

Child Protection Conference Procedures

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Document Summary

These procedures provide information and guidance about child protection conferences – why and when they should be held, who should be involved, what decisions they can make and what actions should follow.

They are informed by legislation and government guidance and should be read in conjunction with “Strategy Discussions and s47 Enquiries” procedures, “Pre-Birth Assessments” procedures and Guidance for Core Groups, as well as other Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board’s guidance and procedures and *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [DfE 2018] or any subsequent guidance.

We will on request produce this policy, or particular parts of it, into other languages and formats, in order that everyone can use and comment upon its content.

Version	Reason for revision & summary of changes made	Date
3.0	Original	November 2012
3.1	Addition to para 3.1, to include Children Centre manager	March 2013
3.2	Amendments to paras 1.1; 8.1.1; 8.2.3, & 8.5.2, following publication of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> DfE 2013. Addition of para 8.3.4 - minimum frequency for monitoring visits	May 2013
3.3	Amendments to paras 2.2.6-2.2.8, relating to pre-birth conferences. Addition of paras 2.4.8.- 2.4.11, relating to the timing of review conferences for unborn babies	January 2014
3.4	Updated links to pre-birth flowchart	January 2014
3.5	Amendments to section 8.7, reflecting arrangements for children who are the subject of PLO, care orders and/or are Looked After. Addition of para.8.6.4 relating to children with links to other countries. Additional amendments reflecting Signs of Safety principles and <i>Working Together 2015</i>	May 2015
3.6	Amendments to timescales for ICPC report sharing, change of terminology to reflect CIC & Early Help	June 2018
3.7	Addition to 6.1.4 and 6.2.1 to strengthen need to include referral information in reports	January 2019

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1 WHAT IS A CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE?

- 1.1 A child protection conference is a meeting for family members and professionals, which is held when there are concerns that a child is suffering (or is likely to suffer) significant harm, to decide whether or not the child requires a protection plan to be made (or continue).

Safeguarding children is a shared responsibility.

- 1.2 “Everyone who works with children - including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers - has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single professional can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.” [["Working Together to Safeguard Children"](#) DfE, 2018, paragraphs 15-16]
- 1.3 All statutory and voluntary sector agencies must ensure that staff involved in child protection work are committed to and achieve:
- Sharing of relevant information
 - Careful preparation for conferences, including written reports being provided in good time
 - Attending conferences and contributing to decision-making
 - Developing effective plans for vulnerable children
 - Taking agreed actions to safeguard vulnerable children and improve outcomes for them

2 TYPES OF CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

2.1 INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE (including pre-birth and transfer-in conferences)

- 2.1.1 An initial child protection conference (ICPC) can only be convened after a strategy discussion/meeting and assessments have concluded that the threshold has been met (please refer to Strategy Discussions and s47 Enquiries)

Purpose of an initial conference

- 2.1.2 An initial child protection conference brings together parents/care-givers, the child (when appropriate), their supporters/advocates and those professionals most involved with the child

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and their family, to:

- Share and evaluate information about the child's health, development and wellbeing; their parents'/carers' abilities to meet these needs and keep them safe; and any other factors which may affect the child's welfare
- Carefully consider all identified risk indicators and establish to what extent, if at all, they affect the child's development, safety or wellbeing
- Carefully consider all identified protective factors and 'signs of safety' and establish to what extent they can protect the child from future harm.
- Make a decision, based on the available information, about whether the child has suffered significant harm and/or is likely to suffer ongoing significant harm in the future and therefore whether the child needs a multi-agency child protection plan
- Agree the safety goals for the child - what future action is needed to safeguard them and promote their welfare, how that action will be taken forward, what the planned outcomes are for the child and within what timescales
- Make a decision (reached by the chair) about the category of the child protection plan, if one is made
- Agree what other action is needed, if any, to promote the child's welfare if the threshold for a child protection plan is not met (including agreeing a Child in Need (CiN) plan with clear safety goals for the child).

2.1.3 Whilst a child cannot be the subject of a child protection conference without a prior strategy meeting and child protection enquiries having concluded that this is needed, the conference must consider the needs, wellbeing and safety of *all* children in the household, even if concerns are only being expressed about one child.

2.1.4 A conference may recommend that such enquiries and/or fuller assessments are needed for other children in the household and, if appropriate, may recommend interim arrangements to safeguard any child who requires it.

Threshold for holding an initial conference

2.1.5 Children's Social Care must hold an initial child protection conference when it is believed that a child may be suffering (or be likely to suffer) significant harm.

2.1.6 This decision must be the outcome of a recorded child protection enquiry which concludes that the concerns are substantiated and the child is judged likely to suffer significant harm in the future.

2.1.7 The Children's Social Care practice manager is responsible for requesting an initial child

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protection conference and the reasons must be clearly recorded. The threshold for ICPCs will be monitored by Service Managers and the County Safeguarding Manager.

- 2.1.8 Additionally, the designated professional (or agency equivalent) from another agency may request an initial child protection conference is held. If Children's Social Care decides the threshold has not been met, the designated professional (or agency equivalent) may choose to refer to the procedures for the [Resolution of Professional Disagreement](#).

Timing of an initial child protection conference

- 2.1.9 An initial child protection conference must take place within 15 working days of the strategy meeting/discussion at which the decision to make child protection enquiries was agreed.
- 2.1.10 When an emergency protection order (EPO) has been obtained, the initial child protection conference should be held before it expires, if possible.
- 2.1.11 When the child is Looked After and it is planned that s/he will remain so, an initial child protection conference will not be required.
- 2.1.12 If legal planning is needed for a child, this should not be delayed for an initial child protection conference.

2.2 PRE-BIRTH CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

See also:

- [Advice / Checklist for Planning Pre-Birth Assessments](#)
- [Pre-Birth Flowchart](#)

Purpose of a pre-birth conference

- 2.2.1 A pre-birth child protection conference is an initial conference concerning an unborn child. It has the same purpose and status as an initial child protection conference and should be conducted in the same way.
- 2.2.2 All agencies involved with pregnant women should consider the need for an early referral to Children's Social Care (preferably at the 12th week but before the 20th week of the pregnancy), so that assessments can be made and support services provided as early as possible in the pregnancy.

Threshold for a pre-birth conference

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2.2.3 Pre-birth conferences should always be held when there is a need to consider if a multi-agency child protection plan is required for an unborn baby. This decision will usually follow from a strategy meeting/discussion and pre-birth assessment.

2.2.4 A pre-birth conference should be held when:

- A pre-birth assessment concludes that an unborn baby may be likely to suffer significant harm before and/or after birth
- Another child has ever been removed from either of the unborn baby's parent/carer, as a result of significant harm
- The baby will be born into a family or household in which another child is already the subject of a child protection plan
- A person who is identified as posing a risk to children lives in the household or is known to be a regular visitor

2.2.5 Other risk indicators to be considered are:

- Denial of pregnancy, avoidance of antenatal care (eg. repeated failed appointments) or non-compliance with medical treatment, with potentially detrimental effects for the unborn baby
- The impact of any factors affecting parenting, for example significant mental health difficulties, significant learning disabilities, alcohol or substance misuse or domestic abuse
- A parent under 16 about whom there are concerns regarding his/her ability to self-care and/or to care for the child

Timing of an initial pre-birth conference

2.2.6 Whilst the timing of all decisions must reflect assessed levels of risk and need, it is recognised that early planning and intervention leads to better outcomes for children.

2.2.7 Therefore, when pre-birth assessments and strategy discussion/s confirm that an unborn baby is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, an initial child protection conference should be convened at the earliest opportunity (usually from about 24 weeks gestation, although a conference may be convened as early as 20 weeks gestation if assessments confirm the need to implement the public law outline). This allows for sufficient time for assessments to be completed and for parents to demonstrate their capacity for change before the baby's birth, within a safe, multi-agency framework (see [Pre-Birth Flowchart](#)).

2.3 TRANSFER-IN CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

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- 2.3.1 When Children's Social Care is notified that a child who is the subject of a child protection plan in another authority is now living permanently in Suffolk, a transfer-in conference should be held.
- 2.3.2 The transfer-in conference must be held within 15 working days of the originating authority making written notification, providing a current, detailed assessment of the child and requesting a transfer of case responsibility. The request for a transfer in conference will be accepted only when it is confirmed that the child is living *permanently* in Suffolk. Temporary residence will not trigger a transfer-in child protection conference.
- 2.3.3 Responsibility for the case remains with the originating authority until the transfer-in conference has been held. However, local staff should co-operate with the lead social worker from the originating authority to help implement the child protection plan. The child should be recorded as having a temporary child protection plan on their social care record.
- 2.3.4 The lead social worker from the originating authority must be invited to the transfer-in conference and be asked to submit a report, a full chronology and any multi-agency assessments that have been made. (If these documents are not provided, the conference will be postponed until they are made available). *The [Cross Boundary Protocol](#) provides fuller information about local arrangements for safeguarding children who move across county borders.*
- 2.3.5 A transfer-in conference is an initial conference, but it can only agree to end a child protection plan if a full assessment has been made of the child and parents/care-givers in their new situation, which concludes that the child is no longer suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- 2.3.6 If the transfer-in conference concludes that a child protection plan is still required, the first review conference must be held within three months and the timescales at 2.4.5 apply.

2.4 REVIEW CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

Purpose of a review conference

- 2.4.1 Review conferences are held within fixed intervals in order to:
- Share and analyse information about the child's current health, development and safety and any changes in their parents'/carers' ability to meet their needs and ensure their future safety and wellbeing
 - Review the safety, health and developmental progress of the child, against the safety goals

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for them in their protection plan

- Make decisions about whether the child is still suffering or still likely to suffer significant harm in the future and whether the threshold for a child protection plan is still met
- If so, make sure the safety goals and timescales in the child protection plan still meet the child's need
- Make sure the measures put in place to protect the child, if needed, are still effective and proportionate and reflect current risk factors and levels of risk
- Decide whether any new actions or measures are needed to safeguard the child and promote their welfare
- Decide whether further/updated assessments are needed about the child or their parents/carers
- If the threshold for continuing the child protection plan is *not* met, decide what ongoing support the child and family requires through a Child in Need plan or (in exceptional circumstances - see 8.5.4) an Early Help plan and agree the details of this plan.

2.4.2 The conference must decide explicitly if the child is still suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and whether a protection plan is still required. If so, the category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered must be re-considered by the chair.

2.4.3 If the child is judged to no longer require a child protection plan, the social worker in consultation with their practice manager will propose a child in need plan which provides ongoing support to the child and their family and which will be endorsed, updated or amended by the review conference as necessary. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to 'step down' from a child protection plan to an Early Help Plan. The Practice Managers from the Social Care team and the Early Help team must both agree this request prior to the conference; the Practice Manager from the Early Help team or their representative must attend the review conference.

2.4.4 The review conference must consider the welfare and safety of all children in the household, even if concerns are only being expressed about one/some of the children.

Timing of a review conference

2.4.5 The first review conference must be held within three months of the initial conference. Subsequent reviews must be held at intervals of not more than six months, for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan.

2.4.6 When there is a sibling who is already the subject of a child protection plan, arrangements

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should be made for their review conferences to be brought together, if this is in the interests of the children and as long as the above timescales are not exceeded.

2.4.7 At the discretion of the chair, consideration should always be given to bringing the date of a review conference forward when:

- There is a significant change in the child's or family's circumstances, not anticipated at the previous conference and with significant implications for the child's safety or wellbeing
OR
- The core group believes it may be safe for the child to end their child protection plan

Timing of review conferences for unborn babies

2.4.8 A 1st review conference must be held within 3 months of the initial pre-birth conference (see also 2.4.11).

2.4.9 In some cases, this will occur before the baby has been born and therefore the timing should be sensitive to the estimated date of delivery and to the mother's likely ability to participate in the meeting. However, the interval between the initial and 1st review conferences cannot exceed 3 months, even if this means the mother is unable to attend, for example in the event of an unexpectedly early / late labour.

2.4.10 At any pre-birth conference (initial or review), the conference chair must ensure that, if a child protection plan is required, it includes explicit arrangements for protecting the baby following his/her birth. This should include (but is not confined to) ensuring appropriate professional membership of the core group and ensuring there are clear arrangements for a hospital pre-discharge meeting. A pre-discharge meeting must be held before the baby is discharged home from hospital, must agree the multi-agency arrangement for monitoring the baby at home and must set a date for a Core Group meeting (within 10 days after the baby's discharge).

2.4.11 Regardless of the timing of any previous conference/s, **a review child protection conference must be held within 4 weeks of a baby's birth**, to evaluate progress on the child protection plan and, if the cp plan continues, to amend it as required in order to meet the baby's ongoing need for protection and support.

3 WHO ATTENDS CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES?

3.1 A conference should consist of the smallest number of people to enable safe, informed decisions and effective plans to be made for the child. This will usually always include the following people:

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- The child (if of sufficient age and understanding – see chapter 4). This will ultimately be the chair's decision
- The child's parents/carers and anyone else who holds parental responsibility for the child (whether they live in the child's household or not (see chapter 5)
- The child's advocate or other person to support/represent the child, if they wish (see 4.7)
- A friend, relative, advocate or legal advisor to support the parents/carers, if they wish.
- The child's safety network – anyone in their family or community who has agreed and is able to help keep them safe, if needed. (This may be the people who attended a Family Network Meeting, if one has already been held.)
- The child's social worker.
- GP
- School nurse, health visitor or midwife
- School, pre-school or nursery staff
- Health & Children's Centre manager (for conferences concerning children under 5)
- Police officer from the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU)

3.2 Additional invitations should be limited to those who have a relevant and significant contribution to make to the conference. It is the social worker's responsibility to ensure that all relevant family members and professionals are invited to attend. This may include (but is not limited to):

- Wider family member/s (if agreed by those with parental responsibility for the child) to be agreed by the Chair person following discussion with the Practice Manager.
- Other professionals involved directly with the child, such as their youth worker, children's centre manager, youth offending team worker, child and adolescent mental health service representative, children with disabilities social worker, specialist doctor or nurse, paediatrician, speech therapist, physiotherapist, NSPCC worker, etc.
- Other professionals involved directly with the parents/carers, such as adult services social worker, psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse, probation officer, public protection officer, alcohol or drugs project link-worker, Women's Aid link-worker.
- Other professionals involved with the family, such as housing officer, community police officer, Catch 22 link-worker, NSPCC or another voluntary sector organisation link-worker
- Other professionals with particular expertise in child protection, such as the named nurse for safeguarding
- A representative of the Armed Services if appropriate
- A representative from the local authority's legal services, if it is anticipated that legal advice is required

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3.3 LEGAL ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES

- 3.3.1 The Law Society provides professional guidance on attendance by lawyers at child protection conferences.
- 3.3.2 The local authority solicitor is both a legal advisor to the chair and to the local authority, although will not normally provide this advice during the conference. S/he may not question parents directly and in exceptional circumstances may have to withdraw if there are any indications that admissions are to be made by parents.
- 3.3.3 A parent's/carer's legal representative or recognised advocate will often be able to make a valuable contribution to the conference by helping a parent cope with the experience. Their role will however normally be limited to providing support and legal advice to their client.

3.4 ATTENDANCE BY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

- 3.4.1 Invited professionals must make it a priority to attend conferences and to provide relevant information held by their agency about the child/ren and/or adults in the household.
- 3.4.2 If an agency representative is unable to attend for unavoidable reasons, they should:
- Notify the conference administrator at least 1 working day before the conference
 - Submit a signed & dated written report, using the Multi Agency Form pro-forma (please [click here](#)) at least 2 working days before the conference (please also see 5.2.7 and 6.2).
 - Arrange for another representative of the agency to attend on their behalf

3.5 QUORACY AT CONFERENCES

- 3.5.1 There should be sufficient agencies present at a child protection conference for safe, informed decisions to be made.
- 3.5.2 The usual minimum representation is from Children's Social Care and at least two other agencies which have had direct contact with the child or their immediate family.
- 3.5.3 In exceptional circumstances, the chair may decide to proceed with an inquorate conference, for example when:
- The child has not had relevant contact with three agencies – e.g. at a pre-birth conference
 - Sufficient information is available to inform decision-making about each subject child
 - A delay would be detrimental to the child.

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- Reports have not been received by involved agencies.

3.5.4 If the chair decides that a conference cannot proceed because it is inquorate and/or lacks essential information to make an informed and safe decision, a plan must still be made/updated by those present, based on available information and the conference must be re-convened within 1 month.

4 INVOLVING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1 HEARING THE CHILD'S VOICE

4.1.1 It is essential that the conference knows the views, wishes and feelings of the child/ren being discussed. Whenever possible, children should be helped to contribute to a conference about them. How and to what extent will depend upon their age, level of understanding, emotional resilience and personal circumstances.

4.1.2 In ways that are appropriate to the child's age, understanding and emotional resilience, the social worker must provide the child with:

- Information about conferences, child protection plans, child in need plans and [core groups](#)
- Practical support to help them contribute to the conference, either directly or indirectly. This must take into account their preferred language or means of communication, culture, religion, community and family background

4.1.3 The social worker must carefully assess in advance whether or not it is appropriate for a child to attend some or all of a conference. This must be discussed in advance with the conference chair.

4.1.4 It is essential that the child's views, wishes and feelings are clearly shared at the conference, whether or not they attend.

4.2 CRITERIA FOR CHILD ATTENDING A CONFERENCE

4.2.1 Conference can be emotionally stressful meetings and therefore care must be taken when deciding whether or not it is in the child's best interest to attend some or all of their conference. The main questions to be considered are:

- Does the child have sufficient understanding of the process and purpose of the conference?
- Has s/he asked or indicated a wish to attend?

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- What are the views of and impact on parents/carers of the child attending? (But see 4.6.7)
- Would the child benefit from attending?
- How might the child might be affected by attending (e.g. if it would be impossible to ensure she/he is kept apart from a parent who may be hostile and/or make the child feel responsible for the conference being held)?

4.2.2 Whether a child has 'sufficient understanding', depends partly on their age and partly on their cognitive and language development.

4.2.3 Generally, it is unlikely that a child younger than 12 years old would be able to participate directly / fully in a conference. However, the social worker must consider each child individually, taking into account her/his maturity, intellectual and cognitive ability and his/her emotional development and resilience.

4.2.4 In order to know the child's views about attending, he/she must first be given clear information about the purpose and processes of the conference.

4.2.5 Children who can read must also be given written information about child protection conferences, translated into their preferred language or medium if necessary. Children who are unable to read must be given this information in another format, e.g. verbally or recorded. (Please [click here](#))

4.2.6 If a child states that she/he does *not* wish to attend a conference about them (having been given appropriate information and support to help them decide), this wish must be respected, but other means must be found to ensure their views are fully represented (see 4.7)

4.3 DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF A CHILD IN A CONFERENCE

4.3.1 If a child states that she/he wishes to attend a conference about them and the above criteria are met, their social worker should liaise with the chair at least 3 working days before the conference, to decide:

- Whether the child should attend all or part of the conference, taking into account their individual capacities and resilience and their parents' and/or siblings' right to confidentiality
- Whether the child should be present with one or more of her/his parents/carers
- Whether the chair meets the child before the conference alone or with a parent / carer

4.3.2 The child must be offered an independent advocate or other supporter to attend the conference

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with them, if they want.

- 4.3.3 If the child attends all or part of the conference, it is essential that their social worker or independent advocate helps them to prepare, for example by rehearsing any particular points they wish to make, helping them to prepare a report / recording.
- 4.3.4 If the child's 1st language is not English, she/he must be offered and provided with an independent interpreter/signer if wanted.
- 4.3.5 If the child has any form of disability, she/he must be given appropriate support and assistance to participate in the conference.
- 4.3.6 If a child or young person wishes to attend some of their conference without a parent / carer present, this should be discussed in advance with the conference chair and arrangements made to allow for this.
- 4.3.7 If, in planning a conference, the chair judges that there may be a conflict of interests between the child and their parents/carers, the conference must be planned so that the welfare of the child remains paramount.

4.4 INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS, WHEN A CHILD IS NOT ATTENDING

- 4.4.1 When a child chooses not to attend a conference about them, or when it is felt inappropriate for them to do so, their social worker must find other ways to ensure the child's own views and wishes are shared, for example, through:
- A meeting with the conference chair before the conference
 - An advocate or supporter attending on their behalf
 - A written statement, email, text message, recording and/or drawings, prepared alone or with the social worker or other independent support
 - The social worker, or any other professional, expressing their views
- 4.4.2 When a child is too young to attend a conference and/or unable to express themselves verbally, the social worker must use other means of gaining their wishes, feelings and views to share with the conference, e.g. through observations, drawings, play, etc.

5 INVOLVING PARENTS / CARERS & KINSHIP MEMBERS

5.1 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IS CENTRAL TO EFFECTIVE CONFERENCES

- 5.1.1 Legitimate family participation in child protection conferences improves the likelihood of good outcomes for vulnerable children¹.
- 5.1.2 Parents and carers (including anyone who holds parental responsibility for the child, whether they live in their household or not) must be told about the conference and invited to attend and participate, unless there are clear and specific reasons why they should not (see 5.5).
- 5.1.3 The conference should also include and involve the child's safety network – anyone else in their family, friendship network or community who has agreed *and is able* to help keep them safe, if needed. (This may be the people who were invited to attend a Family Network Meeting, if one has already been held.) Kinship attendance is to be agreed by the conference chair, following discussion with the Practice Manager.

5.2 PROVIDING INFORMATION & SUPPORT

- 5.2.1 Parents/carers and kinship members must be helped to participate in the conference and must be offered practical support and the necessary information to do so. This must reflect their preferred language, religion, culture and any learning difficulties or other particular needs.
- 5.2.2 At least 5 working days before an initial conference, the child's social worker must explain to parents/carers why the conference is being held, who else has been invited and what the conference process is. They must explain what decisions can be made and the purpose and meaning of child protection plans, child in need plans and [core groups](#).
- 5.2.3 Parents/carers should also be provided with [written information about conferences](#), (which includes information about the conference complaints procedure) and the right to bring *someone to support them, as well as details of local advocacy support*.
- 5.2.4 Parents/carers should be reminded that the role of their supporter or advocate is to help them put her/his point of view across and to provide emotional support, not to take an adversarial position or cross-examine other participants.

¹ Thoburn, J., Lewis, A. and Shemmings, D. (1995), Family participation in child protection. Child Abuse Rev., 4: 161–171.

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- 5.2.5 The child's social worker should help parents/carers to find suitable child care, if needed so they can attend the conference.
- 5.2.6 The child's social worker must share their social work report with parents/carers at least two working days before an initial conference and also two working days before a review conference. If needed, the report should be translated into the parent's/carer's preferred language (or other medium). The social worker must offer the parents/carers an opportunity to go through their report with them if they wish, to help them understand it, correct any factual errors and to ensure their views and wishes are included.
- 5.2.7 There is an expectation that professionals from other agencies who have been invited to the conference should provide parents/carers with a copy of any written reports, at least two working days before an initial conference and also two working days before a review conference. They should offer parents/carers the opportunity to meet and discuss their report/s (see 6.2).
- 5.2.8 The social worker and other professionals should always check whether parents/carers have any literacy difficulties that makes reading reports harder and should offer support if needed.
- 5.2.9 Immediately before the conference, the chair should meet with parents/carers to make sure they understand why the conference has been held and what decisions it can make. This may require separate meetings with different family members, for example when there has been domestic abuse or significant family conflict.
- 5.2.10 When necessary, a parent/carer should be able to speak in the conference without their partner and/or other family members present, for example when there has been domestic abuse (see 5.4 and 5.5).

5.3 INTERPRETERS AND SIGNERS

- 5.3.1 Parents/carers whose 1st language is not English must be offered an interpreter who is fluent in their preferred language, if they want this.
- 5.3.2 Parents/carers who are visually or hearing impaired or are otherwise disabled must be provided with appropriate support so they can participate fully in the conference.

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5.3.3 A family member should not be expected to act as an interpreter or signer.

5.3.4 The social worker must notify the chair at least two working days before the conference if an interpreter or signer has been invited and must provide the interpreter/signer with a copy of the social work report at least 1 working day before the conference.

5.4 ARRANGEMENTS FOR NON-ATTENDING PARENTS/CARERS

5.4.1 If a parent/carer is unable (or does not wish) to attend the conference they must be given the opportunity to share their views in other ways. The social worker must offer to help them with this, for example by:

- Helping parents/carers to write or record their views
- Providing parents/carers with the phone number or email address of the conference chair
- Encouraging parents/carers to make use of an [advocate](#) or supporter to attend on their behalf
- Agreeing that the social worker, or any other professional, gives the parent's views on their behalf

5.5 EXCLUSION OF A PARENT, CARER OR FAMILY MEMBER FROM A CONFERENCE

5.5.1 Every effort must be made to fully involve and include parents, family and friends in child protection conferences. Exceptionally, however, it may be necessary to exclude one or more family member from part or all of a conference.

5.5.2 These situations will be rare, but may be necessary under some circumstances, for example when:

- There is evidence or indication that the presence of a family member may seriously prejudice the welfare of the child
- There is sufficient evidence that a family member may behave in such a way as to interfere seriously with the smooth running of the conference, for example by violence, threat of violence, racist or other discriminatory or oppressive language/behaviour, being in an unfit state from drugs, alcohol or severe mental ill-health. (However, an advocate may represent their expressed views at the conference in their absence)
- A child requests that a parent / carer or family member not present whilst s/he is present
- There is a need (agreed in advance with the conference chair) for the conference to receive confidential information that cannot be shared with a family member, such as legal advice or information about a criminal investigation

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- There is a potential conflict between different family members e.g. in situations of domestic abuse (in which cases the chair should try to ensure that different family members can attend the conference at different times)

- 5.5.3 When a representative from any agency believes a family member should be excluded, they must notify the chair at least 3 working days in advance.
- 5.5.4 The agency concerned must provide clear evidence and/or information about why a family member should be excluded from the conference. The chair must consider this carefully and may need legal advice.
- 5.5.5 Any exclusion from the conference should be for the shortest possible time and must be clearly recorded in the conference record.
- 5.5.6 It may also become clear during the course of the conference that the meeting cannot proceed effectively whilst one or more family member is present. In these circumstances, the chair may ask them to leave.
- 5.5.7 When a parent/carer is on bail or subject to an active Police investigation, it is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that the Police can fully present their information and views and also that the parent/carer can participate as fully as circumstances allow. This may require the chair and Police to have a confidential meeting before the conference.
- 5.5.8 The chair will make the final decision about matters of attendance or exclusion.
- 5.5.9 If the chair decides before the conference that a parent/carer must be excluded from the whole meeting, the chair must write to or telephone them, explaining how they can share their views in other ways, how they will be told of the decisions of the conference and about the conference complaints procedure.
- 5.5.10 If the chair decides that a family member must be excluded for some or all of a conference, this must be clearly recorded in the conference record. Exclusion at one conference is not reason enough in itself for exclusion at further conferences.
- 5.5.11 Parents/carers who must be excluded should be provided with a copy of the social worker's report to the conference (excluding any information which the chair considers may place the child/ren at risk). They should be provided with the opportunity to have their views recorded and presented to the conference.

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5.5.12 When a parent/carer attends only part of a conference as a result of exclusion, s/he will receive the conference record, but the chair will decide if the entire record is provided, or only that part which they attended.

6 PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR CONFERENCES

6.1 SOCIAL WORK REPORTS

6.1.1 The child's social worker must provide a dated written report for the conference. The report may be in the form of the Social Work Assessment completed as part of the s.47 enquiry or any other agreed report form. It should include information about *all* the children in the household (and their relationships with each other), even if they are not the subjects of a conference (see 2.1.3).

6.1.2 The report must clearly distinguish between factual information, observation, allegation and professional opinion. When information is provided from another source (i.e. it is second or third hand), this should be made clear. The social worker must also ensure that all factual information about the child and their family (such as spellings of names, dates of birth, addresses etc.) is correct and accurate.

6.1.3 The social work report is a formal document but should be written in a style, format and language which can be understood by parents/carers and (when appropriate) by the child. If required, the report should be translated into the parent's/carer's or child's preferred language, medium or format. Family members should not be expected to act as translators.

For initial conferences

6.1.4 The social work report must include following information:

- **Referral** - the date, source and a summary of the referring concerns which led to a strategy meeting being held
- **S.47 enquiries** - the date of the first (and any subsequent) strategy discussion/meeting and a summary of the child protection enquiries made, including information provided by other agencies and professionals, dates when the child was seen (and whether seen alone) and a chronology of other significant events during the s.47 enquiries (eg. medical examination, ABE interview, etc.)
- **Chronology** of relevant, key information from social care records about the child or their

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family. This must include any previous s.47 enquiries, child protection plans, episodes of being looked after and/or care proceedings (for this child or any other children in the family). It should also include any services previously offered and the outcomes of these

- **The summary of current assessments** - information gathered to date about the child's current wellbeing, developmental progress and needs; the capacity of the child's parents/carers and wider family to meet these needs and protect him/her from harm; and any other family or environmental factors. This summary should be explicit about the factors or circumstances posing risk to the child, factors which could help to increase the child's safety or wellbeing and the capacity or potential for change
- **Child's views & wishes** about the concerns being raised for their wellbeing and safety
- **Parents'/carers' views** regarding the concerns about abuse or neglect of the child
- **Analysis** of the information gathered, which draws together and evaluates information, leading to a 'Danger Statement', 'Safety Goals' and a clear recommendation about whether the child is suffering and/or is likely to suffer significant harm. This should include reference to research and social work theory when appropriate
- **Recommendations** about whether or not the criteria are met for a child protection plan
- **Proposed plan** – what might be included in a CP plan, including clear safety goals for the child. The protection plan proposed by the social worker should be as detailed as possible and should include details of the current safety planning for the child. Where practicably possible, the plan should have been determined within a Family Network Meeting before the conference.

For review conferences

6.1.5 The social work report should include the following information:

- **Dates when the child has been seen** (and whether seen alone and spoken with, if appropriate)
- **Dates of core group meetings** held and any issues arising from these
- **Significant events or changes** - a summary of any major events for the child or family (eg. change of address/school/family composition) and what difference this has made to the child's development, care or safety, if any
- **CP plan** - a summary of the progress made on each component of the child's protection plan and towards the safety goals for the child. Any additions/changes made to the plan by the core group since the last conference must be clearly highlighted
- **The summary of updated assessments** – clearly highlighting the extent to which signs of safety are increasing and any changes in the child's wellbeing/developmental needs, the capacities of their parents/carers to meet these needs and the family's environmental and social context

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- **Child's views & wishes** about their current circumstances, wellbeing and safety
- **Parents'/carers' views** about the child's current circumstances, wellbeing and safety
- **Analysis** - of current information, leading to a clear danger statement and recommendations, based on professional judgement about whether the child is still suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- **Recommendations** - for any changes to the child's protection plan (if still needed), or for what might be included in a CiN plan, including safety goals for the child.

Sharing social work reports

- 6.1.6 The social worker should ensure their report is shared with parents/carers (and with older children, when assessed as appropriate) at least two working days before an initial conference and also two working days before a review conference. This is to give the family and child time to consider and comment on the report and to ensure any factual errors can be corrected before the conference. Social workers should always offer an opportunity to explain and discuss their report in person at least one working day before the conference.
- 6.1.7 The social work report should be available to the conference Chair at least two working days before an initial conference and also two working days before a review conference.
- 6.1.8 The social work report will be attached to (or included in) the record of the conference, for circulation to all those invited to it.

6.2 INFORMATION FROM OTHER AGENCIES

- 6.2.1 It is the responsibility of all agencies, including the initial referring agency that holds relevant information about the child and/or their family to make this available to the conference, in the form of a printed or legibly written report using the Multi Agency Form pro-forma (please [click here](#)).
- 6.2.2 Reports must be legibly signed and dated and must be received by the safeguarding co-ordinator at least two working days before the conference. Reports must be sent by the most secure manner available, preferably via secure email.
- 6.2.3 Reports must be clear about what risk factors, if any, are judged to be affecting or likely to affect the child and what the evidence is for this.
- 6.2.4 Reports must distinguish between factual information, observation, allegation and professional

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opinion. When information is provided from another source – i.e. when it is second or third hand – this should be made clear.

6.2.5 For agencies working directly with the family, reports must be shared with them also two working days *before* the conference and should be translated into the appropriate language or medium when necessary.

6.2.6 When an agency representative is unable to attend a conference, they must ensure their written report is made available at least two working days before, through the safeguarding co-ordinator and that a colleague who is appropriately informed and authorised attends in their place.

7 CHAIRING CONFERENCES

7.1 The chair of a child protection conference should be a professional with sufficient expertise and status to ensure inter-agency commitment to the conference and child protection plan.

The conference chair:

- Should be independent of operational or line management responsibilities for the case
- Is accountable to the Director of Children's Services
- Should ensure child protection procedures are followed

7.2 Whenever possible, the chair of the initial conference should also chair any subsequent review conferences.

7.3 The chair must be available to meet with the child, parents/carers and kinship members (together or separately and with their interpreters/supporters if required) before the conference starts, to answer any questions they may have and to ensure they understand the reasons for and purpose of the conference and how it will be conducted.

7.4 At the start of the conference the chair will:

- Set out the purpose of the conference and make introductions
- Confirm the agenda
- Emphasise the need for confidentiality and the limits of this
- Explain how any complaints about the conference process or decisions should be made
- Clarify the contributions of those present, including supporters of the family
- Confirm the accuracy of basic information about the child/ren and their family (correct

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spellings of names, dates of birth, addresses, etc.)

7.5 During the conference the chair will ensure that:

- The conference remains focussed on the welfare of the child/ren
- All the children in the household are considered (see 2.1.3 and 2.1.4)
- The opinions, wishes and feelings of the child/ren are made clear
- Parents/carers and kinship members are encouraged and supported to participate fully in the meeting
- The information from and views of all those attending, including the child/ren, parents/carers, other kinship members and professionals, are heard and considered carefully
- Information or reports from anyone unable to attend are shared during the conference
- Issues of race, religion, language, class, gender, sexuality and disability are fully taken into account and addressed by the conference
- Any discriminatory, abusive and/or threatening language or behaviour is not tolerated
- Appropriate arrangements are made to receive any confidential information
- Every one attending the conference scales the current level of risk and safety for the child, to help clarify the perceived levels of safety and identify what would help to increase these.
- All professionals at the conference give their view about whether child protection plans are needed for each of the children who are subjects of the conference (i.e. not just those about whom they have direct knowledge)
- The conference reaches a decision in an informed and systematic way about whether a child protection plan is required for each child who is a subject of the conference (see Chapter 8). Different decisions may be reached for different children in the household.
- Arrangements are made with the social worker for absent parents or carers (and child/ren, when appropriate) to be informed of the decisions of the conference and any plans made

7.6 If the child is made/remains the subject of a child protection plan, the chair will ensure that:

- The social worker presents a detailed, proposed child protection plan, which where possible should have been agreed within a prior Family Network Meeting. The proposed plan will provide a detailed account of the current safety planning for the child (for ICPCs) and will be collectively endorsed, updated or amended by the conference. The chair will ensure that the plan is understood by all concerned, especially by the parents/carers and the child, when appropriate.
- A core group is identified, consisting of key family members and professionals, who will together develop and progress the child protection plan (please refer to Core Group Guidance - [click here.](#))

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- A qualified social worker from Children's Social Care is identified as the lead social worker, who will regularly monitor the child's wellbeing, ensure regular core group meetings are held and promote effective co-ordination between family members and involved agencies
- Set a date for the first core group meeting; after an initial conference, this must be within 10 working days; after a review conference this must be within 6 weeks. Subsequent core group meetings must be held at a maximum interval of every 6 weeks, but may be more frequent if the conference agrees this is needed
- Set a date for the next child protection review conference (see 2.4.5 & 2.4.6).

7.7 If a child is *not* made the subject of a child protection plan, or if a child protection plan is ended, the social worker in consultation with their manager and the agencies involved with the child and their family will propose a multi-agency child in need plan (CiN) with clear safety goals for the child and outlining the ongoing support for the child and their family (See 8.4).

7.8 If parents/carers disagree with the decision of the conference, the chair must ensure that this is recorded in the record of the meeting, with their reasons made clear, and that they are aware of the [complaints process](#) (see also 10.3).

7.9 The chair must ensure that the decision of the conference is entered into the child's electronic records at the end of the meeting, through the appropriate forms and data entry systems.

7.10 The chair must also remind all professionals of their responsibility to update their own agencies' records accordingly and to inform any necessary parties within their agency of the conference's decision.

8 DECISIONS AND ACTIONS OF CONFERENCES

8.1 THRESHOLD FOR A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

8.1.1 When determining whether or not a child requires a child protection plan, an initial conference should consider the following questions:

- Has the child suffered significant harm? and
- Is the child likely to suffer significant harm in the future?

8.1.2 The test is that either:

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- The child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely;

OR

- A professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health and development as a result of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect

8.1.3 If the child has suffered significant harm and/or is likely to suffer ongoing significant harm, then s/he will need protection and support from his/her family and relevant supporting agencies, delivered through a multi-agency child protection plan.

8.1.4 The decision-making process will always take place with parents/carers present unless there are exceptional circumstances why this isn't possible (see 5.5) or they chose not to attend. The chair should try to ensure that they understand the reasons for the decision.

8.1.5 The chair of a conference is responsible for the conference decision. S/he will consult conference members, take account of any written or verbal contributions received and aim for agreement about whether the threshold for a child protection plan has been met, but ultimately will make the final decision about whether the threshold has been met or not.

8.1.6 If any professional disagrees with the decision, this must be recorded in the conference record (see Chapter 10). Any views by the child and/or parents/carers about the decision must also be recorded.

8.1.7 **The threshold for a child protection plan must be considered separately for each child in the family or household who is a subject of the conference** (see 2.1.3 & 2.1.4).

8.1.8 If a decision is made that an unborn baby requires a child protection plan, the plan will start from the date of the pre-birth conference.

8.1.9 For new-born infants, the correct date of birth must be entered into all agency records within one working day of being notified of the birth. Once the baby's birth has been registered and his/her full name is known, the lead social worker must notify all involved professionals and all agency records must be updated if necessary.

8.1.10 If a child who has links to a foreign country becomes the subject of a child protection plan, the lead social workers should inform the relevant Embassy, unless to do so would be likely to

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place the child or family in danger, and provided any necessary consent to disclose information has been obtained (please [click here](#) for further guidance). Decisions should be linked to a robust and thorough risk assessment.

8.2 CATEGORY OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- 8.2.1 If the decision of the conference is that a child requires a child protection plan, the chair will decide the category of the plan, to best reflect the type of abuse the child has suffered or is likely to suffer. The category of the plan must indicate the main risks to the child at the time of the conference.
- 8.2.2 A child protection plan may only be made under the category of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. Multiple categories will not be used.
- 8.2.3 *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [DfE 2015] Appendix A provides the following definitions of these four categories of abuse and neglect:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse *“may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.”*

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is *“the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.”*

Sexual abuse

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Sexual abuse *“involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.”*

Neglect

Neglect is *“the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:*

- *provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);*
- *protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;*
- *ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or*
- *ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.”

8.3 THE CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

8.3.1 When an initial conference reaches the decision that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the chair must ensure that the conference draws up a child protection plan.

8.3.2 The child protection plan should have as much detail as possible to ensure everyone is clear about how the child will be safeguarded (although the core group may later develop it and add further details if required).

8.3.3 The child protection plan must:

- Be focussed on the child’s immediate and long-term safety, development and wellbeing
- Be clear the key risk factors (based on current assessments and information). This should include risks from online activity and sexual exploitation, when appropriate.
- Set clear, specific and child-focussed safety goals for the child
- Be clear and specific about what must happen, stop happening or change, to ensure that the child does not suffer significant harm and that the safety goals are achieved

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- Be clear about who is responsible for these changes or actions, what support or services should be offered to help achieve them and what the timescales are
- Be clear about what support and services will be available to the child's parents/carers to help them keep the child safe (for example through the [ACCORD protocol](#))
- Provide a clear back up plan and 'bottom line' – ie what will happen if the child continues to suffer significant harm, and/or if risk factors do not reduce within reasonable timescales. This may include – but should not be limited to – the local authority taking legal action to protect the child
- Give the name of the lead social worker, who must be a qualified social worker with the necessary skills and expertise in child protection work to act as the lead professional.
- Give the names of other core group members and the timescales for core group meetings (see 7.6 and [click here](#) for Core Group Guidance).
- Specify how often the child will be seen (and spoken with if, old enough) by the lead social worker and other professionals. The child must be seen by the lead social worker (or a designated, qualified social worker) *at least* every 15 working days.
- Identify what ongoing/further assessments are needed, if any, so that safe decisions can be made about how best to safeguard the child and promote her/his welfare
- Make recommendations about whether a Family Network Meeting is required/appropriate, unless one has already been held, and if so, the timescales for this.

8.4 WHEN A CHILD IS **NOT** MADE THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.4.1 If an initial conference decides that a child is *not* suffering significant harm and/or not likely to suffer significant harm then a child protection plan will not be made.
- 8.4.2 However, assessments and information may nevertheless indicate that the child is vulnerable and in need of support or services to promote his/her health, development or wellbeing.
- 8.4.3 In these circumstances, the social worker in consultation with their manager should propose a multi-agency child in need (CiN) plan for the child, which will be endorsed, updated or amended by the conference. The chair should ensure that the conference sets a date for the first/next CIN planning meeting (which should be held within a timescale that reflects complexity and need, but no later than 6 weeks after the initial conference) and should recommend timescales for subsequent review meetings.

8.5 ENDING A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.5.1 If a review conference decides that a child is no longer suffering significant harm and/or is not

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likely to suffer significant harm then the conference must end the child protection plan (see section 2.4.3). The same decision-making process and criteria are used to end a child protection plan as to begin one (see section 8.1).

8.5.2 As described in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* [DfE 2015] page 49, a child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- it is judged that the child is no longer continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan;
- the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. (In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move, only after which event may the child's protection plan be ended in Suffolk – see 8.6)
- the child has reached 18 years of age (in advance of which a review conference should be planned and held shortly before the child's birthday when Transition arrangements to Adult Services should be planned for); or has died; or has permanently left the United Kingdom (in which case the child's social worker should liaise with the relevant Embassy and/or agencies in that country ([click here](#) for DfE guidance and/or see [Children & Families Across Borders](#) for further advice)

8.5.3 When assessments and information indicate that the child is no longer likely to suffer significant harm, but nevertheless remains vulnerable and in need of support, the chair must ensure that the conference endorses and /or adapts if necessary the multi-agency child in need (CiN) plan proposed by the social worker. The CiN plan will define clear safety goals for the child which promote their health, development and wellbeing. The chair must recommend the date of the first CiN planning meeting (which should be held within a timescale that reflects complexity and need, but no later than 6 weeks after the initial conference) and should recommend timescales for subsequent review meetings.

8.5.4 Any child who no longer requires a child protection plan *must* be provided with a CiN plan for a recommended period of at least three months before their case is closed. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to step down from a Child Protection Plan to an Early Help Plan. Both the Practice Managers from the Social Care team and the Early Help team must agree this request prior to the conference; the Practice Manager from the Early Help team or their representative must attend the review conference.

8.5.5 When one or more agency currently working with the child or family is unable to attend a review conference which has decided to end the child's protection plan, the chair may decide to seek

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their views after the conference. This should be done in writing within 10 working days and written responses provided within 10 working days. This correspondence must be clearly recorded in the child's records.

8.6 WHEN A CHILD MOVES TO ANOTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY

8.6.1 When a child who is the subject of a child protection plan moves to live *permanently* in another local authority, the lead social worker must notify Children's Social Care in that area immediately and request a 'transfer-out' conference is convened by the child's new local authority. They must liaise with the other local authority in order to agree what steps will be taken to ensure the child is safeguarded until the 'transfer out' conference has been held.

8.6.2 The social worker must notify the safeguarding co-ordinator in Suffolk of the date the transfer-out conference was held, so that the child's protection plan can be ended in Suffolk.

8.6.3 When a child who is the subject of a child protection plan moves *temporarily* to another local authority, the lead social worker must notify that authority, providing details of the child, their temporary address, the category of their protection plan, the lead social worker's own contact details and any other information requested. The lead social worker must ensure (in liaison with the other local authority, if required) that all necessary safeguarding arrangements continue whilst the child is out of Suffolk, including regular monitoring of the child, convening of core group meetings and progression and review of the child's protection plan.

8.6.4 If a children who is the subject of a child protection plan has links to another country, the lead social worker should consider the need to inform the relevant Embassy that a protection plan is in place (please [click here](#) for DfE guidance and/or see [Children & Families Across Borders](#) for further advice)

8.7 WHEN A CHILD BECOMES ACCOMMODATED, LOOKED AFTER AND / OR THE SUBJECT OF CARE PROCEEDINGS OR THE PUBLIC LAW OUTLINE

8.7.1 As a general principal, a child should not be the subject of more than one kind of plan at a time.

8.7.2 If a child becomes subject to the Public Law Outline (PLO), the threshold for a child protection conference is automatically met and a conference request should be made, if the child is not already subject to a child protection plan.

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- 8.7.3 When a child who already has a child protection plan becomes the subject of a care order or interim care order, their child protection plan will usually be ended (from the date the order started) without a conference needing to be held, subject to the Local Authority being confident in the proposed care arrangements. The chair must write to everyone who was invited to the initial conference and most recent review conference (if one has been held), informing them that the child protection plan has been ended, the date this happened, the new legal status of the child and the date of the next CIC Review Meeting.
- 8.7.4 It is the responsibility of both the lead social worker and the IRO to ensure that any relevant components of the child's former child protection plan are included in their new CIC plan, for example to ensure the child's safety during any contact with family members.
- 8.7.5 When a child with a child protection plan becomes the subject of an interim care order and is placed with a parent (or anyone else with parental responsibility) or there are concerns about the proposed care arrangements under Regulations 15 – 20 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, and if the Local Authority has ongoing concerns about the risk of significant harm, a review conference may be held (earlier than scheduled, if required) to consider whether or not the child's protection plan needs to continue alongside CIC care planning. This may be required when, for example, a high frequency of monitoring and/or close and regular multi-agency liaison is needed to safeguard the child.
- 8.7.6 When a child who already has a child protection plan becomes the subject of an interim supervision order, a review conference may be held as soon as possible after the order is made. The Practice Manager and Conference Chair should discuss the current levels of risk and the proposed care arrangements, to agree if a conference is required to consider whether the child protection plan should continue. If it is decided risks can be managed without a child protection plan, the Interim Supervision Order will be supported through a Child In Need Plan (which should start from the date the order is made). If a conference *is* convened, it must review the ongoing arrangements for safeguarding the child, as detailed in their court care plan, to confirm that all identified risk factors will be adequately managed and to agree if possible that it is safe to end the child protection plan. Only where it is judged not possible to sufficiently safeguard the child without a child protection plan, the CP plan should continue.
- 8.7.7 A child who is the subject of a Supervision Order will ordinarily be supported through a Child in Need plan (which should start from the date the order is made). The child should only require a protection plan if risks escalate, in which case the usual child protection procedures must be followed and a legal planning meeting must be held.

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- 8.7.8 When a child who has a child protection plan becomes accommodated (i.e. Looked After through voluntary arrangement, under s.20 of the Children Act 1989) and is *not* the subject of any care order, a first CIC review should be held. This CIC review needs to determine there are no short-term plans for the child/ren to return home, therefore ending the child protection plan. In doing so this will be fully recorded in the Chair's summary of the CIC report and all agencies will be sent a letter to state the child protection plan is ended.
- 8.7.9 When a Child In Care remains the subject of a child protection plan, the Safeguarding Service will make arrangements to bring the next review conference and next CIC review meeting together (ensuring the timescales for neither are breached) so that the child will have a single planning and reviewing process.
- 8.7.10 Whenever a child protection plan is ended and replaced with a CIC plan, the child's social worker and IRO are jointly responsible for making sure that any relevant parts of the protection plan are included in the child's CIC care plan to ensure they will continue to be protected from any ongoing risk factors.

9 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

9.1 ORGANISING THE CONFERENCE

- 9.1.1 Children's Social Care is responsible for administering child protection conferences.
- 9.1.2 Conferences should be held at a time and place which is as convenient as possible for the parents/carers (and the child, if they wish to attend) and should take into account the family's religious, cultural, community and familial context, as well as any childcare responsibilities.
- 9.1.3 If parents/carers need childcare in order to attend the conference, the child's social worker should help them identify appropriate services.
- 9.1.4 Children's Social Care is responsible for managing health and safety issues and making appropriate security arrangements when planning each conference.
- 9.1.5 There must be clear arrangements for organising child protection conferences, including:
- Information leaflets for children and for parents translated into appropriate languages or medium

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- Standard invitations to children, parents/carers and professionals
- Report formats for initial and review conferences

9.1.6 The child's social worker should book the initial conference with the safeguarding co-ordinator and provide them with an *accurate* invitation list within two working days of the confirmed conference booking. Invitations for the initial conference will be sent out by the safeguarding co-ordinator.

9.1.7 Those invited to attend an initial conference should be notified as far in advance as possible. Invitations should be sent out a minimum of five working days before the conference. If this is not possible, invitations should be made by telephone, followed up by letter.

9.2 CONFERENCE RECORDS

9.2.1 A member of Business Support must attend all initial and review conferences: their task during the conference is to make a written record of essential issues, the decisions of the conference and any plans made.

9.2.2 The conference record is a *summary* of the meeting but must include the following information:

- the name, date of birth and address of the subject/s of the conference, their parents/carers, any other children or adults in the household and anyone else who holds parental responsibility for the child/ren
- details of who was invited, who attended and who submitted apologies
- a list of written reports available to conference and whether any were confidential from the parents/carers
- the purpose of the conference
- the views of the child and family members
- all the essential facts and any important differences of opinion
- danger statement/s and safety goals, which make it clear what the risks are for the child and what changes are needed for them to be safe.
- the child protection plan (if the threshold is reached/remains), enabling everyone to be clear about their tasks and the required safety goals for the child
- (when a child protection plan is made/continued) the name of the lead social worker, other members of the core group, date of first core group meeting and date of next conference
- (When a child protection plan is not made or is ended) the name of the social worker, date of the first/next CiN meeting and proposed CiN plan (see 8.5.3. and 8.5.4)

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- 9.2.3 The decisions of the conference, together with the child protection plan (if one has been made/continued), will be signed by the chair and sent out within three working days of the conference to all those who were invited.
- 9.2.4 Any requests for amendment to the conference record should be sent to the chair in writing, within fifteen working days of receipt.
- 9.2.5 Confidential material such as information about ongoing police investigations may be excluded from the parent's/carer's copy of the conference record.
- 9.2.6 When a friend, supporter or solicitor has been involved in the conference, it is at the discretion of the parent/carer or child/young person whether s/he personally shares the conference record with them.
- 9.2.7 When a child has attended a child protection conference, the social worker must arrange to see her/him afterwards to discuss relevant sections of the conference record.
- 9.2.8 Careful consideration should be given to whether a child should be given a copy of the conference record.
- 9.2.9 If a parent/carer and/or the child/ren has a learning or sensory disability or if English is not their first language, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure they can understand and make full use of the conference record and protection plan (if one has been made/continued).
- 9.2.10 Conference records are confidential and should not be passed to anyone not directly involved in safeguarding the child, without the consent of the conference chair.
- 9.2.11 In criminal proceedings the Police may reveal the existence of child protection records to the Crown Prosecution Service and in care proceedings the record of the conference may be revealed in court.
- 9.2.12 Every agency must make clear arrangements for the secure storage of child protection conference records, in accordance with its own confidentiality and record retention policies.
- 9.2.13 Every agency should ensure their systems are updated and that relevant information is only shared with appropriate staff as required within their agency.

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9.3 MAINTAINING RECORDS

9.3.1 Children's Social Care will designate a manager, normally an experienced social worker, who has responsibility for:

- ensuring that records about children who are the subject of a child protection plan are accurate and kept up to date
- ensuring enquiries about children for whom there are concerns, or who have child protection plans, are recorded and considered
- managing other notifications of movements into or out of Suffolk by children who have child protection plans or looked after children
- managing notifications of people who may pose a risk of significant harm to children who are either identified with Suffolk or have moved into Suffolk
- managing requests for checks to be made to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children

9.3.2 The above designated manager is accountable to the Director of Children and Young People's Services.

9.3.3 Information on each child known to Children's Social Care should be kept up-to-date on the ICS IT system and the content of the child's record should be confidential, available only to legitimate enquirers. This information should be accessible at all times to such enquirers.

9.3.4 The details of enquirers should always be checked and recorded on the system before information is provided.

9.3.5 If an enquiry is made about a child and the child's case is open to Children's Social Care the enquirer should be given the name of the child's social worker, who must be informed of this enquiry so that s/he can follow it up.

9.3.6 If an enquiry is made about a child at the same address as a child who is the subject of a child protection plan, this information should be sent to the lead social worker.

10 DISSENT OR COMPLAINTS ABOUT CONFERENCES

10.1 DISSENT FROM THE CONFERENCE DECISION

10.1.1 The chair of a conference is responsible for the conference decision. S/he will consult

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professionals at the conference and aim for a consensus, but ultimately will make the decision and note any dissenting views.

10.1.2 Research and serious case reviews have shown that differences of opinion between agencies can lead to conflict, resulting in a less favourable outcome for the child. Therefore, when dissent occurs the dissenting agency must remain involved in future decision-making and in progressing any child protection plan or child in need plan.

10.1.3 If the dissenting professional believes the final decision by the chair either places a child at likelihood of significant harm, or makes the child the subject of a protection plan inappropriately, s/he should discuss this with the chair directly. If the matter cannot be resolved, the dissenting professional should seek advice from her/his named / lead / designated professional or manager and follow the procedures for [resolving professional disagreement](#). The Chair can also take management advice.

10.2 COMPLAINT BY A PROFESSIONAL

10.2.1 When a professional is concerned about the way a conference has been managed or run, she/he must seek advice from her/his named / lead / designated professional or manager.

10.2.2 A senior manager of an agency may support these concerns and write to the county lead for child protection within Children's Social Care, with a copy to the conference chair and the agency professional.

10.2.3 If the situation remains unresolved, the procedures for [resolving professional disputes](#) should be followed.

10.3 COMPLAINT BY SERVICE USERS

10.3.1 Parents/carers, family members or the child may make a complaint about:

- the way the conference was organised, and/or managed
- the decisions reached by the conference or the category of any plan made

10.3.2 The complaints process cannot itself change the decisions made and that during the course of a complaint's consideration, the decision made by the conference stands.

10.3.3 The end result for a complainant will be either that a conference is re-convened under a

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different chair, that a review conference is brought forward, or that the original decision remains.

- 10.3.4 Complaints about an individual agency, its performance and provision (or non-provision) of services should be responded to in accordance with that agency's complaints handling processes.
- 10.3.5 If a parent/carer etc. raises concerns during the conference about how it is being run or the decisions it has reached, this must be recorded in the conference record.
- 10.3.6 The chair should try to resolve the concerns during or immediately after the conference. If this fails, the chair should remind the parent/carer of the conference complaints process and invited them write to him/her within 28 days of receiving the conference record (with the assistance of the social worker or an advocate, if wanted). The complaint will be considered during a formal meeting with the conference chair (Stage 1). If the complaint remains unresolved, it will be considered by Children's Social Care's complaints manager and by a panel of Local Safeguarding Board members (Stage 2).
- 10.3.7 Full details of the complaints process relating to conferences are available in this [leaflet for parents/carers](#).

11. **APPENDICES & FURTHER INFORMATION**

- ["WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN" DfE 2015](#)
- [SUFFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD PROCEDURES](#)
- [ADVICE / CHECK-LIST FOR PRE-BIRTH ASSESSMENTS](#)
- [PRE-BIRTH FLOWCHART](#)
- [ADVOCACY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE](#)
- [CP CONFERENCE LEAFLET FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE](#)
- [ADVOCACY SERVICES FOR PARENTS/CARERS](#)
- [CP CONFERENCES LEAFLET FOR PARENTS/CARERS](#)
- [ACCORD PROTOCOL](#)
- [MULTI-AGENCY REPORT FOR CP CONFERENCE](#)
- [RESOLVING PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENT](#)
- [FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES](#)
- [CORE GROUP GUIDANCE](#)
- [WORKING WITH FOREIGN AUTHORITIES - DFE GUIDANCE](#)
- [CHILDREN & FAMILIES ACROSS BORDERS](#)