



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Child Protection Conferences

Information for
parents, carers and families

Introduction

This leaflet is being given to you as a Child Protection Conference is being held regarding your child/ren. This leaflet will help you understand what to expect.

What happens before a Child Protection Conference?

Your child/ren's Social Worker will write a report for the Child Protection Conference. Other professionals will also write a report, which should be shared with you and brought to the meeting. All the professionals involved, sometimes professionals previously involved with you and your child/ren's lives, should have contributed to the Single Assessment and Children & Family Plan, which will be shared with you at least 24 hours prior to the Conference. It is these people who will be invited to attend the Conference, as well as further representatives from key agencies such as the National Health Service, Education and the Police.

Your child/ren's Social Worker will tell you who will be at the Conference and why they will be there. Don't forget that if you have any questions, or you would like things explained in more detail, your child/ren's Social Worker is there to help you.

You will get a letter confirming the date, times and place of the Conference, also listing all persons invited to attend. If you attend / are unable to or need child care support please speak to your child/ren's Social Worker.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that takes place after Child Protection enquiries have been made, where a decision has been made by professionals working with your child/ren advising that they believe that your child/ren has suffered harm or is likely to suffer harm. The purpose of

the Conference is to discuss the findings of the Child Protection enquiries, and the concerns that some or all of the professionals involved with your child/ren have. These concerns may be about physical, sexual, emotional harm or neglect. The aim of the Conference is to consider all the information presented at the Conference, including wishes and views of all persons, and decide whether your child/ren is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm and agree what services to provide or what to do to reduce the risks of harm to them.

It is very important that parents/carers and families are involved in the Child Protection Conference so we would expect you to attend, as your contribution is as valid as any other person present at the Conference. We understand that it may be difficult for parents/carers to come to these meetings, but those that attend the Conference are there to assist and support you and your child/ren. At the meeting you will be able to:

- Gain a better understanding of concerns raised about your child/ren
- Give your views about what is happening
- Ask questions
- Say what help you think your family needs.

Who will Chair the Conference?

A Conference Chairperson from the Conference and Review Service will chair the meeting. The Conference Chairperson is independent from the Child Protection enquiries that were carried out concerning your child/ren and is not responsible for managing your child/ren's case. The Conference Chairperson will meet with you as the parent/carer around twenty minutes before the Conference starts.

Confidentiality, Safety and Respect

The Chairperson will remind everyone that the meeting is confidential and information can only be shared outside of the meeting with those involved in helping your child/ren. None of the information about your family will be shared with members of the public. If you are worried about what information is going to be shared with those working with your family please ask the Chairperson or your child/ren's Social Worker to explain.

It is important that everyone in the meeting gets a chance to speak and that they are shown respect. The Chairperson will explain about this before the meeting starts. Aggressive behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated nor will offensive remarks. If this happens the Chairperson will ask the person concerned to stop and they may even be asked to leave the meeting or the Chairperson may decide to end the meeting altogether.

Can I attend the whole Conference and can I ask questions?

The Conference will follow a set agenda which will be explained at the beginning. The Chairperson will ask all those present, including you, for their views as per the agenda. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and to challenge and clarify anything anyone says that you do not agree with when asked. You may find it useful to make notes before the Conference about information you would like to question or clarify. You may also find it useful to make notes during the meeting about anything that is said that you would like to question, when it is appropriate to do so. Sometimes family members may be excluded from all or part of the meeting if it is considered that it is not in the best interests of the child/ren. You will normally know about this in advance, but something of a sensitive nature may arise during the Conference and the Chairperson may ask you to leave at short notice. If you have concerns about any family member attending you should speak to your child/ren's Social Worker.

What if I do not understand what people are saying?

If your first language is not English and you think you might not understand what people are saying, we have a duty to provide an interpreter. If you have any other difficulties that may stop you attending or understanding the process (for example, if you have impaired hearing or learning difficulties), please discuss this with your child/ren's Social Worker. We will do all we can to assist you.

Can I bring someone to support me?

You can ask a friend, family member, advocate or supporter to come with you to give you support or to help you put across your point of view. However, this person's views and wishes will not generally be sought and will be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Conference. Their role at the meeting is to support you and not to contribute to the discussion. Equally, like everyone else who attends the Conference, they must understand that the information shared at the Conference is confidential. You may want to bring a solicitor with you, but he or she can only be there to support you, not to represent you legally.

We usually invite both parents, even if they have separated and also anyone in a parenting role. We understand that this may be difficult; if you feel that you are unable to attend with your ex-partner, please discuss this with your child/ren's Social Worker. They in turn will discuss your concerns with the Chairperson of the meeting in advance in order to see if arrangements can be made to enable both parents to contribute their views in a way that will not add to your difficulties.

Will my child/ren be at the Conference?

We will invite your child/ren to attend the Conference if it is felt that they are mature enough and of an age where they can understand. If they wish to attend the Conference they will not ordinarily attend the entire meeting but part of the meeting where they will be given the opportunity to express their views and wishes. They may bring a friend to support them through this process or they may want to write down their views and wishes, which will be read out at the Conference, or alternatively meet with the Chairperson of the Conference prior to the meeting.

Your child/ren may wish to seek some advice from National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS). NYAS are independent and offer information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children and young people through a network of dedicated paid workers and volunteers throughout England and Wales. They can be contacted on:

Freephone 0808 808 1001 or send an email to help@nyas.net.

Or your child's Social Worker can refer them to NYAS on their behalf.

How long will the Conference last?

Most Conferences take about 1-1 ½ hours, but some could take a little longer.

What can the Conference decide?

A Child Protection Conference can decide one of three things:

- That your child/ren are not at risk of significant harm and there is no need for a Child Protection Plan
- That more information is needed before a decision about what should happen can be made
- That your child/ren are at risk of significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is needed to help you and your family.

If your child/ren is made subject to a Child Protection Plan/s, the Conference will also make recommendations about what needs to be done to protect your child/ren and reduce the risk of suffering significant harm.

The Conference will appoint a group of people called a 'Core Group' to work with you and your child/ren. You will be part of that group which will meet regularly to look at how the Child Protection Plan is progressing in reducing risk. A leaflet called 'A guide for parents/carers and young people regarding Core Groups' will be provided to you at the Conference. You will also receive the minutes of the Conference afterwards and the agreed Child Protection Plan so that you are clear about what the Conference has recommended and decided.

What happens if the Child Protection Conference decides that my child/ren is not at risk?

If your child/ren is not made subject to a Child Protection Plan/s, a Child In Need Plan will be considered. Whatever is decided, any Plan agreed with your input, will be to assist and support you in caring for your child/ren.

What happens if the Child Protection Conference decides that my child/ren is at risk?

If people at the meeting decide your child/ren is at risk, he or she will be made the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The Child Protection Plan will be presented at the Conference, conference membership will agree if the Plan is right for the protection and needs of your child/ren. The Plan could include sessions at a children's centre, having counselling or therapy, or a meeting where members of your family get together to plan for the future, this meeting is called a 'Family Group Conference'. Your child/ren's Social Worker will give you more details.

What is the Child Protection Plan?

The overall aim of a Child Protection Plan;

- To ensure your child/ren is safe and prevent him or her from suffering further harm.
- Promote your child/ren's health and development – i.e. his or her welfare; and
- Provided it is in the best interest of your child/ren, support you as parents/carers and your wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of your child/ren.

The Child Protection Plan should be based on the findings from the Single Assessment undertaken by your child/ren's Social Worker. You will have the opportunity, at the Child Protection Conference and subsequent meetings, to add to the content of the Child Protection Plan, anything you feel would help you to safeguard your child/ren. You will be given a written copy of the Child Protection Plan. The Child Protection Plan will tell you what to expect from the people named in the plan and what they will expect from you.

There will be an opportunity to make changes to the Child Protection Plan at the Core Group Meeting or at the Review Conference.

What is a Review Conference?

Review Conferences are held every 3-6 months and at each Conference the next Review date will be agreed. The Review Conference(s) will assess how the Child Protection Plan is working and decide whether your child/ren need to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan and for how long.

If there is anything in the Child Protection Plan you do not understand, or disagree with, you should talk to your child/ren's Social Worker.

If you would like to talk about your situation to someone who is not connected with Children's Services you can contact:

The Family Rights Group
The Print House,
18 Ashwin Street,
London,
E8 3DL

Telephone: 0808 801 0366 (Mon-Fri 10am-3.30pm)
Email: advice@frg.org.uk, website: www.frg.org.uk



Who will know if my child/ren or children is subject to a Child Protection Plan?

Confidentiality is very important at Child Protection Conferences and the Chairperson will remind everyone that the meeting is confidential. We take great care to make sure that only those people who need to know are told that your child/ren are the subject of a Plan.

Can my child/ren be taken away?

If the people at the Child Protection Conference feel that there is a serious risk to your child/ren's safety at home, they may recommend that he or she is cared for by someone else for the time being (this may be another member of your family, foster parents, or in a Council children's home).

Your case may be taken to the Family Proceedings Court, so that the Court can make a decision about your child/ren's future. If this happens your child/ren's Social Worker will discuss it with you and will suggest that you contact a solicitor for help and advice.

Can I complain if I am not happy about a decision made?

If your child/ren is considered to be at risk and is made the subject of a Child Protection Plan and you think the decision is unfair (or if your child/ren is not made subject to a Child Protection Plan and you think they should have been) you should talk to your child/ren's Social Worker. They may be able to explain further why the decision was made and answer any questions that are worrying you. If you still disagree you can contact the Conference Chairperson to explain why and an informal meeting can be arranged so that you can discuss it.

Where the complaint is in relation to the practice, decision of a specific agency or a professional and their conduct, you will be directed to that agency's complaints procedure.

For more information please contact:

Conference and Review Service
5th Floor,
Borough Hall,
Cauldwell Street,
Bedford,
MK42 9AP

Telephone: 01234 718022


Email: Conferenceandreviewdutydesk@bedford.gov.uk

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion	معلومات کے لئی	برای اطلاع
তথ্যের জন্য	Informacja	للمعلومات
ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ	Za Informacje	Per Informazione

 **01234 267422**

 **Children's Services**
Bedford Borough Council
Borough Hall
Caudwell Street
Bedford, MK42 9AP

 **childrensservices@bedford.gov.uk**