

Standards

We regularly review our performance to make sure we are providing the best service we can. We do this by:

- consulting service users and using the information to improve and plan our services
- regular reporting to the council and government with regards to service quality and delivery of positive outcomes for children and families
- undertaking random spot checks and audits to see whether we are actually doing what we claim.

Access to records

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have the right to make a written request to view all or part of records held on you by Southwark children's services. Your social worker or local office will be able to assist you in making this request.

What to do if you are unhappy with service?

If, for any reason, you are dissatisfied with the service you have received from the chair of the conference, you can:

- raise your concerns with the child protection manager, quality assurance unit
- make a formal complaint by using Southwark Council's "how to give us your views" leaflet. These are available from your social worker or local office. Alternatively you can telephone Southwark's complaints officer on 020 7525 3977.

Translation or other formats

If you require help with translation or other formats such as audio or large print, please visit the addresses below.

Bermondsey one stop shop
17 Spa Road, SE16

Peckham one stop shop
Peckham Library, SE15

Walworth one stop shop
151 Walworth Road, SE17

Further information

To find out more please contact the quality assurance unit on 020 7525 3722

Quality assurance unit
Southwark children's services
Sumner House
Sumner Road
London SE15 5QS

Child protection conferences

Information for parents and carers



What is a child protection conference?

A child protection conference is a meeting. It is held when workers think a child is suffering harm because of abuse or neglect. At the meeting all the workers who know the child and their family share information, hear from the parents or carers and recommend whether the child needs a child protection plan.

- People at the meeting can include, your health visitor, a member of staff from your child's school, a school nurse, a police officer and your child if they are old enough.
- The 'chair' runs the meeting, they are independent.
- A child protection conference is a confidential meeting and information shared at a conference can only be shared outside to protect any child, or with your permission.
- An audio recording of the conference will be made with your consent.
- You will be sent a written summary of the meeting including any plans agreed.
- A child protection conference has no legal powers and cannot 'take children into care'.
- If workers think a child is not safe at home they can recommend that the council apply to the Court which can order that a child lives elsewhere but only after hearing evidence and considering everyone's views.

Parent's rights

You should:

- be invited to the conference or be told why you have been excluded and invited to give your views in some other way
- be given a service you need to join in the conference, including:
 - interpretation and translation if English is not your first language
 - signing if needed
 - a room that you can access
- be given copies of reports before the conference
- be able to bring a friend or supporter (including a solicitor)
- be able to send a suitable representative (such as a solicitor) if you are unable to attend, e.g. because you are in hospital or custody
- be able to ask questions and give your views.

Significant harm

the law defines 'harm' as ill treatment or the impairment of health and development. Harm becomes significant when it starts to affect how a child or young person is growing up.

Child protection plan

a tool to help family and professionals know what they must do to keep the child safe. The plan should name what is causing harm to the child, set out short and long term goals and what everyone needs to do to reach them.

Core group

the workers and family members who will be responsible for putting the plan into action. This group is agreed at the conference and needs to meet soon after the conference and then every six weeks to review how the plan is working.

What you need to do

Before the meeting:

- arrange for your young children to be looked after during the conference, your social worker may be able to help with this
- plan how you will get to the conference
- think what you are going to say to your child about the conference.

At the meeting:

- arrive 30 minutes early so you can meet with the chair of the conference and raise any questions you have about the conference
- listen to what others say, you will have a chance to ask questions and give your views.

After the meeting:

If the meeting makes any plan for work with your family:

- work with your child's social worker and others to reduce the risk to your child
- attend all core groups if the conference makes a child protection plan for your child.

Top tips for parents

- Lots of parents do not like the conference hearing details of problems in their past, remind yourself how you overcame these difficulties and point that out.
- Think of the strengths of your family and point these out if no one else does.
- Be honest if there are things you think you need to change to make things better for your family.
- Taking notes might help you remember what you want to say.