

APPENDIX 15

ORGANISING AND CHAIRING AN ADULT PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCE

1 Organising and Chairing

The Community Care Service will take responsibility for the organising and chairing of case conferences. The chairperson should be the Service Manager¹ involved. He or she will ensure that time and venues are arranged and that all relevant people are invited.

Whenever possible, and where appropriate, the adult at risk should be invited to attend. He or she will have the right to be accompanied by an independent advocate, Appropriate Adult or support worker of their choice, including family member(s). Before attending a conference, the adult at risk and, where appropriate, his or her relative(s) or carer(s) should be briefed about the purpose and format of the meeting. The person who will take the minutes of the meeting should be identified in advance and should not be the chairperson.

1.1 Guidance to Chairpersons

- Where there is dissent or concern, the chairperson will consider and rule on requests for a family member and/or a carer to be included or excluded from the case conference or requests that the adult involved should or should not attend the case conference. Decisions about who should or should not attend should be recorded in writing with reasons.
- Provision should be made for the chairperson to ascertain if any professional needs to share information without the family being present. If so, this should be done prior to the family joining the case conference. It is expected that this will be exceptional and that the adult at risk and family or carer, will be able to attend for all of most meetings.
- The chairperson will introduce him or herself to the adult involved and his or her family and/or carer immediately prior to the case conference and confirm their understanding of the purpose and process of the case conference.
- Where the adult at risk (and/or his or her family or carer) has chosen not to attend or has been excluded from the case conference the chairperson must ensure that the decisions of the case conference are fed back to them as soon as practicable after the case conference. Where appropriate, the adult at risk should be consulted before details are passed to family or carer(s).
- The chairperson will ensure that the minutes of the case conference are accurate and that they are distributed to the appropriate agencies and,
- where appropriate, the adult at risk and his or her family and/or carer within ten working days of the case conference.
- The chairperson should ensure that any necessary communication aids (e.g. loop system) are made available.

¹ The Adult Protection and Review Officer may also chair cases conferences and reviews.

1.2 Involvement of the Adult at Risk:

The wishes and needs of the adult at risk are at the heart of the case conference process. It should be normal practice for the adult to be involved in discussions about them and their circumstances.

In making decisions about the adult at risk's involvement, the chairperson should be guided by:

- the capacity of the person;
- the information likely to be shared at the case conference;
- the likely effect on the adult, particularly when the person suspected of harm or mistreatment may also require to have some involvement; and
- the views of the family and carers.

1.3 Involvement of Family and Carers

If the adult at risk does not wish the attendance of a family member or carer and it is felt crucial to any protection plan that the family member or carer attend, the Council Officer should discuss the issue with the chairperson who will make a final decision on attendance. Decisions will be recorded in writing.

It is important that family and carers have a room in which they can wait and that, when necessary, the time spent on the initial part of the conference, from which they have been excluded, is kept to a minimum.

1.4 Exclusion of Family and Carers

This will only occur where there are substantive grounds to believe that the involvement of family and carers would undermine the process and purpose of the case conference and they may need to be excluded throughout.

Grounds for exclusion would be:

- When a significant level of conflict or tension exists within the family and carers or
- When there is substantive evidence to believe that there is a likelihood of violent or serious disruption of the process of the case conference
- If frank discussion would be curtailed by the presence of a particular person

Family and carers may also be excluded when third party or sub-judice information is being presented to the case conference.

Being an alleged perpetrator is not sufficient reason in itself to exclude a family member or carer. This may be judged necessary by the chairperson if it is considered that their presence would seriously affect the consideration of the risk to the adult concerned.

1.5 Involvement of a Friend or Advocate

There may be occasions when the adult concerned or a carer or family member may wish to be supported by the attendance at the case conference of a friend, other relative, professional person or member of an independent advocacy service. The attendance of such a person who may be able to assist the adult in clarifying the content of the discussion should be encouraged. The use of an independent advocate or the Appropriate Adult Scheme should be considered.

1.6 Attendance of Professionals

Conferences should be attended by individual professionals from caring agencies that have a direct contribution to make and a role to play. These may include:

- Council Officers/social work professionals carrying out the investigation or who already know the individual and/or their carer or family and their supervising senior social worker or team leader.
- Medical professionals who are involved in the investigation or who know the carers and family concerned (e.g. health visitor, GP, district nurse, community psychiatric nurse etc.)
- Police officers who are involved in the investigation
- Voluntary or private sector staff who are directly involved with the carer/family
- Residential or day care staff involved with the adult
- Members of the interpretation/ services.
- Power of Attorney or Welfare Guardian

Consideration needs to be given to the number of people attending the case conference as the purpose is to enable the adult at risk to be fully involved in the discussion and the decision making process.

1.7 Information Sharing

Confidentiality is required from each participant in a case conference and this should be made explicit at the beginning of the meeting by the chairperson. Information will be shared in line with the legislation on Data Protection.

Exceptionally, it may be considered that the disclosure of certain information in this kind of meeting could cause serious damage to the person it concerns and care needs to be taken on how this information is shared.

2 Conduct of Case Conference

2.1 Introduction

The chairperson introduces the case conference by confirming:

- The function of the case conference and the context of the adult protection guidelines

- The right to information of those present; clarifying that certain information may have to be restricted; giving the reason for that restriction
- The chairperson then asks participants to introduce themselves.

2.2 Fact Gathering

The professionals are asked by the chairperson to share information:

- Beginning with the circumstances of the referral and conduct of enquiries
- Moving on to any relevant background information only once all the information relating to the current enquiry has been shared
- The chairperson briefly summarises each contribution at the time it is made to ensure that the contribution has been properly understood. This process should also facilitate the taking of the minute of the meeting.
- It is particularly important that the carers and family understand the information being shared and that they have an opportunity to make their own contribution. If there are disagreements about the information, then there should be an attempt to resolve these at the time. However, it may be that some disagreements can only be acknowledged.
- The unrestricted information shared at the case conference is summarised by the chairperson.

2.3 Interpretation and Assessment

The chairperson should lead the discussion which focuses on:

- What are the strengths of the family and carers and what are the threats to the adult at risk's well-being?
- What are the specific dangers to the adult at risk and/or the carers and family members?
- What extended family, professional and community supports could be offered?
- How can the harm be stopped?

2.4 Decisions

The case conference needs to decide whether the adult and/or any other person is believed to be at risk of being harmed, mistreated or neglected and if so:

- Consideration must be given as to whether or not a referral should be made to the police if it is believed that a crime may have been committed if this has not already been done.
- An adult protection plan must be agreed with a list of action points and timescales and details of who will be responsible and for what.

- A communication strategy should be included in the protection plan to ensure appropriate liaison between agencies. Contact between the Council Officer / Care Manager and the adult at risk will be weekly unless otherwise agreed by the case conference or review. The core group will meet monthly unless otherwise agreed by the case conference or review.
- A case co-ordinator must be appointed who should be a social worker/care manager.
- A review date must be agreed which must take place within three months
- Any supplementary actions that may be required as a contingency in the event of a breakdown in care arrangements or other changes in circumstances.
- Consideration of whether a Criminal Injuries Claim may be appropriate, along with the need for a referral to the Victim Support Agency.

2.5 Conclusion

The chairperson will summarise the decisions made by the case conference and confirm with participants the roles that they will play in the adult protection plan.

2.6 Minutes of the Case Conference

The minutes of the case conference should be completed and circulated to those attending and, where appropriate, with the consent of the adult at risk, to family and carers not present. The chairperson is responsible for making any alterations to inaccuracies noted by those in attendance and for ensuring that the minutes are circulated to all the relevant people as soon as possible but within **ten working days**.

The minutes should include as a minimum:

- Essential facts
- Details of the adult protection plan (if applicable)
- Whether the conference decided to refer the matter to the police
- Recommendations for further action
- An account of the process of the discussion and the reasons for the recommendations.
- A note of any dissent
- Date of the review conference

Where an adult at risk (and/or his or her family/carer) has chosen not to attend or has been excluded from the case conference, the chairperson must ensure that the decisions of the case conference are fed back as soon as practicable after the case conference.

Copies of the adult protection case conference minutes and review case conference minutes are sent to the Head of Community Care Services and to the Senior Officer Adult Protection, Strategy Performance and Support Services.

Distribution of the minutes can be sent by email internally in Council and to other agencies with secure email. Otherwise registered post should be used.

