**Child Protection Conferences: 2 minute guide**

***What preparation is needed for Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences?***

An initial child protection conference (ICPC) is a meeting that is held when agencies believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm or has suffered significant harm. The aim of the conference is for the family and professionals to meet and share information with each other about the risks and the strengths. They will then consider and decide, with the family and where appropriate the children and young people, what will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people where these concerns exist.

Where a child is made subject to a Child Protection plan, regular Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC) will be held to monitor the effectiveness and progress of the Child Protection Plan.

Parents, carers, children and young people must be well prepared for the ICPC and subsequent RCPC’s. These are very important meetings and the process should be as supportive as possible. It is important that parent(s)/ carer(s) have the opportunity to fully participate in Child Protection Conferences and they can only do this if they have had full access to all of the information in a timely manner and understand what is being discussed. Care should be taken to include all parents and carers including parents not living with their children, where this is deemed appropriate.

All agencies involved are individually responsible for being fully prepared for an ICPC or RCPC by providing their reports to the family in a timely fashion (at least three days before the ICPC and five days before a Review Child Protection Conference) and attending the conference where invited. This guide sets out how agencies should do this.

Agencies or practitioners that are regularly invited to ICPC’s / RCPC’s include, but not restricted to: Police, Children’s Services, School, Housing, GPs, Health Visitors, Midwives, Mental Health workers, Drug & Alcohol workers, Probation, third sector support workers.

***What are the timescales for an ICPC / RCPC?***

When a strategy discussion determines a Section 47 enquiry is required, an ICPC should be convened. The date for the ICPC should be within 15 days of the strategy discussion.

This is a national timescale set by the government and all local authorities in England are expected to meet this timescale. The urgency of the situation, however, may dictate that the timescale is shorter.

Where a Child Protection plan is made at ICPC, an RCPC should be held within 3 months of the date of ICPC, and at further intervals of no more than 6 months. The Conference Chair and / or Core Group members may have reason to convene an RCPC sooner than within the specific timescales above.

It is imperative that these timescales are adhered to and that any reports produced for the ICPC and RCPC are shared with the family in advance of the meeting, as appropriate.

***What should practitioners or agencies do when invited to an ICPC / RCPC?***

When practitioners or agencies are invited to an ICPC or RCPC, this is because it has been identified that they have a contribution to make to safeguarding arrangements for the child and family.

It is expected in accordance with Working Together, local and partnership guidance, that they will attend the ICPC / RPCC and provide a report; ensuring this report is shared with the family prior to the meeting.

***When should agencies share their reports?***

**Sharing reports with parents and carers**

All agencies must share their reports with parents and carers before the day of the Child Protection Conference to give them time to consider what has been said, highlight any mistakes and talk to other family members or an advocate about what the reports say. They may want to prepare a response to the report. They may also wish to seek legal advice ahead of the conference.

It is not acceptable for a parent or carers to see the report for the first time at the Child Protection Conference; this will place them at a significant disadvantage for the reasons outlined above.

If English is not a family’s first language or they do not have good literacy skills, support must be identified and offered to assist their participation in the Child Protection Conference meeting.

Careful and concise planning enables the conference discussion to be more focused and analytical. This will allow for families to actively contribute to the plan and for the plan to be more specific, timely and effective.

**Sharing reports with Child Protection Chairs**

Reports should be sent to the Child Protection Conference Chair no fewer than three working days before the meeting for an ICPC and 5 working days for an RCPC. This then allows the chair to consider what has been submitted and establish if any key information is missing. In Redcar and Cleveland Conference Chairs offer to meet or have a phone call with families (including parents who do not reside with the child, or parent’s partners who are involved with the child) before the day of the conference to introduce themselves and explain the process. This can have a very positive impact on families’ ability to contribute to the meeting, fully participate in discussions and think about what might help.

***What should reports include?***

Reports prepared for the Child Protection Conference should include:

• The voice and views of the child and family, including what they perceive to be their needs and how they feel their needs might be met;

• Details of any professional involvement with the child and family, including positive information about progress and family strengths;

• Information concerning professional’s knowledge of the child’s developmental needs;

• The capacity of the parents to meet the needs of their child within their family; and

• Any other wider environmental factors.

Reports should be clear and consider the strengths, protective factors and risks within the family and extended family networks. Detailed and concise reports ensure that the Child Protection Conference has the necessary information to properly understand the needs of the family, which in turn enables the development of effective plans that the family can understand and fully contribute to.

*Key contacts and for more information For more information about the importance of quality professional preparation for Child Protection Conference, you can contact Sarah Edwards – Independent Review Unit Manager* *sarah.edwards@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk**.*

*You can also consult the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership website* [*Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews - South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (stscp.co.uk)*](https://stscp.co.uk/about-stscp/key-documents/child-safeguarding-practice-reviews/) *and the Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership’s Procedures website* [*Home - Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Procedures (teescpp.org.uk)*](https://www.teescpp.org.uk/)