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**Safeguarding and Quality Assurance**

**Conference framework**

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| 1. **Introduction**
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In line with our relation-based approach to practice, our ambition is that conferences are dynamic and engaging meetings that create the space for open and honest conversations that bring about change for children, young people and their families. We want our conferences to be child-centred and collaborative, giving everyone in the room an equal opportunity to be heard and, importantly, working together to find solutions. Our aim is that on conclusion of a Child Protection Conference, those involved in the meeting leave with a shared understanding of the risk of harm to the child, what needs to change and how, and what the likely consequences are if change does not happen.

We have updated our existing format for Child Protection Conference to ensure that conferences are facilitated and contributed to in a way that achieves this ambition. We have moved away from a traditional approach of receiving information from each agency on their involvement with the family, to a more focussed and inclusive discussion about risk and protective factors, and what needs to change, which will allow for more robust consideration of the threshold of significant harm, as well as for more time to be spent on jointly developing the plan in the conference.

We have also made changes to the way we deliver conferences for adolescents who are at risk of extra-familial harm.

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| 1. **Purpose of a Child Protection Case Conference**
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The purpose of the conference is to:

* Share and analyse information to determine whether a child has suffered harm/is likely to suffer harm in the future;
* Agree what future action is required in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, what outcomes we are trying to achieve for the child and how best to intervene to achieve these;
* Decide if a Child in Need (CIN) plan is required where the threshold of significant harm is not met, and the family need additional support.

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| 1. **Conference model**
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Our conference model places a strong emphasis on planning and preparation, recognising that the meeting itself can be a far more effective tool for change if there is good preparation by professionals and with families.

**Pre-Conference preparation and involving children**

A Family Group Conference referral should be made at point of decision for conference, if not already done within CIN process.

Consideration should be given to inviting children and young people from the age of 12 years to attend the Conference. The appropriateness of inviting children and young people to the conference should be decided by the social worker, in consultation with their Line Manager, CP Chair and parents / carers. Consideration should always be given to the use of Advocacy Services to support children and young people in contributing their views and feelings to the conference whether or not they attend.

The social worker should complete direct work with the child or young person before the conference to explain the conference process and help them articulate their wishes and feeling. The CP Chair should arrange to meet with the child or young person in advance of the Conference, to ensure it is suitable for them to attend and to explain the process and their contribution to the meeting.

**Conference reports**

For the model to be effective, families need to have had the opportunity to have read and discussed the reports being brought to conference beforehand. This will allow the time and space in the conference to be used to focussed on discussion on the key areas of risk, protective factors, threshold of significant harm, what needs to change and, critically, focussing on the plan for the child or young person.

All reports for conference compiled by professionals are expected to be submitted to Safeguarding and Quality Assurance for distribution 2-working days in advance of Initial Child Protection Conference and 5-working days in advance of the Review Conference, in line with the requirements of the London Child Protection Procedures.

There is an expectation that all professionals, excluding the police, who have drafted reports setup either a face-to-face (preferable) or telephone consultation with families to discuss the contents of their reports. This will lead to both families and professionals being more prepared to meaningfully contribute to discussion and creative planning in conference. Everyone should be familiar with areas of risk and the impact this has, or could have on the child, in order to support a succinct and timely discussion at the Conference. The new format for agency reports can be found in ANNEX 1\*.

**Conference framework:**

Annex 2 sets out the format for conference discussion.

The conference framework will have a strong focus on keeping the child in the centre of the discussions and planning, coupled with the family members and all partners contributing constructively and collaboratively to the plan.

The conference will be presented in a discussion format. This will focus the discussion on key areas identified in Annex 2. Conference members will be invited to actively take part in a dynamic discussion about these areas. In order to assist these discussions and a screen will be used to facilitated discussions. This will allow the CP chair to make notes in each section of the matrix as the discussion happens.

The category and need for CP plan will only be determined once the plan has been created and agreed. A multi-agency threshold discussion will take place at this point, facilitated by the Chair, with agencies asked to specifically consider the threshold of significant harm based on the discussions that have taken place during the meeting.

**Conference framework – Adolescents:**

For an increasing number of adolescents, the risk of significant harm is the result of extra-familial risk factors rather than harm attributable to the care they are receiving at home. This does not fit readily with traditional CP model and requires a different approach.

CP conferences for adolescents will focus on involving the young person in creating a safety plan that addresses the extra-familial risks, with parents / carers more aligned with the professional network of support in delivering the plan (where appropriate). The meeting will consider the role of agencies and wider community, who can actively contribute to safeguarding the young person. While we cannot move away from the constraints of CP categories, we have introduced an internally subcategory of Neglect: extra-familial harm to allow us to distinguish these cases in the CP cohort. The conference invitation to parents are slightly amended to emphasise that the conference will focus on creating a multi-agency approach and plan to support the parents in promoting their child’s safety in the community. We have made internal changes in order to call this plan a a ‘’Young Person’s Safety’’.

In line with child protection procedures, the conference will consider the needs and circumstances of all children in the household even if they are not subject to the child protection conference. Agency reports should reference all children known to be living in the household of the subject child(ren).

In order to facilitate a multi-agency discussion and plan a template for use in the conference can be found in ANNEX 2.