

Child Protection Conference Principles

What is our approach?

Dorset Children's services are working with children and families in a Restorative and Strengths based way. The needs of children are at the centre of everything that we do here in Dorset. The child's needs will remain the focus for all practitioners, irrespective of their professional background. We will place the importance of support and challenge high, to ensure that relationships are based at the heart of our Child Protection Conferences with children and families.

What does this mean for our Conferences?

A restorative, strength-based approach means avoiding blame and judgements whilst having high expectations of what can be achieved and everyone's contributions to making things better. This will mean understanding the strengths in the system (in and around the family) whilst honestly and openly exploring the challenges to support each other to deliver change.

Our Key principles are:

1. Language that facilitates solution and outcomes based on the risk and needs of the child
2. The family are supported to lead the meeting by identifying what needs to change and how they feel about the concerns that need to be addressed.
3. Reports will have been read before hand so it avoids taking valuable time that can be used to support the family and provide solutions to reducing risk.
4. How children and families are progressing with health, school and other areas are important and will be expected to be fully captured in the reports and will not necessarily be discussed in the meeting unless pertinent to do so.
5. Membership of the Child Protection Conference will be appropriate to the child and will have sufficient professional expertise to contribute effectively to the conference.
6. The Child Protection Chair will communicate with parents before the conference takes place and ensure that they know what to expect, they will be prepared to talk about their child/ren as the expert
7. The parents will have the opportunity to reflect on the information they have heard, and be supported to consider what strengths they have, and are within the family that may address the harm or actions required.
8. Parents will be supported to identify what support they believe is required from those in the meeting.
9. A plan of support will be finalised in the meeting prior to determining the level of plan under CP or CIN.
10. The allocated Social Worker will work through the Child Protection Plan to achieve progress and change for the child and their family, in a way that is timely and reduces the time that a child is 'at risk of significant harm'.
11. If a Child Protection Plan isn't achieving change for the child, then the Child Protection Chair will ensure there is oversight of progress and any escalation to seeking legal advice is done so in a timely way for the child.