

## Initial Child Protection Conferences under the Calderdale Model for Strengthening Families

### Information for Parents and Families

**This leaflet has been prepared to help parents and families understand what happens at an Initial Child Protection Conference and provides guidance to help you to prepare for the meeting.**

#### The Calderdale Model for Strengthening Families

Calderdale's Safeguarding and QA Service have introduced a new framework to help you to participate more fully in Child Protection Conferences and Reviews because we recognise that for a parent or carer, attending an Initial Child Protection Conference may make you feel nervous and anxious, and it might be difficult to feel confident enough to speak up about things you don't agree with during the Conference. Your contribution is a vital element of the process and in this new way of working you will be an active participant in the process rather than a passive recipient of decisions and services.

The Strengthening Families model puts your child at the centre of the process and allows you and your family to co-operate and work closely with the staff involved. The aim of the Conference is to share information, assess risk and decide on what needs to happen to protect your child. The Strengthening Families in Child Protection Conference model aims to:

- Help support everyone to work together
- Identify strengths and protective factors within your family
- Hear the views, wishes and feelings of your child
- Build a balanced view of your family and your family's needs, including the protection of your child
- Focus on building a good relationship between you and your child, the lead Social Worker and other professionals by listening to and respecting your views, opinions and wishes

#### What is an Initial Child Protection Conference and why is it held?

An Initial Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss concerns about your child and decide how to make them safer.

The purpose of the Conference is to:

- Share information about a child's health, safety and wellbeing
- Assess whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm
- Identify the strengths within the family and how these can be built on
- Identify any support needed by the family and the professionals / agencies who might be able to provide this
- Identify changes needed (if any) in order to ensure the safety of the child
- Decide if the child needs to have a Child Protection Plan

An Initial Child Protection Conference does not make decisions about legal or court action, or where children should live, but these issues are sometimes discussed at Conference. However, the Conference will decide whether your child is made subject of a Child Protection Plan.

#### Who else will be at the Conference?

The Conference will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer who is independent of Children's Social Care and there will also be an administrator who will make notes of the meeting; you will receive a copy of the notes within 15 working days of the Conference.

In addition a number of professionals will be asked to attend the meeting; some of whom have had involvement with your family, but there may also be some individuals you have not met; who have been invited because of their expertise or because they may be able to help.

You will be invited to attend, along with anyone else who holds Parental Responsibility or are significant members of the family. You can bring a supporter (either a friend or you may be able to have help from a qualified advocate) to the meeting. Adult Advocacy Services in Calderdale are accessed by referral through Adult Social Care.

#### Children and Young People's Advocacy Service

This service is available for all children and young people over 10 years old, who are involved in Child Protection Conferences. A referral is made by the Social Worker when they are arranging a Conference. A qualified Advocate will then arrange to visit your child either at home or school, or somewhere else they will feel comfortable to talk.

#### What will happen at the Conference?

Thirty minutes before the Conference starts, the Conference Chair will meet with you; to welcome you, explain how the Conference will run and to talk to you about the best way you can contribute. In addition, the Chair will confirm that we have details of all family members, including friends or other agencies who offer you support.

At the start of the meeting everyone will introduce themselves and the Chair will ask the Social Worker to summarise their concerns, outlining the risk of harm or danger to your child and reason(s) why the Conference is needed. Everyone present will be asked to contribute to the discussions about danger/harm/risk, strengths and the things you do well in your family and also consider issues that impact on your ability to care for and protect your child. Members of the Conference will discuss what needs to change, what information needs to be clarified and what further support or action is needed in order to reduce the risk of harm.

At the end of the meeting, a decision will be made about whether a Child Protection Plan is required and identify the category of abuse or neglect (see below). However, the Conference may decide that a Child Protection Plan is not required and the needs of your child and family can be met through a Child in Need Plan (CiN),

Calderdale Assessment Framework (CAF) or through the provision of advice, support and guidance.

#### What is a Child Protection Plan?

A Child Protection Plan is an agreed set of goals/changes that everyone must work towards to ensure that your child is safe and their health and wellbeing is promoted. A Child Protection Plan is put in place because the legal threshold of significant harm has been met and there are concerns with regard to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

#### How can you prepare for the Conference

It is understandable that attending a Conference may make you feel nervous or anxious, you may find it stressful and it might be difficult to feel confident enough to speak up about things you don't agree with during the Conference. However, it is really important that you have your say and that you challenge any information that is factually incorrect.

Professionals will have had time to prepare reports about the key facts, their views and ideas. It may help you and your family to do the same in advance. If you need support to do this you may be able to have help from an advocate if you are referred by Adult Services (see Help and Advice at the end of this leaflet).

Even if you don't want to prepare written notes, it may help you to think about the following things:

#### **Strengths**

- What do you think are the strengths in your family?
- What are the things you do well?
- What positive things would you like the professionals to know about you and your family?

#### **Risks /Concerns**

- What (if anything) do you think needs to change in order for your child to be safe?

#### **Services /Support needed**

- Does your family need any additional services or support?
- How would this support help?
- What do you think needs to happen after the Conference?

You may want to take notes during the conference, and if there is anything that you don't understand about what is being said or done the Chair will support you in the meeting to fully contribute and challenge any inaccuracies, and will also be available after the Conference along with the Social Worker.

### What happens next?

You will be sent a written record of the discussions, recommendations including any Outline Plan made at the Conference. A Child Protection Plan is an agreed set of goals /changes that everyone must work towards to ensure that your child is safe and their health and wellbeing are being provided for. A Child Protection Plan is produced for a child who is felt to be at risk of significant harm and in need of protection.

If your child becomes subject to a Child Protection Plan:

- You will be asked to attend a regular meeting, called a Core Group, which reviews the progress of the Child Protection Plan.
- Within 3 months a Child Protection Review Conference will be held.
- Every 6 months thereafter, for as long as your child is the subject of a Plan, there will be a Child Protection Review Conference.
- The purpose of the Review is very similar to that of the Initial Child Protection Conference because it assesses
  - the level of risk/danger/harm your child continues to be subjected to
  - what progress has been made against the Plan
  - whether or not your child continues to require a Child Protection Plan

### What if a Child Protection Plan is not needed?

If it is decided at the Initial Child Protection Conference that a Child Protection Plan is not required, it might be that you agree to a Child in Need Plan or CAF Plan.

Both these types of plans support you with regular Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings that would benefit and help your family. The relevant professionals would meet with you on a regular basis to review what progress is being made.

### What to do if you're not happy about a Child Protection Conference

You have a right to complain if you are unhappy about any aspect of the Conference. If this is the case, you should contact the Chair initially to discuss your concerns.

Safeguarding and QA Service  
Heath Training and Development Centre  
Free School Lane  
Halifax  
HX1 2PT  
01422 394055

Calderdale Safeguarding and QA Service want to provide helpful, accurate and understandable information. If you find any of this information unclear, wrong or out-of-date, or if you think additional information would help other readers, please let us know so that amendments can be made. Contact the Safeguarding and QA Service on 01422 394055.

### **Useful Information, Help and Advice**

The following list provides details of advice and advocacy services that you might find helpful:

#### **Citizen's Advice Bureau**

CAB has offices in Halifax, Brighouse, Elland, Hebden Bridge and Todmorden  
Advice line Tel: 01422 842848

#### **Calderdale Advocacy Service**

The Resource Centre

Hall Street

Halifax

HX1 5AY

T. 01422 323809

F. 01422 323798

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

Please contact the Calderdale Advocacy Service to find out if you are eligible for advocacy support.

#### **Rhodes Street Advice Centre**

2 Rhodes Street

Halifax

HX1 5ET

Tel: 01422 341908

#### **Solicitors**

A list of solicitors who specialise in family law can be found in the Solicitors and Barristers Directory available in the Central Library, Halifax Tel: 01422 392630

[www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/findasolicitor.law)

#### **Parentline**

Provides a free, confidential help-line for anyone in a parenting role.

Tel: 0808 800 2222

[www.parentline.org.uk](http://www.parentline.org.uk)

#### **Family Rights Group Advice Line**

Provides a Freephone advice line and advice can be offered in languages other than English

Tel: 0800 731 1696 from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm and 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm on weekdays.