

Pre-Birth Conferences – additional information

Need for a pre-birth conference

Where a Section 47 enquiry gives rise to concern that an unborn child may be at future risk of significant harm, then an Initial Child Protection Conference may need to be convened prior to the baby's birth.

Such a conference will have the same status and will proceed in the same way as any other Initial Child Protection Conference, including decisions about the need for a child protection plan.

A pre-birth Child Protection Conference should always be called when a baby is to be born into a family where children are already subject to a Child Protection plan. This **must** be a separate conference and decisions about the unborn child cannot be made in the Review conference for the other children in the family.

Consideration to call a conference should also be given;

- When the parents have had previous children removed from their care.
- When the baby is to be born into a household where a P.P.R lives or is a frequent visitor.
- When a baby is to be born into a household where a person previously involved in child abuse lives or is a frequent visitor.

Consultation can take place with a Child Protection Coordinator about the need for a conference and should always take place if the Local Authority plan is to commence legal proceedings at birth.

Timing of a pre-birth conference

A pre-birth conference should always take place **8 weeks** prior to the expected date of delivery.

Social workers should therefore contact the convenors in Safeguarding **12 weeks** prior to the E.D.D.

When this timescale cannot be met then the pre-birth conference should be booked at the earliest opportunity.

Invitations

For all pre-birth conferences the following will be automatically invited:

- Consultant Neonatologist – the Jessop Wing (for conferences with no substance misuse).
- Child Protection Midwife, the Jessop Wing.
- Under 18's Midwife for all pregnancies of women under 18.
- Substance Misuse Midwife for all conferences concerning substance misusing expectant mothers.
- The police.

- The community midwife working with the mother. Social workers must be able to provide the midwife's name to the convenor. The inclusion of midwifery services in these cases and their involvement in the conference should be given paramount importance.
- The G.P. (Social Worker to provide this information).
- Invitations to the Local Authority Solicitor should be made by the area team and not the Safeguarding Service if their presence is required.

Post Conference

If the conference makes the decision that the baby will be subject to a Child Protection plan, then this will happen immediately following the conference. The pre-birth conference will request that the allocated social worker informs Safeguarding Children Service of the baby's birth, name and gender and any other required details **as soon as possible** following the birth.

The Child Protection Plan drawn up at the pre-birth conference needs to be incorporated in the woman's obstetric notes, along with a birth plan. The Child Protection Conference will also make a decision about whether a pre-discharge meeting is needed.

Birth plans

A birth plan should be completed in all cases where there is social work involvement with a family where a baby is expected.

The birth plan should be completed and faxed to the specialist midwife for Child Protection. Fax number: (0114) 226 8445. This will ensure it is placed on the mother's records at the Jessop Wing. It should be on the mother's records no later than the 36th week of pregnancy. The plan will provide guidance to the hospital about social care services involvement and contact details, including plans for any ward assessments, restrictions on visitors, plans for discharges and issues such as substance misuse. It should also provide information about what hospital staff should do in case of emergencies e.g. if parents attempt to remove the baby from the ward, especially outside of normal office hours. A copy should be sent to the out-of-hours team if appropriate.

Review Conference

This will take place within 3 months of the pre-birth conference and a date will be made at the pre-birth conference. However, this may need to be altered dependent on circumstances, for instance if the baby is born earlier than expected.