



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Children's Services Practice  
Standards: Child Protection  
Conferences, Child in Care Reviews  
and Allegations Meetings during  
the COVID-19 pandemic**

UNCLASSIFIED

## Document Control Information

Title: **Children's Services Practice Standards: Child Protection Conferences, Child in Care Reviews and Allegations Meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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Version 1	30.03.20	Practice Standards for CP Conferences
Version 2	02.12.12	Document updated throughout to indicate approach taken as of September 2020. Document title also clarified to include Child in Care Reviews and Allegations Meetings.

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## Introduction

This guidance is for all Child Protection Chairs and frontline social care practitioners at Wokingham Borough Council who need to conduct or participate in Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care Reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relevant professionals include, but are not restricted to Independent Chairs, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), social workers, and multi-agency partners.

Our aim is to continue to safeguard our children who need to be subject to a Child Protection Plan or who already are subject to a Child Protection Plan; to maintain robust oversight for children in care to ensure that their care plans are progressing; and to keep in touch regularly with these children to check how they are feeling and ensure their voice is heard.

The document has been put together to provide guidance on how we should conduct and record Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care Reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to clarify our expectations around the preparation and recording of information during such meetings, as well as the plans and minutes that arise from them.

This guidance is subject to change and will be updated accordingly as the situation around COVID-19 changes.

## Virtual meetings

In line with latest government guidance on social distancing, Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services has taken the decision to hold no face-to-face meetings unless absolutely essential, with immediate effect and until further notice.

All Child Protection Conferences, Child in Care Reviews and LADO/Allegations meetings will now be held virtually. Wokingham Borough Council is working on ways to expand its options for facilitating virtual meetings, although conference call, Skype or Microsoft Teams are currently operational. The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team (QAST) will be updating their guidance for each type of meeting as the situation evolves. All platforms being used are secure.

Where there is the flexibility to postpone a meeting while maintaining statutory timescales, and it is felt appropriate to do so, Child Protection Conferences and Child in Care reviews may be re-scheduled.

### **Update as of September 2020**

The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team has developed a hybrid option for meetings which will allow the Service to accommodate four people in a conference room, socially distanced, with other participants joining on Microsoft Teams. This will assist attendees who may not be able to join virtually, and will give the parents the opportunity to meet the Chair in person.

Child in Care reviews will be held virtually on most occasions, but the IROs will prioritise face-to-face visits to children in advance of these reviews taking place. These will be risk assessed on a case-by-case basis using the COVID-19 Visiting and PPE Risk Assessment

Tool.<sup>1</sup> The IROs will also risk assess the way Child in Care Reviews are managed and the plan from September 2020 will be to hold some reviews in person if it is assessed as safe to do so, with additional members joining by Microsoft Teams.

Invitations for both meetings will be updated to reflect the option of a hybrid or virtual meeting.

Having the technology and office space to enable both virtual and hybrid meetings allows the Service to flex and increase face-to-face participation as and when COVID-19 restrictions allow.

## Child Protection Conferences

We will continue to ask social workers to provide a report for initial conferences 2 days in advance of the meeting and to share them with parents 2 days in advance. The timescale for sharing reports for Review Child Protection Conferences remains at 5 days in advance.

The priority is to ensure that plans of intervention to safeguard our most vulnerable children continue to be implemented and purposefully reviewed. To achieve this we are reliant on the full participation, co-operation and communication of our partner agencies.

To this end, it is essential that all key agencies involved with the child and family provide a report for the conference. It is each agency's responsibility to share their report with the family in advance, as there will no longer be an opportunity to share a hard copy at the meeting.

We do not want to disadvantage families by them not having access to, or time to read and understand, the written information that is being shared about them.

Therefore, agency reports also need to be sent by secure email to the CP Mailbox at the very least 2 days prior to the conference, to enable them to be circulated to all invitees by email in good time.

This deadline allows time for the reports to be read by all participants prior to the conference.

The expectation is that agencies will continue to use the Multi-Agency Report Template.

Invitees will be provided with essential information on how the conference will be managed, as well as details on how to join and participate in the virtual meeting.

The Child Protection Administration Team will send out the outcome and plan from the Conference within 1 working day and the minutes will be distributed within 20 working days.

## Child in Care Reviews

The priority is to ensure that plans of intervention to progress the Care Plans and Pathway Plans for our most vulnerable children continue to be implemented and purposefully reviewed.

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<sup>1</sup> For the latest version of this risk assessment tool, please see here:  
<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms1/wokinghamcs/doc-library/#collapse0>

There are no changes to the timescales and reports required for reviews. We will continue to ask social workers to provide a report for child in care reviews 5 days in advance of the meeting, to share the report with parents in advance and to notify the IRO when it is available on Mosaic. Additional information such as the current care plan should be brought to the first review.

Invitees will be provided with essential information on how the conference will be managed, as well as details on how to join and participate in the virtual meeting.

The IRO will send out the decisions and actions of the meeting to the manager within 5 working days and the review report will be distributed within 20 working days.

## **Allegations meetings against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) meetings**

Allegations meetings will continue to be held within the same timescales.

Meetings will be held virtually by secure conference call or video call.

Update as of September 2020.

While there is capacity to offer hybrid allegations meetings as described above, if required, most meetings are taking place virtually and this is working effectively.