

Core Standards for Child Protection Conferences



Introduction

The following five standards are about the **roles and responsibilities of practitioners who take part in the Child Protection Conferences.**

Child Protection Conference Chairs have been central to developing these standards, alongside members of Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) sub groups. Reference to these standards will help Child Protection Chairs and sub groups to a) highlight good practice where observed and b) alert the GSCB where any barriers to good practice need strategic level attention.

Standard 1: Decisions made at a Child Protection Conference are based on a good assessment and understanding of the child/young person's needs.

Standard 2: Clear plans are made for children and young people, rigorously recorded and acted upon.

Standard 3: The progress of a child/young person's plan is regularly reviewed to make sure that their needs are being met.

Standard 4: Children and young people's views are sought and used to influence decisions and actions within the Child Protection Conference process.

Standard 5: Monitoring and quality assurance is in place, to continually improve practice and service delivery to children who are subject of Child Protection Plans.

The detail under each standard sets out responsibilities that help achieve these standards; those of Conference Chairs, then Minute Secretaries, Social Workers, and all other professionals. These are informed by:

- "Working Together to Safeguard Children" and South West Procedures
- The Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young Person Act 2008
- The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (England) 2010
- Findings from GSCB Multi-Agency Case File audits and recommendations
- Feedback from Child Protection Chairs and from Team Managers
- Feedback on related issues from Chairs of GSCB Sub-committees
- Reference to standards published by other Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- The Munro report on Safeguarding.

Standard 1: Decisions made at a Child Protection Conference are based on a good assessment and understanding of the child/young person's needs.

The Child Protection Chair is responsible for:

- a) Reading the Social Worker's report at least 24 hours ahead of the Conference
- b) Making sure that the Conference is "Quorate", meaning there is sufficient attendance to hold the Conference. Where needed, making the decision to cancel or rearrange it and ensuring the reason is clearly recorded and shared with the family and other agencies
- c) Providing guidance or feedback to support the Social Worker in making sure that all relevant professionals are invited to Conference or asked to provide written reports
- d) Making sure that Conferences start on time, so that good use of the discussion and decision time can be made
- e) Arranging for the Conference to be held in two parts if needed, to allow attendance of all whose engagement in the discussion and decisions is required, e.g. where there are issues of domestic abuse
- f) Ensuring all items of the agenda are covered in the meeting – and that any changes to the agenda for a "split" Conference are fully explained to participants
- g) Ensuring all the attendees have the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way and their contribution recorded
- h) Being available to meet with the family before the Conference (half an hour before an Initial Conference, 15 minutes before a Review Conference), to support their understanding of the process and their meaningful contribution
- i) Ensuring all attendees are aware of the criteria for a child to have a Child Protection Plan
- j) Making sure that the decisions and actions from the Conference are clearly recorded in writing and distributed. Checking that the minutes accurately summarise discussion, set out risk analysis and accurately record decisions and actions agreed.
- k) Where a parent/carer has a learning disability, identify whether the parent/carer has received reports before the Conference takes place, whether consideration has been given to the need for an advocate to support their contribution
- l) Where a parent/carer's first language is not English, identifying whether reports have been provided to the parent/carer before the Conference takes place and whether a translator has been arranged if needed
- m) Making sure that throughout the Conference families are treated sensitively and with respect by all those in attendance
- n) Uploading the decision onto the child's record within 24 hours of the Conference
- o) Uploading a summary about these decisions (Chair's Outcomes form) within 5 working days

- p) In consultation with the Child Protection Conference Manager and the Head of Service, postponing Conferences out of statutory timescale only in exceptional circumstances
- q) Where the decision to rearrange a Conference has been made, making sure the reason is clearly recorded in file records and shared with the family and relevant agencies.

The Conference Minute Taker is responsible for:

- a) Providing a minute taking service for all Child Protection Case Conferences, including sending out invitations, distribution of agendas, reports and minutes
- b) Distributing the full minutes and outline Child Protection Plan within 20 working days.

Social Care Managers and Social Workers are responsible for:

- a) Alerting the Child Protection Conference Team when there has been a Strategy Discussion, so that the Initial Child Protection Conference can be convened within 15 working days.
- b) Bringing information from all sources together into a systematic chronology
- c) Overseeing the completion of the assessment by the core group within a maximum of 35 working days. Focussing particularly on those areas highlighted by initial assessment, strategy discussion or Initial Child Protection Conference, as issues requiring further exploration and understanding
- d) Analysing the findings of the assessment to provide an understanding of the child's needs and parenting capacity, to inform planning, the objectives of the plan and the nature of service provision
- e) Making sure that all those involved in the care of the child/young person are consulted and have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully, including those not in attendance at the actual Conference, so that the Conference is properly informed
- f) Making sure those who work with the parents are considered appropriately for Conference attendance and/or core group membership; such as substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse workers
- g) In consultation with the police and Child Protection Chair, identifying what information may be confidential and should not be shared with the child/young person or family members, if to do so may place a child at risk of significant harm or jeopardise police investigations
- h) Where the decision is made to share information, making sure the appropriate consent is sought and where consent is refused, considering whether information needs to be shared for the protection of the child/young person and if so take the necessary steps in consultation with the police and Child Protection Chair
- i) Once a date is set ensure that request for invitations for all those attending are sent to the Child Protection Team the next working day, with all the up to date details including full names and addresses
- j) Making sure that the parents are invited and helped to participate. This may include ensuring the family have made appropriate childcare arrangements, if the children are

not participating in the conference process. Family members should be given the social worker's report in advance (48 hours before an Initial Conference and at least 3 days before a Review Conference).

- k) Where appropriate, discussing with the Conference Chair whether it may be necessary to exclude one or more family members from all or part of the Conference, if their attendance could threaten the safety of a key attendant or prevent professionals from discussing the child's needs and actions required
- l) Where a parent is excluded, or unable or unwilling to attend a Conference, making sure that they are enabled to communicate their views to the Conference by other means
- m) Reminding the family of their opportunity to meet the Chair prior to the Conference
- n) Where a parent/carer has a learning disability considering the need for an Advocate and helping arrange one if appropriate
- o) Providing the Social Worker's report to the Chair of the Conference at least 2 days ahead of the scheduled Conference
- p) Providing their report to all key professionals at least 2 days ahead of the Conference
- q) Attending the Conference half an hour before the scheduled start time for an Initial Conference and 15 minutes before a Review Conference, in order to support the Chair explain the process to the family and to check reports have been distributed and read.

All practitioners are responsible for:

- a) Submitting a written report where they have been invited to the Conference, including if they are unable to attend.
- b) Providing this report (or contributing to their organisation's written report) to the Child Protection Conference Team 2 days in advance of the Conference, setting out the nature of involvement with the family and any information related to risk and resilience factors. Copies of the report should be brought to Conference.
- c) Ensuring relevant information on alleged offenders is provided where appropriate, taken into account in the assessment process and procedures followed
- d) Taking great care to distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion
- e) Considering and making recommendations on how agencies, professional's and the family should work together to make sure that the child/young person will be safeguarded from harm in the future
- f) Sharing the written report with the family before the Conference two days before Conference
- g) Giving clear, valid reasons as to why any information should be withheld from family members at the Conference
- h) Considering and advising the Social Worker whether there are other key professionals who have a significant contribution to make and should be invited to attend the Conference or core group. Where there is more than one professional from the same organisation, one person should be identified to represent the agency where possible

- i) Attending the Conference on time and phoning the Child Protection Conference Team if they are going to be delayed
- j) Taking a full part in decision making
- k) Working with the Social Worker to produce a comprehensive core assessment, to be used to develop the outline child protection plan into a fully informed child protection plan
- l) Where appropriate undertaking specialist assessments to inform ensuing plans.

Standard 2: Clear plans are made for children and young people, rigorously recorded and acted upon.

The Child Protection Chair is responsible for:

- a) Making sure that, where Conference decides that a child should be made subject of a Child Protection Plan, an outline child protection plan is drawn up
- b) Checking that the Child Protection Plan developed by the core group sets out clear objectives, how these will be achieved, by when and who is responsible
- c) Making sure the focus of Review Conferences are on progress towards achieving the plan
- d) Robustly challenging professionals if actions are not being taken or the plan is not meeting the needs of the child/young person, by making recommendations; ensuring that these are clearly recorded in the minutes; and feeding back to the relevant organisations' Managers
- e) Making sure, where the decision is for the child to be supported in *other* ways rather than to be made subject of a Child Protection Plan, or that the Child Protection Plan should end, that actions required are specific and time scaled.

Social Care Managers and Social Workers are responsible for:

- a) Making sure that the outline Child Protection Plan is developed and includes clear actions timescales and accountability, based on thorough assessment and risk analysis.
- b) Making sure that the Plan is clearly based on assessment findings relating to the child's developmental needs; parenting capacity; family and environmental factors; resilience and risk factors.
- c) Chairing the core group in developing and following through the Child Protection Plan
- d) Discussing any concerns they may have, or that the Chair and other professionals who are part of the core group have, that the plan is not meeting the needs of the child/young person in order to take appropriate action
- e) Where there are concerns regarding any changes in circumstances convening an urgent core group to consider any necessary alterations to the plan
- f) Ensuring that children who become Looked After who are subject of Child Protection Plans are taken off Child Protection Plans in line with current procedure, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

All practitioners are responsible for:

- a) Where they are a member of the core group, taking responsibility along with all other members of the group, for developing the outline child protection plan from the first core group meeting, and acting upon it
- b) Making sure that wherever possible, the child or young person and relevant family members are involved in the drawing up of the Child Protection Plan
- c) Where they are a member of the core group, taking responsibility for regular attendance and for raising any concerns about timeliness or inconsistent attendance within the core group.
- d) Providing services according to the agreed plan and where necessary undertake specialist assessments to inform the review of the plan
- e) Ensuring that they can deliver on any relevant commitments within the child protection plan, or if this is not possible that these commitments are renegotiated
- f) Discussing any concerns they may have that the plan is not meeting the needs of the child/young person and alerting the Social Worker to this.

Standard 3: The progress of a child/young person's plan is regularly reviewed to make sure that their needs are being met.

The Chair is responsible for:

- a) Identifying whether the decisions and outstanding issues highlighted at each Conference have been acted upon within the agreed timescales
- b) Making sure that the first Review Conference takes place within three months of the Initial Conference and that further reviews are convened at intervals of not more than six months for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan.
- c) Ensuring Review Conference discussions focus on evaluating the extent to which the plan is meeting the needs of the child/young person and identifying any changes needed
- d) Making sure that any significant changes to the child/young person's life are followed through in the review of the child's plan and action taken if required
- e) Checking whether statutory visits to children/young people subject to a Child Protection Plan have been made within timescale and that the child/young person has been seen alone
- f) Where timescales have not been achieved in relation to decisions, recommendations or frequency of Statutory visits discuss with the relevant Social Worker. Any persistent failure will be discussed with the Team Manager.

- g) Making sure that where a child remains subject of a Child Protection Plan by the 3rd Review Conference (15 months), the relevant Service Manager is alerted so that a case review can be carried out.

Children's Social Care Manager's and Social Worker are responsible for:

- a) Statutory visits to children/young people subject of a Child Protection Plan within timescale
- b) Liaising with all professionals providing services to the child/young person and family, keeping up to date with progress and making sure each professional is aware of what the others are achieving as part of taking forward the agreed plan
- c) Identifying in their report whether the decisions and outstanding issues highlighted at each Conference have been acted upon within the agreed timescales
- d) Informing the core group, other key professionals and the Conference Chair of any significant changes to the child/young person's life to enable these to be followed through in the review of the child/young person's plan and action taken if required
- e) Alerting the Chair where a review should be brought forward to address changes in the child's circumstances
- f) Seeking legal advice as appropriate to ensure that children are not being left for indefinite periods in families where there are chronic and enduring difficulties.
- g) Holding a child protection Professionals Meeting for children on a Plan for 12 months or more, to reflect on the effectiveness of the plan and what needs to happen.
- h) Referring the case to the GSCB Multi-Agency Case Review Panel if the above does not lead to an effective, sustainable plan for the child to come off a CP Plan,

All practitioners are responsible for:

- a) Providing a report or contributing to their agency's report 2 days in advance of the Review Conference, outlining the work undertaken and evaluating the impact on the child's welfare against the objectives set out in the child protection plan
- b) Keeping the Social Worker up to date with progress and any changes which may affect achievement of the child protection plan
- c) Where invited, be committed to attending the Review Conference on time
- d) Taking a full part in decision making.

Standard 4: Children and young people's views are sought and used to influence decisions and actions within the Child Protection Conference process.

The Chair is responsible for:

- a) Being available to meet with the child/young person before the Conference where appropriate
- b) Where a child/young person is attending their Conference, ensuring the child is fully prepared for the Conference, with the support of an Advocate where appropriate, and making sure their views are recorded.
- c) Making sure that where the child's attendance is not appropriate, or they don't want to attend, the child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained by the Social Worker, Advocate or other professional
- d) Making sure that where appropriate the child/young person's views are acted upon. Where it is not in the child/young person's best interests to action a request from them, to make sure that the reasons for this are shared with them and recorded
- e) Making sure that the child/young person is not exposed to information that may be age inappropriate or distressing
- f) Where a child/young person's first language is not English, ensuring a translator is present and that time is allowed for translation throughout the Conference
- g) Where a child/young person has a disability, making sure that specific needs of that child/young person are taken into account to help them participate in the Conference.

Children's Social Care Managers and Social Workers are responsible for:

- a) Where a child is of sufficient age and understanding, explaining the purpose of a Conference, finding out how they wish to express their views and where appropriate sharing the Conference reports in advance
- b) Where a child is attending the Conference, make arrangements for the Chair to meet with the child/young person beforehand
- c) Where a child's attendance is not appropriate or they do not want to attend, making sure that his/her wishes and feelings are and make these known to the Conference
- d) Where it is not in the child/young person's best interests to action a request from them, to share the reasons for this with the child/young person and ensure they are recorded
- e) Where a child/young person's first language is not English, making sure that a translator is present
- f) Where a child/young person has a disability, liaising with the Chair to make sure that the specific needs of that child/young person are taken into account to enable them to participate in the Conference.

All practitioners are responsible for:

- a) Involving the child/young person in a way appropriate to their age and understanding
- b) Making sure that the voice and the experience of the child/young person come across loud and clear in all related assessments, reports and plans.

Standard 5: Monitoring and quality assurance is in place, to continually improve practice and service delivery to children who are subject of Child Protection Plans.

The Chair is responsible for:

- a) Having an awareness of lessons learnt from the rolling programme of audits undertaken by the GSCB Multi-Agency Audit Sub-Committee, and any other feedback from case reviews, audits or inspections, to inform their practice and chairing of conferences.

Social Care Service Managers and Team Managers are responsible for:

- a) Undertaking a rolling programme of audits, taking part in the development of improved systems and implementing practice improvements as appropriately agreed within the agency and with partners

The Head of Quality, Gloucestershire County Council, is responsible for:

- a) Making sure themes and patterns arising from Conference Chairs' monitoring of the above standards inform the work of the GSCB Multi Agency Quality Assurance Sub Group and the delivery of the GSCB Annual Business Plan
- b) Chairing a) themed multi-agency safeguarding audits and b) the Multi Agency Case Review Panel, with feedback and reports as set out in the GSCB Annual Business Plan
- c) Championing the provision of good practice examples and guidance for the attention of all partner agencies, via GSCB sub groups and the GSCB website.

The County Council Strategic Planning Team/GSCB Business Team will:

Collate a quarterly performance report about safeguarding and child protection data for submission to the GSCB, according to the agreed framework.

All practitioners are responsible for:

- a) Recognising and reporting on good safeguarding practice, within their organisation and the wider partnership, to inform continuous improvement of safeguarding practice
 - b) Taking part in learning and improvement activities, within their own organisation or the wider GSCB, in order to learn from safeguarding training, case audits, serious case reviews and the guidance available on the GSCB website.
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