



Guide to Child Protection Conferences in response to COVID-19

For Professionals

In light of the coronavirus outbreak, how the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit facilitate child protection conferences will change temporarily to ensure we are protecting the health of families and professionals as well as ensuring we look after the safety of the children.

What will happen if a family I work with needs a child protection conference in this time?

We will still be holding child protection conferences in this time; however the way we do this will change. We will be looking at using technology to assist us to continue to make the best decisions we can, to help keep children safe whilst supporting everyone to remain healthy and well. At this time, it would appear our best option would be to run conferences through an EE conference call which allows 20 people to join the call at once.

Your agency information is extremely important to us, so we still need to hear from you. We will be looking to front load as much of the conference as possible to help us to do this. So we will need you to provide your information early enough to allow ourselves and parents to understand your information. This is already a statutory requirement.

How will the Child Protection Conference be run?

Prior to Conference:

The Safeguarding Unit will send copies of the other professional reports and the template we use for the recording of conference notes to you prior to the conference taking place. The template will have the danger statement, safety goal and scaling questions pre-populated as well as the plan from the previous conference.

We would ask that you use this template to detail your views for the conference and send this back to the Unit email address and the allocated business support officer at least **3 working days** prior to conference. The returned template should include:

- agreeing the danger statements and safety goal or detailing if you believe any changes should be made;
- the update for any actions on the plan you or your agency had responsibility for;
- your scaling and rationale for this scale based on the information you hold;
- your suggestions for future actions on the safety plan;

- your overall scale and decision about whether the plan should remain or end.

We realise that you may be worried about your predictive decision about the plan when you haven't got all the other agencies information, but the conference process will establish this, your view can only be based on what you know. It is also really important that you include the source of your evidence supporting your view. We know you will not be visiting some families during this time and that electronic forms of 'visits' and contact are not a full equivalent. For this reason we need to understand the evidence source across all agencies to inform the plan. For example purely self reporting is not a rounded picture of what a child is experiencing.

During Conference:

The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will co-ordinate the meeting and have a telephone conference call via EE. You will receive instructions on how to join the conference call in an email.

Please note: If you have a contract mobile with free minutes it will be free to ring the number above. For those who have pay as you go phones that don't include free minutes to mobiles, there will be a cost charged at a **normal network rate**.

The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will run through the conference following the usual agenda.

We will use the information that is given through the reports to conference and within the meeting itself to help us think about a plan that supports the family and children to reduce the risks that they may be facing. We want you to be part of creating that plan, so it is important that we get your views for the conference.

After Conference:

Once all of the information has been shared and a plan has been agreed, we will agree whether a child protection plan is necessary to support the children and what that will need to look like bearing in mind the current restrictions. A decision will then be finalised.

You will then be sent the outcomes and the notes of the meeting electronically as normal. Please do alert the Safeguarding Unit of any inaccuracies in the notes in a timely manner to enable any further changes to be made if needed.

And finally...

Please bear with us!! In these uncertain times, we all have to change the way we think and work in response to the concerns about Coronavirus. We may have some technological difficulties in conference, but we will do our best to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible and you are supported to contribute to the plans for children. Thank you so much for working flexibly with us to keep families safe.