**What is a child protection conference?**

A child protection conference is a meeting that follows a child protection enquiry. This is where we check a child is safe if we are concerned that they have been harmed or have a high risk of being harmed.

**The Local Safeguarding Children Board**

Child protection conferences must follow procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), with advice from the Department for Education and Skills.

The LSCB is made up of senior managers from a number of local agencies including:

- West Sussex County Council’s Children and Young People’s Services;
- the police;
- the health service;
- the probation service;
- the NSPCC; and
- district and borough councils.

The board is keen to fully involve parents and carers in child protection conferences. We may also invite older children to attend conferences if it is suitable.
Where will the conference be held?
The conference will be usually held at your local children’s services’ office, but sometimes other venues are used. You will be given full details about the time and location of the meeting.

Please let your social worker know if you have difficulties getting to the venue, or need assistance with issues such as communication, language or babysitting.

Can I attend the conference?
As a parent or carer you play a key part in helping professionals to reach important decisions. Your social worker will prepare a written report for the conference and this will be shared with you before the conference takes place.

It is your right to put your views in writing if you are unable to attend but want the conference to note them. You can send your letter to the children’s services’ manager at your local office or to the conference chair. Your social worker will advise you on names and addresses.

Can someone else come with me?
You may bring one of the following to the conference with you:
● a friend or relative;
● an advocate (someone who can represent your views); or
● a solicitor.
They can help you to say what you want to say and be there for you if you are upset by the proceedings. They may write down things for you and help you to understand what is said.

**Who else will be there?**

Your social worker will be there with other people, such as:

- a teacher;
- a health visitor;
- a doctor;
- a police officer;
- a families and schools’ health advisor;
- other agencies who are involved or have knowledge of your situation; and
- other family members.

**What happens at the conference?**

We will let you see the reports about your family before the conference.

An independent person who is not directly involved with your family will chair the conference. Their job is to:

- talk to you privately before the meeting to explain what is going to happen;
- introduce everybody;
- explain why the conference is being held;
- make sure what is said is fair;
- make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and to ask questions;
- make sure that everyone behaves properly and follows procedures; and
• help the conference to reach a practical decision.

You may be asked to leave the conference for a short while if you or the conference members need to take legal advice or discuss a particular issue.

What can the conference decide?

The conference can decide to take no further action. Otherwise, it can decide make your child subject to a child protection plan. This will state where our concerns lie.

Child abuse falls into four categories:

• **Neglect** – where a parent or carer fails to meet a child’s essential needs for food, basic hygiene, clothing, shelter or medical care, or when a child is left without proper supervision, which leaves them unsafe or unprotected.

• **Physical abuse** – where a parent, carer or other adult deliberately inflict injuries on a child or do not protect the child from injury.

• **Sexual abuse** – where an adult or older child involves a child in sexual activity to which the child does not or cannot consent because of their age or understanding.

• **Emotional abuse** – where a parent or carer fails to show a child sufficient love or attention or repeatedly threatens, taunts or belittles them. Often this causes a child to become nervous, withdrawn, aggressive or disturbed in their behaviour.
Any information we hold about a child who is subject to a child protection plan is kept confidential. However, we may need to share this information with other children’s organisations if it is necessary.

**What happens if my child is made subject to a child protection plan?**

A child protection plan helps professionals to work with you and your family to keep your child safe and reduce areas of risk.

A key worker – usually a social worker – will be appointed to work with your family. The plan will also name other people to work closely with you to make sure the child protection plan is being carried out. This is called the core group.

The child protection plan will clearly indicate what needs to be done, who should do it, where they should do it and within what time scale.

A date will be set to have another conference to review how the plan is working. It will also decide whether your child needs to continue to be the subject of a child protection plan.
What happens if my child is NOT made subject to a child protection plan?
There may be no further action. Or you may be asked to continue working with your social worker and others to improve things for your child.
To do this, a plan to support your family will be made. This will be reviewed regularly.

What independent advice and support is available for parents and carers?
There are other organisations and voluntary groups that offer parents advice on child care and child protection laws, as well as information on your rights. Your local children’s services office will have details of these organisations.
You are entitled to receive advice from a solicitor. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can provide a list of solicitors in your area who are experienced in family matters.

What can I do if I’m unhappy with the decisions or recommendations of the conference?
We will give you every opportunity to make your views known at the conference. If you are not happy with the decisions you should raise these with the person who chaired the conference. If you and the chair are unable
to resolve the situation you should tell them that you’d like to take the matter further. The chair will then send you details of our formal complaints procedure.

You can find more information about this in our leaflet ‘Making a complaint about a child protection conference’ (CS88). This is available from your local office. Contact details are on page 10.

Other formats

If you would like the information in this guide on audio tape, in Braille, or in another language, please contact:

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  Phone: 01243 642400  Fax: 01243 642437

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  Phone: 01243 752999  Fax: 01243 752644

• Whiphill Farmhouse, Lamberts Lane
  **Midhurst**, GU29 9DZ
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• Centenary House, County Buildings
  Woodfield Road, **Crawley**, RH10 8GN
  Phone: 01293 895100  Fax: 01293 895114

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  **Haywards Heath**, RH16 1SU
  Phone: 01444 446100  Fax: 01444 446144

• Talbot House, 20 to 22 East Street
  **Horsham**, RH12 1HL
  Phone: 01403 213100  Fax: 01403 213125

• 26 West Street, **Storrington**, RH20 4EE
  Phone: 01403 213100

• 44 High Street, **Littlehampton**, BN17 5ED
  Phone: 01903 738900  Fax: 01903 738989

• Glebelands, Middle Road
  **Shoreham-by-Sea**, BN43 6GA
  Phone: 01273 268800  Fax: 01273 268801

• Centenary House, Durrington Lane
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We will review this booklet in one year.

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