

Practice Guidance for ISROs

Police Attendance

Child Protection Conferences

1. Background.

- 1.1. There are well established and clearly documented interagency procedures that detail the framework around which agencies deliver and co-ordinate the initial operational response in cases of suspected child abuse. This guidance does not seek to change those arrangements.
- 1.2. The aim of the Child Protection Conference is to enable those professionals most involved with the child and family, and the family themselves, to assess all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

2. Purpose of this Guidance

- 2.1. The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that the police contribution to Child Protection Conferences fulfils statutory safeguarding responsibilities and thereby meets the needs of families whilst avoiding unnecessary attendances which place disproportionate demand upon policing services and result in avoidable intrusion or anxiety for families.

3. The Initial Child Protection Conference

- 3.1. The initial child protection case conference brings together family members, and those professionals most involved with the child and family following enquiries completed under section 47 of the Children's Act 1989.
- 3.2. Its purpose is:
 - to bring together and analyse, in an inter-agency setting, the information which has been obtained about the child's development needs or the parents' or carers' capacity to

respond to these needs to ensure that the child's safety promote the child's health and development;

- to consider the evidence presented to the conference and taking into account the child's present situation and information about his or her family history, make judgements about the likelihood of the child suffering significant harm in the future and decide whether the child is continuing to, or is likely to suffer significant harm; and
- to decide what future action is required in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, including the child becoming the subject of a child protection plan, what the planned development outcomes are for the child and how best to intervene to achieve these.

4. The police role and attendance at Child Protection Conferences

- 4.1. The police often hold a wealth of information concerning conviction history, non conviction information and incident based intelligence. Such information is often directly relevant to the assessment of risk within the child safeguarding arena.
- 4.2. All such relevant information will have been shared at a Strategy Discussion/Meeting and will be shared at conferences except that information which is operationally sensitive or where disclosure may potentially compromise a criminal investigation.
- 4.3. Any such restricted issues will be brought to the attention of the conference Chair by way of a confidential addendum to the police report.
- 4.4. All those in attendance at conferences should be there because they have a significant contribution to make arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child, or both.
- 4.5. The police may potentially have contributions to make in one or both of these areas; however, in other cases police involvement/knowledge of the child or family may be negligible.
- 4.6. The IRU Screening Tool is intended to make decisions, based on the best interests of the child and family regarding whether police attendance is necessary, having regard to the following;

Professional agencies who are invited to attend should make every effort to do so, but if unable to, they should submit a written record and, wherever possible, a well briefed agency representative should attend to speak to the report (*Working together to Safeguard Children 2010*).

- 4.7. A representative of Devon and Cornwall police **should attend** initial child protection conferences in the following circumstances:
1. the child(ren) are the **subject to current investigation** by the police concerning physical or sexual abuse within the family;
 2. the children have previously been the subject of police investigation concerning sexual or physical abuse within the family and there is clear evidence of an escalation in risk of significant harm;
 3. cases involving an active police investigation of suspected **wilful** neglect;
 4. cases where the reason for conference arises out of child(ren) being placed in police protection (i.e. the police initiate the safeguarding process as a result of a critical event);
 5. complex/serious domestic violence where DV co-ordinators have **current** direct involvement with the family in order to manage risk;
 6. conferences arising from the presence or association of a registered sexual offender within the household;
 7. other cases subject to direct negotiation between the Chair and PPU/Safeguarding Unit where there is a clear and evidenced need for the police to attend.
- 4.8. Where possible, a relevant police representative with experience and direct knowledge of the family will attend the conference.
- 4.9. In the event that the ISRO carrying out the IRU Screening process decides that attendance is not required, Devon and Cornwall Police will provide a comprehensive written report in respect of invitations received to all initial child protection conferences and all review child protection conferences.
- 4.10. Devon and Cornwall Police will not routinely attend review conferences unless designated as part of the Core Group and Child Protection Plan and there continues to be active involvement.

5. Administrative requirements

- 5.1. Under these arrangements the Central Safeguarding Unit will fulfil a review and allocation function for all case conference invitations for Devon and Cornwall Police.
- 5.2. In order to properly inform the management decision on police attendance at initial conferences it is important that invitations are sent to the police by secure e-mail at the earliest opportunity by the Independent Reviewing Unit.
- 5.3. To facilitate preparation of the Police Report at least 5 working days notification would be required before an Initial Child Protection Conference and 10 working days notification for Review Child Protection Conferences.
- 5.4. The invitation will include sufficient information on the reason for the conference being held and the full details of all child and family members to whom the conference relates.
- 5.5. This information is essential in ensuring the accurate application of the attendance criteria.
- 5.6. A written report to conference will be forwarded to the Integrated Safeguarding Unit no later than 48 hours prior to a scheduled conference.

[To complete a Police Report Format click here](#)