

ESCALATION PROCEDURE FOR THE RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS AND ISSUES FOR CONFERENCE CHAIRS IN RESPECT OF CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board	Date: January 2014	Status: Endorsed Final Version
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide Conference Chairs with a resolution procedure in respect of problems and issues arising from Child Protection (CP) Conferences.

It's aims are to:-

- Keep children and young people as its focus
- Streamline the process and make it more understandable and straightforward for all
- Improve communication between CP Conference Chairs, social workers, conference attendees which includes other agencies and their managers and thereby achieve resolution of issues raised
- Ensure records of the process are included on the child or young person's file
- Include a system for both reporting key issues and an overview of all concerns regularly to the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board (CTSCB)
- Ensure CP Conference Chairs comply with their responsibilities as set out in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 and protocols signed off by Cwm Taf SCB

The procedure is intended to address differences between professionals, or Conference Chairs concerns regarding a decision and/or plan.

This procedure will enable the recording and reporting of problems and issues that are dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

The CP Conference Chairs responsibilities are set out in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 3.14.11 and 3.14.12. (see appendix 1)

RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

The following outlines the stages for resolving problems and issues identified by the Conference Chair and the procedure for escalating those problems and issues should they not be addressed.

- Informal discussion between the conference chair and the conference attendee or their manager from the agency concerned
- Conference Chair discussion with CP Coordinator
- Pass to Quality Assurance and Standards Group (QASG) via Chair of QASG
On behalf of the CTSCB QASG may request case audit and/or action from any of the agencies involved. The process will be coordinated by QASG.
- Feedback for Conference Chair

- QASG reports to the CTSCB (incorporated into regular report)

Where the concern is about the immediate safety of a child(ren), this must be escalated as a priority and without delay.

The Conference Chair must refer this to the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager and/or the Lead Safeguarding Manager immediately.

In the absence of either of these any concerns that a child is not safe from harm must immediately be reported to the Team Manager and Service Manager

1. Informal Discussion

Conference Chairs will become aware of problems or issues from a variety of sources although the majority will arise specifically from Child Protection Conferences and reports. These problems or issues are largely based on the information shared at the time or sometimes arise because of lack of available information, paperwork, or key information being missing.

Conference Chairs will take responsibility for clarifying these matters and resolving any problems through negotiation with professionals and their managers, in the first instance. This negotiation will take the form of telephone conversation, email or conversation in person. Where the Conference Chair feels that a more senior manager needs to be made aware of a problem or issue, the Conference Chair will inform the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager and they will decide this and take forward.

Professionals and their managers will take responsibility for responding to issues or problems raised within 2 weeks of receipt of information from the Conference Chair.

Examples of such problems or issues might be:-

- Failure to comply with procedures e.g., AWCPP or SCB protocols
- Practice concerns, e.g. children not seen; aspects of child protection plan not acted upon
- Single issues that require action, e.g. service availability
- Core group not fulfilling it's role
- Difficulties in respect of the Child Protection Plan, e.g. the Conference Chair is concerned that the arrangements in place do not adequately safeguard the child/ren.

The Conference Chair should record in the agreed format (see Appendix 2) the problem or issue, action taken and resolutions agreed and make a copy available to the social worker, who where appropriate will make available to core group members. A copy of this will be retained in the Reviewing Team record and will be forwarded to the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager for discussion in supervision.

2. Discussion with Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager

There will however be problems or issues which arise that cannot be sorted out using the procedure above or indeed that procedure has been used and failed.

In those circumstances the Conference Chair will make arrangements to discuss with the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager, or in their absence if the matter is urgent the Lead Safeguarding Manager.

The purpose of this discussion will be to resolve issues and agree a way forward and plan the consequent actions required.

This discussion will be recorded in the Supervision Record.

Examples of problems or issues might be:-

- Drift in implementing a child protection plan
- Problems which relate to core group arrangements
- Concerns that the child is not safeguarded in the current arrangements
- Problems raised where there has been no response within an agreed timescale
- Non compliance with procedures or protocols

The Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager may decide to speak with relevant managers to expedite a resolution of outstanding and immediate safeguarding concerns. This is especially the case when a child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm requiring intervention.

3. Lead Safeguarding Manager

Where the Lead Safeguarding Manager has been informed of a professional opinion that a conference has failed to make adequate plans to protect a child; or has failed to adhere to the procedures and standards for child protection conferences; the Lead Safeguarding Manager has the authority to set aside the conference decision and require conference to reconvene to reconsider the child protection arrangements.

4. REPORT TO QASG

There will always be certain problems or issues that the CTSCB should be informed of by the Conference Chair.

The Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager and the Conference Chair will decide whether to report the concern to the QASG which is the sub group taking responsibility for practice and standards within Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board.

If the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager and the Conference Chair do not reach agreement, discussion will take place with the Lead Safeguarding Manager who is currently the Chair of QASG.

The concern will be reported to the Chair of QASG via email, outlining the issue, any attempts to resolve, and the identified risks to the child/ren.

QASG will consider the concern and has a range of options available:-

- Request individual agency reports
- Request multi agency audit
- After consideration, recommendations can be made to agencies regarding further action or identified service needs

If there is any belief that a child is not being protected by the arrangements in place the QASG will make recommendations to agencies on behalf of CTSCB.

5. Feedback for Conference Chair

Feedback will always be offered to the Conference Chair from the QASG. The Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager is a member of QASG and will assume this responsibility, and in their absence this role will be allocated to another member of QASG as identified by the Chair. This feedback and learning from the case will be discussed in supervision and in team meetings as relevant.

It is anticipated that Conference Chairs will take responsibility for clarifying issues and addressing problems informally if possible, as described earlier. Advice will be provided by the Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager and such matters will be a standing agenda item in supervision.

A request for a problem or issue to be reported to the QASG will always be discussed with the Child Protection Coordinator and/or the Lead Safeguarding Manager.

In the absence of either of these any concerns that a child is not safe from harm must immediately be reported to the Team Manager and Service Manager Children's Services.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

QASG offers regular reports to CTSCB, detailing the number and nature of concerns raised, what enquiries are made and what are the conclusions.

It may well be that an issue raised leads to a closer look into a specific theme, or to more thorough audit activity.

Appendix 1 All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008

3.14.11 Chairing the child protection conference

The conference chair must be knowledgeable and trained for the role and should be:

- A professional who is independent of operational or line management responsibility for the case;
- Trained in chairing child protection conferences;
- Possess a good understanding and professional knowledge of child protection, children's welfare and development, and best practice in working with children and families;
- Able to look objectively at and assess the implications of the evidence on which judgements should be based and confident in managing and drawing to clear conclusion the views and judgements of conference members;
- Skilled in chairing meetings in a way that encourages constructive participation while maintaining a clear focus on the welfare of the child and the decisions that need to be taken;
- Knowledgeable about diversity and committed to anti-discriminatory practice.

3.14.12 The role of the conference chair

The role of the conference chair is to:

- Meet the child and family members in advance, to ensure that they understand the purpose of the conference and what will happen;
- Decide whether or not there are valid reasons for excluding any children or other family members from attending the conference if this request is made;
- Ensure that the conference agenda is followed;
- Enable **all** those present, including children and family members, to make their full contribution to discussion and decision making, which will include consideration of advocacy arrangements for parents, caregivers and/or child;
- Ensure that the conference makes decisions in an informed, systematic and explicit way;
- Enable conference members to share all appropriate information and evaluate risks;
- Ensure that the conference focuses on the child;
- Ensure that the conference is conducted in an anti-discriminatory manner and gives proper consideration to issues of race, culture, language, religion, gender and disability;
- Ensure that dissenting views and reasons are recorded in full;
- Clearly differentiate between fact, observation, allegation and opinion;
- Establish the opinions of lead persons from professional groupings about placing the child's name on the child protection register;

- Draw together the views of the conference members and arbitrate where different views are being expressed, in line with CTSCB protocols;
- Be available after the conference to explain decisions to parents and children;
- Take responsibility for the accuracy of the conference minutes;
- Take responsibility for who will receive copies of the conference minutes.

Appendix 1

Conference Chair Resolution Form

*** Conference Chair once completed please email to the CP Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager**

Name:		DOB:	
Address:			
Social Worker:		Legal Status:	
Conference Chair:		Date of completion:	

Issues or problems and any actions agreed at the review meeting, if relevant:

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Actions taken by the Conference Chair:

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Response to Issues Raised by whom and when:

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Outcome of Issues Raised:

Conference Chair satisfied with outcome	
Issue unresolved – inform CP Coordinator/Safeguarding Manager	
Other (please specify)	

Where the concern is about the immediate safety of a child(ren) this must be referred to the CP Coordinator/Safeguarding Manger and/or the Lead Safeguarding Manager.