Child Protection Conference Guide

for Bristol Children and their families

This is our guide for parents, carers, children, social workers and partner agencies to help you through the Child Protection Conference Process.



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Introduction

This guide has been produced in collaboration with parent experts by experience and partner agencies, working together to improve the Child Protection Conference processes in Bristol for children and young people.

We are committed to working with children and families in an open and clear way. We focus on what needs to happen next.Take time to develop good quality meaningful safety plans. Together we will identify support that is helpful for children and families to make changes and build safety.

We have removed confidential slots in conference, we are open about worries. If there are serious worries that could increase risks to the child/adult if shared in open conference. Then this would be talked through before with the right people and agreed what can be shared and when.

Feeling well prepared helps us all to be able to be part of conversations. It is important that time is taken before the conference with parents, carers, and child(ren) to help them to understand what the worries are. To take time to explain what can and cannot happen in conference. To ensure families feel important and valued and to create opportunity to well work together.

Families are asked who they they would like to be invited to the conference. This can be family members, friends, community support and professionals that help.

Create space to talk with families about worries and safety. We want to hear from families about what is happening in their lives, and what would help. We are respectful, curious and interested in how this impacts on the child and what can help to reduce worries.

Conferences take place in venues in the area that the family live. We can consider ways to support parents and children to attend. This could be together, separately in the room or using online technology.

Training sessions are offered to partner agencies to talk about Bristol's Child Protection Conference model. We have highlighted the importance of talking to the parents, carers, and children before the conference, sharing their reports with them and thinking with families about what they need, and what the offer of support could be for the family.

Child Protection Conferences



What are Child Protection Conferences?

Initial Child Protection Conferences are held for children when they are at risk of or have experienced significant harm. A Review Child Protection Conference is then held to share what has been happening for the child and family, to review the next steps and consider if the child protection plan is still required.

The Child Protection Conference is a meeting that takes place with parents, the child (if they want to attend) the social worker, and partner agencies that are working with the family or have knowledge of the family, such as health visitors, midwives, schools, drug workers, mental health workers, and probation officers.

During the Child Protection Conference, we will talk openly about the worries and the impact upon the child(ren). We will explore safety and the family's support network. We want to work with the family to help them to reduce the risks and to ensure the child(ren)'s needs are met and that they are safe. We will focus the conversations on building safety for the child(ren) and the adults. We are aware that often there are adult issues that impact upon parenting, this is often the reason for the worries about safety and care of the child(ren). We will focus upon what needs to happen to enable the parents / carers to safely care for the child in both the short and longer term.

Together we need to have a good understanding about the impact of the harm upon the child. We will work to ensure that the child's wellbeing is at the centre of decisions, support and services offered.

We will achieve this by ensuring that everyone feels respected and that this is a safe space to speak, listen and respond to each other and feel supported to participate within the Child Protection Conference.

Then we can ensure the opportunity is given to develop a safety plan with the family (parents, carers, child(ren) and extended family), and we will agree the key next steps with the family to identify what needs to happen. This will include considering the support and services that can be offered to ensure that children are safe and that their needs are met.

Why do Child Protection Conferences happen?

A Child Protection Conference happens when children's social care, health and the police are worried that a child(ren) may have experienced abuse/harm or could be at risk of experiencing abuse/ harm.

Whenever there is information to suggest that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm there would be a professionals meeting called a strategy discussion, involving local authority children's social care, the police, and health professionals.

Before a Child Protection Conference takes place, an investigation (called a Section 47 Investigation) will have been completed by the child(ren)s social worker and the police (if a joint investigation). This investigation requires the social worker to talk to the parents/carers, the child, and partner agencies involved with the family.

Their job is to explore the concerns that have been raised and agree the best way forward.

Initial Child Protection Conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the extended family / supportive friends (if appropriate), advocates and professionals that are involved with the child and family, to talk about the worries, what is working well and make decisions about the child's future safety, health, and development. If concerns relate to an unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference before the child is born.

The Child Protection Conference will develop a plan to best safeguard and promote the welfare of the child(ren). It is the responsibility of everyone attending the conference to make recommendations on how organisations and agencies work together with parents, families and children to safeguard the child in future.

When do conferences happen?

Initial Child Protection Conferences are required to take place within 15 working days of the Strategy Discussion, this is a statutory expectation set out in Working together 2018.

When an Initial Child Protection Conference is requested, details of family and professionals to invite will have been shared by the child's social worker to the Safeguarding Children Business support team. They send out the invitations for the conference to the people need to be invited. This invitation will include the children and parent / carers details, a brief summary of the reason the conference has been called. The date, time and place the conference is being held and the name of the person chairing the conference. With the invite letter we will include a blank report to be completed in advance of the conference and a guide of what to expect in conference.

Agenda for conference can be found here.

At the Initial Child Protection Conference, it was agreed that a Child Protection Plan was needed, this is what will happen next.

First Core group meeting (within 10 working days of the Initial Conference)

Arranged by the child's Social Worker and Parents/Carers, professionals working with the family/child are invited.

Core group meetings take place in between Review Conferences (every 6 – 8 weeks). The dates will be arranged by the child's Social worker.

1st review conference takes place within 3 months from the Initial Conference.

Further reviews take place at least once every 6 months this might be held early.

The Child Protection Plan can end at any of these review meetings. When worries have been addressed and there is a safety plan in place that keeps the child safe.

Who facilitates the Child protection Conferences?

We have five Child Protection Conference Chairs, in Bristol. Their names are Andrew Howe, Louise White, Riikka Burnet, Dawn Andrews, and Julie Richards the Child Protection Manager is Verity Felles.

When a request is made for an Initial Child Protection Conference we allocate one of the Child Protection Conference Chairs, they will chair all the conferences for the duration of the Child Protection Plan. If there has been a previous Child Protection plan and it is possible, we will ask the family if it would be helpful for the same person to chair the conference this time round.

This can be helpful as they will know the family history and what worked for the Child protection plan to end last time. This would also mean there is one less new professional for the family and child(ren) to meet.

The Child Protection Conference Chairs are experienced practitioners that have worked within the area of child protection for many years, they are independent from the child's social worker and the professionals that work with the child and their family. The role of the Child Protection Conference Chair is to facilitate the conference to make sure that everyone is able to talk about the worries, and share what is working well. They will make sure everyone feels heard. They will help to develop the plan of what needs to happen next. The Child Protection Chair will offer to speak to the family before the conference.

At the Child Protection conference, we will bring partner agencies, social workers and families members (parents, carers and if appropriate the child/ren) together. Conversations will be supported to be able to agree a way forward. During the time that there is a child protection plan we will oversee the support children and their families are receiving from professionals and whether it is making a difference. This can then help to develop the safety planning with the family, it is important for the child(ren) that this is achieved in a timely way.

Where – we have venues for conference across the city?

We want to give choice to families about where the conference can take place, we use conference rooms in the area offices in north, south and central Bristol, rooms in local Children Centres and some local community buildings. We will try and make sure that the venue is close to where the family resides.

Conferences generally take place at 10am and 2 pm, we can be flexible in the time if this is helpful for families to attend. We understand that being a parent / carer is busy and we need to make sure that they can attend, and this can be difficult around school times. So, we are happy to consider the start time to enable parents /carers to collect children.

If there is a venue that is identified in the conference that could be suitable for future conferences. Such as, a room in a school we are happy to consider this as an option. We would want to make sure that the parents/carer and the child(ren) were happy with this venue.

We hold conferences 'face to face' in a room with family and professionals that are involved. This means that we have the time and space to talk confidentially and to support parents through the difficult conversations respectfully together. In exceptional circumstances we can facilitate conferences as virtual meeting using Microsoft teams.

We expect your child's social worker to talk to you about this before the initial conference and subsequent conference so we can agree and plan how and where the conference will happen.

What to expect in the Child Protection Conference

The Child Protection Conference will be an inclusive, safe, and encouraging space where we help your support network to work well with your family at difficult times making sure that your children's needs, safety, and wellbeing is at the centre of decisions. The conference will take about 1 ½ hours, and your children's social worker will help you to attend.

- Together we will work to openly talk about worries, identify strengths, and consider the offer with the family.
- Together we will enable the development of a family-owned safety plan.
- Together we will agree the key next steps with the family to ensure that children are safe and that their needs are met.



Agenda – What we are going to talk about

The Child Protection Conference Chair will welcome everyone to the meeting and talk about expectations of how the meeting will take place, they will talk about being respectful of each other, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to talk and be heard and that they will support this happening. They will make sure everyone understands why they have been invited.

We ask the parents/carers if everyone that they would want to invite is present or if not who they would like to be invited to future meetings?

The family will be asked why they feel the meeting has been arranged or will be asked to talk about what has happened since the last conference? We want to hear about any worries they have, and about what has been going well. We will ask what support the family feel would be helpful (this could be from the professionals round the table or their family, friends, and community).

We will ask questions to find out and understand what are the child(ren) saying and feeling about what is happening to them or their family?

We will then have a conversation with everyone present, to hear about the worries and what is working well for the child(ren) and the parents / carer? This needs to consider the impact this has upon the child(ren) and the family.

If the professionals or family members have different views on what's happening for children, we will ask questions. This is to help everyone understand different views and talk about these differences and feel heard.

We will talk about what needs to happen so that the worries reduce, and this will help us with the family to develop a safety plan that will help to keep the child(ren) safe and ensure their needs are met.

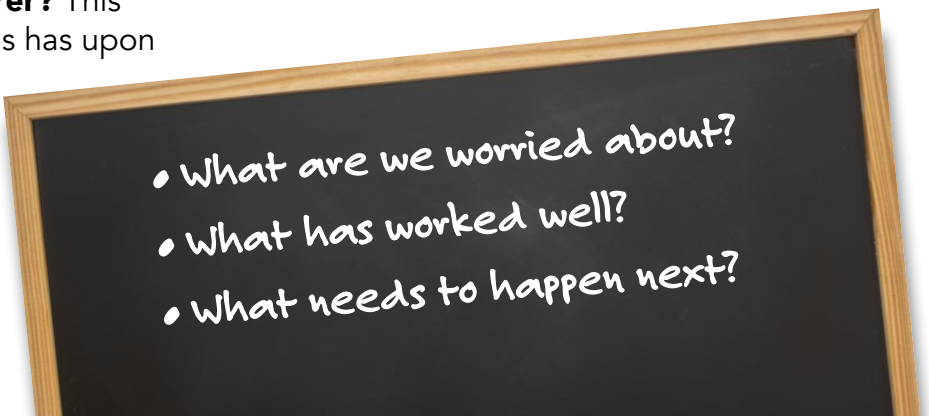
We will have conversations with everybody to decide what else is needed for the child(ren) to be safe and healthy and who can help the family do this.

Then, together we will agree what needs to happen next to build safety and support for the children and your family. This will start to develop/review the family safety plan and next steps that we have discussed and agreed in the meeting. Everyone will be clear about what they need to do and how this will be supported.

The conference chair will summarise what we have talked about, to make sure that everyone understands what has been said about the worries and strengths for the family and how this has impacted upon the child(ren).

The chair will ask if the professionals present feel the threshold for child protection plan or child in need plan is met? We will explain to the family what this means, and the reasons will be explained.

If a Child Protection plan is agreed then the dates for future conferences will be arranged.



Children and Young People

What you might want to know about your Child Protection Conference

What is a Child Protection Conference?

This is a meeting that takes place with your parents/carers, you can come (if you want too) and professionals that know you or your family. To talk about the worries, what is working well and agree what support can be offered, what assessments might be needed and how everyone will work together to make sure your needs are met and you are safe and looked after well.

Why is this happening about me?

This is because people are worried about something that has happened to you, or about how you are being looked after. This could be that someone has hurt you or your siblings, or your parents or carers are struggling to look after you well. There could be different reasons for this, like they have difficulties in their relationship. Or they might struggle with drugs or alcohol. There are many different reasons why we might be worried about children and your social worker will talk to you about why this meeting is happening about you.

Who will be at the Child Protection Conference?

- **A person called a Child Protection Chair,** they will make sure that the meeting runs smoothly and everyone is able to talk and agree what needs to happen next.
- **Your parents/carers**
- **Your social worker professionals** that know you and your family (like school, health visitors, support workers). A Police person, to share any police information (they are not a police officer).
- **Your Social worker can tell you who will be there** and will ask you and your parents/carers if there is anyone that they would like to be invited.

What will happen at the conference?

The Conference Chair will talk to you and your parents/carers before the meeting starts to explain what will happen. In the conference they will introduce people, and they will help everyone to talk about the worries and what is working well. They will help to agree what needs to happen next to help you and your parents and carers. They will make sure that your parents/carers are able to say whats happening and what might help.

After the conference a letter will be sent to your parents and carers to explain the decision that was made, and what the next steps that were agreed are, a summary of what was said and the dates and details of future meetings. The Professionals will also receive a copy.

Where do Child protection Conferences take place?

- **At the office** where your social worker works.
- **In Local children centres**
- **At your school** (we would only come to your school if you were ok about this)
- **In large rooms** to make sure there is enough space for everyone to sit together.

The room is private so that no one can over hear what is being said.

Who can support you? How will everyone know what you think and feel?

Your social worker will talk to you and your parents about the worries and what is going well, and why the conference is happening.

The Conference Chair will ask questions to find out and understand what you are saying and feel about what is happening for you and your family.

They will talk about how they can best support you to be in the conference.

You can come to the conference, if you're over 10 you can talk to someone called an advocate, they can meet you before, talk with you and support you to attend, they can help you share anything that you would like to say.

Your advocate can also attend for you and they can let you know what was said afterwards.

Venues for Conferences across Bristol

South Bristol

Symes House

Symes House, Hartcliffe, Bristol BS13 0EE

Bedminster/Redcliffe Children's Centre

Bedminster Children's Centre,
British Road Entrance BS3 3BZ

0117 377 2340

Hartcliffe Children's Centre

Hartcliffe Nursery School & Children's Centre

0117 123 4567

The Gatehouse Centre

Hareclive Road, Bristol BS13 9JN

0117 978 1708



North Bristol

Ridingleaze House

Ridingleaze House, Ridingleaze
Lawrence Weston Bristol BS11 0QE

Long Cross Children's Centre

Long Cross, Lawrence Weston,
Bristol BS11 OLP

0117 903 0740

nbcc@bristol-schools.uk

Brentry and Henbury Children's Centre

Brentry Lane, Henbury, Bristol BS10 6RG

0117 959 3800

nbcc@bristol-schools.uk

Southmead Children's Centre

Doncaster Road, Southmead,
Bristol BS10 5PW

0117 377 2344

nbcc@bristol-schools.uk

Filton Avenue Children's Centre

Blakeney Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0DL

0117 377 2685

nbcc@bristol-schools.uk



Central Bristol

Welsman Office

Princes Street, St Pauls, BS2 9JA

0734 203 3904

St Pauls Nursery

Little Bishop Street St Pauls,
Bristol B52 9JF

0117 903 0337

stpaulsncc@bristol-schools.uk

East Bristol

Broomhill Children Centre

Fermaine Avenue, Bristol BS4 4UY

0117 353 4276

eastbristol.childrenscentres@bristol-schools.uk

Oldbury Court Children Centre

Frenchay Road, Bristol BS16 2QS

0117 353 2899

eastbristol.childrenscentres@bristol-schools.uk

St Anne's Park Children Centre

Lichfield Road, Bristol BS4 4BJ

0117 377 3189

eastbristol.childrenscentres@bristol-schools.uk



Our Starting Place

How we will support and respect parents, children, and professionals to attend and take part in the conversations within the Child Protection Conference.

To ensure that everyone feels respected and heard and valued. It is the Conference Chairs responsibility to facilitate the conference well. To do this we recognise the need to start from a place where everyone invited is well prepared, supported and encouraged to speak freely.

Parents/carers and children are the most important people that attend the conference and we will help you to be part of the conversation and planning around what happens next.

Parents and Children need to feel safe to be able to talk openly about what is happening in their lives. We want to create a space where parents / carers and children feel comfortable, important, and valued. We also understand that this is not easy and there may be things that need to be explored before the conference to help us to know how to work best with you. This could include, where the conference happens, having someone to support you to attend (a friend / advocate) and talking to you about childcare, so that you can attend and not worry about them.

The conference chair will offer to talk to you before the meeting about what to expect in the conference, who is there, asking what you would find helpful and how they can support you to say what you want to say in the conference. If you're feeling scared, stressed, anxious, upset, or angry about the conference or when you're there, we can help you to deal with these feelings in the meeting. We can make sure the conference is not too long, we can have (breaks in the meeting), so you can leave and come back in. For parent and carers can to have separate times in the conference if needed. These are some of things that we can do to help you feel valued and comfortable.

Being well prepared for the conference, really helps. We will talk to the child's social worker ahead of the conference to ensure that families are well prepared, that they have had the reports shared in good time. It is essential that you have the opportunity and support that is needed to read and understand what has been written, to talk about this and to share your views and opinions.

We encourage the social worker and partner agencies (like schools, health visitors, drug workers and support services) that are involved to not only share the reports with family but also talk to the parents/ carer and children about what would be helpful and to consider this in the offer the can make (this would form part of the next steps).

We understand that some parents/ carers and can struggle to talk in front of others. We understand that when sat in conference this can be a difficult, and stressful time. To talk through what has been happening and what might help can be hard. With the invitation to the conference you will have a copy of a parent's report and a child's report (for children over 10). This can be completed before the conference and sent to the conference chair, or you can bring it with you to help in the conference.



We will read this, and then with you, and agree how we can support you to share what you want to say in the conference. It could be that you read it through, the chair reads it for you or we can ask you some questions that will help you to share your views.

We will be up front and clear about behaviours and responses that we cannot allow in conference and how this will be safely managed. The conference chair's role is to facilitate a conference, to enable conversations to take place well, to support everyone to contribute and will be clear that this needs to be done respectfully. We will create a space in the conference, to allow everyone to have their say, and be heard.

We know that some people struggle with managing anger, and this can lead them to shout, be angry and abusive to others. We understand that it can be difficult for some people to hear information about alleged harm that their children have/are experiencing, this can make conversations hard, and we need to be able to talk this through to work out how best to support the family to make changes, address worries and safely care for the child(ren).

If you know that you can struggle to manage your anger, it would be helpful if you can talk to your child's social worker about this before the conference so that we can then consider options in how we can support you to be part of the conference, in a way that reduces the chances of you feeling angry and gives you options in how you're able to manage this better.

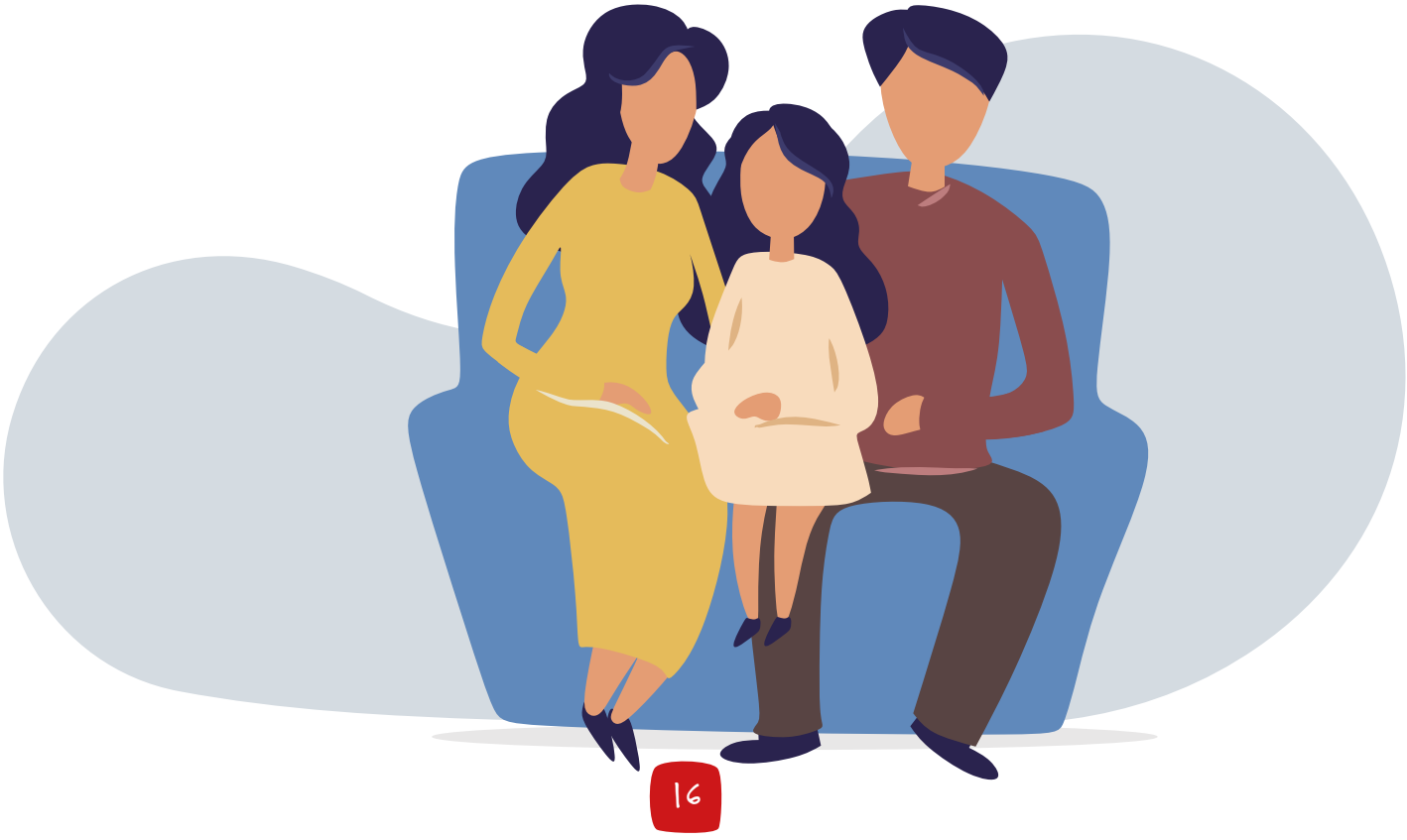
We will talk to parents/carers and children as appropriate before the conference to agree what is expected and how any issues of aggression (words or actions) will be addressed in conference.

1. We will respectfully challenge negative remarks, such as insults, racism, and personal comments directly.
2. If someone becomes threatening or aggressive, they will be encouraged to calm down, and given a warning that this is not appropriate, and conversations can stop to allow the person time to calm down, (if needed this can be outside the room).
3. If the harmful behaviour continues, the conference chair will give a word of warning three times, and then you will be asked to leave the conference.
4. If we are able, we will agree with you, if you're going to come back in, wait outside until the end for the conference chair to let you know the decision made in conference or leave the building and be contacted to be advised of the outcome.

Being open to think about how we can work with you to be part of Conferences in the future. We are open to trying to engage families at every opportunity within the child protection process and conferences. Where there has been a difficult conference, for a child, parent and or carer we would like to be able to think about how we try and do things differently to enable you to be part of future conferences.

In between conferences it would be expected that the social worker and the professionals working with you and your children are developing relationships with you, and before every conference there will be an opportunity to think about how we can enable future conferences to run well and for everyone that needs to attend, to be supported in a way that is good for them to be heard and feel comfortable.

Our Aim is to create a safe space, with you. Where we can talk openly and honestly about the worries and what is working well and to help to develop safety for your child(ren).



But what if parents don't get on

How Child Protection Conference will be undertaken when the worries are about the adults (parents/carers) relationship and the risk posed to each other. When we need to consider the impact this has upon the safety and care of the child(ren).



Our aim

Sometimes Child Protection Conferences are held because of Domestic Abuse between children's parents. In those conferences we will work to:

- Keep children safe and together with the parent who is not harming the child.
- Ask professionals to work with parents whose behaviour is violent or abusive to reduce the risk to children and the other parent.
- Support families so that children can have relationships with parents in a way that is safe for everyone involved.
- Using non-judgemental, open, and curious questions, in order to understand how the family works, their life history, experiences, identity, and explore how this may impact upon their parenting.
- Promote accountability of the person whose behaviour is causing harm with a focus on how this needs to change. Recognise patterns of behaviour and how this might be affecting the other parent's parenting.
- We will put the voice and experience of the child at the centre of our conversations and plans.

How will this be achieved?

What happens before the meeting?

We would expect the children's social worker to think about safety planning with parents in order to address any concerns or risks and to be able to have open conversations about these in the conference. Parents will receive a written report from the social worker, to ensure that the reason for the conference is shared. This could also include developing a safety plan with the parents / carers and child(ren). So that any risks and worries regarding the domestic abuse can be reduced, making the conference a safe place to talk about what is happening and how this is impacting on the child(ren).

There will be conversations about how best to arrange the conference, whether the parents / carers can attend together or separately, if they need to attend at different times. It might be agreed that we have a joint conference with both parents, the expectations will be that there will be a break within the meeting for both parents to discuss their needs and any further safety planning. Or a parent could attend virtually (via Microsoft teams) if this is preferred, or it is felt more appropriate. We will need to consider the safety of the child and the adults in how the conference takes place and the professionals that have been invited.

Discussions in the conference

The focus of the conference is to consider the impact that violent and aggressive controlling behaviour is having on the child(ren) within the family. The child's voice and experience needs to be heard within the conference. To gain their voice, the social worker and possibly an advocate will speak to them before the meeting, and we will talk about this in the meeting. We will use this opportunity to talk about the impact for the child of seeing and hearing the adult behaviour that is harmful and aggressive.

The parent/partner who has perpetrated this behaviour will be encouraged to take responsibility and be supported to make changes to improve the care and parenting they provide for the child(ren). We will talk about the dynamic of the parents/ carers relationships, and the needs of the child(ren).

Outcomes of the Child Protection Conference

We will need to further explore how the aggressive controlling behaviour is impacting the child, and we would want to support the focus upon the perpetrator taking responsibility and acknowledging that they are making a choice that impacts on the way they are parenting. We will consider the offers of support and interventions will be considered for all the family, including the adults and the children.

We will provide a space to be open and curious about the dynamics of the relationships, and think about with the family how the worries can be reduced. This could be achieved by supporting the non-abusive parent through safety planning, alongside any interventions to help change the harmful behaviour and lessen the negative impact to the child(ren) building safety and meeting the health, wellbeing and developmental needs of the child(ren).



Reports for Child Protection conference

Opportunity to share views and information before the Child Protection Conference is really important. Individual reports are sent out to be completed by parents, children, and professionals to be completed before you attend.

The social worker will prepare a report for the conference, this will set out the worries for the child and family, what is going well for the child and will suggest next steps. The report also includes the 'voice of the child' their lived experience and views. This report will be made available to parents/carers at least three days before the conference. It is important that parents have the opportunity to read through and ask any questions, and to help them to share their own views and be prepared for the conference.

We have reports that are sent out to the professionals that have been invited. We ask that they complete the report and share it with the family before the conference. We would like professionals to talk to parents and children about what support would be helpful. This can be beneficial in thinking about what offer they can make to the family in terms of assessment, services, and support.

We ask that this report is returned to the Child Protection Conference team via email to **safeguardingchildreadmin@bristol.gov.uk** and to the social worker 3 days before the date of the conference.

We have a report for parents and children to complete before the conference and send back to Child Protection Conference team via email to **safeguardingchildreadmin@bristol.gov.uk**

If you need support to complete these reports, please ask the child's social worker or another professional or family member to help you.

It is really important that these reports are completed in advance of the conference and sent back for the Child Protection Conference Chair to read through. This helps them to be aware of everyone's views, about the worries and what is working well and to start to consider what might be helpful to support the family to address the worries. Having this information in advance, means the Child Protection Conference chair can think about the questions that they can ask to facilitate a conversation with the family and professionals around what needs to happen and how this can be achieved.

The links to these (blank) reports are below:

Childs report for conference

Parents report for conference

Partner Agency report for conference

Agenda for conference

Links to the documents can also found on the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership website.

Supporting parents, carers and children and young people

This is your guide to help you understand Child Protection Conferences. This includes frequently asked questions and the answers.

We want you to be as informed as possible when you have been invited to attend a Child Protection Conference in relation to your child(ren). Here is a list of frequently asked questions and the answers. We do not feel that any question is a silly question, if we have not covered it below, please speak to your child's social worker or the Child Protection Conference Chair and they will talk through any worries or queries that you may have. We want you to feel comfortable when coming to a Child protection Conference, we hope this is helpful.

- Who will chair the conference?
- Who will be there?
- How long does a does a Child Protection Conference take?
- What if I don't get on with my child's other parent?
- What you need to make this a helpful meeting?
- What can I expect from the professionals who are there?
- What will professionals expect from me?
- What are my options for making sure I can contribute?
- Where will the conference be?
- How will I be prepared for the conference?
- What does it mean if my child(ren) on a child protection plan?
- How many times do I have to attend a Child Protection Conference?
- How does a plan end?
- What if you disagree with the outcome if the conference?
- What happens after a Child Protection plan ends?
- What do I get after the conference, how do I know what I need to do?

Who will chair the meeting?

A Child Protection Chair is responsible to facilitate the conference, when you are sent the invite to the conference the name of the Child protection Conference chair will be included. They will contact you before the conference to introduce themselves to you.

We have five Child Protection Conference Chairs, they are Riikka Burnet, Andrew Howe, Louise White, Dawn Andrews and Julie Richards. They are independent from your child's social worker and the professionals that work with you and your family. They will facilitate the conference to make sure that everyone is able to talk about the worries, what is working well and help to develop the plan of what needs to happen next.

Who will be there?

Your child's Social worker will talk to you to ask if there is anyone that would be helpful to invite, this could be a professional that you or your child is working with or a friend/family member that is supportive. They can then be sent a invite to the conference.

We invite the parents /carers of the children and family members (where safe and appropriate) and the professionals that are already working with you and your family. This would include someone from your child's school, the health visitor and or midwife, probation officer, drugs workers, health professionals, this could be a mental health worker, GP or support worker etc. We will also invite and ask for a report from the Police and a police conference officer will attend.

How long does a does a Child Protection Conference take?

Conference usually takes around an hour and a half. We use the agenda to try and ensure that we keep the conversations focused. There are occasions where conference can be longer, the reasons for this could include: If the family first language is not English and we need an interpreter. If we need to hold a Split conference to enable parents to attend separately and ensure safety. Families with 3 children or more or if the worries are complicated.

If we know that a conference is likely to be longer, we will talk to everyone in the meeting to agree how this can be managed best, and this could include having a break part way through.

What if I don't get on with my child's other parent?

If there are difficulties in the relationship between the child(ren)s parents, we would expect the child's social worker to talk to you about this and think about how we can best support the child(ren)s parents to attend the conference. The childs' social worker can then talk to the Child Protection Chair and with you we can think about how best to make the conference happen and hear from the important people involved with the child(ren). We will do this in a safe way, but we work to try and include both parents/carers where safe to do so.

Where will the conference be?

Conferences take place at the local Social Work Offices at Symes House, Ridingleaze and Welsman and at various children centres across Bristol (see Venues for Conference across Bristol section).

How will I be prepared for conference?

Your child's social worker will have told you that there is going to be a Child Protection Conference, and the reason why this has been arranged. They will ask you who you would like to attend (this could be a family member, friend or professionals that are working with you and your child(ren).

You will be sent an invite to the conference, with the agenda included (this will explain to you what to expect in the conference and a blank copy of a parents/carers report to complete. Please ask the social worker, family member, friend or a professional involved to help you complete this if needed. This will help us to think about what we can ask you to find out about what support you have or may need.

At least 3 days before the conference the social worker will be expected to share their assessment report with you, so you know what will be talked about.

There will be a conversation with you to agree how the Child Protection Conference Chair will meet/talk to you before the conference. They will explain what to expect in the meeting and talk about how they will enable you to be part of the conversations and planning for yourself and your child(ren). We will want to put you at ease and talking before can help.

What are my options for making sure I can contribute?

You will have been sent a written report to complete and this can be shared in the conference, the conference chair will enable you to be part of the conversation and ask questions and support you to feel comfortable to answer them.

If you are worried about talking or sharing what is happening for you and or you children within this meeting if you let your child's social worker know they can also speak to the conference chair to see how we can work with you to enable you to feel able to be involved.

What you need to make this a helpful meeting?

We would like to give you the opportunity to tell us how we can support you to attend and talk with you in a way that you feel relaxed and not worried. This might include having information written in a certain way or having someone with you who supports you. This could be an advocate, or a friend that attends with you. Or it could be that we think about how we share information and talk in the conference, it might be that we arrange an interpreter if English is not your first language.



How will my child/ren be included?

Children over the age of 10 can attend the Child Protection Conference if they would like too, and if this would be helpful, we can talk to them and you about how this happens in the best way.

We refer all children over the age of 10 to an independent advocacy project (Reconstruct). Your child's social worker can talk to you about this. The advocate will contact you to arrange (if you agree) to meet your child, this could be at home, in school or via what's app. To talk to them about why there is a conference, what this means and see if there is anything that they would like to share. The advocate can also support them to attend if they would like. This is the link to find out more about Reconstruct advocacy info.reconstruct.co.uk/bristolportal

The conference chair will make sure that we hear in the conference the views of your child(ren) and that the conversations about what is happening are considered alongside the impact this has upon your child(ren). We would expect your child's social worker to have spoken to them and be able to share what they have to say or think about what is happening for them. We would want to hear about any worries and what is going well.

What can I expect from the professionals who are there?

They should be open, respectful, and supportive. They will be included in the conversations and asked to share information that they have about any worries, things that are working well for you and your family. To share what they would to consider as an offer or support they can give to help you to address the worries and build safety. We would expect the professionals that attend to have spoken to you before the conference about what they are planning to share, so there are no surprises and that they have also asked you what you feel could help.

What will professionals expect from me?

We would really like you to be able to attend, if you can be open and honest about what is happening for you and your child(ren) this will help everyone to think about what they could offer to support you, and we would like to be able to develop the next steps with you in the conference.

What does it mean if my child(ren) on a child protection plan?

The conference will decide based on the information that is shared whether it is felt that your child(ren) have experienced, or are likely to experience significant harm if nothing changes. If so, the conference chair will decide the category of harm. This will either be neglect, emotional, physical or sexual harm and they will explain the reason in the conference.

If a child protection plan is made this will mean that your child's social worker has a statutory (by law) duty to coordinate the next steps and safety plan that are agreed in conference and to ensure that they regularly see your child and work with you to address the worries and build safety.

How many times do I have to attend a Child Protection Conference?

If a child protection plan is made there will be a smaller meeting (core group) that takes place within 10 days, this will be arranged with you and the professionals that are working with you. This meeting gives the opportunity with the social worker to go through the next steps that were agreed in the conference. Making sure everyone knows what they need to do, these meeting might also give time to think about other things that would be helpful.

The first review conference will be booked 3 months from the Initial Conference and then 6 months. If the Child protection plan continues past this point, we will agree the frequency when we hold the conferences, depending on how the child protection plan is progressing. You will be invited to all these meetings and supported to attend.

How does a plan end?

A child protection plan will end in conference when everyone agrees that the worries that were present at the initial conference have been worked through and there is a safety plan that means the risks for your child(ren) have been reduced or can be safely managed.

A child protection plan might end outside of conference if the worries have increased, and the local authority have entered in to care proceedings and or if your child has become a Child in Care. Your child would then be allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who would chair the child in care meetings. The conference chair will speak with them to help the transition to that team.

What if you disagree with the outcome if the conference?

If you are unhappy about the decision made at the conference or you want to say anything about any of the workers that are present this can be shared at the time and will be recorded in the record of the meeting.

If you want to complain or comment about the way the conference was handled, the decision that was made or about the conduct of any of the workers involved you can ask for a Complaints and Comments leaflet which gives you details of what to do Complaints in Relation to Child Protection Conference (proceduresonline.com).

We would like to also ask that if it would be helpful to have a conversation with the Conference chair after the meeting to run through anything that was talked about this could be arranged.

What happens after the Child Protection Plan ends?

When a child protection plan ends, there will be a conversation with yourselves and the professionals attending to consider whether any ongoing support, interventions or services would be helpful for you and your children. This could be agreed as a Child in Need plan or offered through early help services, targeted services or universal services.

The support/services offered will be developed as next steps with you in the conference. If it is felt that a Child in Need plan is helpful this would be reviewed in 3 months time.

This involvement with children services/ other services would mean that your child(ren) would continue to have a social worker and/or have professional involved that would ensure the support is offered and reviewed.

What do I get after the conference, how do I know what I need to do?

After the conference, we will send you a letter that is a clear and easy to understand. This will include the outcome of the conference, whether your child(ren) is on a Child protection Plan and the reason this was agreed. There will be a copy of the next steps that were agreed in the conference, and an overview of what was talked about. The letter will also include details of the dates, times, and place for future meetings. This letter will also be sent to the professionals that are working with you and your children.



Guidance for Social Workers

How to arrange and prepare for an Initial Child Protection Conference.

1. Contact safeguardingchildrenadmin@bristol.gov.uk to arrange the initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), on the day of the strategy discussion there the agreement is for an ICPC or by day 5 of the start of the Section 47 investigation ICPC needs to take place within 15 working days. The of the Strategy Discussion.

2. Complete and return the invitee list within 24 hours to safeguardingchildrenadmin@bristol.gov.uk Include everyone you want invited – all professionals involved with the parents and child(ren).

   Please ask the parents and child if there are any professionals that they would like to be invited or supportive family/friends that could be invited.

3. Take time to prepare parents and carers for conference. Explain the reasons why the conference has been arranged. Talk about how they can be supported to attend, consider practical arrangements, transport and child care. Go through any worries the parents/carers have about the conference and give details of when, where and time the conference will take place. Advise parents and carers that they will receive an invite in the post, with a report that they can complete (please support them to do this is needed).

4. Contact the CP Chair in advance of the conference to discuss the reason for CP conference and consider the best ways to engage family in the ICPC, to discuss what it is hoped the CP process can achieve and the impact upon the children and how we ensure the child's views and 'day to day' life experiences are included in the conference conversations.

5. Talk to the child(ren) about the conference, with the parents/carers, so that they understand why it has been arranged. If the child is over the age of 10, complete the Online referral for an independent advocate info.reconstruct.co.uk/bristolportal Talk to the parents so that they are aware that the advocate will contact them to arrange to see the child ahead of conference. Support the child to complete their report for conference.

6. Complete the Section 47 enquires report, this will be the report for ICPC, and includes the voice of the child, SOS mapping and next steps.This should be completed with the family and incorporates the partner agency information. Where possible hold a family network meeting and start to develop the safety plan with the family. Share a copy of this document with the family 3 days before the conference.

7. Social worker's manager reads and authorises the Section 47 report before the ICPC.

8. Inform the CP Chair that the report has been completed and share with the partner agencies before conference.

9. Complete a genogram with the family and upload on to LCS record.

10. Complete / update the chronology of the child's LCS record.

Child Protection Conferences

How to arrange and prepare for an Reveiw Child Protection Conference and Core Group meetings

1. When requested from Safeguarding Children Admin, please send back the updated invitee list, please check that the correct contact details are given. Please ask parents if there are any professionals or anyone from their support network that they would like to be invited and include them.

2. On LCS in the child's record update the social workers report for conference. You can remove past updates in the SOS mapping - past harm, complicating factors and existing safety and strengths - and add update since the last conference - keep the Danger Statements/Safety Goals (unless the they need to be revised) and update the same Safety Plan and Next Steps.

3. Review and as needed update the safety plan with the family - this should be a stand-alone document.

4. Email/talk to the CP chair prior to the CP conference to update about the family situation and progress with the CP plan and ensure that the reports are completed on LCS to be read.

5. Share the conference report (mapping document) with the family 3 days before the conference and send copies to the professionals that are involved. They can then read this ahead of the conference. Please let the Conference chair know the report is completed.

Core Group Meetings



10 days after initial conference then frequency to be agreed in the conference.



Key people to attend: parents, relevant family members and professionals involved with the family.

Agenda

- Introductions/Apologies and purpose of the meeting. Go through the agenda.
- Summarise the reason for the CP plan - using the danger statements and safety goals can help.
- Share updates since the review (parents and professionals) in a focused way.
- Time to talk through and develop the safety plan - agreed family meeting and time with the young person as appropriate.
- Review the next steps- add to them, and identify what has been achieved, and the impact this has had for the child & family.
- Add new next steps -what else is needed to happen, what else can family and professionals do to make the change happen and develop safety for the child.
- Date of the next Core group (monthly/6 weekly/3 weeks before the next conference).

Guidance for Partner Agencies; attending Child Protection Conference

You have been invited to a Child Protection Conference because you or your agency are involved with the child or their family in a professional role, this could be as a child's school, health visitor, or a parents / carers drugs support worker, probation officer etc.

This section offers helpful tips on what to do before, during and after conference to ensure that we can prepare parents and children for conference, support them to attend and ensure that we consider the support that can be available. We all have a role to play in helping families at these difficult times in their lives.

Before the conference

1. **You will receive an invite for the Initial Child Protection Conference** – this will include the child's and families' details, the date, time and venue for the conference, a blank report to complete and the agenda for the Conference.

2. **Please read through the agenda**, this is in the invite email that you have been sent. Think about your role and involvement now and in the future for the child and family.

3. **Talk to the child/family before completing the report**, let them know you have been invited, ask them about what they would find helpful (what your offer could be), talk to them about any worries that you have and talk about what has been going well – parents and children have told us that not knowing what is going to be said about them makes them worry about coming – being open beforehand can really help.

4. **Please complete the report for conference**, and send this back to the children's social worker and to safeguardingchildrenadmin@bristol.gov.uk **3 days before the conference date.**

5. **If you're unable to attend**, please let the child's Social Worker know and speak to your manager to see if someone else can attend in your place. It is good to let the family know if your not able to attend, please ensure you complete the report and send this back.

6. **If you know the child, parents/ carer** and you feel that you can assist them to attend this could help them feel less anxious. Please share this with the child's social worker or the Child Protection Chair beforehand.

At the conference

7 Conferences generally start at 10am or 2pm (if different this will be stated on the invite), check the venue and time. Unless you have been advised differently, all conferences are in person with the family.

8 Be on time it is important that you arrive at least 15 minutes before the conference start time and stay for the duration of the conference. Giving a strong message to the family of commitment, and care and is essential to help develop good working relationships, trust and respect. This allows us all to spend time to have meaningful conversations and develop safety plans and next steps with families in conference.

9 Come to conference with a clear offer that you and your agency can provide, and to be able to talk about how the worries/strengths for the child and their parents/carers. We need to be able to talk about the impact the worries have upon the child and how we can support the family create safety for the child.

10 Make a note of the dates, times and venues for core group meetings and future conferences. It is important to write down the next steps that you and or your agency have agreed to offer the child(ren), parents and carers.

After the conference

11 You will be sent via email a copy of the post conference letter (written to the parents / carers) this will include the conference decisions, the agreed next steps and an overview of the conversations in conference. Please ensure that this is stored confidentially in your agency's records.

12 Attend core group meetings and future conferences – ensure that the offer to the family – services, support and assessments are provided, and progress shared with family and the child's social worker.

13 You will receive an invite to the review conference at least 2 weeks before the planned date, please check the invite and complete the agency report and forward to safeguardingchildrenadmin@bristol.gov.uk

If you would like to find out more before you attend please speak to the child's social worker. If you have not attended a conference before and would like support please talk to your manager or Child Protection Lead within your agency.

Documents available in other formats:

You can request alternative formats of this document by contacting: **0117 903 4196**



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