



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Child Protection Conferences

A guide for
children and young people

This leaflet explains what happens at a Child Protection Conference

What is a Child Protection Conference?

Bedford Borough Council Children's Social Care have arranged a Child Protection Conference as they believe that you may be at risk of harm or abuse or likely to suffer from harm or abuse. The Conference is a meeting that is arranged by Children's Social Care when people who work with you and your family are worried about you.

The people at the Conference talk about what is happening in your life, with your family and what needs to be done to make sure you will be protected from harm.

The aim of the Conference is to make sure that you are safe and that you are getting all the help you need.

What does harm mean?

Harm can mean things happening to you that shouldn't happen, like being hurt, being left alone, not being looked after properly or having things happen to you that you do not like or want to happen to you.

What does at risk mean?

Children and young people can be at risk when they are being hurt by someone they know or are not being looked after properly. If this is serious or goes on a long time it can affect you; for example, make you unhappy or make it difficult for you to concentrate at school.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about the kind of harm they feel you are at risk of and how they are worried this may be affecting you.

What is the Conference for?

The Conference is held to get all the people who are concerned about you together to discuss if you or your family need any help, and to make sure no one causes you harm in the future. The aim will be to make a plan of how best to make sure you are kept safe.

Who will be at the Conference?

The meeting will include your parents/carers, someone from your school, your health visitor and your Social Worker. There will also be people who you don't know, but they will be there as it is their job to protect children. There is a person, called the 'Chairperson', who leads the meeting and another person who takes notes.

How long will it last?

Conferences usually last 1-1 ½ hours, although some are longer and some are shorter.

How can I tell everyone what I think?

Your views are very important, remember, this is your life and future that is being discussed so we want to hear what you have to say about this. The people at the Conference must consider what your wishes and views are. Your Social Worker must ask you what you think and write it down in a report.

If you are aged over 12 you may be invited to the Conference and you can decide about this with your Social Worker. You may not be invited if you are younger, but whether you attend or not, it is important that people at the Conference know what you want to say and how you feel. You may only need to be there for a short while so that you can tell people what you think. You will meet with the Chairperson before it starts and they will answer any of your questions and explain what will happen during the meeting.

The decision will be made by the Chairperson and with you, your parents/carers and Social Worker. You could send an e-mail to the Conference Chairperson giving your views.

You can ask to have an adult you trust to come along and support you or you can also ask for an advocate to speak on your behalf. An advocate is someone totally independent from Children's Services. If you would like an advocate, speak to your Social Worker so they can arrange for you to have one. National Youth Advocacy Service (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.

If your first language is not English, your Social Worker can arrange for an interpreter to come to the meeting if you want. If you have any speech or hearing difficulties, your Social Worker will make sure you get the support you need. If you have a problem with one or other or both parents attending it can be arranged that they are not in the conference room at the same time as you (or in the same waiting room as you). Speak to your Social Worker.



What if I want to say something that I don't want my Mum and Dad to hear?

You can tell your Social Worker about it and special arrangements can be made with the Chairperson.

What can the conference decide?

The Conference will decide if you should have a Child Protection Plan. A Child Protection Plan is a plan set out with ways so that you can be protected and the care that you should receive to make sure that you are safe and well, it will list who the people are that should help make sure you are safe, it will also include your parents or carers. The Child Protection Plan will list what actions will be taken to make sure this happens and who will give you the support you need.

What happens next

To make sure that the Child Protection Plan is working, regular meetings will be held - called 'Core Groups' - to talk about the Plan and make sure that everything that should be done is being done to keep you safe. Regular Child Protection Review Conferences will take place to ensure you continue to be safe and well. If you have a Child Protection Plan and things improve, a meeting can be held to decide if you and your family no longer need a Child Protection Plan. If you no longer need a Child Protection Plan a decision may be made that we can help you or your family in another way, a 'Children in Need' plan may be agreed.



Who will know what is said at the Conference?

Everything that is said in the Conference is confidential. This means it will only be shared with those people who need to know, to help keep you safe.

What happens if I don't go to the meeting?

The people at the meeting still want to know what you think - you can ask an adult to speak for you. You can write down your views and pass these to your Social Worker to read out at the Conference.

How will I know what's decided?

Your Social Worker will talk with your parent/carers about who is the best person to tell you what happened.

Can the Conference decide if I will be taken away from my parents / carers?

This is something that many children worry about when a Conference is called. The Conference decides what Protection Plan is needed to keep you safe and well and how everyone will work together to ensure this happens.

A Conference can only make a Plan that looks at how to make your life safer and better for you.

Only a Court can order that children no longer live with their parent/carers and this would only be in very harmful situations; most children who have a Child Protection Plan stay at home with their parents/carers.

You may want to complete a letter to give to your Social Worker prior to the Conference using these headings.

Your name

.....

Do you understand why the Conference is taking place?

.....

Do you want to be at the Conference?

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Is there anyone you would like to take to bring to the Conference to support you?

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Is there anything you want to change?

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What do you think would help you and your family?

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Is there anything else you would like people to know?

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What can I do if I am not happy about the Conference?

Your Social Worker will explain your rights to you. If you are unhappy about something, speak to your Social Worker or to any other member of the Conference. If this does not resolve the problem ask to speak to the Social Work Team Manager. You have the right to complain. You have the right to ask for an advocate to support you in making a complaint. An advocate is someone independent who can speak up for you and make sure your views are taken seriously, speak to your Social Worker so that contact details can be provided to you.

Alternatively, you can contact your complaints officer at Borough Hall on 01234 228992 or email be.heard@bedford.gov.uk

When will the Child Protection Plan no longer be needed?

When the group who are working with you decide that you are no longer at risk from harm, they will decide that a Child Protection Plan can be discontinued.

Useful phone numbers

ChildLine – a free and confidential advice line for children and young people.

Phone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

CORAM - Children's Legal Centre – an independent national organisation that gives legal advice and information affecting children and young people.

Phone: 0845 120 3747

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline - A 24-hour advice, information and referral service.

Phone: 0808 800 5000

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service (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.

Freephone: 0808 808 1001

Website: www.nyas.net

Other useful websites

Childnet International www.childnet-int.org

Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk

National Children's Bureau www.youngncb.org.uk

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

Remember

Abusing children or young people is wrong. The Conference is being held to help you and your family - you are not in trouble. Just because you have a Child Protection Plan does not mean that you will be taken away from home. This only happens when Social Workers believe that you cannot stay at home and remain safe. Please contact your Social Worker if you want to ask any further questions about the Conference.

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**

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