

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Child Protection Conferences

Information for parents, carers and family members

What is a child protection conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting held when professionals and family come together to talk about worries for your child's well-being. At the meeting we all share information, hear from you and then decide whether your child needs a child protection plan.

Who can attend?

People at the meeting are usually the professionals who know you and your child. They can include your health visitor, a member of staff from your child's school, a school nurse, a police officer and a social worker. Your child may attend if they are old enough and want to do so and they can also have an independent advocate to support them.

What happens at the meeting?

A person called the "Independent Chair" or "Child Protection Chair" leads the meeting. They are independent from the social work team and the other professionals involved. They ask you and the professionals to talk about the risks and also the strengths in the family. Everyone then works together to make a plan of what will happen next.

Protecting your information.

A child protection conference is a confidential meeting and information discussed at a conference can only be shared outside of it to protect any child or with the permission of you and the Child Protection Chair. Documents received from the conference must not be shared with anyone else without permission from the Child Protection Chair.

Record of the conference.

A brief written summary of the Conference and the agreed outline Plan will be developed during the conference and shared electronically with conference participants (including you), alongside the formal decision letter, by the end of the day following the conference. This plan will set out how you and professionals working with your family, will work together to reduce risks and make positive changes.

For quality assurance purposes, an audio recording of the conference will also be made and stored securely by Oxfordshire County Council.

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact
CCANorth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk,
CCASouth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
CCASouth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Parents' rights.

- To be invited to the conference or be told why you have been excluded and invited to give your views in some other way.
- To be given help to join in the conference. This could be an interpreter, if English
- Is not your first language, signers or accessible rooms. Please let us know what you need.
- To be given copies of reports before the conference.
- To be able to bring a friend or supporter, including a solicitor.
- To be able to send a suitable representative, such as a solicitor/advocate if you are unable to attend, for example, because you are in hospital or custody.
- To be able to ask questions and give your views.

Significant harm

The law defines "harm" as ill treatment or the impairment of a child's health and development. Harm becomes significant when it starts to affect how a child is growing up. You will hear this talked about in the conference as the "threshold" for making a child protection plan.

A child protection conference has no legal or statutory powers to 'take children into care'. If professionals think a child is not safe at home, they can recommend that the Local Authority apply to court. The court can order that a child lives elsewhere, but only after hearing evidence and considering everyone's views. This may be discussed at the conference.

What is the difference between child protection and child in need plans?

If the threshold for significant harm is not met, a child in need plan may be made. Child in need means that whilst there are some worries about safety, they are not serious enough to need a child protection plan, but support is still needed for you and your child.

The plan.

This is a plan of action to help your family and the professionals supporting you to know what to do to keep your child safe. The plan will detail what everyone, including you and your family, has to do to help your child be safer, happier or healthier. The plan will say who will do what. It will say when this will be done by and how people will know things are better. You should say what you want to see in the plan.

The plan will be clear about what will happen if things do not get better quickly enough for your child or before your child gets older. This might include Children's Social Care getting advice about going to court. It could also mean making arrangements for your child to live with someone else either within the family or outside of your family with carers.

Should you have any questions about the documents you receive after conference, please contact the CP Chair who will refer you to the Quality Assurance Service Manager if necessary.

If you do not feel we are meeting these standards, then please let the Child Protection Chair know.

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CCASouth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
CCANorth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
CCACity@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

What happens after conference?

If the decision is that your child has a child protection plan, then a review conference will take place, in 3 months' time to look at how things are changing. In between the conferences there will be core group meetings and the social worker will visit your children at least every fortnight. This will include home visits and making arrangements with you to see your children on their own.

The core group.

This is the group of family members and professionals who will be responsible for putting a child protection plan into action. This group is agreed at the conference and will meet soon after conference (no later than 10 working days) and then at least every 6 weeks to see how everything is going and on track for success.

What can you expect from us?

We want to work in partnership with you and your family. As a family member you should expect to:

- Be listened to, even when there is disagreement.
- Be treated with respect.
- Be kept informed and involved in decisions.
- Get all the help and support that has been offered to you within agreed timescales.
- Receive a reliable service with professionals doing what they say they will.
- Receive copies of the social worker's report three working days before a conference.
- Receive a telephone call from the Child Protection Chair before the conference to introduce themselves and answer any of your questions.
- To be greeted by the Child Protection Chair before the conference, who will check you know what will happen in the conference and will give you the opportunity to share your views.
- To get a copy of the summary of the conference and a copy of the plan, by the end of the next working day.
- Confidentiality; everything that is said at the conference is confidential and will only be shared outside of the meeting, if it is important to help keep people safe.

Advice for parents before, during and after the meeting.

- Arrange for your young children to be looked after during the conference. Ask the social worker if you need help with this.
- Plan how you will get to the conference. If the meeting will be online due to COVID 19 restrictions, check you can access it using MS Teams.

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- Arrive 20 minutes early so you can meet the Child Protection Chair and raise any questions you have about the conference.
- Think about what you are going to say to your child about the conference. Ask someone supporting you or your child for support with this if you think it will help.
- We know these meetings can be stressful for parents and we try to put you at your ease as much as possible to limit this. Try to listen to what others say in the meeting. You will have a chance to ask questions and give your views.
- Work with your child's social worker and others to help make your child safe.

Attend all meetings.

Keep all written documents safe so your privacy is protected.

Write to the Child Protection Chair, if you need to request significant amendments to the written summary of the conference within five working days of receiving them.

Top tips for parents.

Lots of parents do not like the conference hearing details of problems in the past but remind yourself of how you overcame these difficulties and let the conference know.

Think of the strengths of your family and point these out if no one else does.

Be honest if there are things that you think you need to change to make things better for your family. Those working with you and your family want you to succeed.

Bringing notes might help you remember what to say.

If you feel upset during the meeting you can ask for a short break.

What to do if you are unhappy?

Please talk to the Child Protection Chair if you are unhappy about the conference.

It is not possible to change the decision made at the conference, if process was correctly followed.

For further information go to,

https://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_ch_protection_conf.html#complaintsT

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or contact Comments and Complaints Service who can also advise you if you wish to make a complaint.

Tel: 01865 323589

Text: 07717 420419

Email: commentsandcomplaints@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Post: Comments and Complaints Service

Oxfordshire County Council

Freepost RRYR – XTBE – GBTZ

County Hall, New Road,

Oxford OX1 1ND

Tel: 01865 815672

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