

An initial
Child Protection
Conference
about your child

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Illustrations by Kellie Craig



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Information for parents and carers

What is an initial child protection conference and why is it held?

This initial child protection conference is being held because we have serious concerns about your child's safety or welfare. These sorts of concerns are often called child protection concerns.

The purpose of this conference is to talk about your child's health and development, and about your ability to keep your child safe and well in the future. The conference will decide whether your child is at risk of significant harm, now or in the future. If your child is at risk the conference will make sure that your family has the support it needs to keep your child safe and well.

The aim of the meeting is to make the best decisions and plans for your child. To achieve this we will be bringing together those people who know or have important information about you and your child.

Who will be at the conference?

We only invite those people who have a relevant contribution to make. Invitations are sent to people such as social workers, teachers, doctors, health visitors, school nurses, and police and probation officers. We ask everyone who has been invited to send written reports on what they know about you and your family, which will be photocopied and given out at the meeting. The Council's solicitor may also be invited to observe but not take part in the conference.

The chairperson (chair) of the conference will be an Independent Reviewing Officer who acts on behalf of the Safeguarding Children Board and who is responsible for making sure that the meeting is conducted fairly and properly. A written record of the meeting will be made (the minutes of the meeting) and you will receive a copy.

Will my child be at the conference?

This will depend on your child's age and how much they can understand. We also want to avoid causing your child unnecessary distress.

The social worker will talk to you and your child and help you both prepare for the conference. The social worker will explain how your child can let people at the conference know what their views are, whether or not they attend. We have a printed leaflet especially for children which the social worker will give to you. If your child is to attend they can bring a grown-up friend, advocate or supporter to the conference if they wish.

Will I be invited to the conference?

We believe it is very important for you to attend the conference so you can be fully involved in the plans for your child. We want to hear your views, and give you the opportunity to hear what other people have to say.

Very rarely, the chair of the conference will decide that a parent cannot be invited to the meeting. This will only happen if it is believed that you will behave in a threatening way towards the other people at the meeting or if your child will be put at risk if you are there. You will be given the reasons in writing.

We will always try to have all family members who have been invited together for the whole of the conference. Once you know who has been invited you should tell the social worker if you have any concerns about the other people being there.

The social worker will then discuss with the chair whether special arrangements are needed.

Sometimes you may be asked to leave the meeting for a short time so that confidential information can be given. This may include, for example, medical information about someone else which we are not able to give you.

Can I bring someone with me to the conference?

Yes, you can bring a friend, advocate or supporter. Please remember that personal information about you and your family will be discussed at the meeting, and that your friend or supporter will hear this.

You might prefer to bring a solicitor, and you can of course get legal advice beforehand.

What if English is not my first language?

Conferences are held in English so please let the social worker know as soon as you can so that arrangements can be made for you to have an interpreter.

What if I have a physical disability or learning difficulty?

Please let the social worker know as soon as possible before the meeting so that we can make sure that you can play a full part in the conference.

How should I expect to be treated at the conference?

You have a right to:

- be treated fairly and with respect;
- have your views listened to and taken seriously;
- have personal information about you and your child accurately recorded and kept confidential;
- take part as much as possible in making plans which affect you and your child;
- get legal advice about your rights and responsibilities.

If I don't attend, can I make sure that people know what my views are?

Whether or not you come to the meeting, you can put your views in writing either on the form we have sent you or in a letter, which people at the conference will read. If you prefer not to write anything down you should talk to the social worker about other ways of making sure that your views are passed on. You should also be able to see the social worker's report, probably a day or two before the meeting: this gives you a chance to correct any inaccuracies and to respond to what has been written.

How will I know what has been said?

Whether or not you attend the meeting you will be sent a written record of what was discussed, a list of the recommendations made and the initial child protection plan. You should get these within three weeks of the meeting. The social worker will also visit you as soon as possible after the conference to let you know what has happened.

What happens at the conference?

- before the full meeting starts you will be able to meet with the chair of the conference, who will explain how the meeting will be conducted;
- you will then be joined by the other members of the conference, who will be asked to introduce themselves;
- in the next section people will be asked to give information about you and your child. You will be given time to give your own views and comments on the things being said;
- the chair may decide there needs to be a short time when you and your child, and other family members and supporters, are asked to leave the room - this is called a confidential section;
- when you return there will be a discussion about whether there are any risks to your child's welfare and how serious these are.
- following this a decision will be made about whether your child is at risk of significant harm and so in need of a child protection plan: this decision will be made by the professionals at the conference (excluding the minute-taker, and any observers such as the local authority solicitor). The chair has the right to overturn decisions, and specifies the category of significant harm.

What happens if a child protection plan is made for my child?

If a child protection plan is made for your child the conference will:

- say who your child's key worker will be. This will be a social worker who has a number of responsibilities for working with children;
- write an outline child protection plan, to show exactly who will be doing what to make sure your child is safe and well;
- name the people in the core group, which is a group of people (including you and possibly your child) who work together to make sure the child protection plan is carried out;
- set a date for a review conference, which is the meeting where a decision is made about whether your child still needs a child protection plan, and which reviews that plan.

If a child protection plan is made for your child you will be given a leaflet explaining in more detail what this means.

Will my child's name be put on a list?

There is a list of all those children in Calderdale who have a child protection plan. The list contains basic details such as the child's name, date of birth, address and the category of harm. In Calderdale this information is kept by the Council's Children and Young People's Services Child Protection and Review Team Safeguarding Unit, on behalf of the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board. There are strict guidelines on who can check this information.

What happens if a child protection plan is not needed for my child?

The conference may decide that the concerns about your child are not serious enough to require a formal child protection plan. They may feel however that you and your child would benefit from some help or advice and may decide to make recommendations about this. Sometimes a child in need plan will be made. You will have a chance to say what you think and whether you are willing for this support to be arranged.

Will I have to go to court?

Calderdale Council occasionally has to go to court to ask for a legal order if it has very serious concerns about a child, and if the child protection plan does not give enough protection. A decision about this will not be made at the conference, although people may say whether they feel that your child needs extra protection or cannot be kept safe at home. If legal action is going to be taken you will usually be told in advance so that you can get your own legal advice. Remember that the court can only make an order if it believes it is necessary for your child's welfare.

Complaints and Appeals

If you are unhappy about the way the conference was conducted or about the decision the conference made you have a right to complain/appeal.

1. You should talk to the Independent Reviewing Officer who ran the conference to discuss your concerns straight away after the meeting.
The administration co-ordinator in the Child Protection and Reviews Team can tell you the name of the Independent Reviewing Officer who chaired the conference about your child. Tel: 01422 393337
2. Complaints/appeals made more than **3 working days** after a conference can only be accepted at the discretion of the Safeguarding Children Board Manager:

**The complaint/appeal process is explained in more detail in leaflet CSCB5 and on the CSCB website at:
[www. calderdale-scb.org.uk](http://www.calderdale-scb.org.uk)**

Can I make a complaint about an agency?

If you are unhappy about the conduct of anyone representing an agency at a conference, or you wish to make a complaint about other matters regarding an agency, then you should use that particular agency's complaints process.

Help and advice

The following is a list of advice and advocacy services you might find helpful:

Solicitors

a list of solicitors who specialise in family law can be found in the Solicitors and Barristers Directory, available in Central Library, Northgate, Halifax

Tel: 01422 392630

www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law

Citizens' Advice Bureau

have offices in Halifax, Brighouse, Elland, Hebden Bridge, Todmorden

Advice line: Tel:01422 842848

www.calderdalecab.org.uk

Other local advice centres include:

Queens Road Advice Centre

194 Queens Road Halifax HX1 4NE

Tel: 01422 322778

www.queensroadadvice.com

Rhodes Street Advice Centre

Tel: 01422 341908

Parentline

a free, confidential help-line for anyone in a parenting role is provided by Parentline

Tel: 0808 800 2222

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Family Rights Group Advice Line

Tel: freephone 0800 731 1696

from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and

1.30 pm to 3.30 pm on weekdays

(advice can be offered in languages other than English)

www.frg.org.uk

Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board wants to provide helpful, accurate and understandable information. If you find any of this information unclear, wrong or out-of-date, or if you think additional information would help other readers, please let us know so that amendments can be made.
Contact: 01422 393337

If you would like this information
in another format or language,
please contact: 01422 393337

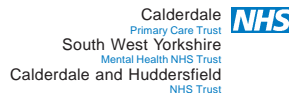
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তাহলে দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন :
01422 393337

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دوسری زبان
یا شکل میں چاہیے تو رابطہ کریں:
01422 393337



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www.calderdale-scb.org.uk



Call 01422 393337

Safeguarding children - everyone's responsibility