Child Protection Conferences
A guide for parents and carers
It is important for everyone involved with children and young people to work together to try and keep them safe from harm. Above all the needs of children and young people must come first.

In Cwm Taf we are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers of children and young people.

The Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children Board (CTSCB) is the operating title of the merged Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil (MT) Safeguarding Children Boards, and is a statutory body which is accountable for ensuring safe professional practice with children in need and children at risk of harm.

A child is in need if:

- He/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority.
- His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or
- He/she is disabled.

The CTSCB will ensure that children in RCT and MT up to the age of 18 years, are protected from abuse, neglect and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

This leaflet will try and help you understand more about Child Protection Conferences.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

What? a meeting between you and the professional workers who know you and your child (the rest of this leaflet will just talk about “your child” although more than one child may be involved).

When? one or more of those workers is concerned about the care and safety of your child; that they are suffering from, or likely to suffer from, neglect, or physical, sexual or emotional harm.

Why? to share information with you and each other, and to decide what needs to happen to make sure that your child will be safe in the future.

Who will be there?

You will know most of the people at the meeting - they will be working with you and your family. For example:

- Teacher or Headteacher
- Health Visitor
- Doctor
- Probation Officer
- Social Worker
- School Nurse
- Housing

Other people are always invited to Conferences because they have experience in Child Protection and can give advice to the Conference either verbally or in the format of a report. These include:

- Police Officers from the Child Abuse Investigation Unit
- Health Service Manager
- Solicitor from Merthyr Tydfil or Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils’

The meeting is chaired by an experienced person whose job it is to chair Child Protection Conferences.
Can I attend?

Yes you can attend. It is very important that you hear all the information that is being shared, that the Conference hears your views and that you are involved in any Child Protection Plans made to protect your child in the future. Your Social Worker will talk to you beforehand about the Conference.

Only in very exceptional circumstances is a parent excluded, and the reason is then made clear. If you are worried about your safety because another person may attend, talk to your Social Worker about this or some other person of your choice about this. Sometimes, parents may only be able to attend for part of the meeting – for example where there are difficulties between separated parents, or where the young person wants to attend without their parents being there.

What if I can’t attend or if I don’t want to attend?

If you are unable to attend, or do not want to, you can write down your views and wishes – your Social Worker can help you with this; or you can tell your Social Worker your views and wishes. You can send them to the Chair of the Conference (address will be on the invitation letter you receive), or your Social Worker can take them to the meeting for you.

However, if you can’t attend because of child care arrangements or transport difficulties, ask your Social Worker who will try and sort this out for you.

Who can support me at the Conference?

Attending a Conference can be difficult or make you feel anxious, so you may want to bring a friend/relative/supporter. You will need to be sure that this is someone you can trust to hear the personal information that will be shared.

You can bring a Solicitor if you have one, but they will only be there as an adviser, and not to legally represent you at the Conference – it’s not a legal meeting.

What happens if English / Welsh is not my first language, if I have speech or hearing difficulties or if I have other special needs?

Tell your Social Worker who will arrange for an interpreter to be at the Conference, or for any practical arrangements. The written record of the Conference can also be translated.

Can my child be there?

This depends whether they want to be there, and if you, your Social Worker and the Chair think it is in their best interests. It would also depend on their age, how much they understand about the Conference and why it is being held, and whether they can cope with such a meeting.

It may be best that they are there for part of the meeting only, or that someone else represents their feelings and wishes.

There is an advocacy service for children and young people to support them to have their say in meetings. The Social worker can provide this information.

Who else will know what has been said?

Information shared at the Conference is confidential and must not be shared outside the meeting without permission of the Chair and the person that shared the information.
Can I see any reports people write for the meeting?

**YES.** The Social Worker will go through the social worker report prior to the Conference. It is helpful if you can make yourself available to read the report, as you will be able to tell the person who has written the report if you disagree with what has been said.

Other people sometimes write reports – the health visitor and the school for example and they should also explain to you what they are writing for the meeting. If you disagree with what is written please say so.

What happens at the Conference?

You will be invited to attend 30 minutes before the start of the Conference to meet the Chair. They will answer any questions that you have, and go through everything that you need to know about the Conference including:

- What will be talked about
- Who will be there
- What the Conference can do
- How you want to take part

This will take place in the conference room so that you are settled there before the other conference members arrive.

The Chair will make sure that you have had the chance to read the Social Worker’s report, and any other written reports that are available. Everyone invited to the Conference should arrive in time to read the reports before the Conference starts. If you disagree with what is written please say so in Conference. Do ask for a pen and paper if you want to make notes during the meeting.

The Conference will then:

- Look at what has happened that led to the Conference.
- Share information about your child and family. All of your children will be considered, even if there are only concerns about one child.
- Discuss whether your child is, or may be at risk of significant harm and is in need of protection in the future.
- Decide whether their name should be placed on the Merthyr Tydfil or RCT Child Protection Register and if so under which category. This is a decision made by all the professionals only at the Conference. The categories for registration are: Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Emotional Abuse. In some circumstances there can be combined categories.
- If so, work out, with you a Child Protection Plan which makes it clear what needs to be done, and who by, to keep your child safe and support your family.
- The Child Protection Register is a confidential list of children, held by the Children’s Services Division and can be accessed only by professionals.

What is a Child Protection Plan?

A Child Protection Plan is produced for every child whose name is placed on the Child Protection Register. An outline Child Protection Plan is drawn up at initial conference to outline what the risks are to the child and what actions must be taken to ensure he/she is protected. The Child Protection Plan will then be developed into a more detailed plan at the first Core Group Meeting.

What can I expect in relation to Child Protection Conferences?

- To be treated fairly and with respect
- To be fully prepared for the Conference and to be given information and advice about Child Protection
- To be given the opportunity and be helped to take part fully in the Conference.
Can I have my say?

YES, it is very important that you do. You can choose whether you want to make comments or ask questions about each report throughout the meeting. The Chair might also want to ask you some questions during the Conference, to make things clearer or to find out what your views are. You can also choose not to answer some questions, particularly if you feel this may affect any legal action that may be taking place. If you disagree with what is being said please say so.

Can my child be taken away from me because their name is placed on the Child Protection Register?

NO. The Child Protection Register is not a legal order, and does not alter the legal status of any parent. However, the Conference can, in very serious circumstances, recommend to the local authority that it should take legal action to ensure your child’s welfare.

But please note – most children on the Child Protection Register in Merthyr Tydfil or RCT live at home with their families.

What is a Keyworker and a Core Group?

A Keyworker – is appointed for every child whose name is put on the Child Protection Register. This is always a Social Worker, and it is their job to make sure that everyone works together with you to make the Child Protection Plan work, while your child’s name is on the Child Protection Register.

A Core Group – is made up of people from the services working with you and your family [for example the Social Worker, Probation Officer the school, health visitor] and yourself, with the child or young person if they are able to play a part. The Core Group will meet regularly to make sure that the Child Protection Plan is working or to change the plan if this is needed.

How long will my child’s name stay on the Child Protection Register?

There must be a first Review Conference within 3 months of your child’s name being placed on the Child Protection Register, then at least every 6 months. The purpose of the Review Conference is to consider the progress of the Child Protection Plan in improving the concerns that led to your child’s name being placed on the Child Protection Register; and to consider whether your child’s name should remain on or be removed from the Child Protection Register or the category of registration changed.

What is a Child in Need Plan?

If your child’s name is not placed on the child protection register, they may be identified as a child in need. The child protection plan is written by the Core Group and is based on the child needs and everyone, including the child if appropriate, will meet regularly to review the progress of the plan.

What can I do if I disagree with the decision about the Child Protection Register or I am not satisfied with the way the Conference went?

You can appeal against a conference decision to place your child’s name on the Child Protection Register; you can also make representations about the Conference. You will receive a leaflet about this with the initial conference written record.

However, if you are not satisfied with the work of any of the individual services involved, or you feel that you have been treated unfairly; you can use the Complaints Procedure of that particular service.
How can I help protect my child?

- Honesty and co-operation
- Agreement that your child’s safety and needs come first
- Respect for other people’s views and opinions during the Conference.

Who can you contact?

You can contact your local safeguarding team on:

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF:** 01443 425003  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL:** 01685 725000

Out of Office hours contact:

**EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM:** 01443 743665

Or

South Wales Police **999 for emergencies only**  
or **101** for all other concerns

We hope that this leaflet will have helped you to understand more about Child Protection Conferences but if you want to know more please ask your Social Worker.