

Guidance for Children's Centre Staff in Gloucestershire

When to attend an Initial Child Protection Conference

Date of Issue: 24th March 2015



Gloucestershire
Safeguarding Children
Board

Recent feedback from some Children's Centre Managers is that there is a certain amount of inconsistency in practice across the Centres, about attendance at Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs). This has occurred where

- a) Some Children Centres only attend if they have checked first there is a role for them, whereas
- b) some are invited to and attend all Initial Child Protection Conferences where there is a child aged pre-birth to 4.

The following guidance is issued by Gloucestershire Safeguarding Board Business Unit, on behalf of the Board. It will support you and your staff to act fully within *Working Together To Safeguard Children 2013*, the South West Child Protection Procedures, and our local Core Standards for Child Protection Conferences.

Question 1: Should Children's Centres always attend an ICPC where the child is pre-birth to 4 years old, or only where the Centre is actively involved with that child and their family?

Answer: You should attend whenever you are invited. It is the Social Worker's role to decide who should be invited, and will have invited you either because

- a) you have an important role in adding to the understanding of a particular child's experience and needs, where you are directly involved with them, or
- b) you can provide important knowledge and expertise more generally and an agency view on relevant aspects of child development, parenting capacity, risk management and so on.

This advice guards against the risk of Children's Centre staff only attending if they think they will have a role, where that will not always be clear until the discussions at Conference have taken place. Attending either having directly worked with the child and family or on a more advisory capacity, are each a valued part of evidence based risk assessment, informed planning, and correct decisions about the nature of service provision.

A further benefit to a Children's Centre attending a Child Protection Conference, even if they are not currently involved is it can provide clear information and understanding to the Children's Centre as to what the concerns are for the children and why the parents are being asked to attend the Children's Centre as part of a Child Protection Plan. This is also helpful for the parents to be able to put a face to an agency, which may help alleviate their anxieties and help form good working relationships from the outset.

Question 2: Should we develop a protocol for when Children's Centre Staff should attend conference?

Answer: The advice is that this is not required. It is important that there are no unintended restrictions on Children's Social Care decisions about who is relevant to invite depending on the nature of the individual case. The Social Worker and Team Manager decide to invite professionals because they have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child or family, or both. With reference to *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013* and the South West Child Protection Procedures, this might include:

Professionals working directly with the child or family

- Professionals working directly with the child
- Professionals not working with the child, but with the child's parent(s)
- Professionals not working directly with either, but who have specialist knowledge about child development, interpreting medical information, or expertise in a particular type of harm, a disability or long term illness.

Question 3: What should Children's Centre staff do if they are invited, and not sure if they should attend?

Answer: In the first instance, please check with the Social Worker who invited you and holds that responsibility. Alternatively, contact the named Child Protection Chair, who is accountable for providing guidance or support to the Social Worker in making sure that all relevant professionals are invited or asked to provide written reports.

Under statutory guidance, you are responsible for

- Contributing the information their agency provides ahead of the conference, setting out the nature of the agency's involvement with the child and family
- Considering, in conjunction with the police and the appointed conference Chair, whether the report can and should be shared with the parents and if so when;
- Attending the conference and taking part in decision making when invited

Further guidance on local expectations and standards can be found here:

GSCB Core Standards for Child Protection Conferences

<http://www.gscb.org.uk/article/113884/Safeguarding-standards-and-guidance>

If you have questions or feedback about this guidance, please contact the GSCB Business Unit on 01452 583629 or Head of Quality, Cathy Griffiths on 01452 328690