

ROCHDALE BOROUGH SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES



PART 3

THE CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE SYSTEM:

Children who are the subject of a child protection plan

Child Protection Conferences

Child Protection Review conferences

Child Protection Core Groups

Assessment & Planning

Further copies of this procedure is available at www.rbscb.org

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3.1 Children who have a Child Protection Plan

- 3.1.1. The purpose of the record of children who have child protection plans held at the Safeguarding Children Unit is to:
- a) provide a record of all children or unborn children in the area, who are considered to be at continuing risk of significant harm and for whom there is a Child Protection Plan (including those children who are registered in other local authorities and living in Rochdale);
 - b) provide a central point of speedy enquiry, available all hours, for professional staff who are concerned that a child may be at risk of significant harm and want to know whether the child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan;
 - c) aid diagnosis of a sequence of repeated injuries or events which might not otherwise be considered related or seen as a pattern of repeated abuse;
 - d) avoid unnecessary or inappropriate duplication of service to the child and family, and aid good communication and co-ordination between agencies;
 - e) enable the collation and analysis of information locally and nationally to inform policy development and strategic planning.
- 3.1.2. The Safeguarding Children Unit manages the record of Child protection Plans and records details of all Child Protection Plan checks.
- 3.1.3. The Safeguarding Children Unit will ensure that the contents of the record of Child Protection Plans remain confidential, other than to legitimate enquirers. For this reason, enquirers will be phoned back with the relevant information and advice.
- 3.1.4. For criteria and categories for Child Protection Plans see:
- a) 'Criteria for a Child Protection Plan in section 3.7;
 - b) 'Categories for being the subject of a Child Protection Plan' in section 3.7;
 - c) 'Criteria for no longer requiring a Child Protection Plan' in section 3.10.

3.2 The Initial Child Protection Conference - Purpose

- 3.2.1. The Initial Child Protection Conference brings together family members, the child where appropriate, and those professionals most involved with the child and family, following Child Protection Enquiries. Its purpose is to:
- a) bring together and analyse in an inter-agency setting the information which has been obtained about the child's health, development and functioning, and the parents'/carers' capacity to ensure the child's safety and promote the child's health and development;
 - b) make judgements about the likelihood of a child suffering significant harm in future;
 - c) decide what future action is needed to safeguard the child and promote his or her welfare, how that action will be taken forward, and with what intended outcomes.

3.3 When to Convene a Child Protection Conference

Requesting and convening a Child Protection Conference

- 3.3.1. Any professional person may request a Child Protection Conference for any child or unborn child who, in their opinion, meets the agreed criteria set out below. The request should be made to the Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit.
- 3.3.2. Where there is a difference of view about whether a Child Protection Conference should be convened, the Safeguarding Children Unit will attempt to resolve this in the first instance. If The Safeguarding Children Unit is unable to resolve any difference, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the case management subgroup of the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board, who will make the final decision.
- 3.3.3. Those attending should be notified of Conferences as far in advance as possible, and the Conference held at a time and place likely to be convenient to as many people as possible.
- 3.3.4. The Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit is responsible for convening Child Protection Conferences and sending invitations.
- 3.3.5. The Chair of the meeting must be informed, when it is believed that any person should be excluded from all or part of a Conference, or where it may be difficult to manage their behaviour.

Criteria for convening a Child Protection Conference

- 3.3.6. A Child Protection Conference must be convened in the following circumstances:
 - a) **Following Child Protection Enquiries and an assessment that a child, or unborn child, is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is necessary;**
 - b) When a child has been made the subject of an **Emergency Protection Order** or **Police Protection** (and following subsequent Child Protection Enquiries and an assessment that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is necessary);
 - c) Where **child to child abuse** is suspected, following Child Protection Enquiries and an assessment that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is necessary in respect of the **victim**;
 - d) Where **child to child abuse** is suspected, following Child Protection Enquiries and an assessment that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is necessary in respect of the **alleged abuser**;
 - e) Where a child has had a Child Protection Plan or a Child Protection Plan that has ended, is to **return home from accommodation** (unless this move was agreed at a previous Child Protection Conference);
 - f) Where a child no longer requires a Child Protection Plan on the basis that they were living away from home, under a Care Order or Interim Care Order, and there is a renewed likelihood of significant harm **because**:

- there is a plan for the child to return home
or
 - there is concern about the child's contact with the abuser
or
 - an Interim Order is not renewed and the child is returned home;
- g) Where a child or unborn child, who currently has a Child Protection Plan with another local authority, **moves into Rochdale** and an assessment has been made that a Child Protection Plan is necessary in Rochdale;
- h) When professionals become aware of a child having contact with **any person who may pose a significant risk** to them (and following Child Protection Enquiries and an assessment that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and that a Child Protection Plan is necessary). This will include people who have a relevant criminal conviction, e.g. A person identified as presenting a risk or potential risk to children (previously known as Schedule One offenders) and those sexually exploiting children;
- i) When **further concerns** have arisen of increased or additional risk to a child or unborn child currently with a Child Protection Plan (or other children living in the same household);
- j) In all cases where a **major change** to previous Child Protection Conference recommendations or the existing Child Protection Plan is proposed;
- k) When the **whereabouts** of a child or unborn child who currently has a Child Protection Plan in Rochdale are **unknown**.

Deciding not to convene a Child Protection Conference where the concerns have been substantiated but the assessment is that the child is not at continuing risk of significant harm

- 3.3.7. It may be that a Child Protection Plan is not required, because, although the concerns have been substantiated, the child is assessed by those conducting the Child Protection Enquiries not to be at continuing risk of significant harm. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that such cases are closely monitored and discussed widely within a multi-disciplinary context, without the necessity of calling a Child Protection Conference.
- 3.3.8. This action can only be taken following the conclusion of Child Protection Enquiries under Part 2 of these Procedures.
- 3.3.9. Those conducting the Child Protection Enquiries should seek agreement not to convene a Child Protection Conference from all professionals contacted during the Enquiries and all relevant professionals involved with the child and family.
- 3.3.10. **If any professional disagrees** with the recommendation not to convene a Conference, the Children's Social Care Team Manager must immediately consult with the Safeguarding Children Unit and **a Child Protection Conference must be convened**.
- 3.3.11. **If all professionals agree** that it is not necessary to convene a Child Protection Conference then:
- a) Those conducting the Child Protection Enquiries should discuss the conclusions of their Enquiries with the Safeguarding Children Unit to gain their agreement. This will be recorded by the Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit;

- b) Those conducting Child Protection Enquiries should inform the parents/carers in writing that no further action under the Child Protection Procedures is planned;
 - c) The completed Section 47 Risk Assessment Form must be sent to the Rochdale Safeguarding Childrens Unit. The form must include the reason why the decision was reached not to convene a Child Protection Conference and details of all relevant professionals consulted;
 - d) The Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit will send a letter of confirmation to all of the professionals involved in the decision not to convene a Child Protection Conference. Copies will also be sent (for information only) to the Named Nurse for Child Protection (HMR NHS) and the Detective Sergeant from the Police Public Protection & Investigation Unit (Rochdale Division);
- 3.3.12. The process of consultation and decision making should be completed within the maximum time period laid down for convening Child Protection Conferences (15 working days from the referral).
- 3.3.13. If, at the end of this process, any agency or individual seriously disagrees with the recommendation they must contact the Safeguarding Childrens Unit to request that a Child Protection Conference is convened. This request should be made as soon as possible and within 5 working days of receiving the letter from the Safeguarding Children Unit
- 3.3.14. If it is agreed that a Child Protection Conference is not required, consideration must be given to the need for further involvement as follows:
- a) the child is in need of services under section 17 of The Children Act 1989, and a Core Assessment should be completed;
 - b) provide a service without the need for further assessment;
 - c) advise and/or refer on to other agencies;
 - d) no further involvement.

3.4 Timing of an Initial Child Protection Conference

- 3.4.1. The timing of an Initial Child Protection Conference will depend on the urgency of the case and on the time needed to obtain relevant information about the child and family. If the Conference is to reach well-informed decisions based on evidence, it should take place following adequate preparation and assessment. At the same time, cases where children are at risk of significant harm should not be allowed to drift.
- 3.4.2. All **Initial Child Protection Conference** should take place within **15 working days** of the last strategy discussion.
- 3.4.3. Any departure from 15 working days must only be in consultation with the Safeguarding Children Unit and must not unduly jeopardise the protection needs of a child. Those conducting the Child Protection Enquiries may request more time to gather essential information which will enable better decision making by the Child Protection Conference.
- 3.4.4. The **need to protect the child** and other necessary action will be the responsibility of those conducting the Child Protection Enquiries and **must not be delayed by the timing** of the Conference.

3.5 Participants at a Child Protection Conference

General

- 3.5.1. The Child Protection Conference will be chaired and minuted by staff from the Safeguarding Children Unit.
- 3.5.2. The Conference Chair will always be independent from any worker involved in the case and will have no direct line management responsibility for any of the workers involved.
- 3.5.3. Wherever possible, the same person who chairs the Initial Child Protection Conference should also chair subsequent Child Protection Review Conferences in respect of a specific child.
- 3.5.4. The Child Protection Conference should bring together all those who have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child, or family, or both.
- 3.5.5. A Conference, which is larger than it needs to be, can inhibit discussion and intimidate the participants. It should, therefore, consist of the smallest number of people conducive to effective decision making and include those who are able to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.

Parents/carers and family members

- 3.5.6. The parents/carers and family members who will normally be invited to attend all Initial Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Review Conferences are:
 - a) any person with Parental Responsibility;
 - b) fathers who do not have Parental Responsibility but who are actively involved with the child;
 - c) others who have day to day care of the child;
 - d) the partner of a parent/carer;
 - e) other family members, where it is agreed that their attendance would be in the best interests of the child.
- 3.5.7. Even where parents/carers have had no significant contact with their children and are unlikely to have future involvement, a decision needs to be made about their attendance. Such cases must be discussed with the Safeguarding Children Unit and consideration given to what is likely to be in the best interests of the child.
- 3.5.8. If the attendance of several family members creates a conflict of interests, the Chair will seek to arrange the meeting in such a manner that all family members' interests can be expressed.

Exclusions

- 3.5.9. Decisions about excluding parents/carers rest with the Chair of the Child Protection Conference, in consultation with the social worker.

- 3.5.10. Parents/carers will be excluded from all or part of an Initial Child Protection Conference or a Child Protection Review Conference in the following circumstances:
- a) their attendance would result in a physical threat to any other person attending;
 - b) there is good reason to believe that they may severely disrupt the meeting;
 - c) their attendance would deter that of others whose presence would be of greater significance to the interests of the child;
 - d) in order to ensure the full involvement of another parent/carer;
 - e) there is a legal order preventing their contact with others who are present;
 - f) the Police decide that the Conference needs to hear information which might prejudice Police investigations, or criminal proceedings, if shared with the parent/carer;
 - g) the Conference needs to hear information in respect of third parties (partial exclusions only).
- 3.5.11. The Safeguarding Children Unit will usually write to the excluded parent/carer to confirm:
- a) the reason the Child Protection Conference has been convened;
 - b) the reason for their exclusion;
 - c) how they can contribute their views to the meeting;
 - d) the outcome of the Child Protection Conference.

Children

- 3.5.12. Children who are the subject of a Child Protection Conference should attend all or part of the meeting if:
- a) they have sufficient understanding, are able to express their wishes and feelings and want to attend (it is unlikely that children under 10 years old will benefit from attending);
 - b) their attendance would not cause them distress or further abuse;
 - c) their attendance would not increase the risk to their welfare.
- 3.5.13. If there is likely to be a criminal prosecution, then consideration needs to be given to the effect that this may have on the child's full participation in the Conference.
- 3.5.14. If the attendance of a child and their parents/carers creates a conflict of interests, the Chair will seek to arrange the meeting in such a manner that all family members' interests can be expressed.
- 3.5.15. Agencies may hold information about a child's parents/carers which the parents/carers would not wish the child to have. Professionals should consider this when producing reports for Conferences.

Supporters/solicitors/advocates

- 3.5.16. The parents/carers may bring a **supporter** to the Conference. Their role will be to ensure that information is clear to parents/carers and, if necessary they can seek clarification of information. Unless permitted by the Chair, they should not act as an advocate or challenge information.
- 3.5.17. Where the supporter is an elected member of the Local Authority, their attendance at the Conference will preclude them from being involved in any future decisions taken in relation to the child by the Local Authority.

- 3.5.18. A parent/carer or child may bring their **solicitor** to the Conference as their supporter. There will also be occasions when a parent/carer or child requests that their solicitor attends in their absence. The Conference Chair will consider such a request, consult, and make a decision.
- 3.5.19. There will be occasions when a parent/carer or child is unable to represent themselves and wishes to be accompanied by an **advocate** to speak on their behalf. The social worker involved in bringing the case to Conference is responsible for establishing if there is a need for advocacy. The social worker and the Conference Chair will make the decision about the attendance of an advocate. Preparation of the advocate is the responsibility of the social worker and the Conference Chair.

Agencies

- 3.5.20. A representative from the following must be invited to attend each Initial Child Protection Conference or Child Protection Review Conference:
- a) Children's Social Care;
 - b) Police;
 - c) HMR PCT;
 - d) General Practitioners;
 - e) Midwifery Service, Health Visiting or School Nursing Service.
- 3.5.21. Where relevant, the following individuals/services must be invited and asked to attend only if they have relevant information or involvement with the child or family:
- a) Education;
 - b) Paediatrician;
 - c) Family support services;
 - d) Foster carers;
 - e) Probation Service;
 - f) Learners & Young People's Services
 - g) Housing/Homelessness;
 - h) Child or adult mental health services;
 - i) Drug treatment services;
 - j) Youth Offending Teams;
 - k) Day care services;
 - l) Voluntary and private organisations;
 - m) Armed services welfare;
 - n) Any other relevant professional worker.
- 3.5.22. A representative from the Local Authority **Legal Services** must be invited, if there is a current or likely need for legal involvement or advice. The social worker involved in bringing the case to Conference must ensure that the Local Authority Solicitor is briefed prior to their attendance. The Solicitor will attend for their information, and to give legal advice to the Conference, if necessary. Where the Children's Social Care requires legal advice, it will be given outside the Conference.
- 3.5.23. A **guardian ad litem, court welfare officer or the Official Solicitor** will also be invited to attend to obtain information, if they are actively involved with the child or family. The Conference Chair should ensure that all those attending understand that the guardian ad litem, court welfare officer or the Official Solicitor will not be involved in any decisions made by the Conference.

- 3.5.24. An **observer** (e.g. a student, a new worker etc.) may accompany a professional colleague who is attending a Child Protection Conference, where the experience is felt to be relevant. However, prior agreement must be sought from the Chair of the Conference and the parents/carers.
- 3.5.25. An independent **interpreter or facilitator** should be invited, where a participant requires this due to a specific communication need.

Quorum

- 3.5.26. Only in exceptional circumstances must a Child Protection Conference proceed without Child Care Services and at least two other agencies being present.

3.6 Preparation for a Child Protection Conference

Providing information to a Child Protection Conference

- 3.6.1. Every invited professional has a responsibility to attend, and give all relevant information to the Child Protection Conference by submitting a written report to the Safeguarding Childrens Unit the **day before the planned meeting** date. This should include:
- a) details of their involvement with the child and family;
 - b) information concerning their knowledge of the child's health, development and overall welfare;
 - c) information concerning the capacity of the parents/carers to safeguard the child and promote the child's health and development;
 - d) any family and environmental factors which might affect the child's welfare or the capacity of the parents/carers to meet the child's needs;
- and** for Child Protection Review Conferences,
- e) evaluate each agency's objectives set out in the Child Protection Plan, in terms of their impact on the child's welfare.
- 3.6.2. The written report format is the responsibility of individual agencies but should be standardised within agencies to ensure that appropriate standards are met.
- 3.6.3. Children's Social Care should provide the Conference with a written report which summarises and analyses the information obtained in the course of the Initial Assessment and Child Protection Enquiries.
- 3.6.4. The Police will bring to the Conference relevant information regarding any significant person. This will include information about those living in the same household as the child or having (or likely to have) significant contact with the child. It is important, therefore, that the Police are provided with full and accurate details of such persons in advance of the Conference.
- 3.6.5. Where it is not possible for an invited professional or their delegate to attend, or for them to submit a written report they must contact the Chair of the Conference, in advance, to give their information.
- 3.6.6. All those providing information should take care to distinguish between fact, observation, hearsay, allegation and opinion.

- 3.6.7. Reports should be free from jargon and superfluous wording, available in the preferred language of the parents/carers or adapted to meet individual communication needs (Braille etc.).
- 3.6.8. Copies of all reports should be provided to the family in advance of the Child Protection Conference. It is acknowledged that the urgency of some Conferences may prevent professionals providing a copy of their report to parents/carers prior to the meeting. In these cases, every effort should be made to discuss with them the likely content of the report.
- 3.6.9. The Chair of the meeting must be informed, when it is believed that any person should be excluded from all or part of a Conference, or where it may be difficult to manage their behaviour.
- 3.6.10. A professional may hold relevant third party information, where authority to pass that information on is restricted by code of practice or by request. In this case, they should discuss with the Chair, prior to the start of the Conference, if or how this information can be shared with the meeting.

Preparing parents/carers and children

- 3.6.11. Once the decision has been made to convene a Child Protection Conference it will be the responsibility of the Children's Social Care Team Manager to ensure that a the social worker will talk to parents/carers and (where appropriate) children in order to:
 - a) inform them of the decision to convene a Conference;
 - b) explain the purpose, structure of the Conference and who has been invited;
 - c) explain the decision making powers of the Conference and implications of any decision/recommendations made;
 - d) explain the purpose of a Child Protection Plan;
 - e) agree a convenient time and date for the Conference, taking reasonable consideration of their wishes, working hours, religious needs etc;
 - f) explain that the Conference Chair will spend some time with them to prepare them on the day of the Conference;
 - g) encourage them to attend;
 - h) ascertain if consideration needs to be given to financial assistance to enable them to attend;
 - i) inform them that they can submit their views in writing to the Conference whether or not they attend;
 - j) ascertain any particular needs which the Conference Chair will need to be made aware of, (e.g. language, disability, communication, literacy, advocacy etc.)
 - k) inform them that they may bring a supporter to the Conference;
 - l) explain to parents/carers the right of appeal, and how to appeal;
 - m) explain, and provide a copy of, the relevant 'Information for Parents and Carers' leaflet.
- 3.6.12. A written invitation giving details of the time, place, venue etc., will be sent to parents/carers by the Safeguarding Children Unit.
- 3.6.13. All written information should be provided to parents/carers in a language and form that meets their communication needs.

- 3.6.14. The parents/carers will be invited to meet the Chair prior to the Child Protection Conference in order to:
- a) ensure that they understand the purpose of the Conference and what will happen;
 - b) encourage them to participate in the Conference;
 - c) explain who has been invited to attend and why;
 - d) share any available reports.

3.7 The Child Protection Conference - Process

General

- 3.7.1. All of those invited to a Child Protection Conference are expected to share relevant information, in order to protect the child. **Full and open sharing of information** will lead to the best possible plan for the child and family. Information should not, therefore, be withheld on the grounds of confidentiality.
- 3.7.2. All information is **confidential** and must only be disclosed to those directly involved in the case and their managers.
- 3.7.3. The Chair should set out the purpose of the Conference to all present, determining the agenda and emphasising the confidential nature of the meeting.
- 3.7.4. A Child Protection Conference will:
- a) share all relevant information about the child and family;
 - b) formulate an understanding of the alleged abuse and consider the assessment of those who conducted the Child Protection Enquiries;
 - c) assess the degree of risk to all children who are the subject of concern;
 - d) consider the child's wishes and feelings;
 - e) consider the views of parents/carers;
 - f) decide whether or not a child meets the criteria for a Child Protection Plan.

Criteria for a Child Protection Plan

- 3.7.5. The need for a Child Protection Plan is established at the Child Protection Conference or when a child who already has a Child Protection Plan moves into the Rochdale area.
- 3.7.6. The Conference should consider the following question when determining whether to register a child. **Is the child at continuing risk of significant harm?**
- 3.7.7. The test should be that either:
- a) the child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely;
 - or
 - b) professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of Child Protection Enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect.

Categories for being the subject of a Child Protection Plan

3.7.8. Following a decision that a child needs a Child Protection Plan, The Chair should determine under which category of abuse the child is at continued risk of. The category used will indicate the primary presenting concerns to those consulting with the Safeguarding Children Unit regarding children who have a Child Protection Plan.

Physical abuse

3.7.9. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness to a child.

Emotional abuse

3.7.10. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capabilities, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying, causing children, frequently, to feel frightened, or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone

Sexual abuse

3.7.11. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual online material, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

3.7.12. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, it may involve a parent/carer failing to:

- provide adequate food & clothing, shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment;
- protect a child from physical harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers);
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Decision making and recommendations

- 3.7.13. The Chair should ensure that the Conference makes the decisions required of it in an informed, systematic and explicit way. Their role in the decision making process is crucial and can influence the outcome of the Child Protection Conference.
- 3.7.14. The Chair should enable all those present to make their full contribution to discussion and decision making, ensuring that information (including information from those unable to attend) is relevant and substantiated. They should also try to ensure that the criteria for a Child Protection Plans are applied.
- 3.7.15. It is the responsibility of each professional present to state their opinion, and contribute to the collective decision about the need for a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.7.16. Parents/carers should be encouraged to give their opinion about the need for a Child Protection Plan, but have no part in making the decision. However, their views should be recorded.
- 3.7.17. Some professionals may find it difficult to make a decision on the need for Child Protection Plan. In these circumstances, the Chair should give advice about the criteria for a Child Protection Plan and enable the Conference to come to a decision, rather than alienate professionals and parents/carers alike with an unnecessarily prolonged discussion.
- 3.7.18. Where a child is in need of a Child Protection Plan, the Chair should determine under which category of abuse it should be recorded. The category will indicate what the primary presenting concerns were to those consulting the Safeguarding Children Unit regarding children subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.7.19. Where a child is in need of a Child Protection Plan the Child Protection Conference will additionally:
- a) identify a key worker who will be responsible for the overall management of the case;
 - b) identify a Child Protection Core Group of family and professionals, who will be responsible for producing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing a detailed, written Child Protection Plan;
 - c) establish how children, parents/carers and wider family members should be involved in the planning and implementation process, and the support, advice and advocacy available to them;
 - d) make recommendations for the **Outline Child Protection Plan** as follows:
 - identify risks of significant harm to the child and ways in which the child can be protected through an inter-agency plan based on assessment findings to date;
 - establish short-term and longer-term aims and objectives that are clearly linked to reducing the risk of harm to the child and promoting the child's welfare;
 - identify what needs to change in order to safeguard the child;
 - what further assessments need to take place;
 - be clear about who will have responsibility for what actions, including actions by family members, within what period of time;
 - outline ways of monitoring and evaluating progress against the plan.
 - e) consider the need for a contingency plan if circumstances change;

- f) clarify the different purpose and remit of the Initial Child Protection Conference, the Core Group and the Child Protection Review Conference;
 - g) agree a date for the first Child Protection Core Group Meeting to take place to produce the detailed, written, Child Protection Plan. This must be within 10 working days of the Child Protection Conference;
 - h) agree when to convene a Child Protection Review Conference and under what circumstances it might be necessary to convene the Review Conference before that date. (The first Review Conference will be held within 3 months. For timing of subsequent Review Conferences see under 'Timing' in section 3.10);
 - i) identify any issues relating to danger, or threats to staff and consider appropriate protection for such staff.
- 3.7.20. It is the implementation of the Child Protection Plan that protects the child. The category of abuse recorded in the Child protection Plan is the formal, multi-disciplinary acknowledgement of the need for the existence of a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.7.21. Where it is considered a child does not require a Child Protection Plan, the Child Protection Conference may consider the child to be in need of support to promote their health or development. In these circumstances; the Conference should ensure that arrangements are in place to consider with the family what further support may be offered. It may be appropriate to continue with a Core Assessment to help determine what support is needed. Where the child's needs are complex, inter-agency working should continue.
- 3.7.22. If any individual or agency has reservations about implementing the recommendations of the Child Protection Conference or the subsequent Child Protection Core Group, they must consult with the Safeguarding Children's Unit.
- 3.7.23. Issues of disagreement, professional dissension and appeals by parents/carers with regard to decisions of the Conference are dealt with in section 3.11.

Talking to parents/carers following a Child Protection Conference

- 3.7.24. It will normally be the responsibility of the key worker to discuss the Child Protection Conference and its outcome with the parents/carers, as soon as possible.
- 3.7.25. The Chair will also be available to talk to the parents/carers with the social worker, if required.
- 3.7.26. The purpose of talking to parents/carers after a Child Protection Conference is to ensure that they:
- a) understand the decisions that have been made and the implications of these;
 - b) are aware of the purpose of keeping a list of children subject to Child Protection Plans;
 - c) are aware of their rights regarding the appeal procedure;
 - d) understand their role and rights in any future work.
- 3.7.27. It may not be possible to talk to parents/carers because of fears for the safety of staff. In this case, the parents/carers should be provided with written information, within 5 working days of the meeting, regarding the outcome and implications of the Child Protection Conference. This may be in addition to the minutes of the meeting. The Chair and the key worker should agree who will take responsibility for this.

- 3.7.28. All written information will be sent to parents/carers in a language and form that meets their communication needs
- 3.7.29. Even where parents/carers have had no significant contact with their children and are unlikely to have future involvement, a decision needs to be made about whether or not to notify them of the outcome of the Conference. Such cases must be discussed with the Safeguarding Children Unit and consideration given to what is likely to be in the best interests of the child.

Minutes of the Child Protection Conference

- 3.7.30. The Safeguarding Children Unit is responsible for providing a dedicated person to take notes and produce minutes of all Child Protection Conferences.
- 3.7.31. The minutes will record the essential facts, a summary that accurately reflects contributions made, decisions made with the reasons, and the recommendations made.
- 3.7.32. Minutes will be circulated by the Safeguarding Children Unit within 10 working days. They will be distributed to everyone invited and any other professionals or family members deemed appropriate by the Conference or by the Chair.
- 3.7.33. All written information will be sent to parents/carers in a language and form that meets their communication needs
- 3.7.34. Where parents/carers are excluded from part of the Conference, their minutes will only record the part of the meeting they attended.
- 3.7.35. Where parents/carers are excluded from the whole Conference, the responsibility for deciding whether or not to send minutes will be that of the Chair and the Children's Social Care Team Manager. They must record the decision and their reasons.
- 3.7.36. No written information or minutes will be sent to those who attend solely as supporters of parents/carers.
- 3.7.37. Even where parents/carers have had no significant contact with their children and are unlikely to have future involvement, a decision needs to be made about whether or not they should receive a copy of the Conference minutes. Such cases must be discussed with the Safeguarding Childrens Unit and consideration given to what is likely to be in the best interests of the child.
- 3.7.38. Requests for corrections or amendments to the minutes should be notified immediately to the Chair and confirmed in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the minutes.
- 3.7.39. All information contained within the minutes is confidential and must only be disclosed to those directly involved in the case and their managers.
- 3.7.40. Similarly, the written copies of the minutes of the Conference are confidential and may only be released or reproduced with the agreement of the Safeguarding Children Unit, where it is in the interests of the child.
- 3.7.41. However, in certain court cases, one of the Rochdale Safeguarding Childrens Board agencies may be advised or compelled to disclose the minutes of the Child Protection Conference to the court or to other interested parties. The court may order anyone who has a set of minutes to produce them in court proceedings.

Monitoring

3.7.42. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that good practice is maintained at the Conference. In situations where practice falls below expected standards e.g. if parents/carers are ill-prepared, reports badly written etc. then the Chair will take the matter up with the agency concerned, via the relevant manager.

3.8 Role and Tasks of the Key Worker and their Manager Following a Child Protection Conference

Role and tasks of the key worker's manager/assistant manager

3.8.1. The key worker is managed by a Children's Social Care Team Manager

3.8.2. The role and tasks of the manager are to:

- a) allocate a qualified social worker who is competent to undertake child protection work;
- b) be responsible for Children's Social Care management of the case and the key worker;
- c) ensure that the statutory responsibilities of the agency are fulfilled and that a detailed, written, multi-disciplinary Child Protection Plan is produced and implemented;
- d) chair the first Child Protection Core Group Meeting following the decision for the need for a Child Protection Plan and ensure that this is held within procedural time limits;
- e) ensure that the first Child Protection Core Group Meeting and the first Child Protection Plan are recorded.

Role and tasks of the key worker

3.8.3. Every child with a Child Protection Plan must have a named key worker who will be a qualified social worker employed by Children's Social Care.

3.8.4. The role and tasks of the key worker are to:

- a) discuss the Initial Child Protection Conference or Child Protection Review Conference and its outcome with the parents/carers as soon as possible after the meeting. (see under 'Talking to parents/carers following a Child Protection Conference' in section 3.7);
- b) explain the role and responsibilities of the key worker, together with the functions of the Core Group and the purpose of the Child Protection Plan, to the parents/carers and child;
- c) ensure that Child Protection Core Group Meetings are regularly convened;
- d) ensure that parents/carers are invited to the Child Protection Core Group meetings;
- e) ensure that parents/carers are actively encouraged to be fully involved in the production and implementation of the Child Protection Plan;
- f) co-ordinate the implementation and review of the multi-disciplinary Child Protection Plan;
- g) ensure that Core Group members and the Safeguarding Children Unit provided with a copy of the Child Protection Plan;

- h) advise the Child Protection Core Group members and the Safeguarding Children Unit of changes of address, household composition, carer, legal status, school, General Practitioner etc;
 - i) provide the focus for communication between all who have an interest in the welfare of the child;
 - j) ensure that the child's health and development is regularly monitored, recorded and reviewed;
 - k) keep under constant review the child's protection and to regularly assess the level of risk in the family to ensure the child is not being re-abused or neglected;
 - l) request (via the Safeguarding Children Unit) police checks in respect of any person, not previously checked, who is having or is likely to have significant contact with the child or family. See also appendix 5.3 'Sharing of Information about Offenders or Suspected Offenders in Relation to Child Protection';
 - m) maintain their own records including all contact with other professionals, the child and family;
 - n) make the child, where appropriate, and parents/carers aware of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme and their eligibility to make an application.
- 3.8.5. It is an expectation that the key worker should have direct contact with the child who has a Child Protection Plan (once every two weeks) and his/her family, although the key worker does not necessarily have to be the professional who has most face-to-face contact.

3.9 Child Protection Core Groups

Purpose and recording

- 3.9.1. The Child Protection Core Group is responsible for producing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing a detailed, written, Child Protection Plan (using the agreed format)
- 3.9.2. The Child Protection Core Group is responsible for ensuring that the Core Assessment is completed within procedural time limits.
- 3.9.3. The Children's Social Care Team Manager/Assistant manager of the key worker will be responsible for ensuring that a record of the first meeting and a written Child Protection Plan are produced.
- 3.9.4. The key worker will be responsible for distributing the record of the first meeting and the written Child Protection Plan. They will also ensure that records of all subsequent meetings and any amended Child Protection Plans are produced and distributed.
- 3.9.5. A record of each Child Protection Core Group Meeting and a copy of each Child Protection Plan will be distributed to all Core Group members.
- 3.9.6. A copy of each Child Protection Plan will be sent to the Safeguarding Children Unit.

Timing and frequency

- 3.9.7. The first Child Protection Core Group meeting should be convened by the Children's Social Care Team Manager/ assistant manager of the key worker, within 10 working days of the Child Protection Conference.

- 3.9.8. The Child Protection Core Group will plan subsequent meetings at six week intervals to enable the implementation, monitoring and review of the Child Protection Plan and to form a recommendation for any Child Protection Review Conference.

Participants

- 3.9.9. The Child Protection Core Group will consist of family members/carers and workers who have regular contact with the family and/or who have a contribution to make to the Child Protection Plan. The Child Protection Conference will nominate the Core Group members and any subsequent changes will be decided by the key worker and/or Core Group.
- 3.9.10. Parents/carers should always be invited and encouraged to attend unless:
- a) their attendance would result in a physical threat to any other person attending, or there is good reason to believe that they may severely disrupt the meeting;
 - b) their attendance would deter that of others whose presence would be of greater significance to the interests of the child;
 - c) where there is a legal order preventing their contact with others who are present.
- 3.9.11. Children should attend if:
- a) they have sufficient understanding, are able to express their wishes and feelings and want to attend (it is unlikely that children under 10 years old will gain from attending);
 - b) their attendance would not cause them distress or further abuse;
 - c) their attendance would not increase the risk to their welfare.
- 3.9.12. The first Child Protection Core Group Meeting should be chaired by the Children's Social Care Team Manager of the key worker. Subsequent meetings should be chaired by the key worker.

The Child Protection Plan

- 3.9.13. A child or unborn child should be regarded as needing a Child Protection Plan, when the absence of such a plan would leave the child at risk of suffering significant harm.
- 3.9.14. A Child Protection Plan is a written, formal, multi-disciplinary plan drawn up with parents/carers, after a child is regarded as needing a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.9.15. All members of the Core Group have equal ownership and responsibility for the Child Protection Plan and should co-operate to achieve its aims.
- 3.9.16. The aims of the of the Child Protection Plan are to:
- a) safeguard the child from further harm;
 - b) promote the child's health and development;
 - c) support the family and wider family members to promote the welfare of the child.
- 3.9.17. The Initial Child Protection Conference is responsible for agreeing an Outline Child Protection Plan.
- 3.9.18. The Child Protection Core Group is responsible for producing the detailed, written Child Protection Plan.
- 3.9.19. Child Care Services are responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Child Protection Plan.

- 3.9.20. The written Child Protection Plan should be agreed as far as possible with all members of the Core Group and will include:
- a) a statement of the identified risk to the child that has led to child needing a Child Protection Plan;
 - b) details of the identified needs of the child and what therapeutic services are required;
 - c) details of the arrangements for any required Core Assessment to be undertaken in accordance with the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (Department of Health);
 - d) details of the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the Core Group and the roles and responsibilities of any other professionals or other significant people in contact with the child and family;
 - e) details of what needs to change to reduce the risk in order for the Child Protection Plan to no longer be required;
 - f) details of agreed action required in order to bring about the required change, including who is responsible for each action and agreed time limits;
 - g) details of the nature and frequency of contact with the child and family members/carers by professionals;
 - h) details of who will provide the resources necessary to fully implement the Child Protection Plan;
 - i) consideration of the needs and wishes of the child and family;
 - j) details of how the plan will be monitored and reviewed, including planned dates for further meetings;
 - k) contingency plans if the level of risk increases;
 - l) details of any disagreement in respect of the perceived risk to the child or the required action;
 - m) details and explanation of any changes to a previous Child Protection Plan.
- 3.9.21. All Child Protection Plans should be signed and dated by all involved in carrying out the plan. The chair of the Core Group Meeting must also sign the Child Protection Plan.
- 3.9.22. The Child Protection Plan should be produced for the family in their first language and they should receive a written copy in their first language.
- 3.9.23. The key worker is responsible for ensuring that all members of the Core Group and the Safeguarding Children Unit receive a copy of the Child Protection Plan.

Core Assessment regarding a child with a child protection plan

- 3.9.24. Within 42 working days of beginning the Initial Assessment, Children's Social Care should have completed a Core Assessment in respect of every child who has a Child Protection plan. **42 working days**
- 3.9.25. The Core Assessment should be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Initial Child Protection Conference, as developed by the Core Group and should be consistent with the 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (Department of Health). It should build on information obtained in the course of the Initial Assessment and the fuller Child Protection Enquiries.

3.9.26. It may be necessary to commission specialist assessments, which it may not be possible to complete within the 42 working day period. This should not delay the drawing together of other elements of the Core Assessment.

3.9.27. The analysis of the child's needs should provide evidence needed to make judgements and plan how to best safeguard a child, promote his or her welfare, and support parents/carers in promoting their children's welfare. This analysis of the child's needs should underpin the Child Protection Plan.

Complaints

3.9.28. Any complaint about the service that is provided by an individual agency, including the conduct of any professional, will be directed to the individual agency for consideration under their complaints procedures.

3.9.29. Complaints about the functioning of the Core Group as a whole should be dealt with by the key worker and/or their manager under Children's Social Care Customer Relations Policy and Procedures.

3.9.30. Families should be told of their right to complain and how to do so.

3.10 The Child Protection Review Conference

Purpose

3.10.1. The purpose of the Child Protection Review Conference is to:

- a) review the safety, health, development and welfare of the child against intended outcomes set out in the Child Protection Plan;
- b) consider explicitly whether the child continues to be at risk of significant harm;
- c) consider whether or not the Child Protection Plan should continue or be changed;
- d) decide what future action, if any, is needed to safeguard the child and/or promote his or her welfare, how that action will be taken forward, and with what intended outcomes.

Timing

3.10.2. A Child Protection Review Conference should be held, within 3 months following a child's becoming the subject of a child protection plan, by a Conference in Rochdale, unless there are good reasons to vary this.

3.10.3. Subsequent Child Protection Review Conferences will be held, for as long as a child remains on the subject of a Child Protection Plan. These will normally be held 3 months after the previous Review Conference. However, they must be held within 6 months of the previous Review Conference, unless there are good reasons to vary this.

Participants at a Child Protection Review Conference

3.10.4. The Child Protection Review Conference will be chaired and minuted by staff from the Safeguarding Children Unit. The Conference Chair will always be independent from any worker involved in the case and will have no direct line management responsibility for any of the workers involved.

- 3.10.5. The Child Protection Review Conference should bring together all those who have a significant contribution to make, arising from professional expertise, knowledge of the child or family or both. The procedures under 'Participants at a Child Protection Conference' in section 3.5 also relate to Child Protection Review Conferences.
- 3.10.6. A Conference which is larger than it needs to be can inhibit discussion and intimidate the participants. It should, therefore, consist of the smallest number of people conducive to effective decision-making including those who are able to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.
- 3.10.7. Invitations, reminding participants of the date, time and venue of the Child Protection Review Conference, will normally be sent by the Safeguarding Children Conference Unit, 4 weeks prior to the meeting.

Quorum

- 3.10.8. Only in exceptional circumstances must a Child Protection Conference proceed without Children's Social Care and at least two other agencies being present.

Preparation for a Child Protection Review Conference

- 3.10.9. The procedures outlined in section 3.6 apply equally to preparation for Child Protection Review Conferences.

The Child Protection Review Conference - process

- 3.10.10. All of those invited to a Child Protection Review Conference are expected to share relevant information, in order to protect the child. **Full and open sharing of information** will lead to the best possible plan for the child and family. Information should not, therefore, be withheld on the grounds of confidentiality.
- 3.10.11. All information is **confidential** and must only be disclosed to those directly involved in the case and their managers.
- 3.10.12. A Child Protection Review Conference will:
- a) review the recommendations of the previous Child Protection Conference and the implementation of the Child Protection Plan;
 - b) review the operation of the current Child Protection Plan and consider whether or not it continues to protect the child adequately and is being followed appropriately;
 - c) review the level of inter-agency communication and collaboration;
 - d) consider any assessment carried out as part of the Child Protection Plan;
 - e) consider the degree of risk to all children who are the subject of concern;
 - f) consider the child's wishes and feelings;
 - g) consider the views of parents/carers;
 - h) consider whether or not the criteria for de-registration are met;
 - i) note and record any significant changes in circumstances; in order to ensure the accuracy of information held about children who are subject to Child Protection Plan.

3.10.13. Where a child remains the subject of a Child Protection Plan the Child Protection Review Conference will additionally:

- a) consider whether the child still meets the criteria for a child protection plan;
- b) confirm the key worker and the membership of the Child Protection Core Group;
- c) make general recommendations concerning the Child Protection Plan;
- d) agree when to convene the next Child Protection Review Conference (This will normally be held after a further 3 months but must be held within 6 months.);
- e) identify any issues relating to danger or threats to staff and to consider appropriate protection for such staff;
- f) agree a date for the next Child Protection Core Group Meeting to take place. (This must be within 10 working days if the Child Protection Review Conference has identified the need to make significant changes to the Child Protection Plan.).

3.10.14. Where a child **no longer requires a Child Protection Plan** the Child Protection Review Conference may consider making recommendations including:

- a) specifying the circumstances under which a further Child Protection Conference would be considered;
- b) the provision or continued provision of services under section 17 of The Children Act 1989, as identified by the Core Assessment;
- c) the provision of any other services to meet a need identified by the Review Conference;
- d) the need for advice and/or referral on to other agencies.

3.10.15. If any individual or agency has reservations about implementing the recommendations of the Child Protection Review Conference or the subsequent Child Protection Core Group, they must consult with the Safeguarding Children Unit.

Criteria for no longer requiring a child protection plan

3.10.16. Consideration should be given to whether a child still requires a child protection plan, at every child protection review conference. Additionally, any of the agencies involved with the child may request that a Conference is convened to consider the possibility that a child no longer requires a child protection plan

3.10.17. The Criteria for no longer requiring a child protection plan:

- a) It is judged that the **child is no longer at continuing risk of significant harm requiring safeguarding by means of a Child Protection Plan**. This would include:
 - where a child who has remained at home, but abuse or the risk of abuse has been reduced by work with the family and through the Child Protection Plan;
 - where the child who has been placed away from home and there is no longer access to the abusing adult, or the access is no longer considered to present a risk to the child (including cases where the child is living away from home under a Care Order or Interim Care Order and there is no active plan to return the child home or clear indications that rehabilitation is likely);

- where the abusing adult is no longer a member of the same household as the child and there is no contact, or such contact as occurs is no longer considered to be a risk to the child;
- where the completion of the Core Assessment and a detailed analysis of risk has shown that a Child Protection Plan is no longer necessary;

- b) the **child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area** and that area has accepted responsibility for the future management of the case;
- c) the **child is no longer a child in the eyes of the law** because the child has reached 18 years of age or has married;
- d) the **child has died**;
- e) the **child has permanently left the UK**.

3.10.18. De-registration under 3.10.17 a), where the original factors which led to registration no longer apply, will normally be decided by a Child Protection Review Conference. The other categories 3.10.17 b), c), d), e) may be agreed without the need for a Child Protection Review Conference.

3.10.19. In all cases where the decision is made that a child no longer requires a child protection plan without a Child Protection Review Conference, the Safeguarding Children Unit will write to all agencies recommending de-registration. If any agency disagrees, a Child Protection Review Conference will be necessary.

Decision making

3.10.20. The Chair should ensure that the Conference makes the decisions required of it in an informed, systematic and explicit way. Their role in the decision making process is crucial and can influence the outcome of the Child Protection Conference.

3.10.21. The Chair should enable all those present to make their full contribution to discussion and decision making, ensuring that information (including information from those unable to attend) is relevant and substantiated. They should, also, try to ensure that the criteria for a child protection plan or a whole one is no longer required.

3.10.22. It is the responsibility of each professional present to state their opinion, and contribute to the collective decision about the need for a child protection plan.

3.10.23. Parents/carers should be encouraged to give their opinion about the need for a child protection plan, but have no part in making the decision. However, their views about this should be recorded.

3.10.24. Some professionals may find it difficult to make a decision based on their interpretation of the child protection plan criteria. In these circumstances, the Chair should give advice about the child protection plan criteria and enable the Conference to come to a decision, rather than alienate professionals and parents/carers alike with an unnecessarily prolonged discussion. For further information see also section 3.11 'Disagreement, Professional Dissension, Appeals by Parents/Carers and Complaints Regarding Child Protection Conferences and Conference Decisions'.

Talking to parents/carers following a Child Protection Review Conference

3.10.25. The procedures outlined under 'Talking to parents/carers following a Child Protection Conference' in section 3.7 apply equally to Child Protection Review Conferences.

Minutes of the Child Protection Review Conference

3.10.26. The procedures outlined in 'Minutes of the Child Protection Conference' in section 3.7 apply equally to Child Protection Review Conferences.

3.11 Disagreement, Professional Dissension, Appeals by Parents/Carers and Complaints Regarding Child Protection Conferences and Conference Decisions

General

- 3.11.1. The Chair of a Child Protection Conference has a responsibility to ensure that the criteria for child protection plans are consistently applied.
- 3.11.2. If the Chair is of the opinion that a Child Protection Conference is heading towards a decision which is not in accordance with the relevant criteria for child protection plans, they will advise the Conference accordingly.
- 3.11.3. In certain cases, it will be a matter of opinion about whether the criteria are met. If the Conference is split about a decision after having considered the criteria, the Chair should then make a decision, which in their opinion is in line with the criteria. Any individual reservations/disagreements will be minuted.
- 3.11.4. Having had their disagreement minuted, a professional may continue to disagree strongly about the decision of the Conference to the extent that they wish to disassociate themselves from the decision and formally dissent. In these circumstances, the Chair should inform them of the procedure for professional dissension and ascertain whether or not they are formally dissenting.
- 3.11.5. It is not unusual for parents/carers to disagree with the decisions of a Child Protection Conference. The response to this would normally be further discussion and explanation by the Chair or key worker. Where parents/carers strongly disagree with the outcome of a Child Protection Conference, they should be advised about the appeals procedure.
- 3.11.6. If, in the Chair's opinion, the Child Protection Conference has made a decision about the requirement of a child protection plan which does not follow the criteria, he/she should, either, voice this opinion to be minuted, or dissent from the decision where they believe that the child would be unprotected.

Professional dissension regarding a Child Protection Conference decision

- 3.11.7. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Child Protection Conference to find out whether a professional's disagreement with a decision taken by a Conference complies with the following definition of a dissension.
- 3.11.8. A professional dissension is when a professional strongly disagrees with the decision of a Child Protection Conference. The disagreement must be profound enough for the professional to wish to disassociate themselves from the consensus view of the Conference and to have their dissension formally recorded.

- 3.11.9. If a dissension does occur, the Chair of the Child Protection Conference will immediately refer the matter to the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager who will convene a Dissension Panel.
- 3.11.10. If a child **already has a child protection plan** and there is a dissension, the child protection plan will continue pending the decision of the Dissension Panel.
- 3.11.11. If a child **does not have a child protection plan** and there is a dissension, the child will become the subject of a child protection plan pending the decision of the Dissension Panel.
- 3.11.12. When dissension occurs, a key worker should be nominated and any support and monitoring required to keep the child safe will occur. If necessary, decisions regarding the Core Group, recommendations for the Child Protection Plan and a Review Conference date will be agreed between the Conference Chair and the relevant Children's Social Care Manager, after the Dissension Panel has met. The Conference Chair will ensure that those persons who received an invitation to the Conference are notified of these decisions.

Appeals by parents/carers against a Child Protection Conference decision

- 3.11.13. The parent/carer, or someone acting on their behalf, should write to the Manager of the Safeguarding Children Unit within 30 days of receiving the minutes, confirming their wish to appeal and giving their reasons. If new information becomes available at a later date, consideration will be given to a late appeal application.
- 3.11.14. Grounds for appeal against a Child Protection Conference decision:
- a) The need for a child protection plan criteria were not met;
 - b) New facts have emerged, now which were not known at the time of registration and these facts invalidate the original need for a child protection plan;
 - c) Information having a bearing on the need for a child protection plan have proved, subsequently, to be inaccurate.
- 3.11.15. The Safeguarding Children Unit Manager will decide whether there are grounds for appeal. If so, a meeting of the Appeals Panel will be convened, at a time and date that is suitable for parent/carers to attend.
- 3.11.16. Where there are no grounds for appeal, the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager will advise the parent/carer in writing of that decision.

Complaints regarding the functioning of a Child Protection Conference

- 3.11.17. There may be occasions when a participant at a Child Protection Conference is dissatisfied with the way in which the meeting functioned (as distinct from disagreement with the Conference decision or having a complaint about the conduct of another participant). The following procedure will apply in these circumstances.
- 3.11.18. Any person who has a complaint about the functioning of a Child Protection Conference should write to the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager at the Safeguarding Children Unit, as soon as possible, stating the nature of their complaint.
- 3.11.19. The Safeguarding Children Unit Manager will attempt to resolve the complaint.
- 3.11.20. If the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel.

Complaints about the conduct of a professional at a Child Protection Conference

3.11.21. Any complaint about the conduct of a professional at a Child Protection Conference should be taken up with their agency and should be responded to in accordance with the relevant agency's complaints handling process.

Appeals, Dissension and Complaints Panel

3.11.22. The purpose of the panel is to provide a forum by which Child Protection Conference decisions are reviewed, and/or recommendations made, following:

- a) an appeal by a parent/carer regarding the decision of a Conference;
- b) a professional dissension regarding the decision of a Conference;
- c) a complaint about the functioning of a Conference.

3.11.23. The panel will be comprised of people who are independent of the case and who have had no involvement with the original Child Protection Conference in question.

3.11.24. The panel will be multi-disciplinary and its members should be professionals who have experience and expertise in child protection work.

3.11.25. A pool of professionals will be identified who can be called upon at short notice to attend a panel.

3.11.26. The Safeguarding Children Unit Manager is responsible for convening and chairing the panel. A member of the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Board will chair the panel, in the absence of the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager.

3.11.27. The panel should meet within 10 working days of the appeal, dissension or complaint being notified to the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager.

3.11.28. The panel should consist of the Chair and at least one representative from the following agencies:

- a) Education;
- b) Health;
- c) Police;
- d) Children's Social Care Department;
- e) Any other pertinent agencies involved in the case.

3.11.29. Parents/carers will not be invited to attend the panel that considers their appeal or complaint. The panel will hear an **appeal, or dissension** regarding the decision of the Conference, taking into account:

- a) the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures, including the criteria for registration/de-registration;
- b) the relevant Conference minutes and reports;
- c) any other relevant reports, documents or information that the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager decides should be submitted;
- d) any verbal or written information given by the parent/carers to support their appeal.

3.11.30. The panel will decide whether or not to change the decision of the Conference regarding registration. It may, also, be necessary for the panel to make other recommendations.

- 3.11.31 The panel will hear a **complaint** regarding the functioning of the Conference, taking into account:
- a) whether the relevant inter-agency protocols and procedures, including Child Protection Procedures, have been observed correctly;
 - b) whether the complaint is reasonable.
- 3.11.32. The panel will decide whether or not the complaint is substantiated and what recommendations to make.
- 3.11.33 If the panel cannot reach a majority decision, the Chair will have the casting vote to make the final decision.
- 3.11.34. It will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager to ensure that the minutes of the panel meeting are distributed to all those invited to the original Child Protection Conference.
- 3.11.35. The Safeguarding Childrens Unit Manager should consider how to inform the parents/carers about the outcome, if they were not present at the panel meeting.
- 3.11.36. It will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager to ensure that the agencies are informed of the requirement of a Child Protection Plan following the decision of the panel.

3.12 Children in Rochdale with Child Protection Plans who are Looked After by the Local Authority

- 3.12.1. A child may be Looked After by the Local Authority and also be the subject of a Child Protection Review Conference. The overriding principle must be that the Looked After Children and Child Protection systems are integrated and carefully monitored in a way which promotes a child centred and not a bureaucratic approach.
- 3.12.2. It is important to arrange the timing of a Child Protection Review Conference to ensure that relevant information can be brought to a Looked After Children Review and can inform the overall care planning process.

3.13 Children Moving Into, Out Of, or Within Rochdale with Child Protection Plans

Children with Child Protection Plans in other areas moving into Rochdale

- 3.13.1. **If a child** with a Child Protection Plan from another local authority moves into the Rochdale area, the Safeguarding Children Unit must be informed.
- 3.13.2. Rochdale Children's Social Care and the Safeguarding Children Unit must liaise with each other, whenever either becomes aware of a child, who has a child Protection Plan from another local authority, moves to Rochdale. They must consider the need for, and timing of any Child Protection Conference in Rochdale.
- 3.13.3. A Child Protection Conference must be convened, whenever a child or unborn child, who currently has a Child Protection Plan from another local authority moves into Rochdale, and an assessment has been made that a Child Protection Plan is necessary in Rochdale.

- 3.13.4. Where a child is safely placed in the Rochdale area, e.g. with foster carers or relatives and responsibility for the case remains with the other local authorities Children's Social Care, it may be that a Child Protection Conference does not need to be convened in Rochdale.
- 3.13.5. The Safeguarding Children Unit will immediately inform the Greater Manchester Police Public Protection & Investigation Unit and the Named Nurse Child Protection (Rochdale HMR NHS) of the details of a child with a child protection plan moving into Rochdale.
- 3.13.6. The Safeguarding Children Unit will request any required Child Protection Conference Minutes and distribute them to the relevant Children's Social Care Department, in Rochdale.
- 3.13.7. Children's Social Care in Rochdale will liaise with the authority where the child received the child protection plan to:
- a) establish if there is a need for a Child Protection Plan in Rochdale and, if so;
 - b) agree who is to be responsible for case management and the timing of any transfer;
 - c) agree who is to undertake key worker responsibilities and the timing of any transfer;
 - d) establish a time limit for the first contact with the family in order to see the child;
 - e) Agree the timescale for a "transfer in" conference and book this conference with the Safeguarding Children Unit.
- 3.13.8. Where the family have moved in from a nearby authority, it may remain more practicable for the current key worker to be retained, until any Child Protection Conference in Rochdale. This can be agreed by the respective local authority departmental managers, and notified to the Safeguarding Childrens Unit

Children with Child Protection Plans moving out of Rochdale

- 3.13.9. When it becomes known that a child with a child protection plan moves out of the Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council area:
- a) The key worker must immediately inform the Social Services Area Team in the Authority to which the child has moved;
 - b) The key worker must immediately notify the Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit;
 - c) Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit will inform the relevant Safeguarding Children Unit that a child with a child protection plan from Rochdale has moved into their area and forward any required Child Protection Conference minutes;
 - d) Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit will inform The Named Nurse Child Protection (HMR NHS) who will transfer the child's medical and community nursing records to their equivalent colleagues in the area to which the child has moved;
 - e) Rochdale Safeguarding Children Unit will also inform the Police and other relevant agencies and professionals;
 - f) The key worker must discuss the need for a Child Protection Conference to be convened in the other area;

- g) Where the circumstances which led a child requiring a child protection plan exist in another area, a Child Protection Conference will need to be convened in that area;
- h) If the other Authority does not accept a recommendation for a Conference in their area, they must be asked to confirm this decision in writing;
- i) Where a child is safely placed in another area, e.g. with foster carers or relatives and responsibility for the case remains with Rochdale Children's Social Care, it may be that a Child Protection Conference does not need to be convened in the other area;
- j) The need for a child protection plan will continue in Rochdale until confirmation has been received from the Authority to which the child has moved regarding the outcome of their Child Protection Conference or assessment;
- k) The key worker is responsible for liaising with key personnel in other local authorities, whilst the child has a child protection plan in Rochdale.

Children who have a child protection plan moving within Rochdale

- 3.13.10. It is the responsibility of the key worker to notify Child Protection Core Group members and the Safeguarding Childrens Unit of all changes of circumstances in respect of children who have a Child Protection Plan. This includes notification of permanent or temporary changes of address, as well as occasions when children are having overnight stays with friends and relatives, etc.
- 3.13.11. The Safeguarding Childrens Unit will ensure that this information is passed on to the Police and any other relevant agencies or professionals.

Armed services families

- 3.13.12. Whenever a child of an armed services family has a Child Protection Plan and moves in or out of the Borough, there should be liaison with the relevant armed forces welfare service.

3.14 Children in Rochdale with Child Protection Plans who are Missing

Action by the Children's Social Care

- 3.14.1. When the key worker becomes aware that the whereabouts of a child with a Child Protection plan are unknown, the Children's Social Care Manager/Assistant manager and the Safeguarding Children Unit must be informed immediately.
- 3.14.2. The key worker / other professionals should follow the guidance & actions contained within the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Boards 'Children Missing from home or care' protocol. This can be downloaded from www.rbscb.org

Action by the Safeguarding Children Unit

- 3.14.3. The Safeguarding Children Unit Manager will write to inform all other Safeguarding Children Units to be alert for the child and family turning up in their areas.
- 3.14.4. The Safeguarding Children Unit must write to inform all relevant agencies.

When a child is found

- 3.14.5. Whoever locates the child must immediately inform the key worker, who must notify all relevant agencies, including the Safeguarding Children Unit.
- 3.14.6. The key worker must liaise with their Children's Social Care Team Manager and other appropriate professionals to re-assess the level of risk to the child and to consider what action is necessary.

3.15 Children with Child Protection Plans and their Families Missing from other Areas

- 3.15.1. A record of information received about children with child protection plans and their families missing from other areas is kept by the Safeguarding Children Unit Manager. This record will be checked, when an enquiry is made about the possibility of a child in Rochdale having a child protection plan.

3.16 Information about a person Identified as presenting a Risk or Potential Risk to Children (Previously Known as Schedule One Offence/Offenders)

- 3.16.1. A person Identified as presenting a Risk or Potential Risk to Children are criminal offences of physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect against children. These offences are listed in Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- 3.16.2. Details about a person Identified as presenting a Risk or Potential Risk to Children are held and maintained by the Safeguarding Children Unit, for the purpose of providing information to professionals where concerns about children arise.
- 3.16.3. Child Protection Enquiries will require more information than that held by the Safeguarding Children Unit. In these circumstances relevant Police information will normally be requested from the Police Public Protection & Investigation Unit, Rochdale Division.
- 3.16.4. The Probation Service will notify the Safeguarding Children Unit of all known offences or pending prosecutions about people identified as presenting a Risk or Potential Risk to Children as soon as they come to their attention.
- 3.16.5. The Probation Officer, where appropriate, will notify the offender that this information has been given to the Safeguarding Children Unit.