

A Child Protection Advisor's prime responsibility is to chair Child Protection Conferences. Outside of the conference, they have an advisory role regarding the progress of the Child Protection Plan. The Child Protection Advisors are located within the Service Quality Team alongside the Independent Reviewing Officers and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). They perform a number of additional duties including participating in case file audits, and covering LADO duty.

Why is it important?

The pivotal role is to assess and advise on the risk of significant harm to children. In conference, as the Chair, it means holding professionals to account and ensuring there is evidence to back up views and decisions. Equally important is the need to try and maximise the role of families in the process and **work with** them to help them to bring about change. A decision about whether to invite the child should be made in advance of the conference by the Conference Chair, in consultation with the social worker, their manager and any other relevant professional, including the child's independent advocate where relevant. Consideration must be given to the impact of the conference on the child. Where it will be impossible to ensure they are kept apart from a parent who may be hostile and/or attribute responsibility onto them, attendance would be inappropriate.

How do we do it?

- Read reports and fully prepare before conference
- Offer consultation to social worker pre-conference, particularly for complex cases
- Meet family prior to conference, to ensure that they are clear about the purpose and process and their role
- Agree beforehand any attendance issues and if a split conference is required
- Within the conference, ensure that the child's voice is heard and, where appropriate maximise the support of the independent advocate
- Throughout conference, ensure full attention to diversity considerations
- Throughout conference, ensure all participants have an opportunity to contribute and keep to a clear agenda
- Promote the participation of family members in the discussion within the meeting
- Provide a summary of risk factors at the end of the Conference
- Respond to any issues of dissent and make the final decision about the evidence of significant harm and whether the threshold has been met for a CP Plan
- Work restoratively with the family and facilitate coproduction of a plan to address any harms that have been identified.
- Ensure that the plan is SMART and a copy is printed off and signed by participants at the end of conference ensuring that family members are able to leave the meeting with a signed copy of their plan.
- Ensure arrangements are in place for the child to be informed about the outcome
- Where a Plan has been in existence for over 9 months, a midway review is planned with the social worker to minimise the risk of drift

For more information:

IRO Handbook - Statutory guidance for independent reviewing officers and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review for looked after children' DfE (2010) can be found [here](#)

[What is a Child Protection Conference: A Guide for Parents](#)