

Child Protection Conferences



Guidance for
Professionals



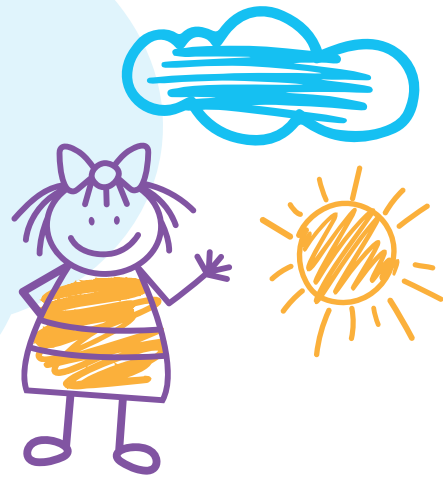
BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council

What is a Child Protection Conference?

Child Protection Conference is convened when there are concerns that children are suffering, or may be at risk of suffering, significant harm. Significant harm is the threshold that is defined within the Children Act 1989.

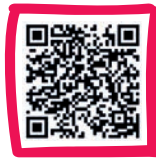
A Child Protection Conference (CPC) is a multi-agency meeting, which has an independent chair. The chair is employed by the local authority but is independent from the professionals involved with the child and their family.

At CPC all professionals will be asked to share what is working well and what they are worried about, being specific and evidence based, giving clear examples of the worries and the impact on the child/children. Parents will be asked to give their view on what they think is working well, what they are worried about and what they think they need help with.



All CPC in Barnsley are underpinned by the Barnsley Stronger Together Practice Model and follow a relational based Signs of Safety approach.

There is multi-agency training available on POD, which can be booked through the following link [Attending Case Conferences in Barnsley](#) or scan the adjacent QR code.



An Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) will be convened following an S47 enquiry and must be held within 15 working days of a strategy discussion.

If a child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan, a Review Child Protection Conference must be held within three months of the ICPC, and any subsequent reviews six monthly thereafter.



Who else will be invited to the Child Protection Conference?

Legally, key partners must be in attendance for a CPC to be quorate.

The three key partners who must be in attendance, as defined in law, are children's social care, health and the police. In exceptional circumstances, where the chair is satisfied that there are no other professionals involved, a CPC may go ahead without all of the key partners in attendance.

Working Together highlights the importance of the fourth key partner, education, who would be expected to attend for all school age children. All other professionals involved with the family will be invited, and any additional services where there is a role to play going forward. There may be other professionals there as well and some of these might work with just the parent and not the child directly. Professional attendance at CPC is essential to enable a complete understanding of the child's circumstances.

Reports are mandatory from all professionals involved with the family. It is the responsibility of each professional to make arrangements to share their reports with the family and the Safeguarding Unit at least two days before an initial CPC and five days before a review.

Every effort should be made by all professionals to support and encourage parents and carers to attend CPC, including non-resident parents. If a parent/carer chooses not to attend the conference, then the meeting may still go ahead without them.



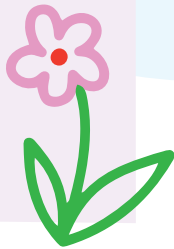
Children's families and wider networks play a critical role in supporting parents and carers to achieve positive change and offer safety to children and it is essential that they are actively encouraged to participate.

Wherever possible, we will make attempts to support young people's participation in their conferences. The chair of the meeting will discuss with the parent/carer and the social worker whether a child should be invited to attend the meeting and if so how they will be supported to participate. They will also decide if it may be better for a young person to join only a part of the meeting due to sensitive nature of the information being shared. For all children over eight, attempts will be made to seek parental consent to make a referral to Barnardo's, who will provide an advocate before the meeting to share their views.



What is the role of the Child Protection Conference Chair?

The person who will lead all Child Protection Conferences is a Child Protection Conference Chair. They have a background in social work and are independent. The chair will talk to the family and the child, if they are old enough, before the meeting. They will help support the family to understand the structure of the meeting and to make sure that everything is arranged to help everyone take part fully in the meeting, taking into account any individual needs.



What is going to happen at a Child Protection Conference?

Child Protection Conferences are face to face meetings. These are held at the Town Hall or the Darton Centre. Given the importance of the meeting in sharing sensitive information, only in exceptional circumstances may they be held online.



The Child Protection Conference Chair will talk to the family before the meeting about what happens in the meeting and answer any questions they may have. They will also speak with professionals, if you have not attended a conference before then you can email the chair who will arrange to speak you individually beforehand.

There may be a confidential slot within the meeting, this is where the police might share information with the professionals. Families are not invited to this part of the meeting as this information may be related to third parties and/or intelligence that is part of ongoing criminal investigations.

The chair provides a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting, introducing all participants and noting apologies, and clarifying the confidential nature of the meeting, and exceptions.

The child's circumstances are mapped using the Signs of Safety format; all professionals are expected to contribute. Parents, carers and children in attendance are also invited to contribute to the case mapping and clarify any points.



This same format is used for ICPC and for RCPC. Within the RCPC, progress from the ICPC will be included within the mapping of the family circumstances.

There is an expectation that all professionals openly share any concerns with the family to ensure transparency and a collaborative problem-solving approach. The chair will facilitate professionals, utilising the Signs of Safety harm matrix, to provide evidence-based examples to support assessments. The family should not be hearing professional concerns for the first time at the meeting, and there should be no surprises.

The Child Protection Conference Chair will summarise what has been said and will then ask everyone in the meeting to answer on a scale of 0–10 how safe they think the child is, with a clear rationale for their scoring.

Following summaries from the chair with regards to the information shared, the risks and the strengths, the professionals will consider if the threshold for a Child Protection Plan is met for each individual child. Professionals will also be asked to identify what category the plan should be under. There are four categories of harm; emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect. The chair will support decision making in this area by providing the definitions and giving a view if required.

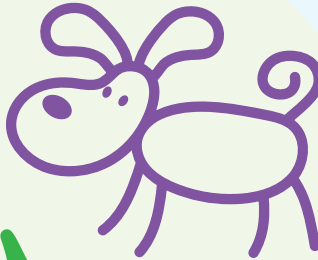
In exceptional circumstances where the chair believes that the evidence presented does not support the decision around the making of a CP Plan or the category then the chair has the authority to intervene.

If a consensus cannot be reached, the chair will take the decision to make the child subject to Child Protection Plan or not.

The plan is then developed at the end of the meeting, outlining what needs to happen, who needs to carry out the action, and the timescales. This plan is distributed at the end of the meeting. The child's plan is the document that tells us what needs to happen to resolve the worries and is a key document. The child's plan should include the family and wider network and support they offer and clearly set out contingency plans.

Child Protection Conferences cannot make decisions to make an application to remove a child from the care of their parent/carer. It can make a recommendation that the social worker have a conversation with their manager around threshold and whether there needs to be further action taken.



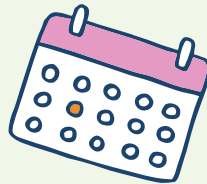


What happens after the Conference?

If a child is made subject to a CP plan, the date of the review conference and the first Core Group will be agreed. The first core group must take place within 10 working days of the ICPC and every 28 days thereafter.

Core group membership will be decided at the ICPC and will consist of the family, network and the identified professionals who are required to support the family to reduce the worries. The members of the core group are responsible for developing, implementing and reviewing the plan.

A first review Child Protection Conference will be held within three months of the initial meeting and will review the progress of the plan. This period is not usually adequate time to both reduce the worries and sustain positive changes and therefore it is unlikely that the child's plan will be ended at the first review. At this meeting the chair will ensure that progress is being made and any identified barriers addressed. They will also consider whether there are any new worries and whether additional services are required to support the family plan.



A further review Child Protection Conference will be held within six months until the worries have reduced to a level that it is determined that a CP plan is no longer required. Timely decision making is key for children and if there has been no progress by the second review, legal advice would usually be sought so that children do not continue to experience significant harm. When a child is no longer subject to CP planning it is usual practice for the family to continue to be offered support from a Child in Need Plan until such time that there is no requirement for statutory involvement.

If you have any questions...

You can contact the child's social worker or the chair of the Child Protection Conference.



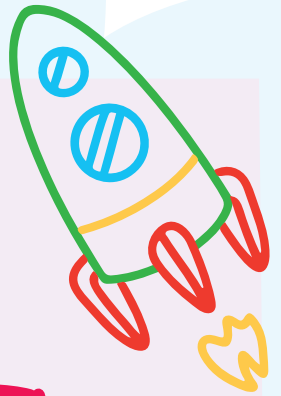
You can also see guidance at the following link around making a complaint.



Children's social care complaints.



Key resources:



To find out how our social workers work with families in Barnsley, take a look at our **Stronger Together practice model**.



You can also find further **information and guidance on child safeguarding** on our website.

