

**Professionals Guidance for Child Protection Conferences**

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**Professionals Guidance for Attending Child Protection Conferences**

As a professional attending Conference you should determine, based upon evidence, whether or not the threshold of **significant** harm is met. This decision is an important one, as it justifies compulsory intervention in family life (Working Together, 2018).

You will be asked to provide a view about whether or not a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm over and above the threshold of significant impairment. You will be asked to provide justification for this, based upon the evidence you have heard and following the steps below.

During the Conference attendees will discuss whether they believe a Child Protection Plan is required or not, and each will be asked to state their view. The final decision on whether a Plan is needed or not rests with the Conference Chair. This decision will be taken with consideration of the views of all professionals at the Conference.

**Step 1a – can the concerns be evidenced to have an impact on the child?** Consider impact individually for each child. Concern about parental behaviours alone is not sufficient to evidence significant harm to the child, because parental behaviours will affect parenting capacity to varying degrees.

**OR**

**Step 1b - where impact is not evidenced, can impact be demonstrated as ‘likely’ based upon research evidence?** ‘Likely’ means a ‘real, substantial risk’ as opposed to ‘possible’ or ‘probable’.

**Step 2 – does this impact amount to significant harm?** Compare impact against what you would reasonably expect from a similar child of a similar age.

**Step 3 – are the concerns attributable to parental care, or lack thereof?** Not including young people involved in risk taking behaviour where there is no evidence of parental collusion or failure to protect. Risk management approaches are more suitable for this group of young people.

**Step 4 – can it be evidenced that significant harm is likely to continue?** The level of parental engagement and understanding of concerns should be taken into account. Likelihood means that there is a ‘real, substantial risk’, as opposed to ‘possible’ or ‘probable’.

**If YES to either step 1a or step 1b and YES to all steps 2-4:**

**Step 5a – significant harm threshold is met.** Consider the category of significant harm and provide justification for this category.

**If not:**

**Step 5b – significant harm threshold is not met.** Consider with the family what services may be required to support them.

If, as a professional, you are concerned about the outcome of the conference, you should raise your concern with the Chair during the conference, or at the earliest opportunity.

If you remain concerned about the decision/outcome of the conference, you may raise this with the Service Manager for the Conferencing Service or with the Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance at Herefordshire Council, following the HSCP Multi-agency Resolution of Professional Differences Policy: [Escalation policy: Resolution of professional disagreements (procedures.org.uk)](https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4gjN/escalation-policy-resolution-of-professional-disagreements/?b=)

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Version Log

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| Version | Date | Description of change | Reason for Change | Pages affected |
| V2 | June 2019 | Change to Chairs authority |  |  |
| V3 |  | Change SBU Logo |  |  |
| V4 | Jan 2023 | Change policy on decision-making to reflect Chair has final decision |  |  |
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