

# **CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES**

## **Information Leaflet for Parents**



## **What is a Child Protection Conference?**

This is a formal meeting to share information about you and your family and to discuss your child's safety. This can be difficult but you will have had a chance to discuss with your child's social worker what is likely to be said at the conference. None of the information should be a surprise to you.

The meeting is arranged following a child protection investigation and because it is felt there are still concerns that your child either has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse or neglect and therefore maybe at risk of 'significant harm'. All the children (under 18) in your house will be considered at this first conference.

Your views are very important and you will have plenty of opportunities to say what you think and to question the professionals there.

Your child's social worker will write a report, which they will share with you before the conference. Other professionals too will write reports and you will always get a copy.

## **What does the conference do?**

After all the information has been shared and discussed, people at the conference will consider the risks that there maybe to your child and the things that are keeping your child safe. Every professional will say whether they think that your child is still at risk of harm and whether your child should be the subject of a child protection plan. **The conference chair has the final decision.**

If your child needs a child protection plan, then this will be started at the conference and it will detail all the things that need to change so that your child becomes safe, with names of who must do what and when.

## **What is a child protection plan?**

This is a multi agency plan for a child who is believed by the professionals attending the conference to be at risk of 'significant harm'. This plan does not change the legal rights of a parent with 'parental responsibility' for a child.

If your child becomes subject of a child protection plan, then this will be under one of the four categories: (actual or likely) physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

Every child with a child protection plan has this reviewed regularly and is always allocated a key worker (a social worker).

Although the list of children with a child protection plan is confidential, any professional who is concerned about a child can check with Children's Services to see if a child has or has had a child protection plan.

If you move away, Kingston Children's Services will inform the Children's Services in your new area that your child has a child protection plan.

### **Who will know my child has a child protection plan?**

Conferences are confidential. This is always stressed at the start of the conference. This means that information about your family will only be shared with people working with you, if this is in your child's best interest.

### **Can I attend?**

We welcome parents' attending conferences and your involvement is very important.

You may wish to bring a friend or relative with you for support. You can also bring your solicitor with you. You should discuss who is coming to support you with your child's social worker well before the conference.

If English is not your first language, then your child's social worker can arrange for an interpreter to be there.

If you don't attend, then your child's social worker will always let you know what happened as soon as possible. The chair will also write to you with the conference outcome.

Exceptionally, a parent will not be invited. An example of when this decision would be taken is if it is thought that there is a risk of violence by that parent or it is felt that the conference will not achieve its purpose with the parent there.

### **Can children and young people attend?**

Young children and babies never attend conferences. Your child's social worker can help you arrange childcare whilst the conference is running if needed.

Young people do sometimes attend the conference if it is felt that this is in their best interest. You and your child (young person) can discuss this with your child's social worker well before the conference.

### **Who else will attend?**

Your child's social worker will always attend. Other professionals working with you and your family will also be invited such as your child's head teacher and health visitor.

There may also be some people who you do not know but who have important information for the conference such as a professional's manager. A council solicitor sometimes attends to provide legal advice. An experienced Children's Social Care manager will chair the meeting.

### **What records of the conference are there?**

A minute taker in the conference will make a written record of the conference, called the 'minutes'. You will get a copy of these minutes about 3 weeks afterwards as well as a copy of any other written report that you do not already have.

The outline child protection plan will be sent to you within 48 hours of the conference.

In Kingston we audiotape child protection conferences. The reason for this is that if there are any queries about the minutes, then we can also refer back to the tape to check what was said.

### **Can the conference remove my child?**

No. Only a court can make an order for Children's Services to remove your child. A conference can make recommendations about what is thought to be best for your child. Sometimes this means applying to a court for an order to protect your child.

Children's Services by law have to try hard to work 'in partnership' with you. Although you may not always agree with Children's Services, most child protection plans are managed in voluntary agreement with parents and without the need to go to court.

Most children with a child protection plan live at home with their parents.

## **How long will my child have a child protection plan?**

The decision about whether your child has a child protection plan is considered at every conference. The first review conference is always within 3 months of the initial conference. Other reviews are then always within 6 months.

In Kingston, we work hard to make sure that no child has a child protection plan for more than 2 years.

## **What if I don't agree with the conference decision?**

We welcome constructive views from parents and we are constantly trying to improve services. The chair invites parents to fill out a short questionnaire when the decision is made that a child no longer requires a child protection plan.

If you are not happy about the conference process or the outcome of the conference, then first you should discuss this with the conference chair. If you are still not happy, then you should write within 28 days of the conference, to the chair. This may lead to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board holding a special panel hearing and will also involve the social services complaints manager. The social worker can give you further details of this process.

If you are not happy with a specific agency's role at the conference, you should ask to speak to the manager for the professional who was at the conference. If you are still not happy, then you will need to make a formal complaint to that agency.

*Kingston Children & Family Services work in partnership with parents and carers to ensure all children are protected from harm and neglect. We aim to provide a service to all parents and children that is sensitive to the religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background of the family. We aim to consider the gender, sexuality and any disability of family members.*

## Useful Contacts

### **Safeguarding Service**

020 8547 6587  
(Office Hours)

### **Eagle Chambers**

020 8547 6920  
(Office Hours)

### **Advancing Services for Kingston Kids (ASKK)**

020 8547 5888  
(Office Hours)

ASKK and Children's Information Service (CIS) are information sharing and information giving services that provide advice and practical support to parents/carers, children and young people in Kingston. Why not contact ASKK to find out about our local Children's Fund Activities, Parents Forum and the new Family Advice and Support Team (FASS) and Family Support activities.

### **Emergency Social Worker**

020 8770 5000  
(Out of Office Hours)

### **Kingston Police Station**

020 8546 1212

### **Emergency Services**

999

**RBK Website:** [www.kingston.gov.uk](http://www.kingston.gov.uk)

Translation advice:

If you have difficulty understanding this document, please contact the Guildhall Information Desk.