

CARE PROCEEDINGS

Q. What is a Child Protection Conference?

This is a Meeting arranged by Social Care and Health (Social Services) when people are worried about the safety of your child.

Q. What is the conference for?

- To discuss what may have happened and why there is a worry.
- To discuss what problems you and your family might be having.
- To see if you need protection and the best way to keep you and your child safe.

Q. Who will be present at the conference?

- a) Chairperson – this person conducts the conference and ensures that everyone has an independent voice and that their wishes are heard.
- b) Legal Representatives
- c) Social Worker.
- d) Police Officer,
- e) Health Visitor.
- f) Doctors.
- g) Teacher.
- h) Minute Taker.

Q. Do I have to attend the conference and can I take a solicitor?

It is always in your best interests that you attend otherwise it may be assumed that you are not co-operating with Social Services, or it may be assumed that you do not acknowledge the worries that Social Services have. You do have a right to take a Solicitor with you.

If you genuinely cannot attend because of other commitments, then you may wish to instruct Solicitors to attend on your behalf. Alternatively you may wish to write a letter dealing with your points.

Q. What happens at the conference?

The Chairperson usually tells you why the meeting is taking place and all the professionals will talk about you and your family and about their concerns.

Q. What can a conference decide?

The most important thing that can be done is that the child's name can be placed on the Child Protection Register.

Q. What is the Child Protection Register?

It is a confidential list of children who need to be kept safe. The names of children can be placed on the register until the professionals are confident that it is safe to remove them.

There are four risk categories which a child can fall under. These are:-

- Neglect;
- Physical injury;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse.

Q. How long will the name be on the register for?

Until the concerns have been dealt with and it is safe to remove it.

Q. What happens after the conference?

- If the conference feels that the child is safe then nothing will happen.
- If your child's name is placed on the Child Protection Register, professionals will discuss matters with you and decide a Child Protection Plan to help you overcome the concerns, ultimately leading to your child's name being removed from the Child Protection Register.

Q. What if I am unhappy with the conference?

You must immediately report your complaint to the Chairperson or alternatively you must contact a local solicitor who will assist you in respect of an appeal to the Chairperson, if appropriate.

Q. What is a Child protection Enquiry?

When a referral is made to Social Services by the Police alleging that your child is at risk or is being abused.

Q. What happens after the Local Authority is told?

The Child Protection Unit will investigate the referral and see if the child has been harmed. Possibly the child may be medically examined but Social Services will always ask your permission. Usually a specialist Doctor will carry out the medical examination.

Q. What happens next?

- If evidence of injury/harm is found they may obtain an Emergency Protection Order.
- If no evidence of harm/injury is found then no action will be taken.
- If there is a suspicion or concern Social Services may ask to hold an immediate Child Protection Conference.

Q. Can my children be taken away from me?

- If evidence of harm is found and you deny the concerns the Police may have the power to remove the child under a Police Protection Order.
- The child may be placed with alternative family and friends or in a Foster Home until it is safe for the child to return to your care.
- If this happens you must seek independent legal advice right away.

INTERIM CARE ORDERS

- Usually the Local Authority make an application to the Court on the grounds that they have concerns about your child and therefore seek an Interim Care Order that they can share Parental Responsibility with the parent.
- It is not automatic that, if an Interim Care Order is granted by the Local Authority, your child will be removed from your care.
- An Interim Care Order can also be made in favour of the Local Authority whilst the child remains in your care as long as the Local Authority is able to carry out assessments and ensure that the child's welfare is met.

IF YOU RECEIVE ANY COURT PAPERS YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY

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