**Strength Based Initial Child Protection Conferences**

**Preparation for an ICPC**

It is recognised that parents can be anxious and sometimes defensive or angry about attending a child protection conference. Therefore, to ensure that parents are adequately prepared and supported to attend conferences, the following steps are to be followed.

It is important that prior to conference:

1. The Social Worker meets with the parents to explain the reasons for progressing to a Child Protection Conference and consider if a translator or family member/friend is required to support them at the conference.
2. The Social Worker supports the family to attend the conference, including moral support and/or practical support (e.g. transport).
3. The Social Worker considers the immediate family who have direct contact or childcare of the child to enable a police check to be undertaken. When making the conference request to safeguarding.
4. Full details are clearly added to the Conference Request Form. The Social Worker ensures that all names are spelt correctly, dates of birth and current addresses are accurate and spelt correctly. The Social Worker clearly states the name of the GP and other professionals working with the child and family.
5. The Social Worker ensures the parents are able to attend the venue of the Child Protection Conference and minimises any barriers that may prevent them from attending. (Following the COVID 19 pandemic LCC have risk assessed all buildings and feel parents should attend where appropriate, social worker should explain the current assessment and how many people will be in attendance).
6. The Social Worker explores with the family if they would like a Family Group Conference (FGC). If an FGC is required, a referral should be made as soon as possible as part of the preparation, understanding the family and their support. An ecomap should also be completed with the family to support this and ongoing support.
7. The voice of the child is central to the conference and therefore the Social Worker must consider how they will gain this. If the child would like to attend the conference, it is important that this is supported and that they are enabled to attend. The Social Worker consults with the IRO of the child attending conference and how this will be facilitated.
8. An Advocacy Service is available, and a referral can be made in conjunction with the child's wishes and feelings (Appendix 1). Alternatively, a direct piece of work should be undertaken with the child to be presented at the Child Protection Conference. This could be from Mind of My Own or another tool to support the views of the child on the intervention service we are providing.
9. The Social Worker shares the Child Protection Conference report with the parents two days prior to conference. Parents must be given the opportunity to discuss the Social Workers report at least 2 day prior to the conference taking place. This enables parents to highlight any questions or inaccuracies and it informs the Social Worker assessment. It also enables parents to feel valued and adequately prepared.
10. Parents should be given this in a format that they can access. For example, a translated document, larger print or coloured texts if they have specific need. (please see: http://intranet.ad.lancscc.net/how-do-i/council-and-democracy/interpretation-and-translation/?page=2 for further details)
11. The Social Worker uses the 'what support do you need' tool with the parents /children and works with them to get their view/understanding on where the family sits within the scale. This will be included within their assessment. (see appendix 2)
12. The Social Worker will ask parents if they wish to bring a photograph of their child to conference and explain that some parents like to do this to ensure that their child(ren) remain central to all decisions that are made. If they don’t want to bring a photograph, they could bring something of the child's to re-focus the meeting on the child.
13. The allocated Social Worker should prioritise attending the ICPC, however if exceptional circumstances arise a social worker who knows the family must attend or the Team Manager must attend.
14. Professionals must share their own reports with parents and young people prior to the day of the conference. Parents must also be given the opportunity to discuss reports with the professional who is attending the conference. This is for all agencies in attendance with the exception of the police.
15. The template/format for the Multi-agency Pre-meeting Reports will be available on the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) webpage and will be updated to reflect the strength-based model of child protection. The report will focus on:
    * What is the current role of the agency?
    * What are the needs / concerns?
    * Areas we need to know more about
    * What can we do to help?
16. These reports must be submitted 48 hours prior to conference to the cpadminteam@lancashire.gov.uk mailbox who will then distribute this to the IRO. (Appendix 2)

1. An IRO is allocated to the family. The IRO telephones parents to introduce themselves and to check that they have received conference report(s) and that they feel able to attend the meeting. The IRO discusses the format of the conference and answers any questions that the parent or family may have. The parent consultation document is discussed and IRO will make their own notes and relay this at the beginning of the ICPC. (appendix 4). Purposeful visits to the family will be considered where appropriate.

**Day of the conference (if professionals are in a building)**

1. On the day of the conference, professionals, children, parents and carers are invited to attend the relevant 'Conference Preparation' time. This is mandatory and is part of the conference process.
2. On arrival, a Business Support Officer will be in attendance to escort parents and professionals to the relevant meeting room at the venue. Family will be taken directly to the conference room and professionals will be taken to a different room.

**Day of conference if Hybrid conference model:**

1. On the day of the conference, professionals are invited to attend the relevant Conference Preparation time, this will be virtual for professionals. This is mandatory and is part of the conference process.
2. The Minute taker will facilitate the meeting by opening the virtual meeting and asking that all professionals share their own email address and then each professional can share their own reports, using the email addresses provided to each other in the conference preparation time.
3. The reports shared by professionals must have been shared with parents beforehand. In the exceptional circumstances were a report has not been shared the conference will need to go through this report in detail.

**Family- if they are attending a meeting venue:**

1. The IRO will greet parents/child and family members and try to make them feel comfortable. The IRO will have a structured conversation with parents and child(ren) in a way that is appropriate to their needs and that will support them to engage in the conference. As part of this discussion they will recap the parent consultation document and see if there any amendments to be made.
2. The IRO reiterates the purpose of the conference, ensuring that they understand the possible outcomes. The IRO will explain that the role of the conference is not to decide about legal action and removal of children although the outcome of the conference may lead to seeking legal advice as part of child protection planning.
3. The IRO will ask parents if they wish to share a photo of their child(ren) in the conference and also if they feel comfortable saying a few words about their child(ren) at the start of the meeting.
4. The IRO will tell parents the names and agency that professionals are representing at the conference. They will ask parents if they have any preference where professionals are seating during the conference.
5. The IRO will explains the role of the Police in the conference and advice parents that the Police may have a confidential section in the meeting due to data protection of other people who are not present.

**Professionals (if attending a building).**

1. The other professionals will be gathered in a separate room, allowing time to read each other's reports and verify any facts with the Social Worker. This is not a meeting but provides time to ensure that the professionals present are prepared for the conference. (This is not a meeting and a discussion about the family should not take place).
2. A Minute Taker will be present, the role of the Minute Taker is to ensure that all professionals have reports, name plates are completed, and all professionals are prepared for the conference.
3. Cycle of change will be available for professionals as this should be a regular discussion point throughout the duration of assessment and planning for the child/children.
4. The IRO will escort professionals into the conference room and the IRO will be mindful of the parent's views in terms of where people are seated. (Considering that parents should not sit next to the minute taker due to confidentiality issues).

**The Child Protection Conference**

**If everyone is attendance:**

The room will be set out in a horseshoe shape. Flip chart paper will be on the wall (unless this is not appropriate for the chair or parents). The parents will decide where they want to sit and also if appropriate can decide where some of the professionals sit.

**If hybrid:**

The IRO will seat parents in the room, with social distancing measures in place. The IRO will explain the technology and how this will work to support the meeting.

Once seated and name plates completed the IRO will:

(See agenda, appendix 5 for further details)

1. Make introductions and advise of any apologies received. (If the meeting is being held late – explain the reasons for this).
2. Confirm the status of meeting and read the confidentiality statement.
3. Verify family details.
4. Provide brief reasons for the conference (at this stage there should be no surprises, e.g. information being presented that has not already been shared with family, SW and IRO)
5. Ask professionals and parents if a Family Group Conference (FGC) has been considered or completed as a way to support the family.
6. Seeks view from parents as to why we are conference today. This can be presented by the parent or the IRO. (Using the parent consultation form and pre-meeting as a prompt)
7. Seek the child's views on why they feel that the conference is being held from the child or the child's advocate.
8. If child or advocate is not present at conference, it should be agreed who is the most appropriate professional to discuss with the child about attending future conferences or consenting to a referral to the Advocacy Service.
9. There will be the time for a confidential section, please see appendix 6 below for guidance.
10. **Conference discussion with parents and agencies** (IRO to record on flip chart in the relevant areas if everyone is present, in a hybrid conference this will not be possible).
11. The use of flip charts is to support and aid parents understanding of the below areas, it is a visual aid to assist learning and to support the conference being an interactive session. It is at the IRO discretion if choose to do this.
12. Discussion involving everyone in attendance:

* Concerns and needs
* What is going well/strengths (including things that reduce risk)
* What might impact on progress
* What would make things better? (including the proposed plan).

1. Children are asked to give their views throughout the meeting.
2. A draft child's plan will be produced to determine what concerns/worries need to be addressed. If threshold is not met this could be a child in need plan.
3. The draft plan will identify areas of need and provide children and parents with an opportunity to consider what support they require. It will also provide professionals with an opportunity to identify what support they can offer to the family.

*example 1*

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| **Current Plan headings:** | **What are we worried about?**  **What do we want to achieve for the child/parents?** | **What are we going to do?**  **How are we going to achieve it?** | **Who will do it?** | **When (the completion date or the start date)?** | **Considering the child how will we know when positive change has been achieved** | **Update on progress** | **Outcome**  **(completed at the end of the action)** |
| **Examples:** | The parent (name) is worried about the amount of alcohol they are drinking. | The parent has agreed to undertake an alcohol reduction programme. |  |  |  |  |  |

1. The draft plan is considered using analysis and assessment of risk.
2. The IRO provides a succinct summary and the threshold criteria, including the strengths and concerns.
3. The IRO asks the professional representing each agency their decision in relation to the level of need:
   * + Child Protection Plan
     + Child In Need Plan
4. If the decision of the conference is for a Child Protection Plan then the category of harm will be agreed by professionals in attendance.
5. IRO provides the decision of the conference.
6. Dissenting views
7. Agreement of membership of and date of first Core Group or other meeting (e.g., CIN)
8. Agreement of Review Conference date
9. Any Other Business / clarification for parents/child.
10. The IRO to thank everyone for coming to the conference.

**Minutes**

1. All virtual child protection conferences must be recorded to support the minute taker, unless there is an objection to the recording.

If the IRO has used the flip chart paper, then either

1. The minute taker can take this and use it to support their minutes and then dispose of this in confidential waste.
2. The IRO can dispose of this in the confidential waste at the building they are in.

**The Child Protection Plan**

53. If there are additions to the child protection plan in the ICPC then these will be added to the plan within the outcomes form by the IRO.

54. The CP plan will be reviewed by the IRO in the mid-point monitoring following the ICPC.

**Implementing recommendations during Covid 19 pandemic**

55. Consideration has been given to how ICPC's can be safely implemented at this time and is dependent on national and local restrictions.

56. However, Lancashire are now proceeding with a 'hybrid conference' model. In which the SW, IRO and parents will meet in person at local buildings and other professionals join remotely.

57. There is additional documentation to advise of the risk assessments around this and how this can be implemented safely.

58. However, if the parent or family are self-isolating due to being symptomatic or being contacted through track and trace the ICPC could be held remotely or be adjourned. The IRO will take the risk factors into consideration and evidence the decision to hold the conference remotely or adjourn the conference until parents can attend.

Appendix's

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| Appendix 1 | Advocacy service information |  |
| Appendix 2 | 'what support do you need' tool' |  |
| Appendix 3 | Multi-agency Pre-meeting report |  |
| Appendix 4 | Parent Consultation Document |  |
| Appendix 5 | Agenda for ICPC |  |
| Appendix 5 | Confidential Sections |  |
| Appendix 6 | Minute takers guide |  |
| Appendix 7 | Mind of My Own | <https://one.mindofmyown.org.uk/> |
| Appendix 8 | RCPC Agenda |  |