



South Tyneside

Child Protection Conference Professional Dissent Process

This dissent process is a separate process for professionals only, when they do not agree with the outcome of a Child Protection Conference. It does not detract from the rights of parents and children to compliment or complain about the service they have received from South Tyneside Council or any other agency working with their family. In the event of a child or parent wishing to make a compliment or complaint they should seek the appropriate procedure from the responsible agency.

Whilst Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 emphasises the importance of collaborative working within the area of safeguarding, there are times when individual agencies assess the risk of harm differently, resulting in a difference of opinion at the end of a conference regarding the need for a Child Protection Plan. When these occasions arise a professional will be given the opportunity to formally dissent to the outcome of the conference on behalf of a child.

Dissent must be raised within the conference meeting, and the dissent process followed as outlined below. In keeping with this process, dissent has to be made on the basis of evidence based from the information shared in conference and underpinned by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and the North and South of Tyne Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual.

To dissent means that a professional disagrees so strongly with the conference decision that they feel they need to have their independent views recorded.

Dissent can only be expressed within a child protection conference and must be shared there and then by the attending professional and followed up in writing as outlined in the process. Dissent cannot be raised by a non-attending professional or retrospectively.

Dissent Process

Child Protection Conferences are arranged when professionals have concerns for children who may be at risk of significant harm. In these situations a conference is held which will involve parents, carers, children where appropriate and professionals.

Conferences are held in keeping with the North and South of Tyne Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and an Independent Reviewing Officer from the Children's Standards Unit chairs the conference to ensure views can be shared and discussed so that we all understand the worries and strengths for the child and their family.

The purpose of the Child Protection Conference is to consider whether a child is at risk of significant harm and therefore requires a Child Protection Plan. If it is decided that a Child Protection Plan is needed then

we will work with the family, child and professionals to ensure we all understand how we need to reduce the risk of harm for the child.

The Conference Chairperson will ensure that professionals attending a conference understand the dissent process and what they need to do if they disagree with the outcome of a conference.

It is important that all dissent is properly considered and that there is a process outlining the responsibilities and actions of the dissenting professionals, as well as the actions that will be taken to consider the reasons for dissent. All dissents will be recorded formally within the conference outcome form and the completed dissent form will be uploaded onto the child's record.

All professionals who have dissented at a Child Protection Conference should ensure that they inform their management for their dissent and the reasons why.

The reasons for the dissent must be put in writing and sent to the Children's Standards Unit (CSU) at Children's.StandardsUnit@southtyneside.gov.uk within 24-hours of the Child Protection Conference – Click to access online form: <https://forms.office.com/e/KpSeCr8R9f>

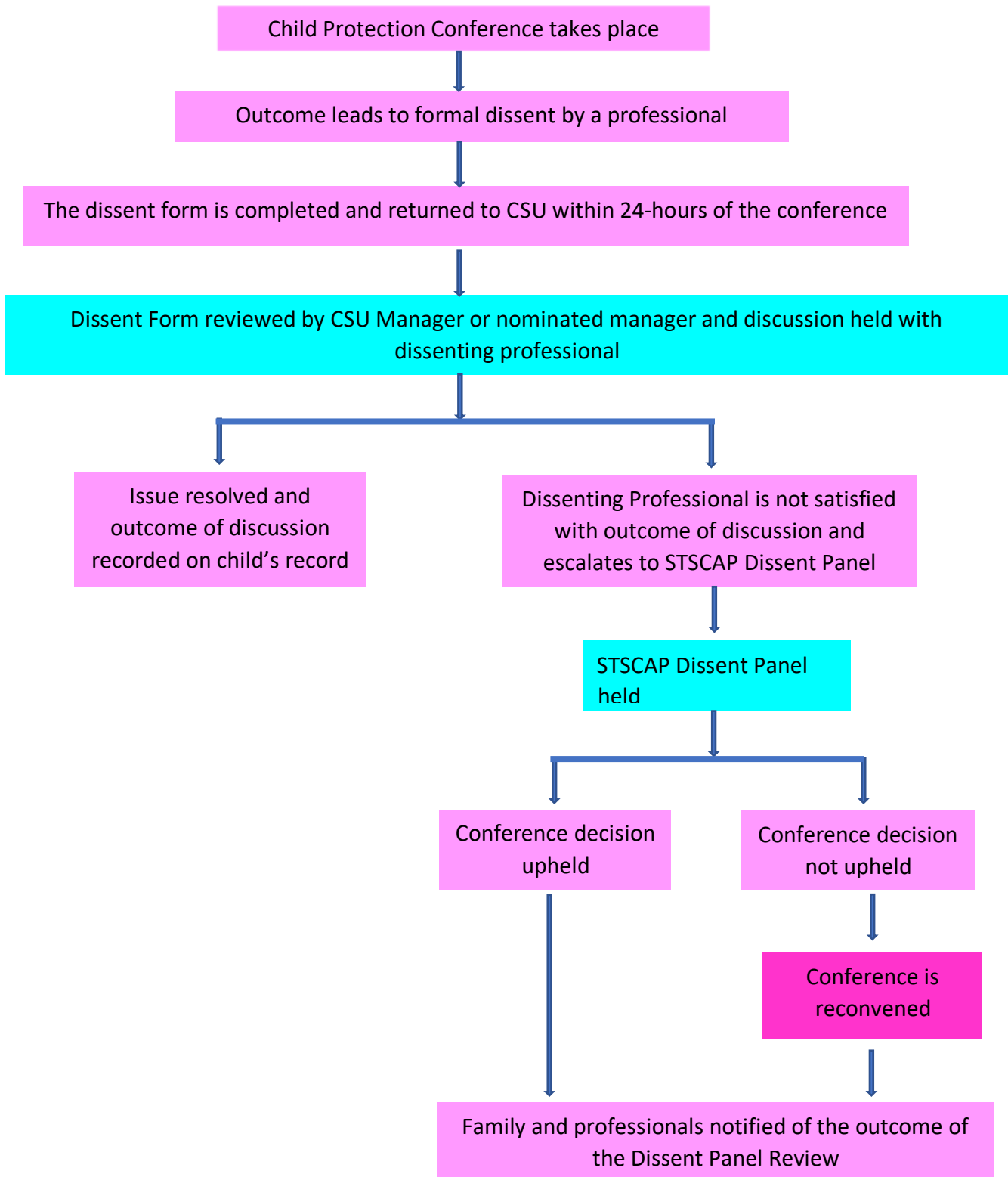
The completed dissent form will be forwarded to the Children's Standards Unit Service Manager or a nominated manager in their absence, to consider the initial reason for dissent. On receipt of the completed form the nominated manager will review the information with the conference chairperson and then hold a discussion with the dissenting professional.

At this point the issue of dissent will either be resolved, or the dissenting professional will be given the option of further escalation to the STSCAP Business Manager. When escalated to the STSCAP Business Manager the dissent will be considered by a Dissent Panel. The Panel will be made up of senior managers of the statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations represented at the conference, who are independent of the decision made leading to the dissent. A representative from the Children's Standards Unit, usually the Service Manager, will always be present at the Dissent Panel.

All professionals present at the Conference will receive formal feedback from the Dissent Panel outlining their decision and rationale within 20-working days. Following the Dissent Panel making a final determination any further concerns with regards to a child would need to be made via the referral pathway.

See [flowchart](#) below.

Flow chart



Appendix 1: Dissent Form

Name of Child/ren and DOB	
LCS number (must be completed by CSU Admin)	

Date of ICPC/CPR
Conference Chair

Name of Professional	Contact Details

Agency

Reason for Dissent

If you believe that a child should be the subject of a Child Protection Plan what difference do you believe a Child Protection Plan would make that a Child in Need Plan would not? If you believe that a Child Protection Plan is not required what other type of involvement will address the needs of the child(ren).



Date: Type date here
Our ref:

Dear

OUTCOMES OF FORMAL DISSENT PANEL

Following the Dissent Panel on XXXXX (date) regarding XXXXXX (Child's name /DOB) convened as a result of XXXXX (Name of Professional and agency) disagreeing with the outcome of the Child Protection Conference on XXXXX (Date), the Panel has:

Option 1: Decided to not to uphold the professional dissent and therefore the decision made at the Child Protection Conference remains appropriate.

Option 2: Decided to uphold professional dissent and therefore a further Child Protection Conference should be convened to reconsider the decision reached.

The reason for the decision being upheld is.....

- A) Procedures not followed i.e. quoracy and thresholds
- B) Information not provided by key agency

(The above statements should be followed by free flowing text)

Kind Regards

Name:
Mobile:
E-Mail:

STSCAP – Dissent Panel -Terms of Reference	
Chair	Designated Person (appointed case by case)
Frequency	As and when required in keeping with Dissent Process
Quorum	Dissent Panel is made up of three representatives from the STSCAP of appropriate grade and experience in Child Protection and always include a representative from the Children’s Standards Unit
Membership	Membership would be made up of senior management who are independent of the decision that has been made leading to the dissent being issued by a professional who had representation at the conference, including statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations.
Confidentiality	<p>This Dissent Panel is part of the STSCAP arrangements. As such, all matters discussed at the meeting and the content of any supporting papers or shared intelligence, must remain strictly confidential.</p> <p>Minutes should not be photocopied, or the contents shared outside of the meeting without the agreement of the Chair. Minutes should be retained in the RESTRICTED or CONFIDENTIAL section of agency files.</p>
Accountability & Reporting	The Dissent Panel is accountable to the Practice Evaluation and Learning Sub Group and will provide an annual report.
Review	The Dissent process will be reviewed annually to assess impact.
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To convene and review decisions made at a Conference whereby a conference member raises a dissent based in evidence that the decision made at conference was the incorrect action. • At no point can the Panel determine whether a child should be made, or not made, subject to a Child Protection plan as this is the purpose of the conference. • The Panel, consisting of multi-agency representatives, would review the information and make an informed decision to either uphold or not uphold the grounds for dissent. • At all times Panel members will need to operate within STSCAP procedures regarding Child Protection and thresholds. • In the event of the grounds for dissent being upheld a further conference would be convened to review the conference decision made. • The outcomes of the Panel will be communicated to all relevant professionals and family members outlining the reasons for decision. • A record of the Panel’s decision will be uploaded onto the child’s record by the attending CSU representative. • In the event of a further conference being required, the CSU representative will take the lead in arranging the conference, following current STSCAP procedures.
Papers	<p>Dissent Form Minutes of the conference Individual agency reports for the conference.</p> <p>Distribution via STSCAP Business Unit, SafeguardingChildrenBoard@southtyneside.gov.uk</p>