

Chapter Eight

The Review Child Protection Conference

Purpose of Review Child Protection Conferences

- 8.1 The purpose of the review child protection conference is to:
- review the safety, health and development of each child against the intended outcomes set out in the child protection plan
 - ensure that the child continues to be adequately safeguarded
 - consider whether the child protection plan should continue in place, should be changed or is no longer needed

Every review child protection conference should thus consider explicitly whether the child continues to be at risk of significant harm.

Timing of Review Child Protection Conferences

- 8.2 All children who are subject of a child protection plan (CPR) will be subject to regular review. The date for the next review will always be set by the chairperson at any conference where a child protection plan is established or continued. Agencies should note the date and make every effort to maintain commitment to attendance.
- 8.3 The first review child protection conference must be held **within three months** of the initial child protection conference. Subsequent review conferences must be held at intervals of no more than six months for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan (CPR). The scheduled date should normally be set at about five months to ensure that any unexpected change of date can be accommodated. Any change to the scheduled date should be managed to ensure that those who need to attend can do so.

Reconvening the Review Conference Early

- 8.4 Any agency may request an early review conference where there is concern that the child protection plan no longer safeguards the child. The decision about whether this should be agreed rests with the chairperson, in consultation with the key worker and his/her line manager.
- 8.5 The key worker should consult the chairperson as to whether an earlier review conference is needed in any of the following circumstances:
- where child protection concerns relating to a new incident or allegation of abuse have been substantiated
 - where departure from conference recommendations by any agency or parent has a significant effect on the safety of the child
 - where consideration is to be given to the return home of a child who is subject to a child protection plan and is also currently looked after by the Local Authority or placed with relatives for his/her safety; and the planned rehabilitation had not been anticipated at the previous conference
 - where a pre-birth initial conference is needed because a further child is to be born into the household and pre-birth assessment indicates that a conference is necessary to consider the safety of the baby
 - where a person assessed as presenting a risk to children is to join or

- commences regular contact with the household
- where the core group believes that the child protection plan is no longer needed

Managing the Child Protection Needs of a Child Who is Looked After by the Local Authority

8.6 Children looked after are subject to regular statutory review. Where they are also subject of a child protection plan, the two reviewing processes should be monitored and integrated in a way which maintains the focus on the child. The timing of the two forums should be linked, and information from the review child protection conference should be taken to the looked after review meeting and inform the overall care planning. It should be remembered that significant changes to the care plan can only be made at the looked after children review meeting.

8.7 Children who are 'looked after' should not normally be subject to a child protection plan unless there are specific circumstances which warrant this. These circumstances should be made explicit in the meeting and set out in the record of the conference. Both initial and review conferences should agree the need or continued need for a child protection plan only if it is judged that the child's care plan does not adequately address significant identified risks. This might be where:

- the child spends significant time at home (e.g. respite care)
- the child will be returning home within 3 months

and there is a need for a multi agency child protection plan.

8.8 Any conference which agrees that a child protection plan is not required should clearly identify in the "reason for decisions" section that the need for a child protection plan would have been satisfied had the child not been accommodated or made subject of an interim order. In addition, there must be a contingency plan to reconvene the conference if these safeguards are no longer in place to meet the requirements for multi-agency care planning.

8.9 Those agencies who would have been involved as core group members if the child had been subject of a child protection plan should accord the subsequent looked after children reviews the same priority for attendance as they would have review conferences and core groups.

Attendance, Quoracy and Reports

8.10 The same protocol and procedures apply as for initial child protection conferences. The review child protection conference requires as much preparation, commitment and management as the initial child protection conference.

8.11 The core group has a collective responsibility to produce reports for the review conference which together provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and professionals, and which evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the objectives and intended outcomes set out in the child protection plan. The social worker's report should reflect this.

Decision making

8.12 The same protocol and procedures apply as for initial child protection conferences.

Decisions at a Review Child Protection Conference that a Child Protection Plan is no longer needed

8.13 In most circumstances the decision to discontinue the child protection plan must be made at a review child protection conference. A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- the risk of harm has been reduced by action taken through the child protection plan
- the child and family's circumstances have changed
- re-assessment of the child and family indicates that a child protection plan is no longer necessary
- the child is now looked after by the Local Authority (see paragraphs 8.6 – 8.9)

It is important for all conference participants to identify the key factors which lead to the conclusion that a child protection plan is no longer appropriate.

8.14 The child protection plan may be discontinued without a review conference where:

- the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area, in such cases the child protection plan may be discontinued once the receiving authority has convened a child protection conference (within 15 working days)
- the child has reached 18 years of age, has died or has permanently left the UK

8.15 Occasionally a conference will decide that, if a certain change takes place, the child protection plan will no longer be needed, without need for a further conference. This might be where, for example the anticipated conviction and sentencing of an abuser will remove the potential source of harm.

8.16 The child remains subject to the child protection plan pending the event. The anticipated change must be explicitly agreed within the recommendations of the previous conference.

Provision of Services following Discontinuation

8.17 A child who ceases to be subject of a child protection plan may still require additional support and services. Discontinuation should never lead to the automatic withdrawal of help. The key worker should discuss with the parents and the child what services might be wanted and needed, based upon the re-assessment of the child and family.

Where the identified needs remain complex and require a co-ordinated inter-agency approach, the conference should draw up the child in need/family support plan, and agree the timescales for its review.