

# Parents' & Carers' Guide to Child Protection Conferences in Havering



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

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## Why have I been referred?

Sometimes a health visitor, school, a neighbour or another organisation may contact us because they are worried that a child(ren) is being harmed or neglected. This is called a referral. We have to investigate these claims and make sure the child(ren) is safe. We will always tell you who has referred your family, unless the person is a member of the public who has asked not to be named.

Before a Child Protection Conference takes place, an investigation (called a Section 47 Investigation) will have been carried out to determine if it is necessary to hold an Initial Child Protection Conference. The investigation requires the allocated Social Worker to talk to the parents/carers, the child, and other practitioners.

An Initial Child Protection Conference is held when agencies believe that a child(ren) may be at risk of significant harm; the aim of the conference is to share concerns, discuss, then decide what will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren) where such concerns have been identified.



# Understanding the Child Protection Conference

What is a child protection conference?

The conference is a formal meeting where parents, the social worker and other professionals who know the family get together to discuss the concerns and decide what can be done to keep the child(ren) safe from harm.

Who will be at the conference?

The conference is arranged by Havering Council and is chaired by an independent person. A number of professionals attend too. The following people will be present:

- Your social worker & their manager.
- Your child(ren)'s teacher/ nursery teacher (where appropriate)
- Your child(ren)'s doctor or school nurse (as appropriate)
- The police (if they have been involved in the enquiry).

Any other professionals that have been involved.

Can parents and carers attend the conference?

It is very important that parents are able to attend conferences about their child(ren) and are able to participate in the discussion and contribute towards the development of a plan to keep the child(ren) safe. Parents may ask another adult to come to support them; this may be a solicitor, advocate or friend. Rarely, parents may not be allowed to attend for all or part of the conference. If this occurs the reason will be explained and the parents' views reported to the conference by the conference chair or social worker.

Can the child(ren) involved attend the conference?

What happens at the conference?



The conference cannot remove your child from your care - only a court can do this.

Typically children over the age of 12 (but in some cases younger) are invited to attend some parts of conferences unless it is thought that this is not in their best interests. All children's views can be presented to the conference by their social worker if they are not able to attend. The [Havering Children's Rights Advocacy Service](#) provides Havering children or young people in care or who have child protection status up to the age of 18 with representation at meetings and forums, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights upheld.

You will arrive early to meet the person who will be chairing the meeting before the meeting starts. Everyone attending the meeting will be asked to introduce themselves and explain how they are involved. The chairperson will explain the reason for the conference and everyone will be asked if they have anything to say which is relevant to your child(ren) and family. This will include concerns about your child(ren) as well as looking at the strengths within your family. At each stage you will be asked if you wish to comment on anything that has been said, or to add anything.

The chairperson will summarise what has been said, this will be followed by a discussion about the potential future risk to the child(ren). Finally, a decision will be made about next steps, such as whether the child(ren)'s name should be placed on the child protection register and/or if a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan is needed. A plan will be developed, and will be clear about the actions and expectations that we require from everyone including yourself with the timescales for achieving this. If it is decided to make your child(ren) subject to a Child Protection Plan, your child(ren) will be given a Key Worker and the conference will be asked to recommend what should happen next. The conference will decide the group of people who will work with you and that is called the core group.

What happens after the conference?

At least 10 days after the initial conference, the core group will meet with you for the first time, and will continue to meet with you regularly to support you and help you to keep your child(ren) safe. The core group will plan what work needs to be carried out to make the changes needed to make sure your child(ren) is safe and work towards discharging the child protection plan. To do this, the core group will draw up an agreement with you that sets out exactly what everyone needs to do to bring about the changes required. It is important that you attend the core group meetings and get involved in work to keep your child(ren) safe.

What is the review conference?

The review conference is there to review progress since the initial conference. You will be invited to attend and the social worker will prepare a report for everyone to discuss. The police will only attend a review conference if they were involved in the child protection enquiry. The conference may decide that your child(ren) is no longer at risk and that a child protection plan is not needed, but Havering can still offer services to support you and your family if you need them.

If the conference thinks that your child(ren) is still at risk, they will look at the child protection plan to see if it needs to be changed to help you and your child(ren) and set a date for the plan to be reviewed. The chairperson will summarise what has been said, this will be followed by a discussion about the potential future risk to the child.

Finally, a decision will be made as to whether the child(ren) should be made subject to a Child Protection Plan. If this is decided, your child(ren) will be given a Key Worker and the conference will be asked to recommend what should happen next.



# Making you feel heard

As a parent or carer, you may understandably have some concerns, questions or worries about child protection conferences and the child protection process. Your social worker will be able to support you with this, and you can ask them or the conference Chair any questions you may have. You could also look at Havering's [Family Services Hub](#) which lists many support organisations available to you in and around the borough. It is important to remember you may also be able to bring a friend or supporter to the conference with you too.

You may find it helpful to look at external organisations for support, such as: [The Family Rights Group](#) - a charity that advises parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights.

[Citizen's Advice](#) - Citizen's Advice can offer general information and advice about the process and your rights. You can find out more about email advice and face to face appointments [here](#).

On occasion, you or your child(ren) may have concerns which you wish to raise a complaint about a conference. These could relate to the process of the conference, or outcomes or decisions made with relation to child protection plans. Complaints should be addressed to the conference Chair. Such complaints should be passed on to the Chair's manager in local authority children's social care and the local authority complaints manager. Whilst a complaint is being considered, the decision made by the conference stands.

The outcome of a complaint will be one of the following:

- The conference is reconvened under a different Chair.
- The review conference is brought forward.
- No change - the outcome of the conference is confirmed along with a suitable explanation.

