

# Child Protection conferences

## Location and Timings

### In Somerset we offer family-led conferences.

We want families to feel comfortable to take part in their Child Protection Conference. Where possible, we support families to choose whether they want everyone to attend in person, or whether they want a hybrid conference where professionals join via MS Teams. In hybrid conferences, the family, Social Worker and Child Protection Coordinator attend in person.

The venue and time will be stated on the invitation and meetings can take up to two hours. All attendees are expected to stay for the duration of the meeting.

## What are they?

**A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that takes place when Children's Social Care and other involved agencies are worried that a child may be suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.**

It will be decided during the meeting whether the child requires the support of a Child Protection Plan. The meeting will be chaired by an independent Child Protection Coordinator. A Child Protection Conference is about finding the best plan of support for a child to keep them safe.

## How to prepare

**All professionals who are invited to a Child Protection Conference should submit a report.**

The template which is attached to the invitation to the Child Protection Conference should be used to complete the report. This needs to be completed, shared with the family and submitted two working days before an Initial Child Protection Conference, and five working days before a Review Child Protection Conference to help the family be prepared and help their participation. This also supports partnership working and helps the Conference to be family led.

## What is expected?

**During the meeting all professionals will be asked to share information that is relevant to safeguarding the child.**

This will include the worries about the child as well as the strengths within the family.

Professionals will be asked whether they have heard evidence that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm that is attributable to the care they are receiving, and if so, whether they require the support of a Child Protection Plan. The Child Protection Coordinator will confirm the decision based on the majority view of the professionals attending the meeting. The Chair will also ask professionals to choose a category for the Child Protection Plan: Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse or Neglect.

Everyone will be asked to contribute to producing an outline plan with the family.

## Who attends?

**A range of people and practitioners will be invited to attend these meetings.**

Children (usually over the age of eight) who are able to understand the worries, can attend their meeting if they would like to, with their parent's consent. All children over the age of four will also be offered the opportunity to share their views via an independent advocate, who will attend the meeting on their behalf.

Any person with parental responsibility for the child will be invited to the meeting, and they might choose to invite other family members or a friend for support.

The social worker will attend the meeting, as well as representatives from police, education, health, housing and any other agencies involved with the family.

## What happens next?

**If the decision is made for the child to be supported by a Child Protection Plan, a Core Group meeting will be arranged.**

If the decision is made that the child will be supported by a Child Protection Plan, involved professionals and the family will then need to arrange a date for the next Core Group Meeting (regular meetings to review the progress of the Child Protection Plan).

This meeting needs to be held within 10 working days after an Initial Child Protection Conference, and thereafter every four weeks. Any professional can chair the Core Group Meeting, and these meetings should go ahead if the Social Worker is not available.

A Review Conference will be scheduled within three months of an Initial Child Protection Conference, and within 6 months of a Review Child Protection Conference.

