

Child Protection Conference Professional Dissent Process

This dissent process is for professionals only and should not be confused with the rights of parents and children to complain about the service they have received from the Local Authority or any other agency working with their family.

The dissent process is separate from the GSCP's [Escalation Protocol](#), which forms part of the local safeguarding children procedures.

It is imperative that agencies work together to safeguard children. However there may be occasions where an agency representative has concerns about the outcome of a Child Protection Conference.

These must be raised within the conference meeting, where you will be given the opportunity to explore your thoughts and opinions based on the information that you have in respect of the family and what you have heard during the meeting. **If, after you have heard all the information you remain concerned about the outcome, it is important that you make your views known openly.**

All professionals should be clear about the distinction between personally disagreeing with the outcome of a Child Protection Conference and making a professional judgement to uphold that decision and formally dissenting; this is the process by which you ask for your view to be formally recorded in the minutes and taken further, in line with the formal dissent process and possible progress to the escalation process.

To dissent means that a professional disagrees so strongly with the conference decision that they cannot have their professional name attributed to the decision.

Dissent can only be expressed within a child protection conference, dissent cannot be made by professionals who have not attended the conference or after the conference has ended.

Dissent Process

Child Protection Conferences are convened when professionals have concerns for children who are living within their families and it is agreed that the children may be at risk of significant harm if their situation does not improve. Both professionals and families, including children where appropriate, attend Child Protection conferences.

The Reviewing Officer who chairs the conference will ensure that all who attend have the opportunity to share their views and discuss what is going well for the child and what is causing concern.

The purpose of the Child Protection Conference is to devise a Child Protection Plan which identifies actions which will improve the child and family's situation in order to protect the children from harm.

The Reviewing Officer will also ensure conference members understand the dissent process and will empower professionals to dissent if they do not agree with the decision that has been made.

There may be occasions during a Child Protection Conference when after hearing all the information shared at Conference professionals do not agree with the outcome of the meeting and feel that threshold has or has not been met for a child or children to be subject to a Protection Plan.

It is important that all dissents are properly considered and there is a transparent process within which concerns can be escalated. All dissents will be recorded formally within the Decisions Outcome and Recommendations forms and the Child Protection minutes.

It is important that we endeavour to resolve issues in relation to Child Protection Conference decision making as effectively and as soon as possible, given the impact for children and their family. Prior to commencing the formal dissent process, it is important that you have discussed your concerns with your line manager, who has in turn advised your service lead. This should happen immediately following the conference.

It would be expected that your service lead and the service lead for the Safeguarding Children Unit have opportunity to explore your concerns and review the information brought to the child protection conference in addition to the minutes. This should happen **within 5 days of the conference**. If, at this stage your dissent is upheld, then it is likely that the conference will be reconvened. If there is disagreement, then the formal dissent process should be commenced.

The reasons for the dissent must be put in writing and sent to the GSCP Business Manager as soon as possible **but no later than 10 working days from the Child Protection Conference** – See [Appendix 1: Dissent Form or use online form](#)

The referral will then be passed onto the Service Manager for Safeguarding Children Unit and nominated representatives of the Quality, Learning and Practice group. A meeting will be held and a decision will be made to either confirm the Conference outcome or to request the Conference be reconvened.

You will receive a response no later than 15 working days of the meeting considering the dissent.

See [flowchart](#)

Flowchart:



