Child Protection Conferences
A guide for parents and carers
Introduction

This leaflet is designed for parents, carers and guardians and helps to explain the Child Protection Conference, and the links with Care Proceedings.

The first part outlines some general points about a Child Protection Conference.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

Ahead of a Child Protection Conference, you will have had contact with a social worker. They will have carried out an assessment on your child and family’s circumstances. They may have identified any concerns about your child(ren) during the assessment, which will have been discussed with you, and which may have led to a Child Protection Conference.

This is a meeting arranged to discuss what concerns have been identified during an assessment and to decide what needs to happen next.

We understand that it may be difficult for parents to come to these meetings, but we hope you will. The people who will be at the meeting are there to help support you to protect your child from harm.

We usually invite both parents, even if you are separated. It may be difficult for you to both be there at the same time. If this is your situation, please tell your social worker, who will
arrange for you to come into the Child Protection Conference at different times.

You can also talk to the social worker in advance of the Child Protection Conference, if you think the idea of attending will be too difficult for you. They will discuss with you other ways of letting people at the Child Protection Conference know your views.

A Child Protection Conference does not decide to remove children from their families, but decides plans, which will best support you in bringing up your children and reducing the risk of harm to them. It will also stress things that you may have to change in order for this to happen.

I am worried I will not be able to understand what is being said

If your first language is not English and you are worried you might not understand what is being said, we will provide an interpreter. If you have any other needs, which may prevent you attending or understanding, please talk to the social worker, who will see what can be done to help.

The Chair or your child’s social worker will spend time with you after the Conference if you have any further questions.
Will my child be there?

Yes, usually, if they are aged 12 and over and want to come. This may only be for part of the meeting. Some children find it easier if they come with a friend or someone to support them. At present, Merton uses a scheme for advocates to support young people over 12 attend Conferences, where parents agree Merton can provide an independent advocate.

Who will be in charge of the Conference?

The person chairing the meeting will be from Merton Children’s Safeguarding Team. This person will chair the Conference and will have had no part in the child protection investigation. The Chair will offer to meet with you before the Conference starts.

Who will attend the Conference?

The school, the school nurse, your doctor, a social worker, and perhaps their manager, possibly the Police and other professionals who are interested in your child’s welfare. The Chair will speak to you before the meeting starts, and will make sure everyone introduces themselves to you at the beginning of the Conference, explaining who they are and how they know your child.
How long will the Conference last?
We realise that you may need to make arrangements for other children to be cared for to allow you to come. Most Initial Child Protection Case Conferences, (ie the first Conference), usually take about one and a half hours, although some times a bit longer. Review Conferences are generally shorter.

Can I bring someone with me?
Yes, but they must understand that they are not there to give an opinion unless asked for it.

Can I ask Questions?
The Child Protection Conference follows a set agenda and everyone there will have a turn to speak. You will have a chance to ask questions and challenge anything said about your or your child. It will be a good idea to bring a pen and paper and take some notes, to help you remember what was said.

Will I be able to attend the whole of the meeting?
Usually, yes. If for any reason, this is not possible, the Chair will explain to you at the start of the Conference.
This section explains the Initial Conference and events, which may occur afterwards

Initial Child Protection Case Conference

The social worker will explain the concerns. Other people at the meeting will then have a chance to give any other relevant information.

If the decision of the conference is that your child requires a Child Protection Plan, the Chair will explain why, and a plan to keep your child safe will be made.

The Child Protection Plan identifies things that need to change in order to make your child safe and who will be working with you and your family. These people will be called the Core Group.

In some situations, the Child Protection Plan will state the need for a Family Group Conference to happen before the first review Child Protection Case Conference, if this has not already occurred.

First Core Group Meeting

The Core Group will take place within 10 working days of the Initial Conference and usually will include you and others who work with you and your child, and are able to offer support. They will meet regularly, usually every 6 weeks, to check how the Child Protection Plan is working.
Throughout this process, you will be asked your views and they will be taken into account.

A written agreement will be drawn up in the Core Group meeting and will include asking for your permission to further assessments and contact with extended family members for a Family Group Conference to be held.

The Core Group Meeting will outline what needs to change and will be supported by everyone present. This will include tasks and activities for you to carry out, as well as each agency working with the family.

Your child’s social worker and Core Group members will explain to you the need for evidence of progress and positive change by the first review Child Protection Case Conference at 3 months, focusing on what outcomes are expected for your child.

If there is a continued risk of harm, there may be a need for legal proceedings. Your social worker will explain what is involved.

**First Child Protection Conference Review at 3 months**

This will be the first Conference since the initial Child Protection Conference. The chair will review the plan and ensure that decisions have been followed up. This will include an updated Core Assessment, outlining progress from other agencies on the Child Protection Plan.
Depending on progress, this Conference will decide if your child should remain subject to a Child Protection Plan. If progress has been satisfactory and it is believed that your child is not at risk from being harmed, they will no longer be subject to a Child Protection Plan.

If there has not been enough progress your child will remain subject to a Child Protection Plan

**Second Review Child Protection Case Conference at 9 Months**

This Child Protection Conference follows on from the first review Conference at 3 months. If it is agreed that your child is to remain subject to a Child Protection Plan, the chair of this Conference will discuss with you and why it is considered that the care of your child is harming or likely to harm your child. As your child is to remain subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Chair will talk with you about the possibility that the Department may call a legal planning meeting.
Complaints

If you have a complaint about either the Initial, Review or Second Review Conference, which has arisen in the course of the meeting, it will be noted and the Chair will try to resolve the matter with you at the conclusion of the Conference. If this doesn’t resolve the matter, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Chair within 28 days of receiving the minutes.

If you disagree with the decision of the conference, this can be noted in the minutes of the meeting. If you are still not satisfied you can formally challenge the decision through the departments formal complaints procedure. This should be done within 6 weeks of the conference being held.

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If you need any part of this document explained in your language, please tick box and contact us either by writing or by phone using our contact details below.

- [ ] Albanian
- [ ] Bengali
- [ ] French
- [ ] Korean
- [ ] Polish
- [ ] Portuguese
- [ ] Somali
- [ ] Spanish
- [ ] Tamil
- [ ] Urdu

☐ Large print  ☐ Braille  ☐ Audiotape

Your contact:
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