



Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Boards

“Practice Guidance for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People through Child Protection Conferences in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent”

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the relevant policy and procedure, dependant on which Safeguarding Children Board area has convened the conference, as follows:

Staffordshire: [Section 3E Initial Child Protection Conferences: Managing conferences and child protection review conferences](#)

Stoke-on-Trent: [Section C05: Initial Child Protection Conferences](#)

[Section C07: Review child protection conferences](#)

The above guidance documents give clear information and guidance on procedural considerations, with which all practitioners should be familiar, prior to their attendance at any initial or review child protection conference.

It is also key that due consideration is given to national guidance in this area, particularly the following:

HM Government: “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2015)

http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

Introduction

“Everyone who works with children – including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers – has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single professional can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.”

(HM Government: Working Together to Safeguard Children ss 1.15 & 1.16 (2015))

With the above in mind, therefore, the primary purpose of a child protection conference is to enable practitioners to share information about the child(ren) and family with whom they are involved, and to assess risks, in order to make decisions about whether the threshold for child protection has been met and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child(ren).

This guidance, therefore, has been designed with the following aims, in consultation with partner agencies:

- To clarify role expectations for those contributing to the child protection conference process to enable SCB partner organisations to fulfil their statutory responsibilities
- To ensure a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the child protection conferencing process
- To help practitioners prepare before attending a child protection conference, the content of which should be based on your organisation’s professional knowledge and understanding of the child(ren) and family
- To develop the skills and confidence of practitioners in effectively contributing to child protection conferences and, by extension, child protection plans.

The Initial Child Protection Conference brings together family members, the child(ren) who is/are the subject of the conference (where appropriate) and those practitioners most involved with the child(ren) and family, following section 47 enquiries. As previously stated, further information on these, and also, many additional relevant areas, can be found in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent SCB policies and procedures:

Staffordshire: www.staffsscb.org.uk/practitioners/

Stoke-on-Trent:

www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/professionals/procedure-manuals/

Roles and Responsibilities of Practitioners attending Child Protection Conferences

All those attending conference should be present because they have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child(ren) and family, or both.

Prior to the Conference

Ensure the information you provide is relevant and accurate:

It is best practice that all practitioners attending the conference should provide, **at least two working days in advance of the conference**, a written, legible and signed report, which should be made available to the Independent Chair (in Staffordshire) or Conference and Review Manager (in Stoke-on-Trent). However, it is appreciated that pressure from timescales may not always allow this, so a written report will, in most circumstances, be accepted on the day of the conference. Rather than providing a specific proforma for this purpose, both SCBs find it acceptable that information is provided either on an organisation's own proforma, or in alternative written form. However, as a minimum, the following (where known) should always be included:

- Name of the organisation
 - Practitioners name
 - Practitioners designation
 - Practitioners business address
 - Practitioners contact details
 - Date of child protection conference
- Details of the child(ren) and family known (full details for initial conference, any changes for review conference)
 - Forename
 - Surname
 - DOB
 - Ethnicity
 - Disability or Special Need
 - Parent/Carer'(s)' name(s)
 - Other names the parent/carer(s) is/are known by
 - DOB(s)
 - Relationship to child(ren)
 - Address
 - Does this person have parental responsibility?
- Details of organisation's involvement with child(ren) and family
- Any information and knowledge of child(ren)'s health and development
- Any additional Information that you have which is relevant to the case (e.g. other practitioners/ agencies working with the family)
- Details of all other adults known to you, who may be involved with this family

- What are the factors that concern you about this/these child(ren) (current and historical), including risks and/or unmet needs?
- What are the factors that help keep this/these child(ren) safe (current and historical)?
- Expressed views, wishes and feelings of the child(ren)
- Capacity of parent to safeguard the child(ren) and promote child(ren)'s welfare and any knowledge of the impact that current and past family functioning are having on the parent's capacity to meet the child(ren)'s needs
- Analysis of implications for the child(ren)'s future safety, health and development, taking into account risk factors and family strengths

Be prepared:

All practitioners attending the conference should be prepared to provide relevant and accurate details of their involvement with the child(ren) and family. This may include knowledge of the child(ren)'s developmental needs, and the capacity of the parents to meet these needs within the family and environmental context, much of which will be based on the organisation's individual assessment processes.

Establish and include the thoughts, wishes and feelings of the child(ren):

This should not be seen as the sole province of the social worker in the case, although, he/she will always lead on preparing the child(ren) prior to the conference and establish their wishes and feelings, including whether or not they wish to, or it is appropriate for them to, attend the conference.

All practitioners, whatever their role, should ensure that, wherever possible, the wishes and feelings of the child(ren) are identified and included in their report or other information shared with child protection conference.

Talk to parents/carers about concerns – don't leave it until the conference:

Any child protection conference should be, where possible, a 'no surprises' arena for parents. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, any information a practitioner is intending to share with child protection conference should be communicated to parents in advance. Any possible implications of this should also be discussed with parents prior to the conference.

If an organisation's nominated representative is unable to attend conference:

Clearly, it is of the utmost importance that all those invited make every possible effort to prioritise attendance at all child protection conferences (whether initial or review) to which they are invited. If the practitioner in question cannot attend he/she should still provide a written report, within stipulated timescales, inform the Independent Chair/Conference and Review Manager and ensure that a well-prepared colleague attends in his/her place.

Ensure a timely arrival at child protection conference:

All practitioners should arrive at the conference venue at least thirty minutes prior to the scheduled start time. This will enable all to have sufficient time to read reports and where necessary, consult the Independent Chair/Conference and Review Manager regarding any issues pertaining to the conduct of the conference and/or any additional information that has been obtained.

Do not wait until a conference to share information with other practitioners, particularly the social worker – take action

Don't be afraid to ask – link in with the social worker, or other colleagues, prior to attending

It may be particularly useful, if a practitioner has any concerns, to contact their organisation's designated safeguarding lead for guidance and support.

At the Conference

All practitioners attending a child protection conference should be prepared to give a verbal summary of the information contained within their original written report and any additional information that has come to light in the intervening period.

Those practitioners attending conference should be prepared to contribute to determining whether or not the child(ren) is/are at continuing risk of significant harm and therefore, need(s) to be subject of a child protection plan.

It is, therefore key, that all those practitioners in attendance provide clear analysis of any possible implications for the child/parents and most importantly, the potential impact this has on the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren). Learning from serious case reviews in Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and nationally, highlights that analysis of risk is critical, therefore, all present at conference should be prepared to analyse both their own and all other information presented at conference, in order to determine risk of significant harm to the child(ren).

Practitioners will be asked to consider the information that has been shared and then offer their opinion as to whether the case has met the criteria for a child protection plan. This decision should be based upon the following:

- available evidence/information provided by practitioners, or taken from existing records, shared at the conference;
- the Child Social Work Assessment (Staffordshire)/ Child and Family Assessment (Stoke-on-Trent) and:
- other relevant specialist assessments.

At the conclusion of the information-sharing element of the conference and following the closing remarks/summary given by the Independent Chair/Conference and

Review Manager, each practitioner present will be expected to give a clear opinion as to whether or not the child(ren) should be made subject of a child protection plan. All practitioners should be aware that this applies to all of the children subject to conference, not only the child with whom the practitioner has direct involvement.

If the practitioner decides that a plan is required they must also provide a clear, independent reason or series of reasons why this should be necessary and identify under which category the plan should be applied, either, neglect, emotional, sexual or physical abuse.

Practitioners should record the outcome of the conference and if the child(ren) is/are to be subject of a child protection plan:

- Contribute to the production of an outline child protection plan
- Record dates and times of any subsequent meetings, particularly, core groups and review conferences
- Make arrangements to attend the core group if a member
- Liaise, where necessary, with appropriate colleagues from other organisations

Review Child Protection Conference

The review conference differs from the initial conference in that a decision will be made as to whether or not the child(ren) remain(s) subject of a child protection plan.

It is essential that attendance at review child protection conferences receives the same level of priority as at an initial conference¹

The written report provided by practitioners should include information in many of the same areas as that for the initial conference, but to include in addition:

- Details of any actual and planned involvement by the organisation/individual practitioner with the child(ren) and family since the last conference
- Outcomes of work carried out
- Any new issues or concerns

¹ **Working Together 2015**, pg. 47 states that 'all involved professionals should attend, when invited, and provide details of their involvement with the child and family and; produce reports for the child protection review.

Section 10, Part 2 (5) (6) of the Children Act 2004 states that: The relevant partners (see (5) for list of relevant partners) of a children's services authority in England must co-operate with the authority in the making of arrangements under this section.

(6) all children's services authority in England and any other relevant partners may for the purposes of arrangements under this section –

(a) provide staff, goods, services, accommodation or other resources;
(b) establish a maintained pooled fund

- Analysis of implications for the child's future safety, health and development, taking into account risk factors and family strengths
- Expressed views, wishes and feelings of the child(ren)
- Consideration of the impact of the current and past family functioning on the parent(s)' capacity to meet the child's needs

All those providing information to any type of child protection conference should always clearly distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion and that all information should wherever possible be shared with parent(s) in advance of any conference.

In addition:

Practitioners should also, in addition to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent SCB policy and procedures, have regard to pages 38 to 49 of "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2015), which provide flowcharts and further summaries of activities associated with initial and review child protection conferences, child protection planning and relevant timescales.