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Health & Social Services

Independent Safeguarding & Standards

CPA Handbook

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Chapter 1 – Child Protection Conferences

1.1 Initial child protection conferences

Purpose of initial conference

1.1.1 The initial child protection conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), supporters / advocacy workers and those professionals most involved with the child and family following an enquiry under Article 42 of the Children (Jersey) Law 2002 (Minister's duty to investigate). Its purpose is to:

- Share and analyse in an inter-agency setting the information which has been obtained about the child's developmental needs, and the parents' capacity to respond to these needs to ensure the child's safety and promote the child's health and development within the context of their wider family and environment;
- Consider the evidence presented to the conference, make judgements about the likelihood of a child suffering significant harm in future and decide whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm;
- Decide what future action is required (e.g. whether a child protection plan is needed and the child's name added to the Child Protection Register (CPR)) to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child, how that action will be taken forward, and with what intended outcomes;
- Allocate a key worker from Children's Service for each child who requires a child protection plan. The key worker is responsible for ensuring that the child protection plan is developed, co-ordinated and fully implemented to timescale;
- Identify a multi-agency core group to develop and monitor implementation of the child protection plan.

Convening initial conference

1.1.2 An initial child protection conference must be convened when it is believed that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

1.1.3 The conference must consider all the children in the household, even if concerns are only being expressed about one child.

1.1.4 For all cases going to conference there should have been a strategy meeting and/or discussion and a referral to the police.

1.1.5 A Children's Service manager is responsible for making the decision to convene a child protection conference and the reasons for calling the conference (or not calling a conference following completion of an Article 42 enquiry) must be recorded.

1.1.6 A conference should be convened if requested by a professional, supported by a senior manager / named or designated professional. If disagreement remains between agencies, conflict resolution procedures should be followed.

Timing of initial child protection conference

- 1.1.7 The initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of:
- The strategy meeting / discussion, or the last strategy meeting / discussion if more than one was held; or
 - Notification by a local authority that a child subject of a child protection plan has moved into the island.
- 1.1.8 If there is an emergency protection order (EPO) (Article 37 Children (Jersey) Law 2002) and it is decided to hold a child protection conference, the conference should, whenever possible, be held before the EPO expires.
- 1.1.9 Where a child assessment order (Article 36 Children (Jersey) Law 2002) has been made, the conference should be held on conclusion of examinations and assessments.
- 1.1.10 Where there is delay, this must be reported to the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager (including reasons for the delay) and Children's Service must ensure risks of harm to the child are monitored and action taken to safeguard the child.

1.2 Child protection review conferences

Purpose of review conference

- 1.2.1 The purpose of the child protection review conference is to review the safety, health and development of the child against the intended outcomes set out in the child protection plan.
- 1.2.2 The review conference requires as much preparation, commitment and management as the initial child protection conference. The same procedures should be followed for review conferences as for initial conferences.
- 1.2.3 Thorough regular review is critical to achieving the best possible outcomes for the child and includes:
- Sharing and analysing up-to-date information about the child's health, development and functioning and the parent's capacity to ensure and promote the child's welfare;
 - Ensuring that the measures already in place to safeguard the child from harm are effective and in line with local arrangements;
 - Making changes to the child protection plan and/or category of registration (e.g. where a family is not co-operating) and deciding whether continuing registration is required;
 - Deciding what action is required to safeguard the child if there are changes to the child's circumstances;
 - Setting or re-setting desired outcomes and timescales;
 - Seeking and taking into account the child's (possibly changed) wishes and feelings;
 - Making judgements about the likelihood of the child suffering significant harm in the future;

- Deciding whether there is a need for a new core assessment.
- 1.2.4 The conference must consider all the children in the household, even if concerns are only being expressed about one child.
- 1.2.5 The core group has a collective responsibility to produce reports for the child protection review which together provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and professionals, and evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan.
- 1.2.6 Every review should consider explicitly whether the child continues to be at risk of significant harm, and hence continues to require safeguarding from harm through adherence to a formal child protection plan and registration on the CPR.
- 1.2.7 If not, then the child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan and the conference should consider what continuing support may benefit the child and family.

Timing of review conference

- 1.2.8 The first child protection review conference should be held within three months of the date of the initial child protection conference.
- 1.2.9 Further reviews should be held at intervals of not more than six months for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan (unless the initial conference was a pre-birth conference)
- 1.2.10 Where necessary, reviews should be brought forward where / when:
- Child protection concerns relating to a new incident or allegation of abuse have been sustained;
 - There are significant difficulties in carrying out the child protection plan;
 - A child is to be born into the household of a child or children already subject of child protection plans;
 - An adult or child who poses a risk to children is to join, or commences regular contact with, the household;
 - There is a significant change in the circumstances of the child or family not anticipated at the previous conference and with implications for the safety of the child;
 - A child subject of a child protection plan is also looked after by Children's Services and consideration is being given to returning them to the circumstances where care of the child previously aroused concerns (unless this step is anticipated in the existing child protection plan);
 - The core group believe that an early cancellation of the need for a child protection plan should be considered.

1.3 Looked after children and child protection conferences

Looked after children with child protection plans

- 1.3.1 Children who are looked after will not usually be the subject of child protection conferences, though they may be the subject of an Article 42 enquiry.

- 1.3.2 The circumstances in which a child who is looked after may be considered for a child protection conference would be:
- A child subject to a care order (Articles 24 or 30 Children (Jersey) Law 2002) who is to be returned to their birth family / returned home;
 - A child looked after on a voluntary agreement (Article 17 Children (Jersey) Law 2002) who has been or is about to be returned to a parent's care about whom there are concerns in terms of safeguarding the child's welfare.
 - A child who's behaviour is likely to result in significant harm to themselves or others e.g. a child who presents a risk of sexual abuse or other harmful behaviour to other children or adults.
- 1.3.3 If it is proposed that a child subject to a care order should be returned to their birth family / returned home, the members of the Looked After Child review (LAC review) considering the proposal for rehabilitation must decide and record whether an initial child protection conference should be convened. If the decision is that an initial child protection conference should be convened, the child's social worker must request it.
- 1.3.4 If a child is made subject to an interim care order as a result of proceedings commenced whilst the child is subject to an Article 42 enquiry, there should be consideration of whether the child should be the subject of an initial child protection conference. If the decision is not to convene an initial child protection conference, the issue of the child's safety must be considered at every LAC review until the final hearing and the Chair must record whether an initial child protection conference is necessary and what steps have been taken to ensure the child is protected from significant harm.
- 1.3.5 If a parent removes or proposes to remove a child looked after under a voluntary agreement from the care of the Children's Services and there are serious concerns about that parent's capacity to provide for the child's needs and protect them from significant harm, the child's social worker must discuss the case with their Team Manager and make a decision about whether a child protection enquiry should be initiated. If a child protection enquiry is initiated, the reasons for this must be clearly recorded on the child's record and may lead to an initial child protection conference. In such circumstances, the child's social worker and Team Manager should consider whether legal action is required to protect the child.

Children on the Child Protection Register who become looked after

- 1.3.6 When a child who is on the CPR and subject of a child protection plan becomes looked after, there must be a careful assessment of the risk of significant harm.
- 1.3.7 If a child subject of a child protection plan becomes looked after under a voluntary agreement, their legal situation is not permanently secure and the next child protection review conference should consider the child's safety in the light of the possibility that the parent can simply request their removal from the local authority's care. The child protection review conference must be sure that the looked after child care plan provides adequate security for the child and sufficiently reduces or eliminates the risk of significant harm identified by the initial child protection conference.
- 1.3.8 If a child ceases to be subject of a child protection plan, and is removed from the CPR as a result of a decision at a child protection review conference, and the

parent then unexpectedly requests the return of the child from the local authority's care, the child's social worker and Team Manager should discuss the need for an initial child protection conference. The social worker must record the reasons for the decision whether or not to hold a conference. If the decision is not to convene an initial child protection conference, the child's social worker and Team Manager must record their analysis of the factors that have reduced or removed the risk of significant harm.

- 1.3.9 If a child who is subject of a child protection plan becomes the subject of an emergency protection order, the next child protection review conference should consider their safety.
- 1.3.10 The child protection review conference must decide whether the looked after child care plan provides adequate security for the child and reduces sufficiently or eliminates the risk of significant harm identified by the initial child protection conference. If the child protection review conference believes the child's circumstances provide sufficient protection from the risk of significant harm, the conference may decide that the child no longer needs to be subject of a child protection plan and removes their name from the CPR.
- 1.3.11 If a court grants a care order in respect of a child who is subject of a child protection plan, the subsequent child protection review conference must make an assessment about the security of the child, considering issues such as contact and the looked after care plan for the child. If the care plan for the child involves remaining in or returning to the family of origin, the child protection review conference should give careful consideration to whether the child can be adequately protected through the framework of the child care reviews.
- 1.3.12 When there is a considerable delay until the date of the next child protection review conference, this can be brought forward to consider a proposal that a child should cease to be subject of a child protection plan and registration.

Review conferences

- 1.3.13 Where a looked after child is also subject to a child protection review conference, the looked after children and child protection review systems must be integrated (e.g. the timing of a child protection review conference should be linked with the LAC review to ensure that information from the former is brought to the review meeting and informs the overall care planning process).
- 1.3.14 Significant changes to the care plan can only be made at the LAC review meeting.

1.4 Membership of child protection conferences

- 1.4.1 A conference should consist of only those people who have a significant contribution to make due to their knowledge of the child and family or their expertise relevant to the case. Membership of a child protection conference is at the discretion of the chair. This is likely to include:
- The child or their representative;
 - Parents and those with parental responsibility;
 - Family members (including the wider family);
 - Foster carers (current or former);
 - Residential care staff;

- Children’s Services staff who have led and been involved in an assessment of the child and family (social worker and/or their first line manager);
- Professionals involved with the child (e.g. health visitor, school nurse, paediatrician, GP, school staff, early years staff, education welfare officers, Youth Service staff);
- Professionals involved with the parents or other family members;
- Professionals with expertise in the particular type of harm suffered by the child or in the child’s particular condition (e.g. a disability or long term illness);
- Those involved in investigations (e.g. the police);
- Involved voluntary organisations;
- A professional who is independent of operational or line management responsibilities for the case as Chair. The status of the Chair should be sufficient to ensure inter-agency commitment to the conference and the child protection plan;
- Standing members, if applicable.

1.4.2 Additional invitations to conference should be provided to all professionals with a need to know or who have a contribution to the task involved. These may include:

- Law Officers (child protection), if it is anticipated that legal advice will be required;
- The child/ren’s Guardian where there are current court proceedings;
- Professionals involved with the parents or other family members (e.g. family support services, adult mental health services, probation, the GP);
- Midwifery services where the conference concerns an unborn or new-born child
- Probation or the Youth Action Team;
- Housing services;
- Women’s Refuge;
- Alcohol and substance abuse services;
- A representative of the armed services, in cases where there is a service connection;
- Any other relevant professional or service provider;

A supporter, friend or advocacy worker for the child and/or parents; if a parent or child wishes to have a lawyer attend in this role, the lawyer must comply with the Law Society guidance *Attendance of Solicitors at Local Authority Children Act Meetings (2012)* (NB: Attendance is at the discretion of the Chair who should meet with the lawyer prior to the Conference to clarify and confirm their role).

See also the *[Protocol for Advice and Advocacy for Parents \(Child Protection\), 2002¹](#)*, which outlines ethical and practice issues when advocacy workers become involved in helping parents.

- 1.4.3 A professional observer can only attend with the prior consent of the Chair and the family, and must not take part in discussions or decision-making.
- 1.4.4 Professionals who are invited but unable to attend for unavoidable reasons should:
- Wherever possible, arrange for another agency representative to attend;
 - Inform the conference administrator;
 - Submit a written report.
- 1.4.5 Babies and young children should not normally be permitted to enter the conference room as they will cause distraction from the business-like nature of the meeting. Parents should be assisted to make arrangements for their care where necessary.
- 1.4.6 Agencies are expected to share information about the child and family in written form, prior to the conference, whether or not they are able to attend the conference.

Location, timing and safety for conferences

- 1.4.7 The location and timing of the conference should be planned to ensure maximum attendance from the most critical attendees. Conferences should not be scheduled for times when parents will be busy looking after children at home (e.g. after the end of the school day). Wherever possible, Children's Services should provide parents with the opportunity to utilise appropriate day care for their children to enable their attendance at the conference.
- 1.4.8 Independent Safeguarding and Standards are responsible for taking into account health and safety issues and security arrangements when planning each conference.

Quorate conferences

- 1.4.9 The primary principle for determining quoracy is that there should be sufficient agencies present to enable safe decisions to be made in the individual circumstances.
- 1.4.10 The minimum representation is Children's Services and at least two professional groups or other agencies who have had direct contact with the child who is the subject of the conference
- 1.4.11 Attendees whose contribution relates to their professional expertise or responsibility for relevant services are not counted in determining quoracy.
- 1.4.12 Where a conference is inquorate it should not ordinarily proceed, and in such circumstances the Chair must ensure that either:
- An interim protection plan is produced; or
 - The existing plan is reviewed with the professionals and the family members that do attend, so as to safeguard the welfare of the child/ren.

¹ Bridget Lindley and Martin Richards, Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge

- 1.4.13 Another early conference date must be set immediately.
- 1.4.14 In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may decide to proceed with the conference despite lack of agency representation. This would be relevant where:
- A child has not had relevant contact with three agencies (e.g. pre-birth conferences);
 - Sufficient information is available; and
 - A delay will be detrimental to the child.
- 1.4.15 Where an inquorate conference is held, an early review conference should be arranged.

1.5 Involving child/ren and family members

- 1.5.1 It is important that the principles of partnership with children and parents are maintained in the child protection process. The following are minimum requirements for all attendees of the conference and the responsibility of the Chair of the conference to uphold:
- Treat all family members with dignity and respect and offer a caring and courteous service;
 - Ensure family members know the child's safety and welfare have priority;
 - Minimise infringement of privacy consistent with protecting the child;
 - Be clear about powers and purpose of any intervention;
 - Be aware of the impact on the family of professional actions;
 - Respect confidentiality and pass on information / observations about the family only with permission or to protect the child;
 - Listen to and try to understand the concerns, wishes and feelings of the child and family before formulating explanations and plans;
 - Learn about the child's religious, cultural, community and familial context;
 - Consider strengths, potential and limitations of family members;
 - Ensure all family members know their responsibilities and rights with respect to receipt or refusal of services and its consequences;
 - Use simple jargon-free language appropriate to age and culture of each individual;
 - Be open and honest about concerns and professionals' responsibilities, plans and limitations;
 - Allow individuals time to absorb professional concerns and processes;
 - Distinguish between personal feelings, values, prejudices and beliefs, and professional roles and responsibilities and seek and use supervision to check achievement of this;
 - Always acknowledge errors, failures or oversights and the distress caused to families.

- 1.5.2 Explicit consideration should be given to the potential for conflict between family members and possible need for children or adults to speak without other family members present.

Involving parents

- 1.5.3 All parents and carers must be invited to conferences (unless exclusion is justified as described below).
- 1.5.4 The social worker must facilitate their constructive involvement by ensuring in advance of the conference that they are given sufficient information and practical support to make a meaningful contribution.
- 1.5.5 The social worker must explain to parents the purpose of the meeting, who will attend, the way in which it will operate and the complaints process.
- 1.5.6 Preparation should include consideration of childcare arrangements to enable the attendance of parent/s.
- 1.5.7 Written information should be left with the family regarding conferences, the right to bring a friend, supporter (including an advocacy worker) or lawyer (in role of supporter), details of any local advice and advocacy services and the conference complaints procedure.
- 1.5.8 The role of the supporter is to support and enable the parents or child to participate in the conference, not to take an adversarial position or cross-examine participants.
- 1.5.9 Those for whom English is not a first language must be offered and, if required, be provided with an interpreter. A family member should not be expected to act as an interpreter of spoken or signed language.
- 1.5.10 Provision should be made to ensure that visually or hearing impaired or otherwise disabled parents are enabled to participate.
- 1.5.11 If parents feel unable to attend the conference, alternative means should be provided for them to communicate with the Chair of the conference. This might include providing the parent with independent assistance for views to be written or recorded for the conference.
- 1.5.12 Prior to the conference, the Chair should meet with any family members to ensure they understand the process. This may, where the potential for conflict exists, involve separate meetings with the different parties.
- 1.5.13 Exceptionally, it may be necessary to exclude one or more family members from a conference, in whole or in part. Where a parent attends only part of a conference as a result of exclusion, they must receive the record of the conference. The Chair should decide if the entire record is provided or only that part attended by the excluded parent.

Involving children

- 1.5.14 The child, subject to their level of understanding, needs to be given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the conference.
- 1.5.15 In practice, the appropriateness of including an individual child must be assessed in advance and relevant arrangements made to facilitate attendance at all or part of the conference.

- 1.5.16 Where it is assessed, in accordance with the criteria below, that it would be inappropriate for the child to attend, alternative arrangements should be made to ensure their wishes and feelings are made clear to all relevant parties (e.g. use of an advocate, written or taped comments).

Criteria for presence of child at conference, including direct involvement

- 1.5.17 The primary questions to be addressed are:
- Does the child have sufficient understanding of the process?
 - Have they expressed an explicit or implicit wish to be involved?
 - What are the parents' views about the child's proposed presence?
 - Is inclusion assessed to be of benefit to the child?
- 1.5.18 The test of 'sufficient understanding' is partly a function of age and partly the child's capacity to understand. The following approach is recommended:
- A (rebuttable) presumption that a child of less than twelve years of age is unlikely to be able to be a direct and/or full participant in a forum such as a child protection conference;
 - A presumption (also rebuttable by evidence to the contrary) that from the age of twelve and over, a child should be offered such an opportunity.
- 1.5.19 In order to establish their wishes with respect to attendance, the child must first be provided with a full and clear explanation of purpose, conduct and membership of the conference and potential provision of an advocacy worker or support person. This task would normally be undertaken by the social worker as part of the preparation prior to the conference.
- 1.5.20 Written information translated into the appropriate language should be provided to those able to read and an alternative medium (e.g. tape) offered to those who cannot read.
- 1.5.21 A declared wish not to attend a conference (having been given such an explanation) must be respected.
- 1.5.22 Consideration should be given to the views of, and impact on, parent/s of their child's proposed attendance.
- 1.5.23 Consideration must be given to the impact of the conference on the child (e.g. if they have a significant learning difficulty or where it will be impossible to ensure they are kept apart from a parent who may be hostile and / or attribute responsibility onto them). Consideration must be given in particular to the extent to which it is appropriate for a child to hear details of a parent's personal difficulties and a parent's view about this must be respected.
- 1.5.24 In such cases, energy and resources should be directed toward ensuring that, by means of an advocacy worker and / or preparatory work by a social worker, the child's wishes and feelings are effectively represented.

Direct involvement of a child in a conference

- 1.5.25 In advance of the conference, the Chair and social worker should agree whether:

- The child attends for all or part of the conference, taking into account confidentiality or parents and / or siblings;
- The child should be present with one or more of their parents;
- The Chair meets the child alone or with a parent prior to the meeting.

- 1.5.26 If a child attends all or part of the conference, it is essential that they are prepared by the social worker or independent advocacy worker who can help them prepare a report or rehearse any particular points that the child wishes to make.
- 1.5.27 Those for whom English is not a first language should be offered and provided with an interpreter. A family member should not be expected to act as an interpreter of spoken or signed language.
- 1.5.28 Provision should be made to ensure that a child who has any form of disability is enabled to participate.
- 1.5.29 Consideration should be given to enabling the child to be accompanied by a supporter or an advocacy worker.

Indirect contributions when a child is not attending

- 1.5.30 Indirect contributions from a child should, whenever possible, include a pre-meeting with the conference Chair.
- 1.5.31 Other indirect methods include written statements, e-mails, text messages and taped comments prepared alone or with independent support, and representation via an advocate.
- 1.5.32 Childcare professionals should all be able to represent a child's views and a particular responsibility falls upon the social worker to do so. It is more important that the child feels involved in the whole process of child protection assessment rather than merely receiving an invitation to the conference.

1.6 Exclusion from a conference

- 1.6.1 Exceptionally, it may be necessary to exclude individuals (which may include family members) from part or all of a conference.
- 1.6.2 These situations will be rare and the conference Chair, or other participants, must be notified as soon as possible by the social worker if it is considered necessary to exclude someone for all or part of a conference. The Chair should make a decision according to the following criteria:
- Indications that the presence of that individual may seriously prejudice the welfare of the child;
 - Sufficient evidence that a family member may behave in such a way as to interfere seriously with the work of the conference such as violence, threats of violence, racist or other forms of discriminatory or oppressive behaviour, or being in an unfit state (e.g. through drug, alcohol consumption or acute mental health difficulty). In their absence, the chair may agree for a friend or advocacy worker to represent them at the conference;
 - A child requests that the parent / person with parental responsibility is not present while they are present;

- The presence of a family member would prevent a professional from making their proper contribution through concerns about violence or intimidation (which should be communicated in advance to the conference Chair).
- The need (agreed in advance with the conference Chair) for members to receive confidential information that would otherwise be unavailable, such as legal advice or information about a criminal investigation;
- Conflicts between different family members who may not be able to attend at the same time (e.g. in situations of domestic violence).
- Any individual who, in the chair's opinion, may prevent the business of the meeting from being conducted effectively.

- 1.6.3 Where a worker from any agency believes any individual should, on the basis of the above criteria, be excluded, representation must be made, if possible at least three working days in advance, to the Chair of the conference.
- 1.6.4 The agency concerned must indicate which of the grounds it believes is met and the information or evidence on which the request is based. The Chair must consider the representation carefully and may need legal advice.
- 1.6.5 If, in planning a conference, it becomes clear to the Chair that there may be a conflict of interest between the children and the parents, the conference should be planned so that the welfare of the child can remain paramount.
- 1.6.6 This may mean arranging for the child and parents to participate in separate parts of the conference and making separate waiting arrangements.
- 1.6.7 Any exclusion period should be for the minimum duration necessary and must be clearly recorded in the conference record.
- 1.6.8 It may also become clear in the course of a conference that its effectiveness will be seriously impaired by the presence of the parent/s. In these circumstances the Chair may ask them to leave.
- 1.6.9 Where a parent is on bail, or subject to an active police investigation, it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the police representative can fully present their information and views and also that the parents participate as fully as circumstances allow. This might mean that if the police representative is a police officer they may be asked to leave a conference after providing information. It is not appropriate for a police officer to administer a caution to parents prior to the conference; the purpose of the conference is to enable analysis and not to progress a criminal investigation.
- 1.6.10 The decision of the Chair over matters of exclusion is final regarding parents, the child/ren and any other individual.
- 1.6.11 If, prior to the conference, the Chair has decided to exclude a parent, this must be communicated in writing with information on how they may make their views known, how they will be told the outcome of the conference and about the complaints procedure.
- 1.6.12 Those excluded should be provided with a copy of the social worker's report to the conference and be provided with the opportunity to have their views recorded and presented to the conference. The Chair will determine whether or not the excluded parent should receive the record of the conference.

- 1.6.13 If a decision to exclude an individual is made, this must be fully recorded in the record. Exclusion at one conference is not reason enough in itself for exclusion at further conferences.

1.7 The absence of parents and/or children

- 1.7.1 If parents and / or children do not wish to attend the conference they must be provided with full opportunities to contribute their views. The social worker must facilitate this by:
- The use of an advocacy worker or supporter to attend on behalf of the parent or child;
 - Enabling the child or parent to write or tape or use drawings to represent their views;
 - Agreeing that the social worker, or any other professional, expresses their views.

1.8 Information for the conference

- 1.8.1 In order for the conference to reach well-informed decisions based on evidence, it needs adequate preparation and sharing of information on the child/ren's needs and circumstances by all agencies who have had significant involvement with the child and family, including those who were involved in the Article 42 enquiry.

Children's Services report

- 1.8.2 A qualified social worker (normally the allocated social worker) should provide the conference with a written report that summarises and analyses the information obtained in the course of the initial assessment and the core assessment undertaken under Article 42 of the *Children (Jersey) Law (2002)* (in as far as it has been completed within the available time period) and information in existing records relating to the child and family.
- 1.8.3 The report for a child protection conference should be consistent with the information set out in the local procedures.
- 1.8.4 Although a core assessment may have been commenced, it is unlikely it will have been completed in time for an initial child protection conference, given the period that such assessments can take.
- 1.8.5 The Children's Services child protection conference report should include:
- The reason for convening the conference;
 - A chronology of significant events and agency and professional contact with the child and family;
 - Information on the child's current and past state of developmental needs;
 - Information on the capacity of the parents and other family members to ensure the child is safe from harm and to respond to the child's

developmental needs, within their wider family and environmental context;

- The expressed views, wishes and feelings of the child, parents, and other family members;
- An analysis of the implications of the information obtained for the child's future safety and meeting of their developmental needs.

- 1.8.6 The report should make clear which children are the subject of the conference, as previously decided by the Children's Services social worker and their manager.
- 1.8.7 The report must make clear the distinction between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. When information is provided from another source (i.e. it is second or third hand), this should be made clear.
- 1.8.8 All children in the household need to be considered and information must be provided about the needs and circumstances of each of them, even if they are not the subject of the conference.
- 1.8.9 The report should be provided to parents and older children (to the extent that it is believed to be in their interests) at least one full working day in advance of the initial conferences and a minimum of five working days before review conferences to enable any factual errors to be corrected and the family to prepare their comments on the content.
- 1.8.10 The contents of the report should be explained and discussed with the child and relevant family members, in the preferred language/s of the child and family members. A family member should not be expected to act as an interpreter of spoken or signed language. Where necessary, the reports should be translated into the relevant language or medium.
- 1.8.11 The report should be available to the conference Chair at least one full working day prior to the initial conference and five working days in advance of a review conference.
- 1.8.12 The report will be provided to those invited to the conference.

Information from other agencies

- 1.8.13 All the agencies invited to the conference should provide details of their involvement with the family and their assessment of the situation.
- 1.8.14 This information should be submitted in a written, legible and signed report for the conference. The report should be available to the conference Chair and other attendees at least one full working day in advance of the conference and three working days in advance of a review conference. All agencies should use the conference report pro-forma, approved by the Jersey Child Protection Committee (JCPC).
- 1.8.15 The report must make clear which child/ren are the subject of the conference, whilst also addressing any known needs and circumstances of all children in the household.
- 1.8.16 The report must make clear the distinction between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. When information is provided from another source (i.e. it is second or third hand), this should be made clear.
- 1.8.17 For agencies in contact with the family, the report should be shared with the family before the conference.

- 1.8.18 The reports will be provided to those invited to the conference. Police reports must not be circulated.
- 1.8.19 Where any agency representatives are unable to attend the conference, they must ensure that a written report is made available to the conference and that a colleague attends in their place, wherever possible. It is an integral part of the assessment of risk that all relevant parties participate in the information sharing and decision making tasks of a child protection conference in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Information from children and families

- 1.8.20 Children and family members should be helped in advance to consider what they wish to convey to the conference, how they wish to do so and what help and support they will require (e.g. they may choose to communicate in writing, by tape or with the help of an advocacy worker).
- 1.8.21 Families may need to be reminded that submissions need to be sufficiently succinct to allow proper consideration within the time constraints of the child protection conference.

1.9 Chairing the conference

Conference Chair

- 1.9.1 The Chair of a child protection conference will be an independent Chair, ultimately accountable to the Managing Director of Community and Social Services. They must not have operational or line management responsibility for the case.
- 1.9.2 The status of the Chair should be sufficient to ensure multi-agency commitment to the conference and the child protection plan. Wherever possible, the same person should also chair subsequent child protection reviews in respect of a specific child.
- 1.9.3 A conference Chair should be trained in the role and should have:
- A good understanding and professional knowledge of children's welfare and development and best practice in working with children and families;
 - The ability to look objectively at, and assess the implications of, the evidence on which judgements should be based;
 - Skills in chairing meetings in a way which encourages constructive participation, while maintaining a clear focus on the welfare of the child and the decisions which have to be taken;
 - Knowledge and understanding of anti-discriminatory practice;
 - Knowledge of relevant legislation, including that relating to Children's Services and human rights.

Chair's responsibilities

- 1.9.4 The Chair must meet with the family, child and (if required) social worker prior to the conference to ensure they all understand the purpose of the conference and how it will be conducted.

1.9.5 At the start of the conference the Chair should:

- Set out the purpose of the conference;
- Confirm the agenda;
- Emphasise the need for confidentiality;
- Address equal opportunities issues and ensure necessary interpreters are present (e.g. specifying that racist, homophobic and threatening behaviour will not be tolerated);
- Clarify the contributions of those present, including supporters / advocacy workers with the family.

1.9.6 During the conference the Chair should ensure that:

- They summarise the risk of harm to the child and what needs to change;
- Consideration is given to the needs and circumstances of all the children in the household;
- All participants, including the parents and child/ren, are enabled to make a full contribution and that full consideration is given to the information they present;
- Information from the reports of those not present is made known to the conference (the reports should have been circulated before the conference);
- The wishes and feelings of the child/ren are clearly outlined;
- Issues of race, religion, language, class, gender, sexuality and disability are fully taken into account in the work of the conference;
- Appropriate arrangements are made to receive third party confidential information;
- Appropriate arrangements are made for those attending only part of the conference;
- The conference reaches decisions in an informed, systematic and explicit way;
- Consideration is given to the issue of criminal injury compensation, if appropriate.
- All concerned are advised / reminded of the appropriate complaints procedure; in the first instance any complaints should be raised with the manager of the ISS or the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager. Complaints may also be made to the Patient & Client Liaison Officer at Health and Social Services or, if any complaints are in regard to multi-agency child protection procedures, they may refer to the JCPC procedures for raising such concerns.²
- Ensure that arrangements are made with the child's social worker for absent child/ren and/or parents to be informed of the decisions of conferences.

² Raising Concerns and Managing Professional Differences: Multi-Agency procedures Chapter 14 and supporting leaflet available from JCPC.

- 1.9.7 If a decision is made that a child's name should be added to the child protection register to safeguard their welfare, the Chair should ensure that:
- They summarise and state the risks to the child and specify what is needed to change;
 - A qualified Children's Services social worker is identified as a key worker to develop, co-ordinate and implement the child protection plan and that a core group is identified of family members and professionals;
 - A date is set for the first core group meeting within ten working days of the initial conference and timescales set for subsequent meetings;
 - A date for the child protection review conference is set;
 - The outline child protection plan is formulated and clearly understood by all concerned including the parents and, where appropriate, the child.
- 1.9.8 If the conference determines that a child does not need the specific assistance of a protection plan but does need help to promote their welfare, the Chair may ensure that the conference draws up a child in need plan or makes appropriate recommendations for a plan.
- 1.9.9 The child protection plan should be reviewed at regular intervals of no more than every six months (initially three months).
- 1.9.10 The Chair is responsible for holding the conference in a timely manner - unless in exceptional circumstances, an initial conference should be no more than two hours and review conferences no more than one and a half hours.

1.10 Protection plan

Threshold for a child protection plan

- 1.10.1 The conference should consider the following question when determining whether a child requires an inter-agency protection plan:
- Is the child at continuing risk of significant harm?
- 1.10.2 The test is that either:
- The child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment is likely; or
 - A professional judgement, substantiated by the findings of enquiries in this individual case or by research evidence, predicts that the child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health and development as a result of neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- 1.10.3 If a child is at continuing risk of significant harm, then they will require multi-agency help and intervention delivered through a formal child protection plan and will have their name added to the Child Protection Register.

Decision that a child needs to have their name added to the Child Protection Register

- 1.10.4 In their decision making, the participants of the conference must take into account all the available evidence obtained through existing records, the initial assessment, the core assessment undertaken following the initiation of Article 42 enquiries and written and verbal contributions in the conference.
- 1.10.5 The decision making process must take account of the views of all agencies represented at the conference and will normally take place with parents present.
- 1.10.6 The Chair must ensure that the conference systematically elicits and records the views of each agency present or invited and the views of the parents and the child/ren, as appropriate.
- 1.10.7 The Chair must make a decision about whether the child's name should be added to the Child Protection Register taking into account the views of other professionals, but they are not bound by them. Any dissent must be recorded.
- 1.10.8 If parents disagree with the decision, the Chair must discuss the issue with them and explain their right to, and the process for, making a complaint.
- 1.10.9 If a decision is taken that the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and hence in need of a child protection plan, the Chair should determine which category of abuse or neglect the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering. The category used (that is physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect, will indicate to those consulting the child's records the primary presenting concerns at the time the child became the subject of a child protection plan. Using dual or triple categories should be avoided.
- 1.10.10 The need for a protection plan and whether a child's name should be added to the Child Protection Register, should be considered separately in respect of each child in the family or household.
- 1.10.11 Where a child's name is to be added to the Child protection Register, the conference is responsible for recommendations on how agencies, professionals and the family should work together to ensure that the child will be safeguarded from harm in the future. This should enable both professionals and the family to understand exactly what is expected of them and what they can expect of others.
- 1.10.12 Specific tasks include the following:
- Appointing the lead statutory body (e.g.Children's Services) and a key worker, who should be a qualified, experienced social worker and an employee of the lead statutory body;
 - Identifying the membership of a core group of professionals and family members who will develop and implement the child protection plan as a detailed working tool;
 - Establishing how the child, their parents (including all those with parental responsibility) and wider family members should be involved in the ongoing assessment, planning and implementation process, and the support, advice and advocacy available to them;
 - Establishing timescales for meetings of the core group, production of a child protection plan, and for child protection review meetings;

- Identifying in outline what further action is required to complete the core assessment and what other specialist assessments of the child and family are required to make sound judgements on how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child;
- Outlining the child protection plan, especially identifying what needs to change in order to achieve the planned outcomes to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child;
- Ensuring a contingency plan is in place if agreed actions are not completed and/or circumstances change (for example, if a caregiver fails to achieve what has been agreed, a court application is not successful or a parent removes the child from a place of safety);
- Agreeing a date for the first child protection review conference and under what circumstances it might be necessary to convene the conference before that date.

Removing a child's name from the Child Protection Register

- 1.10.13 The conference should use the same decision-making process to reach a judgement for when a protection plan is no longer needed. This includes situations where other inter-agency planning might need to replace a protection plan.
- 1.10.14 A child may no longer need a protection plan if:
- A review conference judges that the child is no longer at risk of significant harm and no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan;
 - The child has moved permanently to a local authority outside the Bailiwick, when a protection plan can only cease after the receiving authority has convened a transfer child protection conference and confirmed in writing responsibility for case management;
 - The child has reached eighteen years of age, has died or has been judged to have permanently left Jersey, when their name can be removed.
- 1.10.15 It is permissible for the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards to agree to remove the name of a child from the Child Protection Register without the need to convene a child protection review conference only when:
- One or other of the latter two criteria in section 1.10.14 above are satisfied; and
 - The manager has consulted with relevant agencies present at the conference that first concluded that a child protection plan was required.
- 1.10.16 When the process carried out at section 1.10.15 is followed, the consultation with other agencies and the decision to remove the name of the child from the Child Protection Register must be clearly recorded in the Children's Services child's record.
- 1.10.17 When a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register, notification should be sent, as a minimum, to the agencies' representatives who were invited to attend the initial conference that led to the plan.

1.10.18 When a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register, the key worker must discuss with the parents and child/ren what services might be wanted and required, based on the re-assessment of the needs of the child and family. A child in need plan should be developed for any continuing support. The plan should be reviewed at regular intervals of no more than every six months.

1.11 Outline protection plan

1.11.1 The Chair should ensure that an outline child protection plan is drawn up at initial and review conferences, following the decision that a child is likely to suffer significant harm without such a plan. The aim of the outline plan is to assist the core group to form a more detailed plan and ensure that it is implemented.

1.11.2 The outline plan should:

- Describe specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard each child;
- Describe the types of services required by each child (including family support) to promote their welfare;
- Set a timescale for the completion of a core assessment, if appropriate;
- Identify any specialist assessments of each child and the family that may be required to ensure that sound judgements are being / can be made on how best to safeguard each child and promote their welfare;
- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of professionals and family members, including the nature and frequency of contact by professionals with children and family members;
- Lay down points at which progress will be reviewed, the means by which progress will be judged and who will monitor this;
- Develop a robust contingency plan to respond if the family is unable to make the required changes and the child continues to be at risk of significant harm (e.g. legal action and the circumstances which would trigger this).

1.12 Child does not require a protection plan

1.12.1 If the conference decides that a child is not at continuing risk of significant harm then the conference may not make the child the subject of a child protection plan. The child may nevertheless require services to promote his or her health or development. In these circumstances, the conference should consider the child's needs and make recommendations for further help to assist the family in responding to them.

1.12.2 The decision must be put in writing to the parent/s, and agencies as well as communicated to them verbally.

1.13 Dissent from the conference decision

- 1.13.1 If an agency does not agree with a decision or recommendation made at a child protection conference, their dissent will be recorded in the record of the conference.
- 1.13.2 If a professional concludes that a conference decision places a child at risk of harm, they must seek advice from their named, designated or lead professional or manager.
- 1.13.3 The professional and their manager are responsible for ensuring that the issue is resolved before the child is exposed to further risk of significant harm. They should do this by making verbal and written representation to the conference Chair, and if this fails to resolve the issue then following the Health and Social Services complaints procedure provided or the procedure outlined in the Multi-Agency Child Protection procedures (chapter 14).
- 1.13.4 If parents disagree with the conference decisions, the Chair must further discuss their concerns and explain the appeals procedure / complaints process.

1.14 Pre-birth conference

Purpose

- 1.14.1 A pre-birth conference is an initial child protection conference concerning an unborn child. Such a conference has the same status and purpose and must be conducted in a comparable manner to an initial child protection conference.
- 1.14.2 Pre-birth conferences should always be convened where there is a need to consider if an inter-agency child protection plan is required. This decision will usually follow from a pre-birth assessment.
- 1.14.3 A pre-birth conference should be held where:
- A pre-birth assessment gives rise to concerns that an unborn child may be at risk of significant harm;
 - A previous child has died or been removed from parent/s as a result of significant harm;
 - A child is to be born into a family or household that already has children who are subject of a child protection plan;
 - An adult or child who is a risk to children resides in the household or is known to be a regular visitor.
- 1.14.4 Other risk factors to be considered are:
- The impact of parental risk factors such as mental ill health, learning disabilities, substance misuse and domestic violence;
 - A mother under 18 years of age about whom there are concerns regarding her ability to self-care and / or to care for the child.
- 1.14.5 All agencies involved with pregnant women should consider the need for an early referral to Children's Services so that assessments are undertaken as early as possible in the pregnancy.

Timing of the conference

- 1.14.6 The pre-birth conference should take place as soon as practical and at least ten weeks before the due date of delivery, so as to allow as much time as possible for planning support for the baby and family;
- 1.14.7 Where there is a known likelihood of a premature birth, the conference should be held earlier.

Attendance

- 1.14.8 Those who normally attend an initial child protection conference must be invited. In addition, representatives of the midwifery and relevant neo-natal services should also be invited.
- 1.14.9 Parents or carers should be invited as they would be to other child protection conferences and should be fully involved in plans for the child's future.

Pre-birth inclusion on the Child Protection Register

- 1.14.10 If a decision is made that the unborn child should be added to the Child protection Register and needs the safeguarding of a protection plan, this must be set out in terms that will commence prior to the birth of the baby.
- 1.14.11 The core group must be established and meet if at all possible prior to the birth, and definitely prior to the baby's return home after a hospital birth.

Timing of review conference

- 1.14.12 The first review conference should take place within one month of the child's birth or within three months of the date of the pre-birth conference, whichever is sooner.
- 1.14.13 Undertaking or commissioning a post-natal assessment should ensure that the assessment is structured in such a way as to provide a comprehensive report to the review child protection conference.
- 1.14.14 In exceptional circumstances, the review conference date may be extended by a month with the written authorisation of the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards if the review falls so soon after the birth that information from a post-natal assessment cannot be collated in time for the review conference. When this review is extended, care must be taken to ensure it is held within the three month time period.

1.15 Children who are subject of a child protection plan living away from Jersey

- 1.15.1 Although families in Jersey tend to be less mobile than many areas of the mainland, there are still occasions where children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan move away from Jersey. In order to ensure better outcomes and to improve the well-being of all children it is necessary to recognise that vulnerable families who move away from Jersey may find it difficult to access the services they need.

- 1.15.2 This section:
- Defines the term ‘receiving authority’ as the area to which the family has moved;
 - Does not distinguish between temporary or permanent moves or the nature of the accommodation – e.g. private or public housing;
 - Addresses Jersey children’s social care case and other responsibilities in relation to children in need of protection. Other jurisdictions and other agencies will have their own arrangements determined by different legislation and guidance.
- 1.15.3 In exceptional cases, in response to the circumstances of an individual child, different arrangements from those detailed here may be negotiated with the receiving authority. Such negotiations would normally be undertaken by a Children’s Service Team Manager or above, with their equivalent in the receiving authority.
- 1.15.4 Any such negotiated departure from this procedure should be confirmed in writing by both Children’s Service in Jersey and the receiving authority within 48 hours of the agreement being made.

Information Sharing

- 1.15.5 In cases where Jersey Children’s Service is aware in advance of a child’s move, the allocated social worker must, prior to the move, (and in addition to informing relevant local agencies) inform the receiving authority’s Children’s Social Care Department of the child’s move and ensure that appropriate agencies in that authority are aware of their needs. Families should be made aware that information will be shared with the receiving authority.
- 1.15.6 There would be an expectation that Health and Education agencies in Jersey would be responsible for providing information to their colleagues in the receiving authority prior to the child’s move.
- 1.15.7 If this information has not been received by the time the child moves, it is the responsibility of the receiving agencies (once they become aware of the child’s arrival) to request the information. In such cases, the Children’s Services Team Manager in Jersey is responsible for providing the information within one working day.
- 1.15.8 If a professional from any agency discovers that a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is planning to move or has moved to or away from Jersey, they should inform the allocated or duty social worker immediately and confirm this information in writing within 48 hours.
- 1.15.9 The allocated social worker must inform all other professionals involved in the case as well as the receiving authority. If the move has already occurred, the allocated social worker should complete this task immediately. If the move is to be within the next 14 days, the allocated social worker should complete this task within one working day.

- 1.15.10 The allocated social worker in Jersey must inform their team manager and the Head of Service (Social Work) in Jersey and the receiving authority of the (proposed) move.
- 1.15.11 There would be an expectation that each agency in Jersey (in accordance with their own procedures) would try and ascertain that:
- Its reciprocal agency in the receiving authority receives detailed information and is made aware of the need to fulfil its role in the protection plan;
 - The allocated social worker is informed of the name and details of staff in the receiving area;
 - The allocated social worker is notified of any factors affecting the Child Protection Plan.
- 1.15.12 The allocated social worker in Jersey must:
- Make contact with agencies in the receiving authority to ensure that the level and type of service being provided satisfies the requirements of the Child Protection Plan;
 - Discuss any difficulties with their supervisor;
 - Provide a report, and attend the Child Protection Transfer Conference if possible.
- 1.15.13 When case responsibility is to be transferred, the allocated social worker must inform all relevant agencies of the arrangements so that staff can transfer records and provide information to the transfer Child Protection Conference.
- 1.15.14 For agencies to maintain contact with children and families who move, information needs to be accurate. It would be expected that professionals would:
- Ensure that all forenames and surnames used by the family are accurately provided and that clarification is obtained about the right spelling in particular;
 - Ensure that accurate dates and places of birth are obtained for all household members, wherever possible;
 - Obtain the previous full addresses, and any earlier addresses within the last two years ;
 - Clarify relationships between the child and other household members, if possible with documentary evidence;
 - Clarify which statutory or voluntary organisations the family are in contact with.
- 1.15.15 There would be an expectation that professionals in Jersey would ensure that their counterparts in the receiving authority have been sent a copy of all relevant records within five to seven working days of being notified of the move.

Case Responsibility

- 1.15.16 The responsibility for a child subject to a Child Protection Plan remains with Children's Service in Jersey until the receiving authority's child protection transfer conference. The receiving authority is likely to be some distance away and it may be that home visits and other tasks cannot be effectively accomplished by the allocated Jersey social worker. In such cases the receiving authority may agree to implement the Child Protection Plan on behalf of Jersey Children's Services from the date of the first move. Any such agreement must be confirmed in writing at Team Manager level or above.
- 1.15.17 The responsibilities of Jersey Children's Services toward a child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan will cease when, following from a Child Protection Transfer Conference:
- The receiving authority's child protection transfer conference makes a decision about the continuing need for a Child Protection Plan;
 - Management responsibility is transferred to the receiving authority;
 - These decisions have been confirmed and conveyed in writing between Jersey Children's Service and the receiving authority.
- 1.15.18 The Child Protection Adviser (Conference Chair) in ISS in Jersey must be informed in writing of the outcome of the transfer conference and is responsible for notification to any other local involved agencies once case responsibility has transferred to the new area.

Retention of Case Responsibility within Jersey

- 1.15.19 Jersey Children's Services should retain child protection responsibilities where the child protection plan specifies a move away from Jersey for a time-limited period. Jersey Children's Services may require and request assistance from the receiving authority to carry out the Child Protection Plan.
- 1.15.20 These may be circumstances where:
- The child temporarily stays with friends / family away from Jersey;
 - The child is admitted to hospital away from Jersey;
 - Parent's, together with child(ren), are provided with a time-limited placement in a residential assessment unit away from Jersey;
 - A parent is supported for a time-limited period to live with a specific person outside Jersey.
- 1.15.21 Whenever one of the above circumstances applies, the allocated social worker must:
- Agree with their Team Manager that it is in the best interests of the child for Jersey Children's Services to retain case responsibility;

- Inform the Child Protection Advisers (Conference Chairs) in the receiving authority that Jersey Children's Services will retain case responsibility;
- Provide the receiving authority with written information about the child and the Child Protection Plan and any level of participation requested of them in implementing the plan.
- Request that the child is added to the receiving authority's list of children subject to a Child Protection Plan, in a temporary category.

1.15.23 Whenever one of the above circumstances applies, the Children's Services Team Manager must confirm in writing their agreement to case responsibility being retained by Jersey Children's Services, giving details of dates for that period of time and of the reviewing arrangements.

1.16 Administrative arrangements for child protection conferences

1.16.1 Independent Safeguarding and Standards are responsible for administering the child protection conference service.

1.16.2 Jersey Child Protection Committee has clear arrangements for the organisation of child protection conferences including;

- Timescales for sharing of reports with families
- Report formats for initial and review case conference.

1.16.3 All initial and review conferences should be minuted by a dedicated person whose sole task within the conference is to provide a written record of proceedings in a consistent format.

1.16.4 Conference records should include:

- The purpose of the conference;
- Name, date of birth and address of the subject/s of the conference, parents and other adults in the household;
- Who was invited, who attended the conference and who submitted their apologies;
- A list of written reports available to conference and whether open to parents or not;
- All the essential facts;
- Opinions of conference members, clearly identified as such;
- Views of child;
- Views of parents;
- A summary of discussion at the conference, accurately reflecting contributions made;
- All decisions reached, with information outlining the reasons;
- An outline or revised child protection plan;

- Name of key worker;
- Members of the core group and date of first meeting;
- Date of next conference.

- 1.16.5 The record, signed by the conference Chair, should be sent to all those who attended or were invited, within 10 working days of the conference. Any amendments should be received within two weeks of the records being distributed.
- 1.16.6 A copy of the record should be discussed with the parents by the child's social worker. The conference Chair may decide that confidential material should be excluded from the parent's copy.
- 1.16.7 Where a friend, supporter or advocacy worker has been involved, the Chair should clarify with the parent that no record will be provided for those individuals.
- 1.16.8 Relevant sections of the record should be explained to and discussed with the child by the child's social worker.
- 1.16.9 The conference Chair should decide whether a child should be given a copy of the record. The record may be supplied to a child's legal representative on request.
- 1.16.10 Where parents and / or the child/ren have a sensory disability or where English is not their first language, the social worker should ensure that they receive appropriate assistance to understand and make full use of the record. A family member should not be expected to act as an interpreter of spoken or signed language.
- 1.16.11 Conference records are confidential and should not be shared with third parties without the written consent of either the conference Chair or order of the Court.
- 1.16.12 In criminal proceedings the police may reveal the existence of child protection records, and in care proceedings the records of the conference may be revealed in the court.
- 1.16.13 The record of the decisions of the child protection conference should be retained by the recipient agencies in accordance with their record retention policies.

Decision letter

- 1.16.14 The decision letter should be dispatched to parents and other participants within two working days of the conference. This gives details of conference decisions and recommendations, the name of the key worker and details about the right to complain.

Managing and providing information about a child

- 1.16.15 Children's Services have responsibility for:
- Ensuring that records on children who are subject of a child protection plan are kept up to date;
 - Ensuring enquiries related to children about whom there are concerns, or who are subject of child protection plans, are recorded and considered.

- Managing notifications of movements of children who are subject of a child protection plan, looked after children and other relevant children moving into or out of Jersey;

1.16.16 Information on each child known to Children's Services should be kept up-to-date on the relevant database (Softbox). This information should be confidential but accessible at all times to legitimate enquirers. The details of enquirers should always be checked and recorded on the system before information is provided.

1.16.17 If an enquiry is made about a child and:

- The child's case is open to Children's Services, the enquirer should be given the name of the child's key worker and the key worker informed of this enquiry so that they can follow it up;
- The child is at the same address as a child who is the subject of a child protection plan, this information should be sent to the key worker of the child who is the subject of the child protection plan;
- The child is not known to Children's Services, this enquiry should be recorded together with the advice given to the enquirer. In the event of there being a second enquiry about a child who is not known to Children's Services, not only should the fact of the earlier enquiry be notified to the later enquirer, but the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards should ensure that Children's Services consider whether this may be a child in need.

Request for a change of worker

1.16.18 On occasion, the relationship between the parents or other family members and the key worker may not be productive in terms of working to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child/ren. Provided that such a change is in the best interests of the child who is the focus of concern, agencies should respond sympathetically to a request for a change of worker.

1.17 Complaints by service users

1.17.1 Parents and, on occasion, children, may have concerns about which they wish to make representations or complaint, in respect of one or more of the following aspects of the functioning of child protection conferences:

- The process of the conference;
- The outcome, in terms of the fact of and/or the category of primary concern at the time the child became the subject of a child protection plan;
- A decision for the child to become, to continue, or not to become, the subject of a child protection plan.

1.17.2 Complaints about aspects of the functioning of conferences described above should be addressed to the conference Chair. Such complaints should be passed on to the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards or the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager, and/or the Patient & Client Liaison Officer at Health and Social Services.

- 1.17.3 Whilst a complaint is being considered, the decision made by the conference stands.
- 1.17.4 The outcome of a complaint will either be that a conference is re-convened under a different Chair, that a review conference is brought forward or that the status quo is confirmed along with a suitable explanation.
- 1.17.5 Complaints about individual agencies, their performance and provision (or non-provision) of services should be responded to in accordance with the relevant agency's own complaints management process.

Reconvened conference

- 1.17.6 The Chair of a reconvened child protection conference (either an initial or a review) must ensure that all those present have seen or are briefed at the conference about the decisions reached regarding the complaint.
- 1.17.7 A distinction must be made by the Chair between the need to discuss the conclusions of the panel and the task of the child protection conference, which is to consider the child/ren's current circumstances.

Further challenge

- 1.17.8 No further internal processes for complaint exist in those cases where it is concluded that all relevant processes were followed and that the decisions that were made were reasonable.
- 1.17.9 In what is likely to be a very rare case, where a reconvened conference has been recommended and held and the complainant does not accept the outcome, it is possible that, at the discretion of the complaints manager, in liaison with the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager within Community and Social Services, any remaining and clearly specified concerns may be reviewed; and the complainant should be provided with a copy of 'Raising Concerns – A Guide for making a complaint, raising concerns, contributing comments or complimenting the JCPC' (Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures Chapter 14)

Chapter 2 – After the Conference

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 When a decision is made that a child's name is added to the Child Protection Register, a qualified and experienced social worker must be appointed as the lead social worker to co-ordinate all aspects of the inter-agency child protection plan.
- 2.1.2 The forum to undertake this co-ordinated multi-agency work is the core group, whose membership will have been identified at the child protection conference.

2.2 Core group

Responsibilities

- 2.2.1 The core group is responsible for the formulation and implementation of the detailed child protection plan, previously outlined at the conference. All members of the core group are jointly responsible for:
- Collecting information to assist the lead social worker in completing the core assessment;
 - Participating in the compilation of the core assessment;
 - The formulation and implementation of the detailed child protection plan, refining it as necessary;
 - Carrying out their part of the plan;
 - Monitoring progress against specified outcomes of the detailed child protection plan;
 - Making recommendations to subsequent review conferences about future protection plans and needs;
 - Attending core group meetings and ensuring there is no drift in planning and intervention.
- 9.2.2 Agencies should ensure that members of the core group undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively in accordance with the agreed child protection plan.

Membership

- 2.2.2 Membership of the core group will have been identified at the child protection conference and must include:
- The lead social worker, who leads / chairs the core group;
 - The child if appropriate
 - Parents and relevant family members;
 - Professionals involved with the child and / or parent;
 - Foster carers or residential care staff who will have direct contact with the family.

- 2.2.3 Core groups are an important forum for working with parents, wider family members, and children of sufficient age and understanding. Where there are conflicts of interest between family members in the work of the core group, the child's best interests should always take precedence.

Timing

- 2.2.4 The date of the first core group meeting must be within ten working days of the initial child protection conference. After that the core group should meet within four weeks of the first meeting and at a minimum frequency of once every two months following the first review conference. More regular meetings may be required according to the needs of the child.
- 2.2.5 The first core group meeting date must be arranged at the end of the conference, along with the required frequency of subsequent meetings.
- 2.2.6 Dates for future meetings must be agreed at the first core group meeting following each conference. Where a meeting needs to be rescheduled, this must be confirmed in writing to all concerned by the lead social worker.

2.3 Formulation of child protection plan

Completion of core assessment

- 2.3.1 Completion of the core assessment, within 40 working days, should include an analysis of the risk of harm to the child; and the child's developmental needs and the parents' capacity to respond to those needs, including parents' capacity to ensure that the child is safe from harm. Decisions based on this analysis should be used to develop the child protection plan.

Purpose of child protection plan

- 2.3.2 The purpose of a child protection plan is to facilitate and make explicit a co-ordinated approach to:
- Ensure that each child in the household is safe and prevent them from suffering further harm;
 - Promote the child's health and development (i.e. welfare);
 - Support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.
- 2.3.3 It must be clarified for parents:
- What the causes for concern are that have resulted in the decision that a child needs a child protection plan;
 - What needs to change;
 - What is expected of them as part of the plan for safeguarding the child.
- 2.3.4 Review of progress on achieving the outcomes set out in the child protection plan and consideration as to whether changes need to be made should be an agenda item at each review conference.
- 2.3.5 The child protection plan may be used as evidence, in any legal proceedings, of the efforts that have been made to work in partnership (this must be made clear to parents).

Detailed child protection plan – development

2.3.6 The core group is responsible for drawing up in more detail the child protection plan for each child. Each plan should:

- Be accompanied by a full chronology from each agency, which must be available at the first core group meeting;
- Describe the identified developmental needs of the child and what therapeutic services are required to meet these needs;
- Identify what needs to change to reduce the risk of significant harm to the child;
- Include specific, achievable, child-focused outcomes intended to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child;
- Include ethnic / cultural / religious considerations (e.g. necessity for an interpreter, avoidance of appointments with family on significant religious festivals, likelihood that child might be taken out of the country);
- Highlight issues arising from any disability;
- Identify parenting strengths;
- Identify what further core and specialist assessment is necessary to assist in judgements about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child;
- Include realistic strategies and specific actions to bring about the changes necessary to achieve the planned outcomes;
- Set out when and in what situations the child will be seen by the lead social worker, both alone, and with other family members or caregivers present;
- Clearly identify and set out roles and responsibilities of family members and professionals including those with routine contact with the child (for example, health visitors, GPs and teachers) and the nature and frequency of contact by these professionals with the child and family members;
- Include a contingency plan to be followed if circumstances change significantly and require prompt action (including initiating family court proceedings to safeguard and promote the child's welfare); and
- Lay down points at which progress will be reviewed and the means by which progress will be judged.

Interventions and services

2.3.7 Decisions about how to intervene, including what services to offer, should be based on evidence about what is likely to work best to bring about good outcomes for the child³. A number of aspects of intervention should be considered in the context of the child protection plan, in the light of evidence from the assessment of the child's developmental needs, the parents' capacity to respond appropriately to the child's needs and the wider family and

³ For further information from research findings on effective interventions see www.dcsf.gov.uk/nsdu/research.shtml

environmental circumstances. Particular attention should be given to family history (for example, of domestic and other forms of violence, childhood abuse, mental illness, substance misuse and/or learning disability) and present and past family functioning.

2.3.8 The following questions need to be considered:

- What are the options for interventions which might help support strengths and/or help meet the child's identified unmet needs as well as addressing the known vulnerabilities and risk factors?
- What resources are available?
- With which agency or professional and with which approach is the family most likely to co-operate?
- Which intervention is most likely to produce the most immediate benefit and which might take time?
- What should be the sequence of interventions and why?
- Given the severity of any ill-treatment suffered or impairment to the child's health or development, the child's current needs and the capacity of the family to co-operate, what is the likelihood of achieving sufficient change within the child's time frame?

2.3.9 The interventions and the services provided should be offered on the basis that they give the child and family the best chance of achieving the required changes.

2.3.10 If a child cannot be cared for safely by his or her parents she or he should be placed elsewhere whilst the interventions offered through the child protection plan are undertaken with the child and family.

2.3.11 The interventions in the child protection plan should specifically address:

For the child

- The developmental needs of the child;
- The child's understanding of what has happened to him or her;
- Consideration of the child's views;
- Issues arising from any disability
- Ethnic, cultural, religious considerations For the parents
- The abuser's relationship with the child and capacity to change and respond to the child's needs;
- The relationship between the adult caregivers both as adults and parents (including their strengths);
- Consideration of the parents' views;

For the family & circumstances

- Family relationships;
- The family's social and environmental circumstances, and the flexibility for change within these;
- Considerations of the family's ethnicity, culture or religion.

2.3.12 Intervention may have a number of inter-related components:

- Immediate action/services to make the child safe from harm and prevent recurrence from harm;
- Longer term actions/services to make the child safe from harm and prevent recurrence from harm;
- Further core and specialist assessments necessary to assist in judgements about safeguarding the child and promoting his or her welfare;
- Action/services to help promote a child's health and development, i.e. welfare (including therapeutic intervention);
- Action/services to help a parent(s) in safeguarding a child and promoting his or her welfare;
- Support or therapy for the protective parent and other family members with a role in supporting the child;
- Support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse or neglect to prevent future harm to the child and where necessary to other children;
- The frequency that the child will be seen;
- Identification of who (including family members) is responsible for what actions.

2.3.13 Family group conferencing could be considered as a means of progressing actions in some of these areas. For information about Family Group Conferences see: *[Family Group Conferences: Principles and Practice Guidance \(2002, Barnardo's / Family Rights Group / Action for Children\)](http://www.frg.org.uk)* at <http://www.frg.org.uk>.

Decision-making considerations

2.3.14 When drawing up the detailed child protection plan the core group should take the following considerations into account:

- The development of secure parent/caregiver–child attachments is critical to a child's healthy development.
- The child's developmental needs must be responded to in a timescale which is appropriate for the child
- If it is safe, the child's developmental needs should be responded to within his or her family context (this may not be possible if the timescale is not compatible with those for the parent or other family members)
- The process of decision making and planning should be as open as possible, from an ethical as well as practical point of view.
- Where the family situation is not improving or changing fast enough to respond to the child's needs, decisions will be necessary about the long-term future of the child. In the longer term it may mean it will be in the best interests of the child to be placed in an alternative family context.
- Therapeutic work with the child should continue for as long as is required in order for their needs to be met, irrespective of where the child is placed.

- 2.3.15 More information to assist with making decisions about interventions is available in Chapter 4 of the *Assessment Framework* and the accompanying practice guidance (Department of Health, 2000). Recent research evidence on effective interventions in safeguarding children has been published by DfE and DH⁴.

Detailed child protection plan – written agreement

- 2.3.16 The lead social worker must make a record of the core group meetings and formulate the detailed child protection plan in the form of a written agreement for all parties to sign.
- 2.3.17 The child protection plan / agreement should be based on the findings of the core assessment and follow the dimensions of the assessment framework.
- 2.3.18 The child protection plan / agreement should take into consideration the wishes and feelings of the child, and the views of the parents, insofar as they are consistent with the child's welfare. The lead social worker should make every effort to ensure that the child/ren and parents have a clear understanding of the planned outcomes, that they accept the plan and are willing to work to it.
- 2.3.19 The lead social worker should achieve this by, as far as possible, constructing the plan / agreement together with the child and the family. An interpreter should be used if the child or family's level of English means that they are not able to participate fully in these discussions unless they are conducted in their own language.

Agreeing the plan with the child

- 2.3.20 The completed child protection plan / agreement should be explained to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding. The child should be given a copy of the plan written at a level appropriate to their age and understanding, and in their preferred language.

Negotiating the plan with parents

- 2.3.21 Staff should ensure that the parents understand:
- The evidence of risk of significant harm which resulted in the child becoming the subject of a child protection plan;
 - What needs to change;
 - What is expected of them as part of the plan for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare.
- 2.3.22 The parents should receive a written copy of the plan so that they are clear about who is doing what, when, and the planned outcomes for the child.
- 2.3.23 If the parents' preferences have not been accepted in the plan / agreement about how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, the reasons for this should be explained. Parents should be told about their right to complain and make representations, and how to do so.
- 2.3.24 If the parents are not willing to co-operate in the implementation of the plan then Children's Services should consider what action, including the initiation of family proceedings, it should take to safeguard the child's welfare.

⁴ <http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/scr/>

Negotiating the plan with agencies

- 2.3.25 All parties should be clear about the respective roles and responsibilities of family members and different agencies in implementing the child protection plan / agreement.
- 2.3.26 Copies of the notes and the written agreement should be circulated to core group members within five working days of the core group meeting. The agreement, signed by the members of the core group, should be returned to the lead social worker within another five working days. Implementation of the child protection plan must begin immediately and not await formal signatures.
- 2.3.27 Any disagreements should have been discussed at the core group meeting, recorded with reasons, and reflected appropriately in the written plan / agreement. It is permissible to rely on electronic signatures or emails confirming acceptance of an agency's responsibilities under the child protection plan, but all such signatures and emails must be collected in the child's Children's Services record.
- 2.3.28 The child protection plan / agreement should also be on the adult service user's record if the parent is known to Adults' services.
- 2.3.29 All agencies are responsible for the implementation of the child protection plan and all professionals must ensure they are able to deliver their commitments or, if not possible, that these are re-negotiated.

Seeing the child

- 2.3.30 The core group must ensure the child/ren are seen at least every ten working days by the lead social worker or by another member of the core group unless a different frequency is stipulated by the child protection conference. The interaction must be clearly recorded, analysis of the risk of harm to the child should be made and all the information should be shared with the lead social worker and the core group.

2.4 Lead social worker role

- 2.4.1 It is important that the role of the lead social worker is fully explained at the initial child protection conference and at the core group.
- 2.4.2 At every initial or pre-birth conference, where a child protection plan is put into place, the conference Chair must name a qualified social worker, identified by Children's Services, to fulfil the role of lead social worker for the child.
- 2.4.3 The lead social worker should complete the core assessment of the child and family, securing contributions from core group members and others as necessary. They should co-ordinate the contribution of family members and other agencies to plan the actions which need to be taken, put the child protection plan into effect, and review progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan. It is important that the role of the lead social worker is fully explained at the initial child protection conference and at the core group.
- 2.4.4 The lead social worker should also regularly ascertain the child's wishes and feelings, and keep the child up to date with the child protection plan and any developments or changes.
- 2.4.5 The lead social worker should:

- Convene and chair / lead second and subsequent core group meetings (the first core group meeting having been chaired / led by their supervisor unless the lead social worker is a senior practitioner);
- Provide a written record of meetings for their supervisor and all core group members;
- Ensure that the outline child protection plan is developed, in conjunction with members of the core group, into a detailed multi-agency protection plan;
- Clearly note and include in the written record any areas of disagreement;
- Produce a written agreement from the protection plan to be signed by all members of the core group, copied to all signatories and maintained on the child's file;
- Obtain a full understanding of the family's history, which must involve reading previous Children's Services files as well as current records, including those relating to other children who have been part of any households involving the current carers of the child. Additional information should be obtained from relevant other agencies and local authorities outside of Jersey;
- Complete the core assessment of the child and family, securing contributions / information from core group members and any other agencies with relevant information;
- Co-ordinate the contribution of family members and all agencies in putting the plan into action and reviewing the objectives stated in the plan.

Seeing the child

2.4.6 The lead social worker should:

- See the child at home and alone for part of each visit, at least every month or at intervals specified by the child protection conference plan;
- Ensure that the child's bedroom is seen at least once between each conference;
- Ensure they see the child alone (with parents' agreement) or babies awake at least every month or at the intervals specified by the child protection conference plan (if parents refuse, their Team Manager must be informed).

2.4.7 The frequency of contact with the child by the lead social worker or core group members detailed above is a minimum standard. In exceptional circumstances the core group may decide that the required contact level should be less frequent. Any such decision should be authorised by the relevant social work team manager and agreed by the Child Protection Adviser or the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards.

Difficulties maintaining contact with the child

2.4.8 If the lead social worker or any other involved professional has difficulty obtaining direct access to the child, their Team Manager / Child Protection Adviser should be informed, as well as other core group members. This must

result in a plan of action agreed between core group members, the police and the Child Protection Adviser.

- 2.4.9 In these circumstances, formal agreement may be reached that an appropriately qualified and experienced member of another core group agency carries out the direct contact, or that a review conference be called. Such a decision must be recorded and authorised by the Team Manager, the police and the agency undertaking the direct contact.

Routine written records

- 2.4.10 The lead social worker must maintain a complete and up-to-date signed record on the child's current file, electronic or manual, to include:
- The time and date of every home visit, stating who was present, confirmation that the lead social worker spoke with the child (including if alone), or providing a clear reason why not;
 - Any information gained or observations made during the visit relevant to the identified risk of harm to the child;
 - Circumstances of all family members;
 - Specific information about key subjects such as meals and sleeping arrangements (the lead social worker must observe the child's bedroom);
 - Factual reports of the child's presentation and behaviour (describing what they did, said and how they looked, avoiding non-specific labels such as 'disturbed / acting out / unkempt, unhappy' etc.);
 - Any new incidents or injuries, which must be subject to a full Article 42 enquiry;
 - The date, time and content of any communication which relates to the child and family (distinguishing between fact and opinion).

Responsibility for convening conferences

- 2.4.11 The lead social worker is responsible, in liaison with the child protection adviser and administrator, for convening the review child protection conference, the dates for which should have been set at the previous conference:
- No more than three months after the initial conference;
 - No more than six months after a review conference.
- 2.4.12 Dates for conferences should usually only be changed in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards or the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager. When dates are changed, they should be brought forward where possible and should not be held at timescales that exceed the above timescales. The lead social worker must ensure that the invitation list is updated for every conference so that the correct professionals are invited in good time. Updating the invitation list is not an administrative task.
- 2.4.13 Consideration should be given to bringing forward the date of a review conference in the following circumstances:
- Following a new and significant incident relating to concerns about child protection, usually involving an Article 42 enquiry;

- When there is a significant change in the circumstances of the child or family;
- When there are significant difficulties in carrying out the child protection plan.

2.4.14 The request to bring forward the date of a review conference should be made by a strategy meeting / discussion of an Article 42 enquiry or by the allocated social worker, following consultation with the core group members and the child protection adviser, and must be authorised by the manager of Independent Safeguarding and Standards or the Policy Development, Governance & Quality Assurance Manager.

Absence of the lead social worker

2.4.15 It is the joint responsibility of the lead social worker, and their supervisor, to ensure that clear cover arrangements are in place when the lead social worker is absent on annual leave, training etc.

2.4.16 Parents and children and other core group members must be informed of planned and unplanned absences of the lead social worker, who will be covering the role and what contacts will be made.

Children's Services – first line manager role

2.4.17 The first line manager has a vital role in managing the progress of the case and supporting the lead social worker.

2.4.18 The manager should:

- Read and approve all assessments, reports to the conference, plans and decisions on the child's file;
- Chair the first core group and others where thought to be appropriate, such as in cases involving professional disagreement for instance;
- Discuss the progress of the protection plan and any concerns in supervision, including ensuring that there has been adequate direct contact with the child/ren;
- Record management decisions in supervision in the child's record to note agreed actions or decisions and approve the record;
- Agree conference reports and the child protection plan;
- Review the plan with the lead social worker when unexpected developments or crises occur and together make a decision whether to recommend that a review child protection conference date be brought forward;
- Attend all conferences wherever necessary, e.g. where there have been professional differences;
- Arrange cover for the lead social worker in case of sickness and ensure arrangements are in place when the lead social worker is on annual leave and training, including the checking, and any necessary action resulting from, post, e-mails and telephone contacts.

2.5 Difficulties in implementing the child protection plan

- 2.5.1 Where any member of the core group is aware of difficulties implementing the protection plan due to changed or unforeseen circumstances, the lead social worker must be informed immediately and a core group meeting / discussion co-ordinated to agree a reconsidered child protection plan.
- 2.5.2 Circumstances about which the lead social worker should be informed include inability to gain access to a child who is subject to a child protection plan, for whatever reasons, on two consecutive home visits (the second visit being a second attempt to see the child in close succession of the first attempt). In any such circumstances, action must be agreed between the concerned agency, Children's Services and the police.
- 2.5.3 If the difficulty in implementing the protection plan impacts on the safety of the child, managers and advisers (Head of Service within Children's Services, police, designated / named doctor / nurse, teacher) must be consulted and consideration be given to the need for immediate legal action, emergency police action to gain access to a premises where appropriate, an Article 42 enquiry and/or to bring forward the date of the review child protection conference.
- 2.5.4 If members are concerned that there are difficulties implementing the protection plan arising from disagreement amongst professional agencies or a core group member not carrying out agreed responsibilities this must be addressed by:
- First, discussion with core group members;
 - Second, if required, involvement of respective managers / child protection advisers (e.g. Head of Service within Children's Services, designated / named doctor / nurse, teacher or police DCI, manager of ISS);
 - If the situation remains unresolved, by a formal referral to JCPC (see Chapter 14, Multi-Agency Procedures for managing professional differences).
- 2.5.5 In these situations it is likely to be helpful for a Team Manager from Children's Services to chair the core group meeting.

2.6 Interventions and services

- 2.6.1 Decisions about how to intervene, including what services to offer, should be based on evidence about what is likely to work best to bring about good outcomes for the child. A number of aspects of intervention should be considered in the context of the child protection plan, in the light of evidence from assessment of the child's developmental needs, the parents' capacity to respond appropriately to the child's needs, and the wider family circumstances.
- 2.6.2 It is important that services are provided to give the child and family the best chance of achieving the required changes. If a child cannot be cared for safely by their parent/s, they will have to be placed elsewhere whilst work is being undertaken with the child and family. Irrespective of where the child is living, interventions should specifically address:
- The short and long-term developmental needs of the child;

- The child's understanding of what has happened to them;
- The abusing and non-abusing parent-child relationship and individual parent's capacity to respond to the child's needs;
- The parent/s relationship with other adults, including the other parent if there is one;
- If there are two parents, their ability to jointly parent the child;
- Other family relationships;
- Possible changes to the family's social and environmental circumstances.

2.6.3 Intervention may have a number of inter-related components:

- Action to make a child safe;
- Action to help promote a child's short and longer term health and development (i.e. his / her welfare);
- Action to help parent/s in safeguarding a child and promoting their welfare;
- Support and therapy for an abused child;
- Support or therapy for a perpetrator of abuse.

2.6.4 The development of secure parent-child attachments is critical to a child's healthy development. The quality and nature of the attachment will be a key issue to be considered in decision making, especially if decisions are being made about moving a child from one setting to another; re-uniting a child with their birth family; or considering a permanent placement away from the child's family.

2.6.5 If the plan is to assess whether the child can be reunited with the caregiver/s responsible for the maltreatment, very detailed work will be required to help the caregiver/s develop the necessary parenting skills.

2.6.6 A key issue in deciding on suitable interventions will be whether the child's developmental needs can be responded to within their family context, and within timescales that are appropriate for the child. These timescales may not be compatible with those for the caregiver/s who is / are in receipt of therapeutic help.

2.6.7 The process of decision making and planning should be as open as possible, from an ethical as well as practical point of view.

2.6.8 New information may change the assessment of risk of harm, either positively or negatively, and may require urgent decisions to protect the child. Similarly, where the family situation is not improving or changing fast enough to respond to the child's needs, decisions will be necessary about the long-term future of the child. In the longer term it may mean it will be in the best interests of the child to be placed in an alternative family context.

2.6.9 Key to these considerations is what is in the child's best interests, informed by the child's wishes and feelings.

2.6.10 Children who have suffered significant harm may continue to experience the consequences of this abuse irrespective of where they are living: whether remaining with or being reunited with their families or alternatively being placed

in new families. This relates particularly to their behavioural and emotional development.

- 2.6.11 Therapeutic work with the child should continue, therefore, irrespective of where the child is placed, in order to ensure the needs of the child are responded to appropriately.
- 2.6.12 More information to assist with making decisions about interventions is available in the chapter 4 of the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health, 2000)* and accompanying practice guidance.