

# The Child Protection Conference

A guide for parents and carers



## What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that is held because one or more professional workers have serious concerns about the care and protection of your child. If there is more than one child in your family we will want to talk about all of them.

A strategy discussion and section 47 Child Protection enquiry will have been completed to agree an Initial Child Protection Conference needs to take place. As the child's parent or carer you will be invited to attend this meeting. In the meeting everyone will share all information about your child, you and any other significant adults to see if any action needs to be taken to make sure that your child is well looked after and safe in the future. The conference will discuss all household members.

## Why have I been invited?

You know your child better than any of the professionals attending and we recognise you have an important part to play in discussions about your child. You also have the right to know what professionals are worried about in relation to the care and protection of your child. You and the professionals will work together to improve your child's daily life.

## What happens before the conference?

The Social Worker will meet you to explain in detail the reason for the conference, their recommendation and what might happen as a result of it. You will also receive a copy of the Social Worker's report and reports from other professionals involved with your family. The reports will be shared with you and your child (if age appropriate) 2 days before the conference to give you the opportunity to respond or seek advice on what's included in the report. Before the conference it may be helpful if you write down any points you want to say in preparation for the conference.

## What happens if I choose not to attend?

We recommend you complete the parent/carer questionnaire. You could also write to the Conference Chair sharing any information and your views about your family. This will be shared in the conference by the Chair.

If you feel you cannot attend for all of the conference you can attend at the end, to be told what decisions and recommendations have been made.

## Can I be excluded?

Parents and carers will only be excluded from conference in exceptional circumstances. For example, if you are likely to disrupt the conference or if you have bail conditions that prevent you from having contact with your child or the other parent. The final decision will be made by the Conference Chair who will give you the reason for the exclusion in writing.

In conference the Police may have confidential information they are unable to share with you. Therefore you may be asked to leave the conference for a short time to enable this information to be shared with professionals. The Conference Chair will decide if any of this information needs to be shared with you to enable you to safely care for your child.

## Can I bring anyone to help me?

You may choose to bring a supporter or Solicitor to the conference. You can bring a friend or family member such as grandparents. If you choose to bring your Solicitor, they will need to inform the Conference Chair before conference that they will be attending. The Solicitor cannot participate within the conference but they may help you to put your views to the conference and to understand the issues.

## Can children attend?

Yes, if your child is over the age of 11 years and it is appropriate, he or she is welcome to attend if this is what they want. Younger children should not attend unless this has been agreed in advance with the Conference Chair. It is most unlikely that it will be appropriate for anyone under the age of 11 years to come and you must make separate child care arrangements. All children and young people will be given help and guidance in presenting their wishes and feelings, either in writing or verbally, through the Social Worker or via Children's Advocacy Services.

## Who will be at the conference?

The conference will be arranged by Children's Social Care, but there will be other people there too. Who they are depends on the age of your child, but they will usually include the:

- **Child's Social Worker and their Manager**
- **Police**
- **Health Visitor**
- **School Nurse**
- **Nursery**
- **Teacher or Head Teacher**
- **Education Welfare Officer**
- **Your child's Doctor**
- **Advocate**
- **Professionals working with parents/carers for example Mental Health Team, Substance Support Service, Probation, Domestic Abuse Services, Doctors etc.**

## What happens at the conference?

The conference will be chaired by an Independent Conference and Reviewing Manager who is an independent person based in the Safeguarding Unit employed by Halton Borough Council. The Conference Chair will meet you before the conference begins so that

they can answer any questions you have and explain what will happen in the conference.

There is a set agenda that will be followed. You and all the professionals will be asked to share what is known about your family. The Conference Chair will summarise the information shared under one of three headings that will be displayed on the wall. These are:

- What you are doing well (Green)
- Things that we could become worried about (Amber)
- What we are worried about and needs to change (Red)

## What happens at the end of conference?

The conference will decide if your child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, which will inform:

1. Whether to make a Child Protection Plan or to continue with a Child In Need Plan for one or more of your children.
2. If a Child Protection Plan is developed, this will be under the category of either: Physical Harm, Emotional Harm, Sexual Harm or Neglect, or under the likelihood of any of the four categories.
3. The desired outcomes and actions within the outline Child Protection Plan will be agreed. (This is explained in another leaflet - The Child Protection Plan. A guide for parents/carers).
4. Who the core group of professionals will be. This core group will be those professionals working directly with your family. Their task will be to work with you after the conference to assess your child's and family's needs and work on the Child Protection Plan.
5. When the first core group meeting will take place. This may follow the conference or will be held within 10 working days.
6. A date for a Child Protection Review Conference will be set to take place within three months of the conference to review the progress of the plan.

The conference cannot make a decision to remove children from your care. In some cases the conference may recommend the Social Worker seek Legal Advice.

Children can only be removed from their home in agreement by you and Children's Social Care under Section 20 (Children Act 1989) or by order of the court.

## Can I appeal the conference decision?

Yes. If you disagree with the decision of the conference you or somebody on your behalf, should write to the Conference Chair within 5 working days of being notified of the decision. Please say why you disagree with the decision of the Child Protection Conference. The appeals process will be followed.

## Legal advice

You can seek help from a solicitor, whether or not you agree with any action which Children's Social Care takes concerning your child. This is especially important if Children's Social Care decide to go to court to ask for an order allowing them to remove your child from home or to visit your home to supervise the care of the child. It is most important that you have the help of a solicitor in court. You can get a list of solicitors in your area specialising in child-care work from your child's Social Worker or from your local Citizens Advice Bureau. If your income and savings are below a certain level, you may be entitled to legal aid to pay for work which the solicitor does for you. You should ask about this on your first visit to the solicitor.

## What is.....

### **Safeguard – protecting children from abuse or neglect.**

Child Protection - process of protecting individual children identified as having suffered, or at risk of, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect  
Significant harm or likelihood of significant harm - refers to the harm or likelihood of harm that a child or young person has or may suffer including - physical, psychological or emotional harm as a result of what is done (physical, sexual or psychological abuse) or not done (neglect) by another person, often an adult responsible for their care.

**A strategy discussion** – is held between Childrens Social Care, Police and Health and may involve other professionals, to discuss the risks or harm in relation to individual children and plan what needs to happen.

**A section 47** - Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 gives Children's Social Care a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Accommodation-** Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 enables a local authority to provide accommodation for a child who has no person with parental responsibility for him/her, is lost or abandoned or whose parent cannot provide suitable accommodation and care.

**Legal advice-** if Children's Social Care do not think a child is safe they may speak to their managers and the Local Authority solicitor to see what actions are needed, including going to court to seek an Order for a child to be removed from parents care.

If you need this leaflet in a different format such as large print, audiotape or Braille, please contact our Customer Services on **0303 333 4300**.

If your first language is not English and you would like information about our services in another language, please call us on 0303 333 4300 or email [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk)

اگر آپ کی پہلی زبان انگریزی نہیں ہے اور آپ ہماری خدمات کے بارے میں معلومات کسی دوسری زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہمیں 0034 333 3030 پر فون یا [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk) پر ای میل کریں

যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা ইংরেজী না হয়ে থাকে একে আপনি অন্য ভাষায় আমাদের সার্ভিসেস সম্পর্কে তথ্য জানতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে 0303 333 4300 নম্বরে ফোন করুন অথবা [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk) এমইল করুন।

यदि आपकी पहली भाषा अंग्रेजी नहीं है और आप हमारी सेवाओं के बारे में जानकारी किसी अन्य भाषा में चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमें 0303 333 4300 पर फोन करें या [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk) पर ई-मेल भेजें

如果你的母语不是英语，而你希望得到有关我们服务的其它语言版本的信息，请致电 **0303 333 4300**或者发送电邮至 [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk)联系我们。

Jeżeli angielski nie jest Twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz informacji o naszych usługach w innym języku, prosimy o zatelefonowanie do nas pod numer: **0303 333 4300** lub wysłanie maila do: [hdl@halton.gov.uk](mailto:hdl@halton.gov.uk)

We value your views about Halton Children's Services, if you would like to provide feedback, you can contact Halton Direct Tel **0303 300 4300** or the Children and Young People's Customer Care Manager on **0151 906 3706**.

