

Tips for getting ready for a child protection conference

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Make sure you know who is likely to attend the conference and how it will be run.

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Ask the social worker to provide you with a written copy of their report about your child. Ask if this can be done in good time before the conference.

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Ask the social worker questions about the report if you need to. You can also ask them to include your views in the report and ask for any factual mistakes in the report to be corrected.

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Ask the social worker for a copy of written reports other practitioners prepare. But those practitioners will need to agree with the conference Chair (and where necessary the police) before the report(s) can be given to you. The chair is the person responsible for managing the child protection conference.

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Try to understand what worries the different practitioners have about your child and your family situation and why.

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Make some notes of the main points that you want to make at the conference. This can be a helpful reminder. There may be things that you want to ask. Or there may be things that you just want to remember to tell the conference about your situation and your child. Try and write these down whenever you think of these, so you don't forget. You can keep a list in the folder with your other paperwork. Or you might prefer to keep a note on your phone or to make a voice note as a reminder.

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You can prepare your own brief note to share at the conference. These should ideally focus on:

- Your views about the social worker's concerns about your child
- Information you think is important about the concerns. For example, the support you could receive from family, friends, and in your community
- The main things you disagree with and why
- Specific support that you feel would help your child and family.

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If the conference is taking place face to face arrive early to meet the Chair. Ask to be shown the conference room and to choose where you feel comfortable sitting. You can ask for water, tissues, pen, and paper to be made available to you.

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If the conference is going to take place remotely – by phone or by video call – it's a good idea to ask the social worker for clear information about these things:

- Whether everyone is joining in the same way as you. Is everyone going to be on the phone? Or on a video call? Will some people be in the meeting in person?
- Exactly what time the meeting will begin and what time you should join
- Let the social worker know as soon as possible if you are worried you do not have the right equipment for the meeting. For example, if you don't have access to internet data, Wi-Fi or a computer or tablet
- Let the social worker know if you don't feel clear and confident about how exactly to join the meeting
- Ask the social worker what help is going to be made available to make sure you can take part fully.

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Let the social worker know before the conference if you are worried that you might be at risk of domestic abuse or intimidation if a particular person is at the conference. That may be a partner or former partner. Or a family member. The social worker should talk to the Chair about how best to manage this. It's important to talk to the social worker about this type of concern whether the conference is going to be in person, by phone or via a video call.

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Be prepared to listen to other people's views as well as expressing your own.

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If you are worried that you may need a break during the conference discuss with the Chair about having a short break. You may need a break to use the toilet, to calm down, collect your thoughts or because you may become upset. If at any point you need a break, ask for this. Ask the Chair to confirm that if you leave the room, call, or video call, others will not continue discussions. If the meeting is taking place by phone or video call, ask the social worker what you need to do to leave. Should you hang up and re-join afresh when ready? Or should you turn off your microphone or video for a time? Ask the social worker to talk you through what is best before the meeting starts.

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Try to respond to other people's contributions and thoughts in a respectful way.

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Discuss with the social worker and the conference chair before the conference, if you have concerns about any very sensitive information being shared at the meeting.

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Focus on your child and what might help them; keep in mind what the practitioners are concerned about.

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Be willing to cooperate with the practitioners to draw up plans that will best meet your child's needs now and in the future.

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If you are unhappy about any part of the child protection process, you can make a [complaint](#). See the [Complaining about a child protection conference](#) section on our [Child protection](#) page for more information.

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You or your advocate, friend or supporter can make a note of any significant points made by others at the conference. This will help you to remember afterwards what was said and agreed.

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Even if you make a complaint about the conference still continue to work with practitioners and put your child's needs first. Children's Services are very likely to seek legal advice if parents stop cooperating.

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You could ask for a [family group conference](#) (FGC) to allow your whole family to come together to decide how they can help support you and your child.

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Once the conference makes a decision about whether or not a child protection plan is needed, you can ask for:

- Help you would like for your child or for yourself to be included in the plan (whether this is a child protection or a child in need plan)
- Information about responsibilities. This includes who will be responsible for carrying out actions and when this will happen. This should also be fully addressed in a core group meeting.