard, and that everyone involved in the Conference meeting are treated with dignity and respect and have the opportunity to contribute. It means developing effective plans to keep children safe that are reflective of need, that these are achievable and proportionate to the identified risk.

A main function for a Conference Chair role is quality assurance activity. Conference Chair’s a focus for and consideration with regard to the required outcomes of processes and the impact they are having on children’s lives. Responsibility for monitoring the progress of Child Protection plans and the quality of practice, in Conference meetings and in-between Conference meetings, to ensure best planning for children and families and prevent drift and delay. To ensure this responsibility is met to the highest standard the Service must be transparent in its approach and recording. Quality assurance is not a tick list but rather an ongoing and continuous activity.

The Child Protection Conference quality assurance process starts at the request for a Child Protection conference. It includes the preparation for a Conference, the appraisal of the reports and information submitted by all agencies, together with in the ongoing monitoring arrangements thereafter.

To effectively scrutinise case work and quality assure practice the Child Protection and Review service is independent of case work and operational managerial responsibility.

Key points at which quality assurance activity undertaken by Conference Chair’s is evidenced on the child’s electronic file includes:

* The ICPC request
* The ICPC and RCPC preparation
* The Outcomes from RCPC and ICPC
* The ICPC and RCPC meeting record
* The midway review
* Case monitoring case notes
* Dispute Resolution

The Midway Review and case monitoring may take place more than once in-between a Conference to follow up on identified actions. However, over monitoring is to be avoided and should not be the means for managing risk. Notification of and invitation to a Midway Review or case monitoring discussion is sent to the child’s allocated Social Worker and their Team Manager by the Conference Chair, to ensure that and they are involved in the quality assurance process.

Themes from quality assurance activity are captured for formal sharing with Heads of Service. For individual case concerns see the Dispute Resolution process.

If themes emerge regarding partner agency involvement in the Child Protection process, which may include, non-attendance at Conference meetings or the quality of reports submitted to Conference for example this will be either discussed with individual professionals or if considered serious escalated to their Manager or the agency/ organisation lead for safeguarding as identified by the KSCP.

**Chapter 7. Dispute Resolution Process**

**Internal Dispute Resolution process**

It is expected that the Conference Chair forms a positive working relationship with the child’s allocated Social Worker.

There will be occasions where there is difference of opinion between the conference Chair and the child’s Social Worker together with occasions when there is concern relating to practice, statutory duties, and service provision. In these circumstances the conference Chair has a responsibility to raise any concern to ensure that the agreed plan is being adhered to, and that the child’s safeguarding needs are being met. If a Conference Chair assesses that the practice or policy of Children’s Social Care (or partner agency) could be detrimental to a child’s welfare, they have a duty to assertively challenge this.

 The following legal framework and guidance underpins the statutory duties undertaken by Child Protection Chairs:

* [The Children Act 1989](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents)
* [The Children and Young Persons Act 2008](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents)
* [The Children Act 2004](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents)
* Children and Social Work Act 2017
* Working Together 2018
* Kirklees Children’s Social Care (KCSC) practice standards and procedures
* Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board (KSCP) Procedures
* Child Protection service dispute resolution process

Where concern is identified the Chair will in the first instance seek to resolve the issue informally with the child’s Social Worker and/or their Team Manager dependant on the seriousness of the issues under the Dispute Resolution process. A record of the conversation and concern will be added to the child’s electronic file by the Conference Chair. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child’s needs, the Conference Chair will follow the Child Protection Dispute Resolution process.

Within the Child Protection Dispute Resolution process, a Chair may bypass any stage and progress a dispute to the level they consider most appropriate. The individual Chair is responsible for activating the Dispute Resolution process, even if this step may not be in accordance with the child’s wishes and feelings, but may, in their view be in accordance with the best interest and welfare of the child, as well as his/her human rights.

<https://kirkleeschildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/escalation_process.pdf>

**Resolving Professional Differences**

A child’s welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout the child protection process; professional agency disagreements can detract from ensuring a child is effectively safeguarded, there will however be occasions where there are professional disagreements, this may include decision around planning or child protection categories. The Child Protection Chair is responsible for ensuring that all professionals are listened to and that their views are taken into consideration. A Chair must ensure that a conference meeting is child focused, this may mean that on occasion they take a lead on decisions where they believe discussions or decision making is not child focused or conducive to the meeting.

Where a professional is concerned about how a Child Protection conference has been chaired they should in the first instance contact the Child Protection Service Manager to discuss the issue/s. If this does not resolve the issue, they should then consult the KCSP escalation procedure *Resolving Professional Differences* or contact the Kirklees Childrens Services Complaints team to discuss the situation.

Insert link to professional escalation KSBP

It is always in the best interests of those involved, and specifically for the child, for professional differences to be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

**Chapter 8 Multi-agency working arrangements**

Positive multi-agency relationships are integral to safeguarding children, and the key to achieving these is communication. The Child Protection Review Unit is a central to ensuring working together arrangements are in place. This includes the quality assurance of conference and core group effectiveness, the quality of reports and information submitted, and attendance at case conference.

The Service Manager has a responsibility to work with the lead professionals from agencies across the partnership, to ensure that themes collated from quality assurance activity is shared, that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and that there is professional accountability across the child protection system.

Key partners include:

* Kirklees Childrens Social Care
* West Yorkshire Police
* CHART (substance misuse service in Kirklees)
* Locala
* Care Commissioning Group
* NHS
* Probation services
* Education/Schools

Themes and performance data are provided to the KCSP annual report for analysis and opportunity for shared learning and service development and improvement.

**Chapter 9. Duty arrangements**

The Conference service provides a daily duty service which offers:

* Safeguarding advice and guidance
* Cover arrangements for staff sickness to ensure effective service delivery
* Guidance for Level of risk reached and progression to ICPC
* Support regarding multi-agency working arrangements

This is available to Childrens Social Care and partners.

**Chapter 10. Transition of Child Protection Plan to Child Looked after process.**

**Role of the Social Worker**

The Child Protection Chair should be notified that the child is now “Looked After” by the child’s Social Worker as soon as possible after they become Looked After. Following this, a request will be submitted to the CPRU for the initial statutory Looked After review to be assigned to a Child Looked After Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

(SR1 form generated in Wisdom in the CLA folder called “SR1 Request for Initial Review”)

The Child Looked After review process should then commence as per procedures and Practice Standards for**;**

* **Children Looked After Reviews**
* **Role of the Child Looked After Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the CPRU**

The Conference Chair will write to all the child protection core group members advising them the child(ren) are now “Looked After” and asking them to respond in **7 working days** outlining any reasons they may have as to why the child (ren) should not be removed from a Child Protection plan. Following the feedback received the child protection conference Chair will brief the Child Looked After IRO of the decision to end the Child Protection Plan.

If a decision to de-plan the child (ren) from a Child Protection is made by the core group, an agreement with all agency feedback received will be signed by the Child Protection Chair and scanned onto the child’s electronic file. The Child Protection plan will end, and the reason recorded on Liquidlogic by the BSO.

Where a decision is made to discontinue a Child Protection plan, but there remain assessed safeguarding risks to the child (ren), the Child Looked After IRO should ensure that these are highlighted for oversight and management within the Child Looked After Review process and appropriately reflected within the care plan and clearly recorded in the initial review of arrangements.

A meeting /discussion between the Child Protection Chair and the Child Looked After IRO for a formal hand over will take place prior to the first Child Looked After (CLA) Review meeting. At the child’s/ren’s first statutory CLA review, the decision to end the Child Protection plan will be recorded in the minutes in the review of arrangements by the CLA IRO.

Subsequent minutes of the Looked After Review meetings must clearly evidence that any safeguarding risks have been assessed and incorporated into the child’s care plan.

End.

RF

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