

Complaints about Child Protection Conferences

This is a multi-agency procedure relating to complaints about Child Protection Conferences.

Complaints about individual agencies, their performance and the provision or non-provision of services should be responded to in accordance with the relevant agency's complaints procedure.

Who can complain?

The following are eligible to complain about the process or outcome of a Child Protection Conference:

- The child (if of sufficient age and understanding);
- A person acting on behalf of the child, for example a solicitor, advocate, or Children's Guardian;
- Parents;
- Those with Parental Responsibility;
- Carers.
- A professional agency

Timescale for Complaint

A complaint must be sent to the Conference Chair or the Principal Officer (Safeguards & Quality Assurance) within 28 days of the Child Protection Conference in respect of which the complaint is made.

Grounds for Complaint

The complaint may relate to:

- The process of the Child Protection Conference;
- The outcome of the Child Protection Conference - either a decision that the child should be subject to a Child Protection Plan or which of the Categories of Significant Harm the decision was based upon;
- The decision that a child should not be subject to a Child Protection Plan or a decision to continue a Child Protection Plan or a decision to discontinue a Child Protection Plan.

Where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Plan will continue to operate throughout the complaints process.

Information about the Right to Complain

The Conference Chair will inform those eligible to complain of their right to make a complaint under this procedure and the timescale.

Written confirmation of the right to complain will be in the record of the Child Protection Conference and will also be sent to those eligible with the decisions and recommendations made at the Conference.

The child's social worker will also reinforce this right in his or her communications with those eligible both before and after the Child Protection Conference.

Procedure

The complaint should be addressed to the CPRU, who will respond in accordance with the following procedure.

Stage One

This is an "informal resolution stage".

If the complainant feels unable to meet the Conference Chair, they should address the complaint to the Principal Officer (Safeguards & Quality Assurance).

Within 15 working days of receiving the complaint the Principal Officer (Safeguards & Quality Assurance) will arrange a meeting with the complainant. The purpose of the meeting is to establish the nature of the complaint and to achieve an early resolution wherever possible. A written response will be provided at this stage.

Complainants may not go straight to Stage Two - the attempt at informal resolution at Stage One is a prerequisite.

Stage Two

If a resolution at Stage One is not possible, the complainant will be advised that they may invoke Stage Two by setting out their complaint formally in writing to the Head of Service Safeguards within 14 days of the initial Stage One Meeting. The following information should be provided by the complainant:

- The child's name;
- The date of the Child Protection Conference;
- The grounds for the complaint.
- The outcomes that the complainant is looking for

Where the complainant requires assistance to provide the above, this must be offered or arranged by the Conference Chair or the keyworker.

Upon receipt of the written complaint, the Head of Service Safeguards will acknowledge receipt of the information and request all papers relating to the relevant Conference, including the Conference Reports and the records of any meetings.

The Head of Service Safeguards will convene a meeting with the complainant and make a decision as follows:

- To uphold the complaint and require the Child Protection Conference to reconvene within 10 days with a different Conference Chair. That Conference should reconsider its previous decision, considering any views expressed at Stage Two of the complaint;
- To uphold the Conference decision on the basis that the decision was justified in relation to adherence to procedures and the information presented, i.e., not uphold the complaint.

They will then:

- communicate the decision in writing to the complainant within 3 working days.
- the Conference Chair/Child Protection and Review Unit Manager will also be made aware of the decision within 3 working days of the meeting;
- ensure the Child Protection and Review Unit communicate the decision where appropriate to those who attended the Conference within 7 working days of the decision;
- In the event, that the Child Protection Conference is to be reconvened, the Principal Officer (Safeguards & Quality Assurance) or Conference Chair will contact all original invitees to advise of the reason for the reconvened conference and to request that attendance is prioritised in order to ensure a timely consideration of the child's needs.

Stage Three

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied, the complaint will be shared at Stage Three with the Business Manager for Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and the Chair of the SSCP Assurance and Review Group (ARG) or one of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners. At this stage the Business Manager will facilitate a meeting with the complainant and the Chair of the ARG or a Delegated Safeguarding Partner. The meeting will make a decision as follows:

- To uphold the complaint and require the Child Protection Conference to reconvene within 10 days with a different Conference Chair, so that the Conference can reconsider its previous decision, considering any views expressed at Stage Three of the complaint;

- To uphold the Conference decision on the basis that the decision was justified in relation to adherence to procedures and the information presented, i.e., not uphold the complaint.

They will then:

- communicate the decision in writing to the complainant within 3 working days.
- the Conference Chair/Child Protection and Review Unit Manager will also be made aware of the decision within 3 working days of the meeting;
- ensure the Child Protection and Review Unit communicate the decision where appropriate to those who attended the Conference within 7 working days of the decision;
- In the event, that the Child Protection Conference is to be reconvened, the Principal Officer (Safeguards & Quality Assurance) or Conference Chair will contact all original invitees to advise of the reason for the reconvened conference and to request that attendance is prioritised in order to ensure a timely consideration of the child's needs.

If the complaint remains unresolved at the end of Stage 3, the complainant will be advised of their right to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Please Note – If the complainant wishes to raise concerns that fall within the remit of both the SSCP (conference) process and the Children's Statutory Complaints Process, then the concerns regarding the conference may be investigated via the statutory process, instead of the process outlined above.