**GUIDANCE FOR PARENTAL COMPLAINT / APPEAL IN RELATION TO CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES.**

1. **Introduction**

This Guidance is for parents, carers or young people who may have concerns regarding the process and/ or outcomes from a Child Protection Conference.

This guidance will set out the grounds for the making of a complaint or appeal, and the different stages within the complaint/ appeal process with regards to Child Protection Conferences, outcomes and or process.

1. **Grounds for complaint or appeal.**

Parents/ carers or young people can make a complaint or appeal a decision made at a Child Protection Conference if it is felt that–

* The child protection process and conference was unclear
* Information relied upon within the conference was incorrect
* Decision making was felt to be disproportionate or unfair
* The category of concern selected for a Child Protection plan was felt to be wrong

Complaints about a specific agency need to be directed to the relevant agency via their individual complaints process. Social workers can help signpost you to this if necessary. Telephone 01454 865924 or email

<https://www.southglos.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints/children-adults-and-health-complaints/childrens-social-care-complaints/>

1. **Process**

A parent/carer or young person has the right to make a complaint and or appeal if they are unhappy with the process or outcome of a Child Protection Conference.

Parents/ carers’ and young people can request support to make a complaint or appeal, either to their Social Worker or through the Complaints Department.

Whilst a complaint/appeal is being made or investigated the decision from the Child Protection Conference remains in place. The complaints/appeal process does not have the power to change a decision and or recommendation from a Child Protection Conference, it does however have the power to request that another conference is convened to review the decision if the complaint/appeal is upheld.

1. **Stage 1.**

If a parent / carer or young person has a complaint, or wishes to appeal the process and/ or a particular aspect of the Child Protection Conference, then where possible they need to put their concerns in writing to the Child Protection Chair **within 10** working days of the conference.

The Child Protection Chair will

* respond to the parent/carer or young person within **3** working days of receiving the complaint/ appeal
* arrange a meeting with the parent/ carer or young person within **10** working days of receiving the complaint/appeal.
* notify the Local Authority complaints officer and Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager, who has oversight of all Safeguarding processes within South Gloucestershire, of the complaint/appeal.

The Quality Assurance Reviewing Manager will chair the meeting with the parent/carer and or young person, and the Child Protection Chair, the aim being to listen to the complaint/appeal and find a resolution to the issues raised. The Quality Assurance Reviewing Manager does not have the authority to change a conference decision, but can recommend that a conference is reconvened to consider any new information.

Following the meeting the Quality Assurance Reviewing Manager will within **10** days, send the parent/carer or young person a letter confirming in writing, the points of the complaint/appeal and any action/ outcome that was agreed upon. A copy of this letter will be sent to the Safeguarding Service Manager and Complaints Officer

If the parent/ carer, or young person remain dissatisfied with either the CP process or outcome from the complaint, they have the right to appeal the outcome and request that their complaint/appeal progresses to Stage 2.

1. **Stage 2.**

A parent has **28** days following receipt of the complaint/appeal outcome letter to request a review of their complaint/appeal.

This request will be heard within **28** days by a panel consisting of representatives from partner agencies, the Quality Assurance Reviewing Manager and Safeguarding Service Manager

The meeting will consider

* The complaint/appeal and response from the parent
* the correspondence from Stage 1
* the child protection reports
* the child protection minutes

The panel will seek to find a resolution and way forward for the parent/ carer or young person.

The panel is not able to amend the conference decision but can recommend that a conference is reconvened to consider all new information.

The panel will need to determine if;

* **A.** Child Protection Conference procedures were followed correctly and therefore the complaint/appeal is not upheld.
* **B.** Child Protection Conference procedures were not followed correctly and the complaint/appeal is upheld and recommendations are made as to how best to remedy this
* **C**. The Child Protection Conference decision was appropriate and therefore the complaint/appeal is not upheld
* **D.** The child protection conference decision was not felt to be appropriate and therefore the complaint/appeal is upheld and a reconvened conference is recommended.

If the panel is not able to form a conclusion they will need to set out a clear action plan, timescale and a date for a reconvened panel to consider any additional information.

The chair of the panel will circulate minutes and recommendations from the meeting to the parent/carer and/or young person, and panel members within 5 working days. Minutes and recommendations will also be sent to the complaints officer, Child Protection Chair and social work team.

If a conference is to be reconvened it is the responsibility of the Child Protection Chair to ensure that all attendees of the conference are aware of the recommendations and reasons behind these.

1. **Outcome**

If a parent/ carer or young person remains unhappy with the outcome of Stage 2 they have the right to pursue their complaint/appeal via the Ombudsman and /or seek legal advice.

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