

The Role of the Child Protection Chair

1. Chairing the Conference

The Chair's main responsibility in chairing Child Protection Conferences is to maintain independent oversight; they will have professional knowledge of child protection issues and practice and appropriate training. Independent Reviewing Officers who have had the necessary training and experience can also chair Child Protection Conferences.

The roles and duties of the Chair are to:

- Ensure reports submitted to the conference have been read and have been understood.
- Ensure that reports have been shared with the parents (and child/young person if appropriate) prior to the conference – at least before the report is sent to SQA inbox prior to the conference. If necessary, an interpreter or advocacy worker should be available to assist prior to the conference and for the conference itself if there are communication issues. If there are any issues with the report being available and interpreter or advocate and conference unable to proceed a review of the safety plan should take place.
- Meet with parents (and child/young person if appropriate), who will be invited to attend the meeting 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is for the Chair and family to introduce themselves to each other, and to briefly describe the conference process, who is attending and what their role is. The parents should be given the opportunity to ask any questions about process and to re-read the reports so that they understand the content. The Chair will also use this as an opportunity to agree with the parents how best to facilitate their participation in the conference – develop the contract for the meeting.
- Ensure that other professionals are invited to meeting and have had the reports in advance to read so that they come prepared to participate fully in identifying the risk/harm and contribute to formulating the plan.
- Decide if a conference should proceed when a quorum has not been reached and if it does proceed record why they made this decision. Do they not seek management agreement?
- Set the agenda, confirm issues about confidentiality and the purpose of the conference.
- Decide upon any exclusion from the conference and record the reasons why.
- Facilitate the conference ensuring full participation by those who are present. Ensure that each person present has the opportunity to add their information and contribute to any discussion and the decision-making process by any means necessary.

- Ensure that the views of each child are clarified and carefully considered and recorded and whether or not he/she/they are present at the conference or at least in part.
- Ensure that the views of each parent or person with parental responsibility are clarified and carefully considered and recorded, whether or not they are present at the conference.
- Ascertain the views of each conference member as to whether each child or young person has been significantly harmed, or is likely to be significantly harmed and whether a formal Child Protection Plan is necessary.
- Summarise the discussions and opinions expressed about whether the child or children have been significantly harmed or are likely to be.
- In light of the views expressed, reach a conclusion on the decision of the conference as to whether each child or young person has been significantly harmed and/or is likely to be significantly harmed and a formal Child Protection Plan is necessary.
- Ensure that any disagreements amongst participants over where a child should be subject to a plan or not and if they should be stepped down from a CP Plan are fully discussed, carefully listening to those expressing a minority view.
- Decide the category for of the significant harm for the CP Plan ensuring that all categories of actual or likely harm are noted.
- Take responsibility for accuracy of conference notes and sign them, ensuring in particular that any dissenting views are recorded;
- Approve the notes of the meeting, checking for inaccuracy and ensure they are disseminated to the correct people.

The issues discussed during the conference should be treated by each party in a manner which is consistent with good practice and with its legal powers and obligations (including data protection and human rights). Subsequent processing/disclosure of information with the appropriate safeguards may be required for lawful purposes such as the prevention or detection of crime and/or the protection of children.

The notes should be completed as soon as possible; at the very least the decision and outline of the Child Protection Plan should be completed, signed by the chair, and sent out to all attendees within 2 working days of the conference. The substantive notes should be completed, signed and sent out within 20 working days. The notes of Child Protection Conferences are confidential and should not be disclosed to a third-party organisation without the permission of the CP Chair.

2. Threshold for a child protection plan

The conference should consider the following question when determining whether a child requires a multi-agency child protection plan:

- Has the child suffered significant harm and
- Is the child likely to suffer significant harm in the future?

The test for likelihood of suffering harm in the future should be that either:

- The child can be shown to have suffered maltreatment or impairment of health or development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely; or
- A professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, predicts that the child is likely to suffer maltreatment or the impairment of health and development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

If a child is likely to suffer significant harm, then they will require multi-agency help and intervention delivered through a formal Child Protection Plan.

The primary purposes of this plan is to:

- Ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent them from suffering further harm;
- Promote the child's health and development;
- Support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.
- Is able to reduce risk and high-level need through clear multi agency allocation
- Is needs led and not resource led

3. Decision that a child needs a Child Protection Plan

If a decision is taken that the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm and hence in need of a Child Protection Plan, the Chair should determine which category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered or is likely to suffer. The category used (that is physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect, (see: [Responding to Abuse and Neglect](#) for definitions) will indicate to those consulting the child's social care record the primary presenting concerns at the time the child became the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The need for a protection plan should be considered separately in respect of each child in the family or household.

The Chair of the Conference is responsible for the Conference decision. They will consult with Conference members, aim for consensus as to the need for a Child Protection Plan or not, but ultimately will make the decision and note any dissenting views.

The Chair must make the decision about the need for a Child Protection Plan based on the views of all the agencies represented at the Conference and also take into account any written contributions that have been made.

4. Threshold Conversations

Before a request to hold an ICPC is made at day 5/6 of the Sec 47, a conversation should be held with the Quality Assurance Team Manager and operational Team Manager to consider threshold. The outcome of this conversation will be recorded on the child file by the referring manger.

In the pre-conversation held by the Child Protection Chair with the Social Worker and or their manager the threshold conversation can also be explored.

Where there is no consensus of opinion between the QA Team Manager and operational Team Manager the Head of Quality Assurance and the operational Service Manager will review the request and decide together. Only in exceptional situations will escalation to Director be required for a final decision if agreement cannot be reached however this will be rare.

The CP Chair prior to conference will have the conversation with the SW and if they wish to include their manager, to plan the conference and check the right people have been invited, the plans for the parents/carers and child to attend the conference in person, unless they wish it remotely and management of having parents contributing where there is domestic abuse for example.

5. Removal of child(ren) from CP plans

Where there is a potential plan of removing the child(ren) from the CP plan at the first RCPC (within the 12 weeks) the chair and the SW/Team Manager and operational Service Manager should refer to Director level for agreement to proceed prior to the conference. Evidence of sustainability will need to be provided prior to the conference by the operational Team Manager/Service Manager.

Where a child(ren) remain in PLO the RCPC cannot remove the child/ren from a child protection plan prior to the SW taking it back to Legal Gateway Panel to confirm PLO can be exited in the first instance. This should be completed prior to the conference. Where the conference are confident that the threshold for CP is not evidenced the conference decision will be adjourned to enable a PLO to be arranged to consider the progress.

Where there are assessed risks outside of the family and evidence provided to conference that this is the situation consideration should be given to a ROTH conference in the first instance for young people aged 12 and over through completing the screening tool and SERAF.

Where a child(ren) have school attendance less than 80% this remains a safeguarding concern and the child should not be removed from a CP Plan without the permission of the Director of Social Work. It is the responsibility of the SW/TMSM to seek this prior to the conference.

5. Dissent

The majority view of the conference will ordinarily prevail, although in exceptional circumstances as outlined above the Chair does have the right to the final decision.

In this situation all professionals will be asked if they wish to formally dissent from the Chair. If they wish to, the Chair will pass their names and details to the Quality Assurance Team Manager who will write to all parties and provide a written explanation. If formal dissent is made within 10 working days, upon receipt of this the Team Manager will undertake a review of the case and will notify all relevant parties of the outcome within 10 working days.

Professionals may also informally dissent where their view is recorded in the notes only.

If any professionals or family members do not agree with the decision of the Conference this will be recorded in the minutes. Disagreements should be resolved through the Chair within the Conference wherever possible. Where a complaint cannot be resolved within a Conference, professionals should follow the SSP Escalation Policy and family members should follow the Complaints Procedure

See: Swindon Safeguarding Partnership [Multi-Agency Standards for Safeguarding Children](#)

6. CP Chair access to Legal Gateway Panel (LGP)

Any child on a CP Plan where the plan is not reducing risk, or where the child has been on a CP Plan for over 10 months or where in their view the plan is “stuck” the CP Chair have the opportunity to refer this to the Legal Gateway Panel at the earliest opportunity to discuss threshold.

If a child has been on Protection Plan twice i.e. is on its second period of CP Planning there should be an action to refer to Legal Gateway Panel for a discussion regarding threshold.