



Your child protection conference

Information for young people

What is a child protection conference and why are they held?

A child protection conference is a meeting arranged by your social worker when people working with you think that you may be being hurt or not looked after properly.

The conference is to decide what needs to be done to keep you safe and well looked after.

Your social worker will talk with you about what is going to be said at the conference, and ask you what you think needs to happen. They will make a plan with you, your parents and other people who work with you and your family. The plan will spell out:

- what people are worried about,
- what needs to change, by when, so that things are better for you,
- what help your parents and you need,
- how everyone will know that things are better for you.

The plan will be discussed and agreed at the conference. Your social worker will also write a report for the conference which they will show you. There might be parts that you can't read that are private to other people.

Your views, wishes and feelings are very important to the conference

1. Your social worker, advocate or someone else can tell the conference your views. An advocate supports you to understand your rights and to have a say in the decisions that are made about you. There will be an advocate to support you if you want one.
2. Your social worker will help you fill in 'notes for my conference', which you can share with your advocate.
3. The person chairing the conference will try and meet with you privately before the conference or speak to you on the phone to give you a chance to say what you think.
4. Or if you have any other ideas of how to tell people what you think, please speak to your social worker.

To contact the National Youth Advocacy Service, NYAS, Freephone 0808 808 1001.

Who will be at the conference?

There will be about 6 to 10 people at the conference, including your parents or carers.

Some you will already know because they are working with you and your family, such as your social worker and someone from your school. There might be some people you don't know, for example someone from the police who works to protect children and young people.

The meeting will be chaired by a child protection advisor. This means they lead the meeting and make sure everyone has a chance to speak. There will also be someone to write down what is said.

People taking part in your conference are not allowed to talk about what was said with anyone except people who need to know.

What will happen at the conference?

People will talk about what is going well for you, what the worries are, and what needs to change, by when.

If the worries are very serious, the conference will decide that you need a 'child protection' plan. If the worries are less serious but your parents and you need some help from social workers, the conference will make a 'family support' plan. Both plans are there to make sure everyone works together to make things better for you, and that your family gets the help it needs quickly so that problems can be sorted out.

The conference cannot decide that you will no longer live with your parents. Only a Court can do that. Most children who have child protection plans continue to live at home with their family.

Can I come to my conference?

If you are secondary school age and able to understand what is happening you can come to your conference if it is safe for you to do so. If there are parts of your conference that are private to other people you may be asked to leave for that part.

You may want to bring someone with you. This needs to be an adult and someone you trust. This could be your advocate.

Your social worker will talk about who you want at the conference to support you.

An interpreter, or support with any speech or hearing difficulties, will be provided if you need it.

When do I stop having a child protection plan?

A review child protection conference will take place three months after the first conference and then there will be a review conference at least every six months.

The review conference decides whether you still need a child protection plan.

The decision is based on whether the people at the conference are still worried that you are being hurt or not properly looked after.

You might hear the words 'abuse' and 'neglect'. These are things that people are worried may be happening or might happen to you. What do they mean?

- **Physical abuse** is any kind of hitting, shaking, burning, pinching, biting, choking, throwing, beating, and other actions that cause physical injury, leave marks, or cause pain. It could be when a parent/carer tells people a child is ill when they're not.
- **Sexual abuse** is when somebody touches a child's body or private parts in ways that make them feel unsafe (even with their clothes on). It can also be when they make a child touch them, watch pornography or take photographs of them when they are undressed. Sexual abuse can happen over the internet and on a mobile phone.
- **Emotional abuse** happens when shouting and anger go too far or when parents/carers criticise, threaten, or make a child feel bad about themselves. Domestic abuse can also cause emotional and physical harm to children and young people.
- **Neglect** is when a child doesn't have enough food or suitable housing, clothes, or health care. It can also be when a parent doesn't give a child the attention they need.

What can you do if you are not happy with the conference or the decisions made?

Talk to your social worker, speak to an advocate, or ask to talk to the child protection advisor.

You can also make a complaint:

Children's Services Complaints Team

Phone: 01273 482304

Email: cscommenstcomplaints@eastsussex.gov.uk