

# Child Protection Conferences

## A guide for parents and carers

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting between families and professionals which is held when there is concern about the safety or care of a child within a family.

Hackney is using a new way of working with your family and your children. We have introduced a more family friendly approach to Child Protection Conferences to ensure the best possible outcomes for your child and family. The new Child Protection Conference aims to help your family and caregivers to work with Hackney Children's Social Care and other services to ensure your child is safe and appropriately cared for.

The new Child Protection Conference meetings will assess risk by looking at strengths in your family, looking at concerns about your family, and making decisions about what needs to happen to ensure your children are safe and appropriately cared for.

### The purpose of a Conference

The purpose of a Conference is to:

- Share information about the health, safety and wellbeing of your child
- Assess whether your child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm
- Identify changes needed (if any) in order to ensure the safety and appropriate care of your child
- Identify the strengths within your family and what as a family you are able to do to achieve any necessary changes
- Identify any professional assistance needed by your family and which agencies can provide this
- Decide if your child needs to be subject to a Child Protection Plan.

**A Child Protection Conference does not make decisions about legal or court action, or about where children should live.**

As a parent or carer, you are invited to attend the Conference and we would encourage you to take an active part. Prior to the Conference we will discuss with you whether there are any family or friends who could attend the Conference to support you and consider what role they may play in any plans that are made.

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## How can you prepare?

During the Conference you will be given the chance to comment about what others are saying and provide information and your views. You will also be asked what you think should happen in the future, including any help you feel is necessary.

Many of the professionals who come to the Child Protection Conference will have prepared reports – setting out facts as they are known, their views and ideas. Do take up opportunities to go through this information with the professionals involved with your family before the conference. This will enable you to be clear about what you do and don't agree with, and help avoid surprises.

If you would like to prepare a report you may do so; should you require help with this please consult a member of your social work unit. If you don't want to write things down, you could still think about what you would like to say at the meeting, and perhaps bring some brief notes. You might find it useful to think about the following:

### Strengths

- What do you think are the strengths in your family?
- What are the things you think you do well?
- What positive things would you like professionals to know about you and your family?

### Risks/Concerns

- What (if anything) do you think needs to change in order for your child to be safe and appropriately cared for?

### Services/Assistance needed

- Does your family need any additional services or assistance?
- How would this assistance help?

### Next Steps

- What do you think needs to happen after this Conference?
- What do you think you, or others, could do to improve the current situation?

## Who else will be at the conference?

Anyone who has a role in caring for your child and your family can attend. This will include professionals who work with your child and your family. Everyone who attends the Conference will have a chance to

- speak about what is working well
- speak about what is worrying them
- be involved in decisions about who might support you and your child

The Conference will be chaired by an Independent Chairperson. There will also be someone to make a written record of the meeting, which will be shared with you.



A number of professionals that have been involved with your family might be invited to the meeting, such as:

- Social Workers
- Health Visitors
- School Nurses
- Doctors
- Teachers
- Education Welfare Officers
- Probation Officers.

A representative from the police attends all Initial Child Protection Conferences and some review Conferences.

## Talking to children

It is important that your child, if appropriate, has an opportunity to talk about what they are worried about, what makes them happy, and anything they would like to be different.

Social workers are expected to bring information about children's views to the conference. They may use a tool like the Three Houses, below, to speak with your child to obtain their views.



## What happens at an Initial Conference?

The Independent Chairperson will meet with you immediately beforehand to welcome you, to explain how the Conference will run, and to talk about the best way for you to contribute to the discussion and how sensitive issues can be best handled.

During the meeting four key questions are asked and everyone is asked to contribute:

- What is working well in your family?
- What are we worried about in relation to your child and your family?
- What needs to happen to make sure your child is safe and appropriately cared for in the future?
- What information is not agreed upon and needs to be clarified?

At the start of the Conference all the participants will introduce themselves, and the Chair will ask professionals to summarise the most important parts of their reports. You will be invited to contribute to this discussion.

Key information will be recorded on a grid displayed on the wall once its accuracy has been agreed. The grid will have headings based on the questions above and information will be recorded under these. In this way there is openness about what information is seen to be important and in what way.

A plan will be developed with you and others present, after which a decision will be made about whether the risks to your child are significant enough that the plan should have the status of a Child Protection Plan.

If it is decided that the plan will be a Child Protection Plan, a core group of people will be identified, which will include you and any supportive family and friends, as well as professionals involved in your family's care. The role of this core group is to work out in detail how the plan will work and measure progress.

It may be agreed that your child does not need a Child Protection Plan, but the discussion has identified that certain things should happen, or some assistance which may benefit your family. If this is the case then a Child in Need support plan may be developed.

## What happens after the Conference?

After the Conference you will be sent a written record of the meeting.

If a Child Protection Plan is made, you will be asked to attend regular meetings with other members of the Core Group. At these meetings, you will look at the Plan and discuss what progress has been made in relation to the Plan. The core group will meet within 10 working days of the Initial Conference and then at regular intervals (usually about 6 weeks) until the next conference.

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A Review Conference will be held after 3 months and then at 6 monthly intervals for as long as your child is subject of a Child Protection Plan. At each Conference a decision will be made about whether a Child Protection Plan remains necessary.

### What can you expect from us?

We want to work in partnership with you and your family. As a parent/carer, you should expect to:

- be listened to
- be treated with respect
- be involved in decisions
- get any assistance and help that has been offered to you within the agreed time scales
- receive copies of all reports before Conferences
- get a copy of the Conference record within 15 working days of the Conference

### Equal Opportunities

Hackney is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format, such as audio tape, or in another language, please ask an English speaker to contact the Independent Reviewing Team on 020 8356 4522.

### Contact

Please do not hesitate to contact your social work unit or the Independent Child Protection Chairpersons on 020 8356 4522 should you wish to discuss a Child Protection Conference or any part of the process.

### Your rights

You are entitled to receive advice from a solicitor if you wish. A list of solicitors experienced in family matters in your area can be obtained from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

### Other information and advice

If you would like some independent advice, please contact

The Family Right's Group  
2nd Floor, The Print House,  
18 Ashwin Street,  
E8 3DL

Tel: 020 7923 2628 (Office)

Tel: 0800 731 1696 (Helpline)

Fax: 020 7923 2683

Email: [office@frg.org.uk](mailto:office@frg.org.uk)

Web: [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

### Complaints

Should you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of a Child Protection Conferences please contact the Quality and Improvement Unit on 020 8356 5800 or [children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk)

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