



## Guide to Child Protection Conferences in response to COVID-19

### For Parents

In light of the coronavirus outbreak, how the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit facilitate child protection conferences will change temporarily to ensure we are protecting the health of you and others as well as ensuring we look after the safety of your children.

### What will happen if my family needs a child protection conference in this time?

We will still be holding child protection conferences in this time; however the way we do this will change. We are looking at using technology to assist us to continue to make the best decisions we can to help keep your children safe and support your family to be healthy and well.

Whilst we navigate our way through these difficult times, a member of the Safeguarding Unit will be in touch via telephone prior to conference so we can make decisions about the best way to manage conference. We will try to support you to ring into the meeting as part of an EE conference call which will include the allocated Social Worker and the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer to enable you to be part of the conference process. If you would like to join the conference please ring the following telephone number **07953 966 666** at the time of your scheduled conference and enter the **6 digit code followed by #** which you will find located on the letter you will have received with this guidance.

If you have a contract mobile with free minutes it will be free to ring the number above. For those who have pay as you go phones that don't include free minutes to mobiles, there will be a cost charged at a **normal network rate**. For those parents, we suggest that the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer calls you at a specific time convenient for yourself to get your views – This will be after you have had chance to read the documents in relation to your conference. The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will provide feedback to you and get your views on the conference decision and plan.

If you don't wish to join in the conference at all then we will ask you for a contact number and the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will ring you to collect your views.

Please note:

You could really help us by making sure you have adequate battery life on your phone for the call and being in a place free of distractions wherever possible and your family information cannot be heard by others.

### **How will the Child Protection Conference be run if I join by telephone?**

#### **Prior to Conference:**

Where you have access to email, we will talk you through opening an account with EGRESS which is a free, secure email provision. This will allow the Safeguarding Unit to send your family copies of the professional reports and the template prior to the conference taking place. The template will detail the concerns held by professionals about your child/children in something called the 'danger statement' as well as what we would like to achieve for your family in the 'safety goal'. You will also be able to see the scaling questions that we will use to determine how worried we are for your children and where the strengths are in your family that reduce these worries. The template will help you to follow the conference as we move through the meeting over the telephone.

We have asked all the professionals involved with your family to provide us with their information before the conference and this will be shared with you and help us in the meeting to discuss what we need to do together to support you and keep your child/ren safe

#### **During Conference:**

The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will co-ordinate the meeting and be responsible for asking for the necessary information from you and the other professionals involved with your family. We hope you will join a call with the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer, the Social Worker and a note taker on the same telephone line wherever possible, via EE conference call. Please let the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer know if you are having any problems with the connection or if you are struggling to hear and follow the conversations.

The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will use this call with you and your allocated Social Worker to find out how the plan has progressed, find out what is working well, what we are

worried about and they will ask you for your views. They will ask you for your suggestions about any future plan.

The Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer will come to you to share information at different points within the telephone call. You may feel strongly that some information is inaccurate or has been misrepresented but we would ask that you wait until you are asked for your view to tell us this, as it will become difficult to hear your view in the meeting if people are talking over each other on the telephone.

We will use the information that is given through the reports to conference and within the phone call itself to help us think about a plan that supports your family and your children to reduce the risks that they may be facing. We want you to be part of creating that plan, so it is important that we get your views for the conference.

Once all of the information has been shared and a plan has been agreed, we will consider the views of the social worker and the other professionals who will have provided their views to the Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer to determine whether a child protection plan is necessary to support your children. A decision will then be finalised.

**After Conference:**

You will be sent the outcomes and the notes of the meeting electronically via EGRESS, if this is your preference. The outcomes will include the updated plan and the decision from conference and these will be sent out via EGRESS within 24 hours. The notes will follow within 15 working days. Please do alert the Safeguarding Unit of any inaccuracies in the notes in a timely manner to enable changes to be made if needed.

**And finally...**

Please bear with us!! We have to change the way we work in response to the Coronavirus. We may have some technological difficulties along the way but we will do our best to ensure that the process is as smooth as possible and you are supported to contribute to the plans for your child/ren. We would want to reassure you that we are keeping these arrangements under review to ensure that as soon as face to face contact can resume safely, we will.

Thank you so much for working flexibly with us to keep your family safe.