



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION FIFTEEN

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

2007

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Introduction to Child Protection Conferences

The reason that this section has been included is that foster carers are often invited to attend Child Protection Conferences for the children in their care. The contribution of carers is vital to the process of a full understanding of the child concerned. This will ultimately help the care planning for the child.

The following people may be invited (where appropriate) to Child Protection Conferences;

- Chair
- Parent/s
- Child/ren
- Foster carer/s
- Social worker of the family
- Social workers manager
- GP
- Health Visitor
- Residential social worker
- School nurse
- Teacher/s
- Youth worker
- Community physician
- Child minder
- Police
- Duty social worker
- Educational welfare Officer
- Family placement social worker
- Grandparent/s
- Family Centre Workers

- NSPCC
- Child Protection Social Worker
- Minute taker

Usually some people who are invited cannot attend. However Child Protection conferences (CPC's) can be large. The chair will ask everyone to introduce him or herself at the start. Being a part of one of these meetings can feel daunting.

This section aims to give foster carers some ideas about how conferences are organised and their part in them.

1. The Aims of the Conference

The aim is to share information with all the people involved in the care of the child about whom there are concerns over safety and well being.

The child protection conference will;

- Decide on a plan for a child. This may be a child protection plan or a looked after children's plan or a care plan depending on the situation.
- Decide what action should be taken and by whom.
- Create a Core Group to monitor.

A core group is usually made up of five or six people. This normally includes the social worker, parents and carers. There may also be additional professionals who are directly involved with the family.

2. Categories of Abuse

Children are given a Child Protection plan if they are deemed to be at risk of or to have suffered 'significant harm'. Within this there are four areas of abuse. This handbook has already covered the four areas in detail in the child protection section. This will be a brief reminder;

- Neglect
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional

3. Foster Carers Role

The chair of the meeting will allow space for people to contribute. Foster carers will be expected to provide information on;

- How the child settled in (if recent)
- Their physical and emotional state when they arrived
- Any worrying behaviour
- How the contact visits seem to be going
- Positives about the child e.g.; good manners etc

Carers may wish to talk to their supervising social worker before-hand, to decide what they want to say and how best to say it. It is important not to get involved in arguments with birth family or the child. Birth families often feel under attack and can therefore respond angrily. Clarifying your statements in a calm way is advisable. It is also a good idea to express your views towards the chair and not the family. The chair may ask you for clarification if your statements are challenged.

4. Decision Making

Once all the information has been gathered the chair will clarify the following points;

- Is the child at risk?
- For what reasons?
- What should the plan be?
- Which category should it be placed under?
- Who will be named as responsible worker?
- Are any other views or professional opinions to be sought?
- Are there any disagreements about this decision?

Lastly the conference will make recommendations which may include the following;

- Is legal action recommended?
- What services should be provided to the family?
- Should the child be removed from the home?
- Who will be in the core group?
- Is a recommendation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board appropriate?
- Date for review Conference
- Recording any disagreements
- Any specific dangers?
- Final tasks, such as informing people who are not present.

Time Out Fostering Supervising Social Workers want to help foster carers to feel confident and valued as an important contributor at a Child Protection Conference and will assist carers to achieve this. It is important to ask for support especially at the first few Child Protection conferences.