How we chair review child protection conferences

21 January 2019

15:21

Preparation

* The Social Worker updates the child and family assessment and plan review for the conference, this includes safety plan and draft timeline/trajectory. Social worker should only be adding any new information since the last conference. Danger statement and safety goal agreed at initial conference, should explain past harm and therefore these do not change, unless significant new harm has been identified.

Building a relationship with the family.

Before the conference starts the chair should spend some time with the family to:

* Settle them into the room and work out what they are most worried about happening in the meeting and what would help them to stay in the room.
* Always acknowledge that the meeting can be hard for families but their input is valued and needed in order to make the child's situation safer.
* There may be things that the family disagrees with but it is important that they hear the professionals concerns.
* Advise family that you would like to start the conference by asking them first, to tell the conference how the safety plan has been working and what strengths they have used to keep their children safe?
* Advise family members that it is okay if they want a break and always ensure they know what to do if they feel distressed.
* We must honor the difficulty some experience in the situation of the Child Protection Conference and this can be eased by acknowledging this and offering options for the family to take time out if they need to.
* Use this time to check out that the family have seen the report and have an understanding of the concerns.

At the start of the conference:

* Welcome everybody into the room and introductions.
* Setting rules re confidentiality, boundaries and expectations.

Danger statement and safety goals

Revisit danger statement and safety goals, reminding everyone of where we were at the previous conference and where we are heading (Safety goal).

At a review conference we will always start with "What's working well?"

*Strengths and Safety*

**First Question goes to the family:**

**Tell us about the strengths of your family and how you have been keeping your child safe?**

Chair writes these in the "what's working well" column on the board.

Chair checks with the social worker and other conference members about the strengths and safety that they have seen in this family. Use the appreciative inquiry questions (EARS) to explore this?

If people start to get ahead and plan actions, then park that idea in the "what needs to happen" column under next steps, to be explored before the end of the conference.

Safety Plan

Social worker to present the safety plan.

|  |
| --- |
| Has the plan been working to keep the child safe? |
| Are there any other important things that we have missed in the Plan? |

Update on progress of next steps.

What are we worried about? Starting with the family.

Are there new worries that are not covered by the families danger statement, since last conference?

Any complicating factors which are making things hard for the family to follow their safety plan or change?

Childs voice:

*This is the opportunity to use the child's three houses/safety house to share with everyone involved and show how they see their situation in relation to the concerns.*

Next steps

1. **To look at strengthening their family safety plan if not strong enough (Shared with social worker)**
2. **Strengthen the safety network, if not strong enough?**
3. **Words and pictures**

**And any other next steps e.g. breakthrough mentor, alcohol services.**

**Scaling question ( As agreed at initial conference)**

A safety scale should be created matched with **each** danger statement and safety goal(no more than 4 danger statements and safety goals).

The 0 and 10 end points of the scale need to be clearly defined in line with the danger statement (0) and the safety goal (10) so the scale clearly measures the current safety of the child/ren in relation to the danger expressed in the danger statement. The same safety scales should be used throughout the assessment and casework. In this way everyone has a clear way of understanding, measuring and discussing the seriousness and what progress has been made.

**Ask everybody in conference to give a score and ask what they need to see for the score to move up the scale?**

Chairs, advocates or note takers do not score.

Contingency

If necessary the chair will facilitate a discussion as to what will happen if things do not change or become worse for the child. It is important to explain that while we want to work in partnership with the family if the situation means that the child continues to be at risk Of harm despite the best efforts of the family network then the Local Authority will have to impose their own plan to keep the child safe. It is important that the family are aware of this and what this would entail for them and their child. Using terms such as seeking legal advice is not clear enough for families and professionals must explain in full why they would seek legal advice, for what purpose and the potential outcome. Conference decision. The chair asks professionals for their decision regarding the need for a child protection plan or a chi d in need plan. The chair will explain that the decision to make this c child protection plan or not is based upon whether or not professionals are satisfied the safety goals have been achieved. It is the Conference chair's responsibility to define the category of the plan, (Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse or Physical Abuse). The Chair will then clarify members of the core group (Safety Network), who will continue to develop the Safety Plan and monitor the trajectory progress.

Conference decision

Chair asks social worker for their recommendation as to whether a child protection plan is to continue? And check category is still appropriate (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation).

Then the chair checks the views of all the other professionals in the room.

Chair clarifies members of the core group, who will continue to develop and review the safety plan with the family.

If a Child Protection plan is ending, Chair will ensure robust Child in Need plan in place.

Chairs rationale

Chair summarises the reasons for plan decision and records their views.