

# Quality Standards and Practice Guidance for Independent Chairs of Child Protection Conferences

## Quality Standards

1. In preparation for the ICPC, the Chair will read strategy discussion minutes, the S47 assessment and relevant history from the Child's record. For Review Conferences, the Chair reads the social work report for the Conference. Chairs must ensure that they clarify any issues of concern which arise prior to conference with the social worker. Agency reports will be read prior to all CP Conferences.
2. The Chair meets with the parents and young person half an hour before the Child Protection Conference.
3. CP Conferences always start with the Chair reading out a confidentiality statement and an equalities statement. The Chair must always ensure that the original risks leading to the ICPC are actively considered during each Review Conference discussion.
4. The Chair must always ensure that the original risks leading to the ICPC are actively considered during each Review Conference discussion.
5. The Chair will ensure that all professionals contribute to the Conference discussion, and specifically to the recommendation regarding whether the child should be subject of a Child Protection Plan and under what category.
6. The Chair will ensure that a multi-agency Plan, to which all participants contribute is formulated during the Conference.
7. Where there is a difference of opinion regarding whether the child should be subject of a Child Protection Plan, these will be recorded on the Conference record. If agreement can't be reached, the Chair has the final decision. Conference participants will be invited by the Chair to formally dissent from this decision.
8. The Chair will ensure that a Core Group membership is agreed, the date of the first Core Group is set, and is recorded in the minutes.
9. The frequency of social work visits to the child should be stipulated in the Conference by the Chair, and recorded.
10. A contingency plan, specific to the child's circumstances, will always be included.

11. Where a child has previously been the subject of a CP Plan, the Chair will, following the ICPC, complete a summary analysis of the history of the previous Child Protection Plan compared with current risks to the child/ren. This summary will then be sent to the Service Manager (Safeguarding) to assist in further decision-making regarding the child/ren, and whether a LPM is appropriate.

## Practice Guidance

These sections relate to the Quality Standards listed above.

1. It is part of the quality assurance role of the Chair to consider their view on whether the threshold for holding an Initial Child Protection Conference has been met. The strategy meeting record should be available within two working days of the strategy meeting being held which will enable the Chair in their consideration as to whether the threshold has been met. Where the Chair has concerns about this, it is important that they discuss with the team manager and record the outcome of this discussion in Obs on the child's record on CareFirst. The resolution policy should be used if required, after further discussion and consideration. However, it should only be in exceptional circumstances that an ICPC is cancelled or delayed, without Children's Social Care's agreement. A general discussion with Children's Social Care Managers and other agencies about thresholds for holding ICPC's may well be a more constructive way forward. The Chair should also consult with Children's Social Care if there are any case issues which need clarifying prior to the Conference in order to ensure the conference remains focused.
2. In the meeting with parents and young person, where attending, prior to the Conference, the Chair introduces themselves, explains their role and who is will be attending . They go through the agenda and briefly explain the potential categories of Child Protection Plan which the child could be made subject of. (NB the child's Social Worker should already have discussed this with the family). The Chair checks out everyone's understanding of the Conference process and discusses any concerns they have, including about other parties who are attending.
3. The confidentiality and equalities statements are at the top of the agenda and are also read out at the start of the Conference by the Chair. The latter includes the importance of treating all participants with consideration and respect.
4. In Child Protection Review Conferences, discussion about the original risks, as outlined in the Child Protection Plan is important, in continually assessing if those original risks are still relevant. Consideration needs to be given to the ways in which these have been minimised, if they have and how this is reflected in the impact on the child. Is there evidence that this reduction in risk has been and continues to be sustainable? This

discussion is an important prerequisite for the Conference discussion regarding the current risks to the child.

5. A key task for the Chair is to ensure that all those who attend the Conference contribute relevant information and views on the risks to the child, the nature of the risk, whether they feel that the child should be made subject of a Child Protection Plan, why and under what category. The more people contribute, the richer the discussion and the more comprehensive the assessment of risk. Sometimes professionals may feel intimidated by a parent or other family member, or inhibited in discussing the nature of the risks faced by the child. The Chair needs to be alert to these possible factors and facilitate discussion in a way which enables participants to feel safe and able to be honest.
6. The formulation of the Multi-Agency Plan is the main task of the Child Protection Conference and sufficient time needs to be given in the Conference to developing this. The social worker's Outline Plan should form the basis framework, but all other participants including family, should be encouraged to think about what they can contribute to the Plan. It is important that the Plan is based on the identified risks to, and needs of the child/ren. This provides clarity for the family and for agencies about what needs to change in order to reduce these risks and meet the needs of the child/ren. Once the Plan has been developed, the Chair asks everyone to give their view, based on the identified risks, actions, and expected outcomes for the child/ren, regarding whether the child/ren should be subject to a Child Protection Plan, and if so, under what category.
7. In circumstances where there are mixed views regarding whether a child should be made subject of a Child Protection Plan, the Chair should facilitate further discussion exploring everyone's perspectives and seek a consensus agreement. Where there is formal dissent about the decision at the end of this process, this should be recorded in the minutes and advice given, after the Conference, to those who have dissented, about the escalation policy.
8. The Chair needs to ensure that the Core Group membership is agreed, the date of the first Core Group is set, and that this is recorded in the Chair's Report. Core group activity in implementing and reviewing the Plan should be monitored and reviewed at each Conference.
9. Chairs need to ensure that the minimum visiting frequency standard of every 10 working days by the social worker is monitored, reviewed and recorded at each Review. If it is clear from the Social Workers report that this visiting frequency has been met, and no concerns are expressed about the level of visiting during the Conference, this can be a very brief agenda item. However, in circumstances where visits have not been

of this frequency, or whether the level and/or nature of the visits needs to be amended, this will need to be discussed in more detail, and recorded in the Chairs report.

10. For ICPC's, the Contingency plan will be based on the Contingency outlined in the S47 assessment. At each Review Conference, the effectiveness of the contingency plan needs to be actively reviewed and amended as necessary.

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