



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

INTERNAL NOTIFICATION OF CONCERN

**Procedure for the Resolution of Problems and Issues in
Respect of Child Protection Conferences and Planning**

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide Child Protection Conference Chairs with a resolution procedure in respect of problems and issues identified or arising from Child Protection (CP). It is an internal procedure for Birmingham Children's Trust and is intended to complement the Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Multi-Agency and Escalation Protocol.

Its aims are to:-

- Keep children and young people as its focus.
- Provide a straightforward and understandable process for those involved in disagreements and practice concerns.
- Improve communication between Conference Chairs, Social Workers and their managers and thereby facilitate resolution of issues raised.
- Ensure that records of the process are included on the child or young person's file.
- Include a system for monitoring and reporting key issues and routinely providing an overview of concerns to BCT senior leadership team.
- Ensure Conference Chairs and Social Work staff comply with their responsibilities as set out in the Child Protection Procedures and protocols.

The procedure is intended to address differences between area social work staff and Conference Chairs regarding decisions, planning and practice relating to young people with Child Protection Plans.

Key Principles

The key principles mirror those set out in the Multi-Agency protocol and include:

- Seek to resolve issues in a timely way, based on evidence and assessment, and at a practitioner rather than senior management level.
- Professionals and their managers take responsibility for responding to any issues or problems raised within agreed timescales.
- The safety of the child is paramount and staff should be mindful of the risks in considering escalation and should work hard to resolve difficulties quickly and openly.
- Professional disagreement is reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities to enable problems to be shared and resolved through collaboration.
- The best way of resolving difference is through discussion. Where possible, a face-to-face meeting between those concerned will enable clear identification of the areas of difference and the desired outcomes for the child. E-mail communication, although important, can be open to misinterpretation or make for a stilted exchange of views.
- Disagreement should be resolved at the lowest possible stage between

the people who disagree but any worker, who feels that a decision is unsafe, should consult their manager for advice.

- It should be acknowledged that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this without support.
- If the process highlights learning or gaps in policy and procedure, they should be brought to the attention of the Practice Hub for dissemination across the Trust.

Resolution Procedure

The CP Notification of Concern Process does not replace the current emphasis on clear communication and professional dialogue, including discussions or meetings between key practitioners regarding individual children's situations.

However, the following paragraphs outline the stages for resolving problems and issues identified by the Conference Chairs together along with the procedure for escalating those problems and issues when necessary.

1. Informal discussion and practice challenge between the Conference Chair and the area social work service.
2. Conference Chair discussion with Child Protection Conference Service line manager.
3. Formal Notification of Concern Process.
4. Director level Resolution Meeting.
5. Decision Feedback for Practitioners and Managers.

This process does **not** replace the current requirement for the raising and resolution of immediate safety concerns for a child; this will continue to be undertaken by the Conference Chair contacting the Team Manager to discuss concerns, with senior managers becoming involved as necessary.

Where the concern is about the immediate safety of a child or children and where this cannot be satisfactorily resolved, this must be escalated without delay. The Conference Chair must refer concerns that a child is not safe from harm to the Head of Service for the Child Protection Conference Service and the Area Head of Service, Safeguarding, immediately.

1. Informal Discussion and Dialogue

Conference Chairs will become aware of problems or issues from a variety of sources, although the majority will arise specifically from Child Protection Conferences and reports. These problems or issues are largely based on the information shared at the time or sometimes arise because of lack of available information, paperwork, or key information being missing.

Conference Chairs will take responsibility for clarifying these matters and resolving any problems through negotiation with professionals and their managers, in the first instance. This negotiation will take the form of telephone

conversation, email or conversation in person. In situations where the Conference Chair considers that a more senior manager needs to be made aware of a problem or issue, that Conference Chair will discuss with their line manager and make a decision about how to proceed.

The Conference Chair should record the issue in the child's case record using a "PO Case Note" in which they will outline any action taken and/or resolutions agreed or not. Where appropriate, the Social Worker will make the core group members aware of the nature and outcome of the dialogue. A record of an informal intervention will be made by the Conference Chair using the Child Protection Services Quality Assurance template that is completed after conference.

2. Discussion with Child Protection Line Manager

At time, however, there will be problems or issues arising that cannot be resolved using the informal procedure above or where that procedure has been tried but has failed to resolve within the agreed timeframe of 5 working days.

In such circumstances, the Conference Chair will make arrangements to discuss the matter with the Assistant Head of Service (Child Protection) or, in their absence or if more urgent, the Head of Service (Child Protection). The purpose of this being to share the details of the issue and hold a reflective practice discussion to agree the best way forward and plan the consequent actions required. This discussion should be recorded in the Conference Chair's Supervision Record.

The Notification of Concern Process will help to increase consistency across the Trust if practitioners are clear about the type and nature of situations/ issues which they might expect to be routinely escalated. These issues should reflect good practice standards and the Trust's improvement priorities.

The Assistant Head of Service Child Protection may decide to speak with relevant area managers to expedite a resolution of outstanding and immediate safeguarding concerns or to choose to trigger a formal and reportable Notification of Concern.

A consultation between Child Protection, Area Social Work services and the Practice Hub will be held annually to identify an agreed a set of issues arising from the Notifications of the previous year and to flag up any emerging trends. This is also an opportunity to review the escalation guidance and to amend where needed.

3. Formal Notification of Concern

The reasons for pursuing a Notification of Concern will be decided on an individual basis, taking account of the child's situation. This could be for a range of reasons but could include situations when there are concerns about the child's immediate safety, practice concerns e.g. child not having been seen, lack of progress with a Child Protection Plan (either due to core group efficacy or resource availability) or where there is a worry that the Child Protection Plan

proposed or agreed not meeting the child's safety needs.

If the Practitioners involved are unable to reach agreement about the way forward in an individual case then their disagreement must be addressed by more senior staff.

It is envisaged that most issues will continue to be resolved by Team Managers and Conference Chairs. However, if this does not prove possible, The Child Protection Notification of Concern Process will be incrementally escalated through the various levels of management as follows.

Informal	Conference Chair to Social Worker/Team Manager	5 days
Stage 1	Conference Chair to Team Manager	5 days
Stage 2	Head of Service to Head of Service	5 days
Stage 3	Assistant Director to Assistant Director	5 days

Although this is a guide, there may be occasions when an Initial Child Protection Notification of Concern may sometimes more usefully and appropriately enter the process at a higher management level within the Trust

Before escalating to the next stage, the relevant manager in the Child protection Conference Service should make arrangements to discuss the matter with their immediate line manager. The purpose of this is to share the details of the issue outlining what has been tried, and to hold a reflective practice discussion to inform a decision about the best way forward and any action needed.

4. Director Resolution Hearing

There is a clear expectation that any professional disagreement must be resolved within the three-stage process set out above. In the unlikely and rare event that a suitable resolution cannot be secured at Assistant Director level, The Assistant Director Child Protection Conference Service will notify the Director of Practice (and Director of Commissioning and Corporate Parenting) and arrange a resolution meeting with the relevant Assistant Directors. After consideration of the information and evidence provided the Director of Practice will make a determination on the matter.

Where the Director of Practice has formed a professional opinion that a conference has failed to make adequate plans to protect a child or has failed to adhere to the procedures and standards for child protection conferences, they have the authority to set aside the conference decision and require conference to reconvene to reconsider the child protection arrangements.

5. Feedback to Practitioners

When the matter is concluded feedback will always be offered to the Conference Chair and Practitioners involved by their line management. In complex situations, for example where the matter has been escalated for resolution at Director of Practice level, this may be best carried out in a table top review organised by the

Assistant Director responsible for the Child Protection Conference Service.

This feedback and learning from the case will be discussed in supervision and in team meetings and, where relevant, will be shared with the Practice Hub for dissemination and wider organisational learning.

Recording of Process and Outcomes

The Child Protection Notification of Concerns Process mirrors the IRO Escalation Process that is already integrated within Eclipse. Eclipse provides an online form, consisting of free text boxes, in which the Conference Chair outlines the concerns and a suggested resolution. This triggers an alert to the Team, who has a free text box in which to respond by an agreed timescale. Upon receipt, the Conference Service either acknowledges the matter as fully resolved or escalates accordingly.

If resolution is not achieved, then the matter moves incrementally through the management structure. At Assistant Director level, decisions can be made as to the need for further action, such as and resolution meetings or discussions and themed audits.

Reporting and Monitoring

The Child Protection Notification Process in Eclipse will allow retrieval of data regarding numbers and progress of notifications. This will be regularly analysed within the Child Protection Service management team, both as a measure of quality assuring performance within the service and providing a collective voice about emerging practice themes.

The Child Protection Service will monitor the progress of individual cases and will provide monthly reports to the senior management team. Reporting can be by area and team and can also point up issues such as timeliness of response and nature and number of concerns. Assistant Directors will also be specifically notified of all open Notifications of Concern, particularly highlighting those older than 20 working days and that remain unresolved.

Information can already be recorded, collated and reported upon in Eclipse detailing performance in areas such as timely provision of reports for conference and conference attendance. The reporting on CP Notifications of Concern will complement these reports, providing a complete picture.

The CP Notification of Concern reporting aims to improve progress of individual children's CP planning as well as inform organisational learning, joint working and continued practice improvement across the Trust.