

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

When an Initial or Review Child Protection Conference is held it is very important that everyone hears the voice of the child or young person the Conference is discussing. The child's voice lets us understand their lived experience, what they want to happen and helps everyone make decisions on how to keep them safe. Children and young people can participate in several different ways in Child Protection Conferences. The most important thing to consider is what is the best way for the child to have their voice heard.

CHILD ATTENDS THE CONFERENCE

The Social Worker can discuss with the child and the family whether it is suitable for the child or young person to attend the meeting or part of the meeting. Children over the age of 12 should be offered this opportunity.

With the support of school the child could attend their conference via Microsoft Teams when they are in school.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is one way a child or young person can have their views shared in the meeting, a referral can be made by the Social Worker. An independent Advocate will meet with the child or young person prior to the Conference, will attend either with them or on their behalf to represent their views. They will also help children to understand the outcomes from the Child Protection conference. Advocates will share their report with the Social Worker and Child Protection Chair in advance of the conference.

DIRECT WORK TOOLS

Direct Work Tools are a creative way to engage with a child or young person to help understand their feelings, these can capture what they want to say, and this can be presented to the Conference by their Social Worker. This can include drawing pictures, writing down their thoughts, filling in a consultation document, singing a song or recording a video. There are lots of ways for children to share their thoughts with the important adults in their lives.

CHILD PROTECTION CHAIR MEETS WITH THE CHILD

If appropriate the Child Protection Chair can speak to the child or young person before the Conference, this can be facilitated through the Social Workers. The Social Worker will speak with the Conference Chair to agree how best this can be done.

Please speak to your child's Social Worker to agree a plan for your child's voice to be heard.