

Conferences and Core Groups

Jargon Buster:

ICPC: Initial Child Protection Conference

RCPC: Review Child Protection Conference

CPC: Can refer to a few different elements-Child Protection Coordinator/Child Protection Chair/Child Protection Conference, the context this acronym is used in should make the meaning clear.

QAIS: Quality Assurance and Involvement Service

What is a Child Protection Conference?:

Child Protection Conferences are multi-agency meetings convened and chaired by a Child Protection Coordinator (sometimes referred to as the "Conference Chair"). The Child Protection Coordinators work in the Quality Assurance and Involvement Service (QAIS).

The purpose of a Child Protection Conference (CPC) is to determine whether a child or young person has experienced or is likely to experience significant harm, by sharing and evaluating different agency information about:

- An 'Initial' CPC ("ICPC") should take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion which decided to investigate whether or not a child or young person is at risk of significant harm.
- family history, the child's health, development and functioning, and the parent's capacity to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing.
- Consider circumstances that may increase risk and any areas of disagreement.
- Future action needed to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- Whether they should be the subject of a 'Child in Need' or 'Child Protection' Plan; as well as:
- Nominating a lead social worker
- Identifying members of and setting the date for the first core group meeting, within 10 working days
- Setting the Review CPC ("RCPC") date within 3 months

The Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) should be attended by:

- Children's Social Care
 - At least two other agencies directly involved with the child or young person.
 - Agencies who have information about the child, parents or other family members, or with expertise in a particular area
 - The child or young person, if of a suitable age and understanding and wanting to attend, and/or their advocate
 - All parents, anyone with Parental Responsibility and other family members
 - Foster carers (current or former)
- The allocated social worker must facilitate the constructive involvement of parents by providing information, considering communication needs, disabilities, child care, and the use of an interpreter (not a family member) if needed.
 - Parents can contribute in writing if they do not wish to attend.
 - A parent may be excluded from the conference or have their participation restricted. If you think this is necessary you must discuss this with the Child Protection Coordinator who is chairing the meeting as soon as possible.
 - The Chair will speak with the child, parents and supporters **before** the CPC to explain the conference process and their contribution.

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Expectations and Responsibilities of Education Settings in relation to ICPCs and RCPCs:

It is a clear expectation that education settings will;

- Be clear about your role and decision-making.
- **Write a conference report**, which **must** include **scaling and rationale**. It is unacceptable to not submit a report. Non-submission is recorded and will be challenged (template: [SCSP-Child Protection Conferences page](#))
 - Please note that scaling stated in your report can be altered in the conference during the scaling section dependent on information shared in the conference.
- **Send the typed report securely** (via SfX) to the CPC convening team at least 3 working days before the CPC. The convening team will share (via SfX) any reports from other professionals within 3 working days of the CPC with all professionals who have sent their reports to the team by the 3 working days deadline.
- **Share the report** with parents, translated and communicated as needed.
- **Record parental disagreements** in the report
- **Confirm ICPC and RCPC attendance** via SfX secure email to the CPC convening team: They will invite DSL/Ds to CPCs securely via SfX email.
- **Attend ICPCs as a top priority.**
 - There are a very few reasons not to have education representation at an ICPC, it would be highly irregular for an education setting not to attend an ICPC. Non-attendance is recorded and challenged.
- **Attend RCPCs as a top priority.**
 - RCPCs are diarised during ICPCs, so the date is known at least 12 weeks in advance. It is the responsibility of the education setting to maintain a functional calendar system and cover arrangements to ensure that RCPCs are attended, including making arrangements for attendance at RCPCs if they fall in school holiday periods.
- **Attend Core Groups as a top priority.**

The Child Protection Coordinator will;

- Ensure that parents can understand, consider and respond to information, and contribute to the assessment and planning process to safeguard the child or young person.
- Focus on the welfare of the child/ren in the household or wider family is maintained; **their wishes and feelings are clearly presented**; and their full needs are considered.
- Use the Signs of Safety model to analyse strengths, safety, harm/risks and complicating factors to decide whether the child/ren is/are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- Consider whether a Child Protection Plan is needed and decide which category of harm applies. Where a CP plan is agreed by professionals the outline of this will be set in the conference and subsequent Core Group meetings will develop and monitor progress with this in between Review CPCs.
- Consider what further help is needed to support the child/ren if a CP plan is not needed

Children's participation in Conferences;

- Younger children do not usually attend their conferences due to the subject matter; however, older children (secondary school age and above) should be supported to do so where appropriate.
- An 'Advocate' is offered to those over 5 years to help them articulate their wishes and feelings to, and understand the outcome of, the conference. The advocate will inform the CPC of the child's views.

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The Core Group;

Is responsible for developing in detail, and implementing the 'Child Protection Plan' and includes:

- The lead social worker
- The child or young person and their family
- Practitioners and carers directly involved.
- All practitioners are jointly responsible for actions, updates, monitoring the plan and recording the meetings. The social worker should write up and circulate these records to all core group members.
- The first core group takes place within 10 working days of the initial CPC and further meetings should be held monthly.
- In the absence of the Social Worker the core group should proceed and report back to the Social Worker or their Line Manager.

Developing the Child Protection Plan;

The detailed child protection plan should:

- Ensure the child/young person is safe from harm and their needs met.
- Promote their health, development and welfare.
- Support the family to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or young person.
- Be based on the 'Sheffield Single Assessment' completed by Children's Social Care

The plan should include:

- Nature and frequency of contact by practitioners with children and family members
- What therapeutic services are needed?
- Specific, achievable child-focused strategies and outcomes: what needs to be done, why, when and by whom?
- A contingency plan for significant changes
- How and when progress will be reviewed

Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs):

Review Child Protection Conferences are held within 3 months of the Initial CPC and then at least 6 monthly and:

- Receive the completed core group assessment.
- Use the Signs of Safety model to review the safety, health and development of the child and ensure they are still safeguarded.
- Check that inter-agency co-ordination is functioning effectively.
- Consider the child's wishes and feelings.
- Consider if the plan should continue or change.

Remember: **The same attendance and report requirements apply for RCPCs as for the ICPCs**

Useful Links:

- [SCSP Procedures Manual: Initial Conferences](#)
- [SCSP Procedures Manual: Developing and Implementing a CP plan](#)
- [SCSP Procedures Manual: Review Conferences](#)
- [Child Protection Conferences, Safeguarding Sheffield Children website](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2018](#)