



# CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

## Information for Parents



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### What is a Child Protection Conference?

This is a formal meeting to share information about you and your family and to discuss your child's safety. This can be upsetting but you will have had a chance to discuss with your social worker what is likely to be said at the conference. None of the information should be a surprise to you.

The meeting is arranged following a child protection investigation and because it is felt there are still concerns that your child either has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse or neglect and therefore maybe at risk of 'significant harm'. All the children (under 18) in your house will be considered at this first conference.

Your views are very important and you will have plenty of opportunities to say what you think and to question the professionals there.

Your social worker will write a report, which they will share with you before the conference. Other professionals too will write reports and you will always see these.

### What does the conference do?

After all the information has been shared and discussed, people at the conference will consider the risks that there maybe to your child and the things that are keeping your child safe. Every professional **must** say whether they think that your child is still at risk of harm and whether your child's name should go on to the child protection register. The conference chair has the final decision.

If your child's name is placed on the child protection register, then a child protection plan will be made which will detail all the things that need to change so that your child becomes safe, with names of who must do what and when.

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### What is the child protection register?

This is a list of all the children in Kingston who are felt to be at risk of 'significant harm'. Every Local Authority has by law to keep a child protection register. The register does not change the rights and responsibilities of a parent with 'parental responsibility' for a child.

If your child's name goes on to the child protection register, then this will be under one or more of these four categories: (actual or likely) physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

Every child on the register has a protection plan that is reviewed regularly and a key worker (always a social worker).

Although the register is confidential, any professional who is concerned about a child can check with social services to see if the child is either on the register or has been in the past.

If you move away, Kingston social services will inform the social services department in your new area.

### Who will know my child's name is on the child protection register?

Conferences are confidential. This is always stressed at the start of the conference. This means that information about your family will only be shared with people working with you, if this is in your child's best interest.

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### Can I attend?

We welcome parents' attending conferences and your involvement is very important.

Exceptionally, a parent will not be invited. An example of when this decision would be taken is if it is thought that there is a risk of violence by that parent or it is felt that the conference will not achieve its purpose with the parent there.

You may wish to bring a friend or relative with you for support. You can also bring your solicitor with you. You should discuss who is coming to support you with your social worker.

If English is not your first language, then your social worker can arrange for an interpreter to be there.

If you don't attend, then your social worker will always let you know what happened as soon as possible. The chair will also write to you with the conference outcome.

### Do children and young people attend?

Young children and babies never attend conferences and if you want, your social worker can help arrange childcare whilst the conference is running.

Young people do sometimes attend conferences if it is felt that this is best for them. Your social worker will discuss this with you and the young person concerned well before the conference.

### Who else will attend?

Your social worker will always attend. Other professionals working with you and your family will also be invited such as your child's head teacher and health visitor.

There may also be some people who you do not know but who have important information for the conference such as a professional's manager. A council solicitor sometimes attends to provide legal advice. An experienced social work manager will chair the meeting.

#### **What records of the conference are there?**

A minute taker in the conference will make a written record of the conference, called the 'minutes'. You will get a copy of these minutes about 3 weeks afterwards as well as a copy of any other written report that you do not already have.

The protection plan will be sent to you within 48 hours of the conference.

In Kingston we audiotape child protection conferences. The reason for this is that if there are any queries about the minutes, then we can also refer back to the tape to check what was said.

#### **Can the conference remove my child?**

No. Only a court can make an order for social services to remove your child. A conference can make recommendations about what is thought to be best for your child. Sometimes this means applying to a court for an order to protect you.

Social services by law have to try hard to work 'in partnership' with you. Although you may not always agree with social services, usually protection plans are managed in voluntary agreement with parents and without the need to go to court.

Most children on the child protection register live at home with their parents.

#### **How long will my child's name be on the child protection register?**

The decision about whether your child's name stays on the register is considered at every review conference. The first review conference is always within 3 months of the initial conference. Other reviews are then always within 6 months.

In Kingston, we work hard to make sure that a child's name does not remain on the child protection register for longer than 2 years.

#### **What if I don't agree with the conference decision?**

We welcome constructive views from parents and we are constantly trying to improve services. The chair will always give you a feedback form at the initial conference to record your views and a pre-paid envelope.

If you are not happy about the conference process, the outcome or the registration decision made at the conference, then first you should discuss this with the conference chair. If you are still not happy, then you should write within 28 days of the conference, to the chair. This may lead to the Area Child Protection Committee holding a special panel hearing and will also involve the social services complaints manager. The social worker can give you further details of this process.

If you are not happy with a specific agency's role at the conference, you should ask to speak to the manager for the professional who was at the conference. If you are still not happy, then you will need to make a formal complaint to that agency.

#### **Useful Contacts**

Initial Contact Centre:  
020 8547 5888

Beaconsfield Resource Centre  
(Includes the Disabled Children's Team, Looked After &  
Leaving Care Team and Initial Response Team)  
020 8547 6587

Alpha Road Resource Centre  
020 8547 6242

Police Child Protection Unit  
020 8247 7898

Kingston Hospital  
020 8546 7711

Family Rights Group  
0800 731 1696

Parentline Plus  
0808 800 2222

RBK Website: [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk)

Translation advice:

If you have difficulty understanding this document, please contact the Guildhall Information Desk.

Kingston Children & Family Services work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure all children are protected from harm and neglect. We aim to provide a service to all parents and children that is sensitive to the religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of the family. We aim to consider the gender, sexuality and any disability of family members.