



**Diogelu Gwent
Gwent Safeguarding**

Gwent Safeguarding Board

Practice Guide

Decision Making at Child
Protection Conferences



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This practice guide provides information for practitioners attending Child Protection Conferences and the expectations placed upon them.
- 1.2 It provides advice and guidance in relation to decision-making in Child Protection Conferences.
- 1.3 This practice guide advises on the process for representations to be made should professional or families attending conference wish to either raise concerns or make a formal complaint.
- 1.4 This practice guide should be read in conjunction with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

2. The Process of Decision making at Child Protection Conferences

- 2.1 Following presentation and discussion of written and verbal reports, and contribution from the family, and the voice of the child is heard where appropriate, the Chair of the conference will summarise the information. The role of the Chair includes putting the facts that have been presented in a context which can be informed by research, and clarifying the risk factors that arise from the information. The Chair will then ask whether conference members feel this is an accurate summary, before proceeding.
- 2.2 Conference members will then be asked to present their view of the risks, strengths and needs based on all the information shared in conference. They will be asked if they feel the Child is in need of a Care and Support Protection Plan and therefore whether their name should be placed on the Child Protection Register.
- 2.4 Children and young people should be recorded as being at continuing risk of abuse, neglect or harm under one of the following categories. The decision as to which category applies is made by the practitioners at the child protection conference.

The categories are

- physical abuse;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- financial abuse;
- neglect.

For a full explanation of the categories please refer to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures Pointers for Practice: Signs and Indicators of Possible Abuse, Neglect and Harm in a Child [here](#)

2.5 In order to promote consistency and focus, all five Local Authority Heads of Children's Services within Gwent, have decided that only one category should be used in registration. The Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) tell us that this should:

- indicate to those consulting the register the primary presenting concerns at the time of registration
- reflect all the information/evidence obtained in the course of the Section 47 enquiries and subsequent analysis and should not just relate to one or more abusive incidents
- be specific to each child in the family who is being placed on the register

The child's name is placed on the register in order to:

- alert all practitioners working with a child to their risk of harm;
- confirm that a care and support protection plan for the child is in place and must be complied with.
- that a social worker and a core group of practitioners are working with the child and family.

2.6 All professionals attending conference must be aware that they are part of the decision-making process and cannot abdicate their responsibility. They are each there are several ongoing safeguarding issues that there should be discussions about which category is the main concern to inform decision making responsible for voicing their own professional opinion to inform the final decision.

If there are several ongoing safeguarding issues, there should be discussions about which category is the main concern to inform decision making.

2.7 The final decision should reflect the consensus view of the conference. Wherever possible conference members should aim for a consensus view about whether or not each child is at continuing risk of significant harm.

2.8 Where consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair should attempt to seek resolution, e.g. by re-summarising the issues and facilitating further discussion.

2.9 Only where there are irresolvable differences of opinion should the decision making revert to a voting situation, with the nominated or lead person from each agency being asked to vote on registration. Voting as such should be avoided where possible.

2.10 Voting should be based on agencies and/or professional groupings not individuals, listed below in Part 2. The Chair should clearly identify the relevant professional groupings within agencies for the purposes of voting. The senior staff present at the conference from each agency should assist in this process and ensure that professional groupings are kept to a minimum. This may necessitate a short break in the conference to facilitate. Each agency should have arrangements in place to ensure consistency in this process.

- 2.11 The aim is to reach a majority decision. The agencies that have dissented from the majority view will be listed in the written record of the conference.
- 2.12 If the vote is split 50/50, the Chair will have the casting vote as to whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and in need of a Care and Support Protection Plan and therefore whether their name should be placed on the Child Protection Register.
- 2.13 If the Chair believes the decision places the child at risk s/he must indicate this in the conference and include their concerns in their Summary. Immediately after conference, they must escalate their concern to the Senior Manager responsible for child protection.
- 2.14 The Chair also has the option to address any professional differences, as do any of the conference members, where they feel that a child is not being adequately protected. In fact, all professionals have a duty to follow up continuing concerns. (Please refer to the Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences [here](#)) Following the decision of the Conference, it is vital that all members of conference discuss and contribute to any proposed Care and Support Protection Plan to address the identified risks.
- 2.15 Parents, caregivers and children/young people who are involved in the conference process may wish to raise a complaint. The Chair of the conference will ensure family members are aware that a complaint can be raised in one or more of the following aspects of the functioning of the most recent Child Protection Conference:
- The process of the most recent conference in terms of adherence to procedures
 - The registration decision, including the category of registration, which was the result of the process / procedure followed
 - The decision not to register or to de-register, which was the result of the process / procedure followed

Please refer to the Gwent Safeguarding Board Complaints Procedure for a more detailed explanation of when this is possible [here](#)

3. Children Looked After

3.1 When a child on the Child Protection Register becomes looked after [such as under the auspices of an Interim Care Order, Care Order, Supervision Order, Section 76 voluntary consent to accommodation etc] the review Child Protection Conference should consider whether or not this has reduced the risk of significant harm to the child.

There are relatively few circumstances where a child's name should remain on the Child Protection Register. This is because, when a child becomes looked after, there are now greater safeguards in place to protect the child and reduce the risks, which supersedes the Child Protection Plan. Any risks that remain will be managed in alternative arenas, such as the Child Looked After and the Court processes.

Should further safeguarding concerns arise, if necessary, the Local Authority would take urgent action to safeguard the child and seek legal advice.

When a child is removed from the Child Protection Register, a lead professional will remain allocated, home visits will continue, a child's plan will be developed and multi-agency review meetings will take place (for example Child Looked After review meetings).

4. Professional Groupings

4.1 The following examples of professional groupings have been agreed Children Social Services (including all social work teams, and all services which are line managed within Children's Services e.g. fostering services),

- Child Health Services (including Paediatrician, Health Visitor, School Nurse, Paediatric Nurse--acute and community, Speech Therapy, Midwifery, Specialist Nurses, Physiotherapist, Neo-Natal outreach Nurse, CAMHS, GP)
- Youth Justice Service
- Adult Social Services (including all social work teams, and all services which are line managed within Adult Services e.g. adult placement services, community support teams)
- Adult Health Services (including Mental Health, Learning Disability Services, Midwifery, GP, Substance Misuse Services)
- Police; includes PPU and Divisional Officers
- Probation services
- Housing; (including tenancy support, or Housing Associations)
- Education; including primary school, secondary school, nursery,
- Education Welfare Officer Local Authority Education Support Professionals
- Early Years pre-school providers including Flying Start (other than health visitors)
- Voluntary groups; including Women's Aid, Action for Children, Barnardo's,
- NSPCC (not advocacy), Homestart,
- Any other agency at the discretion of the Chair

(Please note that if you are part of a multi-agency team then you will be allocated one vote according to the service you represent e.g. CMHT can sit with Adult Social Services or Health Services)

4.2. The written record of the conference should reflect the professional groupings identified, including situations where the Chair makes the final decision about such groupings, and the rationale for this decision. The written record will also include any difference of views expressed at the conference, including any concerns raised by the Chair regarding the safety of the decision.

5. Other Attendees

5.1 There are also people who attend Child Protection Conferences who are not party to the decision-making. This includes:

- Parents,
- Children and young people,
- Family members or people who are there in the role of support for parents,
- Advocates for the child
- Legal representatives of the parents or young people

- Care Inspectorate Wales staff.
- CAFCASS
- Foster carers and residential carers

5.2 Parents, children, young people and family members should be asked for their views but it is the professionals who are responsible for making the final decision.

5.3 In accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Children Procedures, the conference will also consider whether a Care and Support Plan would be more appropriate in circumstances when a Care and Support Protection Plan is not deemed to be necessary.

5.4 All professionals and agencies invited to attend a conference will be asked to submit a report in line with the Wales Safeguarding Children Procedures (please see Appendix 1 for a guide). Some organisation such as Children's Services, Police and Health will already have a standard reporting template that they use. It is a requirement that reports should be provided to and discussed with parents, and children when appropriate, a minimum of 24 hours before the conference. Parents/Carers will be required to sign reports to acknowledge that they have had sight of the document. If they are unable to physically sign a report, the report author must get verbal agreement that the report has been shared with the Parents/Carers.

Where a professional is unable to attend the conference, s/he should still submit a report and this should include their own view of the risks to the child, based on their knowledge of the child and the family.

5.5 If a representative of the agency attends on their behalf of the professional to present their report, the Chair should ensure that this view forms part of the discussion at the conference, whilst bearing in mind that it was a view formed without the benefit of hearing the contributions of all the other professionals at the conference. Based on the information shared at the Conference the professional in attendance can make a more holistic view and vote accordingly.

6. Specific Issues

6.1 If there is only one School representative present and only one child in the family attends their school, they will be asked to contribute to the decision making on behalf of their agency in respect of all the children who are discussed at conference, based on the fact that they have heard all relevant information in conference.

6.2 In situations where there are sibling groups and there is no agreement, then each child will be considered separately with those professional groups directly involved with an individual child voting on registration for that child.

6.3. The Chair has responsibility for ensuring that if parents disagree with the decision or are unhappy with the conduct of the conference they are given information about the safeguarding board's appeal/complaint process and that they have the option of appealing against the decision. An independent panel will deal with complaints and

they have the option of asking for the conference to be re-convened if the complaint is upheld.

MULTI-AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE REPORT

Completing the Multi-agency Child Protection Conference Report

The attached Multi-agency Child Protection Conference Report Template should be completed by all professionals to provide information to the conference.

The report should be provided to and discussed with parents, and children when appropriate, a minimum of 24 hours before the conference. It is important that families do not hear new information at the conference and it is the responsibility of **all agencies** who have relevant information to make this available to the conference in the form of a written, legible and signed report. Parents/Carers will be required to sign the report to acknowledge that they have had sight of the document.

Once the report has been discussed with the parents, it should be provided to the Conference Chair to have at least 24 hours prior to an initial conference and 5 working days in advance of a review conference.

These timescales are to give families sufficient time to prepare for such important meetings about their family life.

It is an expectation that all agencies will provide a written report for the conference.

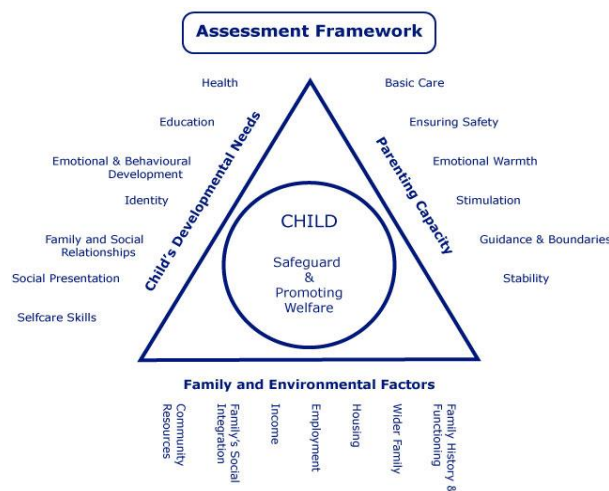
Confidentiality

Information shared verbally or in writing in the Conference must only be shared outside the meeting if it is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Conference reports and minutes are confidential and should not be passed to a third party without the consent of the parents or order of court.

Guidance on completing the Conference Report

Please write the report based on your professional knowledge and understanding of the child and family. **As this is a generic form you must ensure all the relevant information from your agency or specialism is included.**

You may wish to refer to the Assessment Framework triangle to aid your assessment:



Parent/ Carer and significant family or household member's information

This section should include **all** members of the household as known to your agency including anyone living in the household and significant people not living in the household.

Overview of your agency's involvement with child/ren & family

This section should include reasons for your agencies involvement, attendance and level of engagement, services or care provided, duration of involvement, progress to date and any actions outstanding.

Current Risks or Concerns

This section should include any factors you consider to pose risk of significant harm or increase the risk of harm to the child/ren.

Historic or complicating factors

This section should include any previous history of concerns within the family, anything that might get in the way of resolving current risks and any previous involvement with your agency.

Safety/ Protective Factors

This section should include factors that you believe reduce the risks of harm to the child/ren or help to ensure safety.

Strengths/ Positives

This section should include any features of family life and parenting that have a positive effect on the child/ren's lives and anything the parents/ carers are doing well and if they were not, would be considered a risk factor.

Grey Areas

This should incorporate any areas that are unclear or may be of potential concern for the child/ren but require further time, clarity or assessment.

Significant Events

This section should include details of any incidents, injuries or significant events that your agency is aware of along with the date and a brief summary of the event.

Health Professionals Section

This section should only be completed by health professionals.

Please do not to share the above guidance with family members when sharing the report.

MULTI-AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE REPORT TEMPLATE

Agency details	
Professionals Name	
Job Title	
Agency Name	
E-mail address	
Telephone Number	

Child/ren's information		
Name	NHS Number	Date of Birth

Parent/ Carer and significant family or household members information		
Name	Date of Birth	Relationship

Overview of your agency's involvement with child/ren and family	
<p>Include factors relevant to your service such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose for your involvement • level of engagement and attendance • services or care provided • difficulties or challenges • referrals to other services • progress to date • duration of involvement • any actions outstanding 	

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Current Risks or Concerns (if yes please state below)

Are there any current risks or concerns? Yes No

<p>Include what factors you consider to pose risk of significant harm or increase the risk of harm to the child/ren?</p>	
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Historic or Complicating Factors (if yes please state below)

Are there any historic or complicating factors? Yes No

<p>Include any previous history of concerns within the family, anything that might get in the way of resolving current risks and any previous involvement with your agency.</p>	
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Safety / Protective Factors (if yes please state below)

Are there any safety/ protective factors? Yes No

<p>Factors that you believe reduce the risks of harm to the child/ren or help to ensure safety.</p>	
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Strengths / Positives (if yes please state below)

Are there any strengths/ positives?

Yes

No

Features of family life and parenting that have a positive effect on the child/ren's lives. Anything the parents/carers are doing well and if they were not, would be considered a risk factor.

Grey Areas (if yes please state below)

Are there any grey areas?

Yes

No

This should incorporate any areas that are unclear or may be of potential concern for the child/ren but require further time, clarity, or assessment.

Significant Events

To insert a new row go to the menu bar, click on TABLE, then INSERT and select ROWS BELOW.

Date of incident, injury or significant event	Type of event, e.g. Birth, Death, ICPC, Assessment	Details and outcome, i.e. what happened as a result of the event e.g. child remained in hospital following premature birth, Father arrested following DV incident, child excluded from school, Child in Need Plan put in place.	Name of child/ren to whom events apply (if not all)	Source of information e.g. Police , other Local Authority file, School etc

What do you believe to be the likely outcome for the child/ren if their current situation continues?

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What changes would you need to see in the family to assure you that the risk of harm to the child/ren is sufficiently reduced?

--

What can your agency contribute to a plan to keep the child/ren safe?

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Any other relevant information

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	Yes	No
Has this report been seen by they parents/ carers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has this report been seen by the child/ren/ young people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What are the views of the parents/ carers and/or chid/ren/ young people on this report?

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Report completed by:

Name		Job Title	
Signature		Date	
Signature of Parent/Carer or Verbally Shared (delete as appropriate)		Date	
Reasons for not obtaining a signature		Date	