**Good Practice Guidance for the Multi-Agency Child Protection Conferencing Process**

**Aim of this guidance**

* To clarify role expectations for those contributing to the child protection conference process to enable LSCB partner agencies to fulfil their statutory responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and section 175 and 157 of the Education Act 2002.
* To ensure a better understanding of roles and responsibilities within the child protection conferencing process.
* To develop the skills and confidence of staff in all agencies in contributing effectively to child protection conferences and child protection plans.
* To ensure the LSCB child protection standards are met by all agencies

**A shared responsibility**

“Safeguarding children-the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm-is everyone’s responsibility” Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2013

It is therefore important that all professional attending a child protection conference are clear about their role and responsibility and come prepared to contribute fully to the decision making process.

The LSCB Safeguarding Children Procedures 2010 give detailed guidance on the child protection conference process;

Give web link

**Purpose of the initial child protection conference is:**

* to bring together and analyse, in an inter-agency setting, the information that has been obtained about the child's developmental needs, and the parents' or carers' capacity to respond to these needs to ensure the child’s safety and promote the child's health and development, within the context of their wider family and environment;
* to consider the evidence presented to the conference and taking into account the child’s present situation and information about his or her family history and present and past family functioning, make judgments about the likelihood of a child suffering significant harm in future, and decide whether the child is continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm; and
* to decide what future action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, including the child becoming the subject of a child protection plan, what the planned developmental outcomes are for the child and how best to intervene to achieve these*.*

(“Working Together” HM Government 2013)

**Responsibilities of practitioners attending initial child protection conferences**

Those attending conferences should be there because they have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child or family or both. (Working Together HM Government 2013

**Prior to the conference**

* **All the agencies,** who have participated in the Section 47 and all those invited to the conference **should provide a written report** **and this should be made** **available** **to the Chair 3 working days** **in advance** of the initial conference**. It must be shared with parents before the conference**
* The social worker’s report to conference should also be with the Chair **at least 3 working days prior to the conference and be shared with parents**
* If an agency representative is unable to attend the conference she/he must ensure that a written report is made available to the chairperson and, if possible, that a well prepared colleague attend in his/her place.
* Conference members will be expected to arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the conference to allow time to read reports.

**The role of the child protection chair**

The responsibilities of the chair include:

* meeting the child and family before the conference, to ensure that they understand the purpose of the conference and what will happen
* setting out the purpose of the conference to all present, introducing the agenda, and emphasising the confidential nature of the meeting
* enabling all those present, and absent contributors, to make their full contribution to discussion and decision-making
* ensuring the voice of the child is heard
* ensuring that the conference takes the decisions required of it in an informed, systematic and explicit way
* determine which category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered or is likely to suffer
* agreeing and signing-off the minutes of the conference
* being accountable to the Director of Children’s Services for the conduct of the conference

**Role of professionals attending Initial Conference**

* All agencies must provide a written report which has been shared with parents prior to the conference. Appendix 1
* The agency representative should come to the conference prepared to contribute to determining whether or not the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and needs to be the subject of a child protection plan**. The representative should have a clear idea of how they/their agency may contribute to any outline child protection plan if the decision of the conference is to make the child subject to a plan.**
* Learning from Serious Case Reviews highlights that analysis of risk is critical to sound and safe decision making. All representatives at conferences should be prepared to analyse the information presented at conference in order to determine the risk of significant harm to the child/children. Effective decision making benefits from robust debate of differing professional perspectives. It may involve challenging alternative views where this is supported by professional opinion or research.

**After the conference**

**Role of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit**

* Record of decision, category of abuse and outline plan to be circulated within 1 working day
* Minutes of conference to be circulated within 15 working days of the conference by secure email or post

**Role of professionals**

* All professionals should record the outcome of conference and liaise with any appropriate colleagues as deemed necessary.
* Record the dates and times of any subsequent meetings.
* Make arrangements to attend the core group if identified as a core group member at the conference.

**Pre-birth conferences**

The above guidance also applies to pre birth conferences.

**The Child Protection Plan**

The child protection conference is responsible for deciding if the criteria for “significant harm” are met and the child/children therefore need to be the subject of a child protection plan. The category of abuse or neglect that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering will be decided by the Chair of the conference. An interagency outline child protection plan will then be drawn up by all attendees; this will be facilitated by the Chairperson.

As a contributor to the conference you will be required to participate in the process of developing the details of the plan with other professionals and the child/parent/caregivers at the conference. It is therefore important to be clear about how you/your agency may contribute to the child protection plan before attending the conference. You may need to think about whether you are authorised to commit your agency’s resources or whether you need to discuss this with your manager prior to attending the meeting.

**The overall aim of the child protection plan is to**:

* Ensure the child is safe and prevent him or her from suffering further harm.
* Promote the child’s health and development – i.e. his or her welfare; and
* Provided it is in the best interest of the child, support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child.

**The child protection plan should:**

* clearly identify the risks to the child and what needs to change for the child to be safe
* describe the identified development needs of the child, and what therapeutic services are required
* establish which agencies need to be involved in different aspects of the plan
* include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, including interim objectives
* include realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve the planned outcomes, with timescales
* include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action
* clearly identify roles and responsibilities of professionals and family member, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members
* lay down points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which progress will be judged
* Set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of those professionals with routine contact with the child – e.g. health visitors, GPs and teachers – as well as professional providing specialist services or targeted support to the child and family.
* inform the membership of the core group
* inform the visiting frequency for the key worker to see the child

**The Core Group**

The responsibility of the core group is to develop the outline child protection plan as a detailed working tool and to implement it within the outline plan agreed at the initial child protection conference.

The core group is responsible for managing the child protection plan on behalf of the conference.

The chair of the core group will be a member of the social care team within the Children Services Department and will be either the team manager or another experienced social worker. Membership should include the lead social worker, (also known as key worker, or allocated social worker), the child if appropriate, family members and professionals or foster carers who will have direct contact with the family**.** The conference itself will identify those agencies that should be part of the core group.Although the lead social worker has lead responsibility for the implementation of the child protection plan, **all members of the core group are collectively responsible for carrying out these tasks, refining the plan as needed and monitoring progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan**. All members of the core group will submit written reports to each core group meeting.

**Attendance at core group meetings is key to the effective implementation of the child protection plan and should be given a high priority by all agencies.** Agencies should ensure that members of the core group undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively in accordance with the agreed child protection plan.

Core groups are an important forum for working with parents, wider family

members and children of sufficient age and understanding. It can often be difficult for parents to accept the need for a child protection plan within the confines of a formal child protection conference. Their co-operation may be gained later through the core group meeting process. Sometimes there may be conflicts of interest between family members who have a relevant interest in the work of the core group. The child’s best interests should always take precedence over the interests of other family members.

The core group will meet 10 days prior to the review conference to consider whether the child protection plan has reduced the risk of significant harm and to make a recommendation to the review conference regarding the need for the plan to continue or to be changed

The minutes of the core group will be circulated within 5 working days

**Responsibilities of practitioners attending review child protection conferences**

**The purpose of the child protection review conference is to:**

* review whether the child is continuing to suffer, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and their health and developmental progress against planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan;
* ensure that the child continues to be safeguarded from harm; and
* consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be

 changed.

The review conference requires as much preparation, commitment and management as the initial conference as it is crucial that the momentum is maintained in the process of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

**Prior to the conference**

* All core group members should provide a written report and this should be made available to the chair **5 working days** **in advance** of the review conference.
* All other agencies should also provide a written report which should be made available to the chair 5 **working days in advance** of the review conference
* If an agency representative is unable to attend the conference she/he must ensure that a written report is made available to the chairperson and, if possible, that a well prepared colleague attend in his/her place.
* **All reports must be shared with parents prior to the review**

Conference members will be expected to arrive at least 30 minutes before the start of the conference to allow time to read reports and speak to the chair regarding any issues pertaining to the conduct of the conference.

**At the conference**

* The agency representative should come to the conference prepared to contribute to determining whether or not the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and therefore needs to remain the subject of a child

 protection plan**.**

**After the conference**

* All professionals should record the outcome of conference and liaise with any appropriate colleagues as deemed necessary.
* Record the dates and times of any subsequent meetings convened to safeguard the child’s welfare.
* Make arrangements to attend the core group/children in need meeting if nominated as a member of the team around the child/family.

Apppendix 1 Template for report to conference

**INITIAL/REVIEW CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE REPORT**

A child protection conference is a multi-agency meeting bringing together agencies involved in protecting children and supporting family members. The purpose of this report is to supply relevant information to the conference to assist in decision making. The report should be shared with the parents/child prior to the conference.

This report will be circulated to all participants of the conference, so please bring sufficient copies.

It should be sent to the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit (at the secure email address below) 3 **Days prior to an Initial Conference** or **5 Days prior to a Review Conference**

Email to: ............................................................

**Agency/Organisation** (please print):

**Name/Role** (please print):

**Date & Time of Conference:**

**SUBJECTS:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name(s) of child(ren)** | **Dob /****EDD**  | **Address** | **GP** | **School /Nursery** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**PARENTS/CARERS:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name(s) of Parent(s) and to whom** | **Dob** | **Address** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name(s) of other significant people to children and parents** | **Date(s) of Birth** | **Relationship to child(ren)** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**PLEASE COMPLETE EACH BOX AS APPLICABLE BASED UPON INFORMATION HELD BY YOUR AGENCY *AND* YOUR PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH FAMILY MEMBERS.**

 **Length Of Involvement With Family By Your Agency** (including start and end date if applicable):

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Chronology of Agency Involvement:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Guidance Note:** *Please provide dates along with a brief description of* ***significant events****. This should include any injuries to the child, incidents of domestic abuse, failed appointments, health checks undertaken, hospital admissions (including A&E), mental health needs, substance misuse, school attendance record etc.* |
| ***Date***: | ***Event***: | ***Source***: |

### Summary of Information Held by Your Agency:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Identified Risk Factors: *Please specify any factors that pose a risk to the children including the behaviors or attitude of carers.*  | Identified Protective Factors: *Please identify any factors that potentially act to protect the child/ren within and outside of the family.*  |
| **Child’s Developmental**Needs: *Health; education; emotional and behavioural development; identity; family and social relationships; social presentation; self care skills.* |  |  |
| **Parenting Capacity:** *Basic care; ensuring safety; emotional warmth; stimulation; guidance and boundaries; stability. Please also include impact of factors e.g. mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse on parenting.* |  |  |
| **Family & Environmental Factors:***Family history; family functioning; wider family; housing; employment; income; family and social integration; community resources, including significant others associated with the household.* |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Based on the information held by your agency, do you think this child/ren is at risk of significant harm?** |
| **From the information you are aware of, what needs to change for the level of risk to be reduced?** |
| **How can your agency contribute to a child protection plan/ children in need plan?** |

**Report shared with parent: Yes/No**

**Report shared child: Yes/No**

**Signed: …………………………………………………….** **Date: ………………………………….…**