|  |
| --- |
| **Child Protection Conferences – Guidance for Parents and Children Over 12 Years during COVID-19 arrangements** |

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting arranged by children’s services. The people invited to this meeting are: parents, children (if they are old enough), your Social Worker, and other professionals from organisations already involved with your child, like your child’s school, nursery, your health visitor, police, or anyone else who knows your family. The Conference decides whether the children in the family have been, or are at risk of being harmed, and whether there needs to be a Child Protection Plan to support the family.

Due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and Government restrictions, the way we do Child Protection Conferences has changed and instead of meeting in an office, the Conference will happen by telephone or by Skype.

**This guide is to help explain what this will mean for you**

1. The invitation to the Conference will explain the options for you to be involved, and your Social Worker will have talked with you before the meeting. You will decide whether to be involved in the meeting by phone, Skype, or whether you will speak to the Conference Chair (the person who is in charge of the Conference) by phone before and after the meeting, but not actually be in the meeting.
2. The Social Worker will have told the Conference Chair what option you have chosen.
3. If you want some help to download the Skype app on your phone or tablet, please email [sqateam@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:sqateam@swindon.gov.uk) or call 01793466822. This app is free to use provided you do not use it to make calls.
4. The Conference Chair will contact the Social Worker before the meeting to identify anything that we need to be aware of. For example, we know that it might not be good for parents who are separated to be involved in the Conference together. We need to plan to make sure everyone who is involved in a child’s life has the information they need to keep them safe.
5. You may want to have someone else in your family there to support you and be included in the phone or Skype call (for example parents and grandparents), but we are going to be talking about things that have been difficult for your family, so we encourage you to talk to your Social Worker about how the people you trust can help you in this meeting.
6. The Conference Chair will contact you 15 minutes before the Conference is due to start to talk about how the meeting will work, and to check that you understand why the meeting is taking place. They will want to know that you have seen the reports that have been written about your family.
7. At the start of the Conference the Chair will agree the rules of the meeting, for example:

* Everyone will need to introduce themselves prior to speaking.
* Everyone will need to speak slowly and clearly.
* Everyone needs to take their turn to speak; no one should speak over another person.
* Although we know this is a stressful situation, we all need to stay as calm as possible in the meeting.

1. The Chair will help all the participants have their turn to speak, including you.
2. A note taker will be part of the Conference to make notes of what is said, and write down the plan.
3. The Police will have shared their report with the professionals before the meeting, but they won’t share it directly with you, because of the risk of highly confidential information being accidentally shared. They will also have to be careful about what they say in the meeting, because they cannot monitor who else may be listening on your phone or Skype call. The Chair will give you a summary of police information and after the current restrictions because of COVID-19 are over, if you want further disclosure, then you can consider applying for Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and Child Sexual Offender Disclosure Scheme which will enable the Police to share the information with you in a meeting.
4. Please remember that if you join the meeting by phone or Skype it is important that, if possible, you are not in a room with children who may be upset by the things that are said in the meeting, or may not understand it properly. It may also be upsetting for them if they see you unhappy or angry, so please talk to your Social Worker about how best to manage this.

Fiona Francis – Safeguarding Service Manager

02/04/2020