

Child Protection Chair Handbook

Guidance for independent child protection
conference chairs, Haringey Children's Services

The functions in relation to child protection
conferences and monitoring arrangements for
children in need of protection

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Chapter 1. Introduction:

This document seeks to provide clarity about the local arrangements and expectations of the child protection conference chair role and activities and how conference chairs should discharge their responsibilities for children in need of protection.

The guidance draws on legislation and national guidance, local policy and procedural arrangements, the various local guidance documents, and the statutory arrangements for child protection conferences. These include:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Procedures
- Haringey's Children's Services procedures, including safeguarding procedures
- London Child Protection Procedures 6th Edition 2020 (London Safeguarding Children Partnership)

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the above. They are available in the Haringey Children's Services Procedures Manual which can be accessed on the Internet/Intranet, or on the GOV.UK website.

The London Child Protection Procedures 6th Edition 2020 provide a complete guide to CP processes in the London local authorities. These should be consulted for detailed guidance to conference procedures, at londoncp.co.uk

This document draws on models of best practice already established in the child protection service. It is published as a 'handbook' with the aim of providing a format that chairs will find easy to use and enable them to share information about their role with those with whom they work, for example:

- Social workers
- Other children's services staff
- Professionals in other agencies
- Children / young people
- Parents and other relevant adults.

Chapter 2. An overview of the child protection conference service:

Service structure

Haringey's child protection conference service is situated within the Engagement, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service (ESQA). ESQA sits within Haringey Children and Young People's Services (HCYPS). The service is independent from operational services and directly reports to the Assistant Director of Safeguarding & Social Care. This ensures independence from operational practice and allows for challenge and scrutiny without conflict of interests.

The role of child protection conference chair is carried out by Child Protection Advisors, managed by the Child Protection Conference Service Manager. The child protection advisors do not carry operational management responsibilities. This allows for

- independent scrutiny free from practice demands
- scrutiny of practice
- analysis of data pertaining to practice themes.

The child protection conference chair will be referred to throughout this document as "the chair".

The child protection conference service is supported by the Child Protection Administrative Service (CP Admin). This comprises a team manager and Business Support Officers.

The practice context:

The chair's primary focus is to quality assure the safety planning and review process for each child. 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 child protection conference service is managed by a service manager with a professional social work qualification and relevant managerial and leadership experience; and that all chairs are social work qualified with 5 years post qualifying experience in children's safeguarding and with managerial experience. This is to ensure they have a high level of expertise in safeguarding and the leadership qualities to engage with professionals from different agencies and disciplines and levels of managerial responsibility.

Chairs should be authoritative professionals 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 they have:

- 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 of what makes for good quality practice in working with children and families to safeguard children and promote their welfare (evidence and research).

An effective child protection conference service should enable HCYPS to achieve improved outcomes for children. Every chair should feel confident in their role and personal authority. They should understand their responsibilities to monitor and review risks to children and their child protection plans, and where necessary to challenge poor practice. This guidance recognises that it is not the responsibility of the chair to manage the case, supervise the social worker or devise the safety plan. The chair's quality assurance role is important as is their relationship and interactions with the child and their family. However, this should not undermine or replace the relationship between the social worker and the child or their family or undermine the functioning and relationships in the core group.

The role of the child protection conference chair:

Chairs have a statutory function to chair child protection conferences independent of case management within HCYPS.

Core functions, tasks and responsibilities of the chair are:

- To ensure that the conference and associated activity is child focused and the safeguarding of the child/ren is paramount
- To ensure the voice of the child/ren is heard and that their wishes and feelings are given due consideration
- To monitor and review the progress of child protection plans and safeguarding arrangements
- To review the safety planning to ensure that it reflects the current concerns about the child/ren, and their needs. To make sure that actions are timely and take risks and safety into account, that they are achievable, and that contingency planning is in place
- To facilitate discussions, offer guidance and ask questions in the pursuit of clarity of threshold and safety planning
- To monitor the performance of the safeguarding social work practice and highlight areas of poor, good and outstanding practice.
- To monitor the performance of the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding the child/ren and ensure that they are compliant with relevant statutory guidance
- To manage the safety and welfare of children, family members and professionals, including Haringey staff, in attendance at the conference
- To ensure that the meeting is conducted in a professional manner

These functions can be separated into three separate aspects:

- Chairing the conference
- Monitoring the case
- Monitoring and reporting on safeguarding practice standards

Role and functions of the conference service manager:

The chairs' manager will be accountable for the quality of the service that is offered to each individual child who has a child protection plan. The role will include providing oversight, professional advice and management support to each chair.

The manager will be a qualified social worker who should be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the legal framework surrounding child protection and how Haringey meets its responsibilities towards children who have child protection plans.

The service manager will be responsible for monitoring and ensuring:

- That chairs have a manageable case load
- That chairs receive appropriate training on a regular basis
- That chairs are supported and supervised on a monthly basis
- That chairs are supported in internal and external challenge and escalation, which is appropriate and proportionate to the concern
- That chairs challenge partners and raise concerns where appropriate, both to partner agencies and to the HSPC
- That conferences are held within statutory time scales
- That the service meets the needs of the organisation and is compliant with statutory regulations

Chapter 3. Preparation for the child protection conference:

The initial child protection conference:

An initial child protection conference (ICPC) is convened following section 47 enquiries which substantiate concerns that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The ICPC must be held no later than 15 working days after the first strategy meeting when the s47 enquiries were initiated. To ensure this time scale is met the decision and request for the ICPC should be made as soon as possible. This ensures that:

- The details of the professionals that are to be invited are provided in good time
- Agencies receive adequate notice of the meeting in order to ensure their availability to attend
- Agencies have adequate time to review their records and prepare a report
- The conference service has time to identify and book the meeting, venue and chair
- The chair has time to review information and query / manage any issues. These may include any exclusions, a decision to hold a “split” conference, a child/ young person’s participation and attendance, and accessibility, communication and translation issues. (this is not an exhaustive list).

The review child protection conference:

Review child protection conferences (RCPCs) will be held no later than three months after the ICPC and then at intervals of no more than six months until the child protection plan is deemed no longer required.

Administration of the conference process:

An administrative support service is in place to facilitate the delivery of an efficient and effective child protection conference process, enabling meetings to take place in accordance with legislation and local policy and procedures. This is provided by the CP Admin service, with dedicated BSOs supported by a manager.

There are clear procedures and standards for booking an initial conference and subsequent review conferences. Invitations to conference are sent out to all those participating in the conference in advance of the meeting, at the earliest opportunity for an initial case conference and for review child protection conferences at least ten working days before the meeting. Where there has been a delay in sending out invitations for the conference, phone contact should be made with the family and professionals to verbally invite them. The calls should normally be made by the social worker. Such arrangements will be requested by the chair or the conference service manager.

All conferences have a dedicated BSO minute taker who supports the chair in producing the decisions and record of the conference. The summary and decisions of the conference (child protection plan) should be distributed within one working day.

The convening sheet:

The “convening sheet” holds the invitation list. The social work team must send it to the CP admin team in good time in order to progress to ICPC.. The convening sheet is a stand-alone template in Mosaic which is accessible by everyone in the social work team, conference BSOs and the chair. Within 24 hours of the decision to convene an ICPC,, the social work team must create a convening sheet and make an email request to initiate an ICPC to CP admin team. This allows the maximum time for a conference to be arranged, avoiding any delay.

The social worker will confirm the invitation details three weeks in advance of the RCPC, on a new convening sheet which MUST be reviewed and updated for each conference.

The convening sheet should list parents with parental responsibility, carers as appropriate, and the child/ren young people who are of an age and understanding to take part in the meeting (invitations to these can be added after requesting a swift discussion with the chair once allocation is made). The convening sheet should list all key professionals working with children and also their parents. The GP must always be invited and if the social worker has difficulty accessing their details, they can request assistance from the MASH health lead. The social worker is responsible for making sure the names and addresses on the convening sheet are accurate. The CP admin team cannot take details from the case file in order to send out information, in case these are not up to date. The social worker must review all the invitees when each convening sheet is produced - in case there has been a change of address or contact details, and to make sure that any new professionals involved are invited. They should ensure that any who are no longer involved and have not been involved since before the last conference, are removed.

The CP admin team will send out invitations from the convening sheet invitation list. They will also send invitations to the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) and confidential health inboxes from where the invitation will be shared with the relevant health visitor, school nurse and other community health teams, and mental health teams. Where there are children under 5, the designated safeguarding lead for the local Children’s Centre is invited as part of Haringey’s strategic aim to ensure all parents whose children have CP plans are offered a parenting course and access to free nursery provision as appropriate.

It is the role of the social worker to inform the chair of any additional issues and concerns which may require further consideration, in good time for these to be well-managed and resolved. It is also the social worker’s responsibility to book an interpreter and make advocacy referrals.

The convening sheet is used to distribute the decisions and reports after the conference. It is essential therefore that if the social work team is made aware that there is a change of address or contact details, of either parent(s) or professionals, that they inform the chair and CP Admin team straight away.

Conference reports:

The social worker must share their conference report with the parent/s, and with young people where appropriate, if it is agreed they are old enough and have the ability and resilience to manage the information. This should be at least two working days in advance

of an ICPC, and five working days in advance of an RCPC. This is important as it allows the parent/s time to digest the information and formulate their thinking, as well as to compose themselves in preparation to take part. It allows the child/ren to decide if they wish to take part in the meeting, and to arrange this.

It should be complete and available for the chair to read within these same timescales. The chair should be notified of any unavoidable delays at the earliest opportunity.

All professionals invited to an ICPC or RCPC need to provide reports as well, sending these to the CP admin team inbox. They also have a responsibility to share their reports with parent(s)/carers and young people where appropriate, before the conference. The timescales are the same as those which apply to the social worker's report.

The CP admin team will share the social worker's and other agencies' reports to professional invitees before the conference.

Reports are circulated by the CP admin team to all invitees afterwards with the record of the conference, unless the chair takes a decision not to share some or all of their content with some or all invitees, for confidentiality or safeguarding reasons.

Pre-Conference Meetings and Discussions:

a) Between the chair and the social work team:

Pre-Conference meetings, between the chair, social worker and where possible the team manager, must be held for all child protection conferences. This will be at least one working day in advance of an ICPC and three working days before an RCPC. The purpose of these meetings is to consider the current circumstances of the child and family, including what the worries and strengths are and what needs to change or happen for the child/ren to be safe and what work has already been undertaken to safeguard the child/ren. The significant harm threshold will be considered. This meeting will also consider the arrangements for the child protection conference including whether parents and the child/ren will require support to participate in the discussions e.g. interpreter, advocacy.

b) Between the chair and the parent/s (or carer/s):

The chair will make contact with each parent or carer at least one working day prior to each conference to discuss their understanding of why the conference is being convened, what they are worried about, what they feel is going well and what they think needs to change or happen for their child/ren to be safe. These discussions should also include any practical arrangements for the child protection conference. The chair will discuss the parent's conference contribution form with them.

c) Between the chair and the child/ren:

The chair will make contact with each child who is of an age and understanding to take part in discussion with the chair, at least one working day before each conference, to discuss their understanding of the child protection plan, contribution, and wishes regarding attendance. The chair will discuss the child's conference contribution form with them.

In their preparation of parent/s and children for the conference, the social worker should share with them that the chair will make contact with them before the meeting, make sure they are comfortable with this, and confirm the best method and time to do so.

Transfer Child Protection Conferences:

a) Transfer out:

When it becomes known that a child/ren who has a child protection plan has moved out of the Haringey area, either on a temporary or permanent basis, the social worker should inform the chair straight away. The social worker will notify the new local authority immediately and request that the child/ren are placed on a temporary child protection plan in that area. If the move is permanent or there is no evidence that it is short-term, then the social worker will request that a transfer in ICPC is held by the new local authority. Each local authority follows different procedures, and these should be clarified. The pan-London procedures for the 32 London boroughs are clearly laid out in the *London Child Protection Procedures*. The social worker will provide written confirmation and relevant paperwork to the new local authority in order that a transfer conference can be arranged.

The Haringey child protection plan will remain in place and the Haringey social worker will retain case responsibility until transfer has taken place. This includes statutory visits and core group arrangements. However, there may be occasions when it is appropriate to negotiate with the other authority to undertake some of these tasks, for reasons such as distance.

The social worker must keep the chair informed of progress until the case transfers to the accepting authority. At this point the chair will be able to end the Haringey child protection plan without a return to conference.

b) Transfer in:

When a child who has a child protection plan has moved to Haringey, the local authority from which they have moved will notify MASH. Under Haringey's transfer in procedure MASH sends an initial request to the duty safeguarding manager in the safeguarding service, copied to the dedicated transfer BSO officer. The duty safeguarding manager requests information and documents from the other local authority and undertakes relevant checks. They may request more information. They advise the safeguarding service manager about suitability /threshold for transfer in. There is a transfer panel which takes the decision whether to accept a transfer. The safeguarding team advise the relevant borough accordingly, as well as the CP admin team.

MASH also contacts the CP admin team and asks them to place the child/ren on temporary child protection plans in Haringey. They send a transfer-in conference request to CP admin on Mosaic. CP admin will progress the episode once they are informed by the safeguarding team that a transfer in ICPC will go ahead.

Once the safeguarding team notify CP admin that a transfer in ICPC has been agreed, a date for this should be set by the child protection conference service manager in a timely way. This should be at least one week after notification to the conference team, so invitations can be sent to invitees with reasonable warning of the ICPC.

Chapter 4. The child protection conference:

The purpose of the ICPC is to bring together and analyse all relevant information in an inter-agency setting, and 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 in future.

The purpose of the RCPC is to review the CP plan and its progress and make further recommendations. As with the ICPC, the RCPC will bring together and analyse all relevant information in an inter-agency setting, and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. It continues to be the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how agencies work together to safeguard the child in future.

Confidentiality and information sharing:

Professionals and the services they represent have an obligation to share information under agency data sharing agreements, store information securely, and to destroy information in line with agency data sharing agreements. The chair will note at the start of the conference that information will be shared and held in line with data protection legislation. The chair will also remind parent/s, child/ren and family members attending about the confidentiality of the meeting, and the documents provided after the meeting.

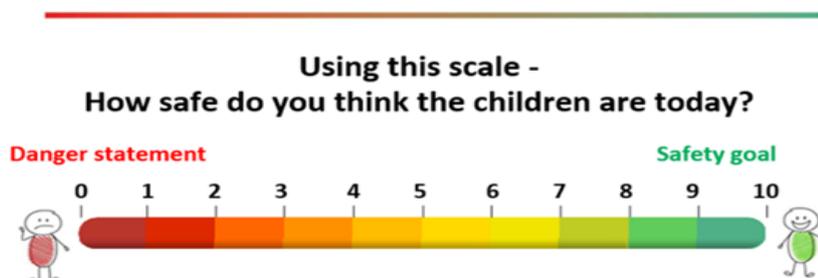
The conference model:

The conference is held using the Signs of Safety model, utilising a mapping tool:

<p>What is going well? <i>Existing strengths.</i> <i>If a review conference, what has been successful in the CP Plan so far.</i></p>	<p>What are we worried about? <i>Past harm -</i> <i>And what are we worried could happen in future if nothing changes.</i></p>	<p>Are there "grey" areas? <i>What do we not know enough about or need to understand better?</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
<p>Are there safety factors? <i>Things that help keep the children safe now (and have done for some time).</i></p>	<p>Complicating factors <i>Things that are making things more difficult for the family at the moment.</i></p>	<p>What needs to happen next? <i>Next steps – practical steps or services that should be part of the plan.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

A danger statement is presented to the conference by the social worker and reviewed and amended in the meeting in discussion with those present. A safety goal is outlined. A safety scale is also used, with everyone asked for their view as to how safe they feel the children are today.

Scale



Threshold for agreeing a child protection plan:

The conference should consider if the 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 conference should consider the following question when determining whether a child requires a multi-agency child protection plan:

- Has the child suffered significant harm? *And;*
- Is the child likely to suffer significant harm in the future?
- The test for likelihood of suffering harm in the future should be that either:

The child can be shown to have suffered maltreatment or impairment of health or development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely; or

A professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, predicts that the child is likely to suffer maltreatment or the impairment of health and development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

If a child is likely to suffer significant harm, then they will require multi-agency help and intervention delivered through a formal child protection plan.

The primary purposes of this plan are to:

- ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent him or her from suffering further harm;
- promote the child's health and development; *and*

- support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.

There are four threshold categories for child protection planning:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Haringey procedures require that a single category is chosen for a child protection plan, even where there is evidence that the harm suffered falls within two or more categories. The category chosen should be the category that most appropriately fits the experience or predicted experience of the child and provides an indicator of what the key concern is. The conference must seek consensus from the professionals in the meeting.

For example; where there is domestic abuse the concern is likely to be that the child would experience emotional harm if seeing, hearing or aware of an incident, or physical harm if caught up in the middle of an incident. Where there is child sexual exploitation (CSE) the category should be sexual abuse. The chair will offer guidance and in some cases the decision on the category which best fits the concerns for the child.

See Appendix: *Definitions of child abuse and neglect, from the London Child Protection Procedures*

Decision not to make a child subject to a child protection plan:

In cases where the conference agrees that the threshold is not met for a child protection plan then the meeting 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 meeting date at the end of the conference. Where a child's circumstances do not meet the threshold for a child protection plan, they should always be assessed as potentially a child in need. This decision could be made at an ICPC as well as at an RCPC when a current CP plan is ended. It should be borne in mind that parental agreement is needed for a child in need plan.

Criteria for ending a child protection plan:

A child protection plan can be ended if:

- A review conference is satisfied that the abuse or neglect, or risk of abuse or neglect, is no longer present. The decision must be based on careful and thorough analysis of current and future risk. The conference will have judged that the child is no longer likely to suffer significant harm and no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan.
- The child has moved permanently to another local authority. In this case a child protection plan can only cease after the receiving authority has convened a transfer child protection conference.
- The child has reached the age of 18.

- The child is deceased.
- The child has left the United Kingdom. It is important that there is sufficient evidence gathered to confirm this before the child protection plan is ended. Where the child is still believed to be at risk, and there are concerns about how and why they left the country, the local authority must take action to trace the child and to make appropriate referrals to children's safeguarding services where the child now resides.
- The child is now looked after and therefore also has a CLA Plan in place which meets the child's care needs and manages risk (see below, **Dual Plans**).

Ending a Child Protection Plan at the first review conference

A child protection plan should only be ended at a first review conference under exceptional circumstances. Where children have experienced or been at risk of significant harm and this has required a child protection plan, the concerns would not be likely to be resolved within three months, and a testing period in addition to change is appropriate.

For this reason, it is advised against ending the CP plan at the first review, and this should happen only on rare occasions. The children's social worker and team manager should discuss such a proposal to end the child protection plan with the chair, in advance and in good time. The chair is asked to discuss the case with the child protection conference service manager before the conference.

Dual plans:

Dual planning for children (i.e. having both a CP plan and a child looked after (CLA) plan) is to be avoided. This will help prevent duplication and confusion.

If a child who has a child protection plan becomes looked after under section 20, it is important to be aware that the parent/s with parental responsibility can end s20 agreement at any point. The child's status is not permanently secured. However, if it is expected that the child will be looked after for some time, and that their removal is not imminent, then it is likely to be reasonable to end the CP plan, as long as it is ensured that the CLA plan and placement plan provide adequate security and sufficiently reduce or eliminate the risk of significant harm identified by the CP conference. If the parents request the return of the child from the LA's care, the risk of significant harm and the need for a further ICPC should be considered.

If court proceedings are taking place, and the court has granted an Interim Care Order (ICO), then the court's oversight as well as the CLA plan overseen by the IRO should be sufficient to meet the child's needs and keep them safe.

In each of the above cases, the chair should liaise with the social worker, team manager and IRO and discuss risks and safety, and whether in their view it is appropriate to end the CP plan. If the view of these professionals is that dual plans are not needed, then the chair may contact the parent/s, other core group members and police (CAIT) to note that the chair proposes to end the child protection plan as a "paper exercise".

The chair may share this information at the first CLA review (this may be by attending themselves by agreement, or via the IRO or social worker). Alternatively, the chair may write

to relevant parties, via the social worker, noting they intend to end the CP Plan within a given period (72 hours is reasonable), and why.

The chair should ask parties to share any concerns or dissent directly with them, and to do so within that time period. If any party does have concerns, the chair will contact them for further discussion. If there are concerns which cannot be resolved, then the chair should convene an early conference rather than end the plan as a paper exercise. If no concerns are raised, the plan will be ended as a paper exercise and parents, core group members and CAIT will be informed. The chair must maintain oversight of the whole process until completed.

Where a Care Order is granted in respect of a child who has a child protection plan, then the child protection plan should be ended. The chair should write to the parent/s, core group and police (CAIT) to inform them.

The conference outcome and record:

The conference service is responsible for recording the outcomes of the meeting on the child's file.

All conferences will have a dedicated Business Support Officer who supports the chair in producing the decisions and documents which comprise the record of the conference. The chair is responsible for these and must check the documents before they are sent to invitees

The CP admin team distribute the conference documents, to professionals by email or post, and to parent/s or carers by post. The conference documents should be distributed within one working day.

The record of the conference comprises the following, all of which are shared to invitees after the conference:

- Conference summary and plan
- Professional agency reports to the conference
- Parent and children/young people's contribution forms

The conference summary and plan is produced by the chair and holds information including: Decision, Chair's summary, Danger statement, Safety goals, Scaling (with reasons), Each child's views, the CP or CIN plan made, Contingency plan, Attendees/Apologies, Core group membership and timing of further meetings.

The chair will make a note on the child's case file regarding whether the chair's conference record or any report should be redacted or held back from any party. The dedicated BSO will consult this before sending out these documents.

Chapter 5. Children and young people's participation

Haringey is committed to ensuring that the experiences of children and young people are understood, and that they can share their experiences, wishes and feelings in a way which is meaningful, is heard and which can be shown to contribute to planning and change.

It is important that the conference service is proactive in capturing the views of children, young people and their families.

It is an expectation that all children of a reasonable age and level of understanding should have the opportunity to contribute to their conference. This includes through conference consultation forms, words and pictures direct work, and any other media they choose to use. Attendance by all children over the age of ten should be considered.

All children should be offered an advocate who will attend with them or on their behalf. It is the social worker's responsibility to arrange this. They should ask the young person to agree a referral to the dedicated advocacy service, which is provided by Barnardo's. If the young person prefers to use an alternative advocate, they should explore this with them and discuss it with the chair. If this is appropriate, this person must understand their role as advocate and meet with the chair prior to the meeting to discuss arrangements and role. The chair should promote and support the use of advocacy, and referral to the Barnardo's advocacy service. It may be important to make this part of the child protection plan.

If the young person wishes to attend, the social worker and advocate must inform the chair in advance and discuss with them the young person's wish to engage and any potential issues which might affect them. They will discuss the arrangements for making the young person feel welcome and safe, and how they will take part, including if they will join for all or part of the meeting.

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

Whether or not they use an advocate, the young person may want to contribute in person, write a letter or provide a presentation. The social worker will explore this with the young person so that their contribution is available for the conference. They will discuss with the chair how it is to be shared in the meeting.

Whether children over the age of ten attend or not, they should be offered the opportunity to meet with the chair to discuss the meeting and the plan that was agreed and if they would like to attend their conference in the future. There may be younger children too who would like to meet the chair. This should always be considered. The chair and social worker should discuss who is the best person to provide feedback about the conference to each child.

It is important to gather feedback from children and young people about their experience of being on a child protection plan, and of the child protection process. This may be best gathered when the plan ends. The service should consider how best to do this, and progress plans to do so.

The conference service has produced leaflets for children and young people about child protection conferences. These should be shared and used by their social worker to support age-appropriate explanation of the process and the part they can take in this.

Chapter 6. Quality assurance:

Quality assurance in the child protection service is about placing an emphasis on quality of outcomes for children. It is about making sure that children and young people and

parents/carers have the opportunity to participate and contribute and have their voices heard. It means that all people involved in the conference are treated with dignity and respect and have the opportunity to contribute. It means developing effective plans to keep children safe and meet their needs, that are achievable and proportionate to risk.

Quality assurance activity is a very important part of the chair's role. It is important that staff throughout the organisation understand the role of the conference chair and the value they bring through robust quality assurance. It is important that chairs work with social workers, understand the boundary between operational responsibilities and independent scrutiny, and take an appreciative enquiry approach to all quality assurance activity.

In order to effectively scrutinise case work and quality assure practice the child protection service is and should be independent of case work and operational managerial responsibility.

The chair has a responsibility for monitoring the progress of CP plans and quality of practice, in conference and in between conferences. This ensures the best planning for children and prevents 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, both in conference and through the monitoring of case work.

The service should have an effective quality assurance process which starts at the request for a child protection conference.

Quality assurance activity undertaken by the chair should be evidenced on the child's file. It begins with preparation for the ICPC and continues throughout the period during which the child has a child protection plan. This should be evident in:

- ICPC and RCPC preparation including the pre-conference discussion
- Appraisal of reports, both from the social worker and other agencies
- The conference outcomes and decisions (CP or CIN plan)
- The ICPC and RCPC meeting record
- The midway review
- Response to information sharing at key points in the progress of the case

Monitoring may take place more than once between conferences. However, over-monitoring is to be avoided and should not be the means for managing risk.

Themes which arise from quality assurance activity should be shared with the ESQA Head of Service. Individual case concerns are managed through the dispute resolution process. (See below). The chairs take part in regular audits led by the audit team within ESQA.

Where there are themes emerging in regard to partner agencies, which may include attendance at conference, reports submitted to conference and the quality of these activities, these should be shared with the ESQA Head of Service and the HSCP Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager.

Chapter 7. Managing concerns and the dispute resolution:

Internal dispute resolution process:

It is expected that chairs have positive working relationships with social workers and team managers. There may be occasions where there are differences of opinion on thresholds and planning for individual children. There may also be occasions when poor practice may be identified, when statutory duties and responsibilities are not being met and when children are not receiving a service in accordance with their need. The conference chair has a responsibility to take action where they are concerned that the planning in place is not being adhered to or where it is failing to meet the child's safeguarding needs.

If a chair believes that a practice or policy is detrimental to the child's welfare, they have a duty to challenge this assertively. A key feature of the chair's role is that they should provide an independent perspective uninfluenced by managerial or resource pressures. They are in a unique position to carry out a critical monitoring and challenging role. They have a duty to monitor how statutory duties are carried out and compliance with child protection processes. They should identify any areas of poor practice and report on areas of good practice.

Chairs will follow Haringey's dispute resolution process, outlined within the *Escalation Policy for children subject to Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children*. Where concerns are identified the chair will in the first instance seek to resolve the issue informally with the social worker or the team manager, dependent on the seriousness of the issues. A record of the conversation and concern will be added to the child's file as an alert. If the matter is not resolved in a timescale that is appropriate to the child's needs, the chair should then consider following the escalation process.

This will be recorded as a dispute resolution episode on the child's case file and logged as an escalation in the case notes. The dispute resolution will be tasked to the relevant team manager, service manager or Head of Service depending on the nature and level of the concern.

A response must be provided within 5 working days of the dispute resolution being raised. It is good practice for the chair to discuss the matter in advance with the individual professional to whom they are escalating the matter. If they are unable to do this, then an explanatory email will be helpful, as well as using the case file episode to log their concern. The chair may bypass any stage and progress the dispute to the level they consider most appropriate.

Resolving inter-agency professional differences:

It is understood that all professionals in attendance at the conference are there to contribute, in the best interests of the child. There will be occasions where there are professional disagreements. The chair is responsible for ensuring that all professionals are listened to and that their views are taken into consideration. The chair must ensure that the meeting is child focused. The chair will take the final decision regarding whether a child protection plan is made, and the category. The chair is responsible for recording dissent to the final decision of the conference.

If professionals have concerns about the decisions made in a conference (including the content of a CP Plan) and believe that this does not manage the risk concerns, or if they have

other concerns relating to a conference, then they are encouraged to bring this to the chair's attention straight away after the conference. If they continue to have concerns and in their view the issue is not managed or resolved, they should use the support of safeguarding lead professionals within their organisations to enable professional challenge and escalate concerns using the [HSCP Escalation and Resolution Protocol](#)

The chair may have concerns related to the involvement of a professional from a partner agency in a conference or in the safeguarding process. This may relate for example to conference attendance or to a report. They will consider whether it is most appropriate to discuss this with that professional to achieve resolution, or whether it is most appropriate to escalate straight away to a manager in that organisation or to its safeguarding lead, using guidance within the HSCP Escalation and Resolution Protocol.

Chapter 8. Multi-agency working arrangements and monitoring:

Positive multi-agency relationships are integral to safeguarding children, and the key to achieving this is communication. Child protection conferences, core groups, and child protection planning are flagship areas of multi-agency working. It is vital that good 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 CP conference service manager has a responsibility to work with the lead professionals from agencies across Haringey.

Key partners include:

- Haringey CYPS
- NHS and health care leads, including mental health and specialist services
- Probation services
- Education/Schools
- Children's Centres
- Police
- Housing

Themes collated from quality assurance work will be shared to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and that there is accountability across the child protection system.

Chapter 9. Support and consultation role:

The child protection advisers are available to offer:

- Safeguarding advice, consultation and guidance

- Threshold consultation guidance for ICPC
- Support on multi-agency working arrangements
- LADO cover and advice (in the absence of the dedicated LADO officer)

Each CPA is linked to a CYPS service, or to a number of teams within the service, and is the first contact for team managers and social workers for advice. However, every CPA will respond to requests for advice and consultation.

CPAs liaise regularly with team managers from their named services, and attend team meetings on a rolling basis.

Chapter 10. Risk to children

The conference service is a central and crossover point for safeguarding activity within the London Borough of Haringey and through local and national agencies and organisations. When required, the Child Protection Advisors provide support to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in respect of responding to referrals relating to people who may pose a risk to children and young people.

When it is necessary to provide support to the LADO service, Child Protection Advisors (CPA's) must cooperate and respond to referrals pertaining to individuals who may pose a risk to children and young people. Within this role CPAs are responsible for diligently recording all necessary information and following LADO processes to ensure enquiries have a robust and thorough response to the concerns raised in the referral.

When CPAs are enlisted to provide support to the LADO service, they need to liaise with relevant partner agencies; primarily the police, probation, prison, and link in with MAPPA and MARAC as required, to discuss, consider and record such persons in line with the legislation relating to such individuals.

It is important that 'risk to children' markers are managed responsibly and by a small pool of experienced workers to ensure legislation and policy are followed rigorously. The allocated social worker for open cases linked to MAPPA and MARAC will be responsible for the case recordings for those cases and where appropriate will liaise with the CPA with regards to a recording of risk to children marker.

Chapter 11. Concerns and complaints from parents or children

It is the chair's responsibility to share with family members who attend conference, what to do if they are unhappy about how a conference has been chaired, or about a decision that has been made within it. They should share that in the first instance they are encouraged to have a discussion with the chair, who will make themselves available to do so and work to resolve the concern. They can also contact the CP conference service manager if they wish, initially or if they are not satisfied with the chair's response. The complaints procedure is within the conference guide sent out by CP admin with the conference invitations. The chair will make sure this is provided again if necessary. The chair will reassure parents and young people that they have a right to complain and be heard, and that if an individual makes a

complaint this will not have an impact on the progress of the child protection plan or on decision making.

Chapter 12: Chairing conferences in an anti-discriminatory way

42.3% of people in Haringey belong to a BAME group. For many parents attending conference, English is an additional language. Children and their families face racism, language barriers, and intolerance of cultural differences. Children and parents experience poverty, live with disability, experience homophobia, and face lack of understanding of mental ill health. A potent mix of factors may limit opportunity, and increase vulnerability, for children who are the subject of child protection conferences and their families . Black boys in Haringey are more likely to be excluded from school than any other group.

Chairs will aim to make sure that young people and adults drawn into the child protection process believe the challenges they face are recognised, their strengths can be expressed and will be valued, and their different needs and experiences will be understood. They will place young people and their carers front and centre of meetings. The signs of safety approach helps to focus on the strengths of families and communities, including religious community. Parents are encouraged to bring community support and advocates to meetings. Advocacy is encouraged, to empower young people and engage them. Where interpreters are needed, they will always be used in conferences.

All chairs and the CP conference service manager will work hard to identify and challenge racism and other forms of discrimination, individual and systemic, within conference and outside it. They will work to be responsive, to listen and to learn. They will escalate as needed and to be part of identifying and making changes. They will work hard to identify and meet needs.

Chapter 13: Keeping attendees safe

The chair has a responsibility to chair the conference so that it is a safe enough space for those attending. The chair must make sure that all those attending have a chance to share their views and be heard. Parents attending a conference are bound to feel distressed and challenged. They may be dealing with particular difficulties, such as mental ill-health, which makes it hard for them to manage in the meeting. The chair will work hard to put them at their ease as much as possible and will always act respectfully towards them. They will give them the opportunity to take breaks, and time out when they need to.

A parent or family member may act in ways which present as aggressive, abusive, or even physically challenging. If the chair believes that any individual's behaviour is unacceptable or unsafe, they will need to consider whether to give them a warning or ask them to leave. In a virtual conference they may take action to mute an attendee. In some circumstances they may need to end the conference for everyone's safety. The chair will need to be clear that threatening or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated. If a parent, child, professional or indeed the chair is being threatened or abused, the chair will act to remove the perpetrator from the meeting. The chair will take the final decision about conference attendance.

The chair will follow safety guidance if the meeting is taking place in person.

If there are concerns beforehand about the risk of potentially aggressive, threatening or violent behaviour before the conference, the chair will consult with the social worker, team manager and CP service manager before the meeting to make a safety plan.

The chair will make a referral to the persons of concern panel or advise the team manager to make such a referral, if the threshold of concern appears to be met.

Appendix: Definitions of child abuse and neglect

From the London Child Protection Procedures, Responding to Concerns of Abuse and Neglect Procedure

As defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2018 and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2018:

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child; see Fabricated or Induced Illness Procedure.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person;

Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction;

Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another e.g. where there is domestic abuse;

Serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger;

Exploiting and corrupting children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, including online and with mobile phones, or in the production of pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

In addition; Sexual abuse includes abuse of children through sexual exploitation. Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of similar age, consenting partners is not usual. However, where a child is under the age of 13 it is classified as rape under s5 Sexual Offences Act 2003. See Part B1, Practice Guidance.

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 or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues. Where there is domestic abuse and violence towards a carer, the needs of the child may be neglected.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to:

Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);

Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;

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, social and educational needs.

Included in the four categories of child abuse and neglect above, are a number of factors relating to the behaviour of the parents and carers which have significant impact on children such as domestic abuse. Research analysing Serious Case Reviews has demonstrated a significant prevalence of domestic abuse in the history of families with children who are

subject of Child Protection Plans. Children can be affected by seeing, hearing and living with domestic abuse as well as being caught up in any incidents directly, whether to protect someone or as a target. It should also be noted that the age group of 16 and 17 year olds have been found in recent studies to be increasingly affected by domestic abuse in their peer relationships.

The Home Office definition of Domestic violence and abuse was updated in May 2018 as:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

Psychological; Physical; Sexual; Financial; Emotional."

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."

In addition Working Together to Safeguard Children has introduced the concept of Contextual Safeguarding which recognises that as well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking, online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.