



**COVID-19 – Interim Position for the
Management of Child Protection Case
Conferences**

**THE MID AND WEST WALES
SAFEGUARDING BOARD**

30th March 2020

Purpose of this Document

This briefing paper has been prepared to support staff across the region in the delivery of services to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that normal service delivery will remain disrupted for several months. During this period, it is vital that children at risk of abuse receive protection and support. Therefore, as of the 30th March 2020 the following will be in place until further notice;

- Initial Child Protection Conferences will remain business critical and will continue to be held, albeit remotely in Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys. *Exception; Carmarthenshire will be retaining face to face conferencing for families, social workers and conference Chairs*
- Review Child Protection Conferences will become less critical and will continue to be held, albeit remotely OR will be undertaken by the conference Chair as a desktop audit.

Whilst it is important that child protection conferences continue, the way they are undertaken will need to adapt based on anticipated changes to service capacity, the health of children and families and the impact of self-isolation. During this period, every effort should be made by professionals to engage children and families and to ensure that their voice is heard.

The position in relation to child protection conferences will remain under constant review and any changes communicated via the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Board.

Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)

ICPCs will continue to be held within timescales. Each Local Authority will set out and communicate a process for running the conference remotely (see appendices). This will vary on resources available and may include using email, Skype, telephone and other group chat platforms.

Conferences will still require agency reports 2 working days prior to the conference date, and all these reports should be shared with the family 24 hrs before the conference. Agencies will need to use remote methods to share the reports.

The pre-conference discussions with children and family members could occur through a telephone/Skype call and the report could be emailed or posted to the family. All reports sent remotely should be protected by password or encryption.

The Chair must be satisfied that sufficient information is likely to be available to ensure an informed judgement about continuing risk of harm can be made e.g. in the case of an unborn baby, it is essential that midwifery and health visitor services can contribute.

Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs)

RCPCs will continue to be held within timescales. Each Local Authority will set out and communicate a process for running the conference remotely OR a desktop audit to be completed by the conference Chair (see appendices).

Conferences or audits will still require agency reports 2 working days prior to the conference/audit date, and all these reports should be shared with the family 24 hrs before the conference/audit date. Agencies will need to use remote methods to do this. Agencies should include their views on registration and reasons in their report.

The pre-conference discussions with children and family members can occur through a telephone call, and the report can be emailed or posted to the family. All reports sent remotely should be protected by password or encryption.

The Chair must be satisfied that sufficient information is available to ensure an informed judgement about continuing risk of harm, and using the reports and/or discussions will make a decision on further registration based on the agency recommendations.

The conference Chair will then communicate this decision to families and partner agencies.

Quoracy

Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) require a minimum of three agencies or practitioner groupings that have direct contact with the child to be present for the conference to proceed. Situations of two agencies can occur in certain circumstances at the Chair's discretion. The Chair must be satisfied that the key agencies' input has been gained. If the Chair is of the view that the appropriate partners have shared enough information e.g. from conference reports and recent contact with the Chair, the Chair has the discretion to convene the conference.

Timescales

The conference can be delayed in exceptional circumstances e.g. if the child and family members are unwell and therefore unable to participate. A delay in coming to conference must not prevent any immediate action being taken to safeguard the child. If a delay occurs, the Chair must be satisfied that the child is protected. In such circumstances, this discussion must be recorded on the child's record. This delay should not exceed 1 week. If there are circumstances arising which could delay the conference further, the child's and family's wishes should be ascertained and shared with the Chair and the conference should go ahead.

Missing Information

If the Chair feels not all the required information is in place, they should make a professional judgement, given the information that is available, as to the level of risk to the child or children. A decision can be made to continue with the conference, but acknowledging the missing

information. If a child or children are registered then a RCPC should be scheduled within 14 days to consider the missing information.

Recording of conferences: A record of the conference will be made, and the minutes will detail the methods used to come to the conference decision.

Appendix 1 – Carmarthenshire

ICPCC Conference

Prior to conference;

- Invitations will be sent out by email with a conference date & time for conference to take place.
- Agency reports to be submitted to the conferencing support team 48 hrs in advance of the conference.
- Agencies to share their reports with the family by phone 24 hrs in advance of the conference.
- On the day of the Conference and where possible, the parents will be invited into the relevant office to meet with the conference Chair and social worker to participate in the conference with other agencies who will be available through Skype.
- Alternatively, when it is not possible for the parents to meet at the offices or through Skype, the conference Chair will contact the family to ensure they have received all of the reports, seek their views/responses, and read out any reports not sent to them (usually GP and Police reports). They will ask the family's views on registration. The Chair will share with agency partners in the conference via Skype.

Conference

- Agency Partners are expected to be available on Skype at the time and date of conference.
- Conference support team will e-mail the agency partners all reports 30 minutes prior to the start of the conference. Partners will be given 30 minutes to read the reports.
- After 30 minutes, agency partners will be expected to participate in the Conference meeting through Skype.
- Following a SoS analysis at the Conference, the Chair will then review the responses and request a decision from the agencies regards registration and the reasons. Family will also be consulted on views.
- If the family are unable to attend the Conference or join through Skype, the Chair will ring the family and explain the decision of the meeting. This will be followed up the

same day by the social worker to inform the family of any Care and Support Protection Plan and how visits etc. will proceed.

RCPCC – Remote Review Conference (Skype/Telephone)

Prior to conference;

- Invitations will be sent out by email with a conference date & time for RCPCC to take place.
- Agency reports to be submitted to the conferencing support team 48 hrs in advance of the meeting.
- Agencies to share their reports with a family by phone (preferably) 24 hrs in advance of the conference.
- Prior to the conference, Chair will contact the family through Skype/telephone to ensure they have received all of the reports and read out any reports not sent to them (usually GP and Police reports).

Conference

- Following the Chair's Skype/telephone call to family prior to conference, Chair will continue with Skype/telephone call to family and commence conference.
- Agency Partners are expected to be available on Skype at the time and date of conference.
- Conference support team will e-mail the agency partners all of the reports 30 minutes prior to the start of the conference. Partners will be given 30 minutes to read the reports.
- After 30 minutes, agency partners will be expected to participate in the Conference meeting through Skype at the time arranged for the start of conference.
- Following a SoS analysis at the Conference, the Chair will review responses and request a decision from the agencies regarding registration and the reasons. Family will also be consulted.
- If the family are unable to join through Skype or via telephone, the Chair will ring the family and explain the decision of the meeting. This will be followed up the same day by the social worker to inform the family of any Care and Support Protection Plan and how visits etc. will proceed.

Appendix 2- Ceredigion

ICPCs

Prior to conference;

- Invitations to agencies and family will be sent out by email with a conference date & time from the QA admin.
- Agency reports are to be submitted to the QA admin team 48 hrs in advance of the conference.
- QA admin will establish with each agency how they will they take part in the conference. The social worker will contact the family to establish how they take part.
- Agencies are to share their reports with the family by phone (preferably) or email 24 hrs in advance of the conference. If email is used, the report must be password protected.
- On the day of the conference, the Conference Chair will contact the family to ensure they have received all of the reports, seek their views/responses and share any reports not sent to them. They will ask the family's views on registration if the family is unable to take part in the call/Skype meeting.
- QA admin will be on the call/Skype and in receipt of the emails, and will produce concise minutes as a record of the meeting and decision and agreed actions in the plan.

Conference Process

- Agency Partners are expected to be available via conference call or Skype meeting or email at the time and date of the conference for roughly 1 ½ hrs.
- QA admin will email agency partners all reports (password protected with the date of conference) 24 hours before the conference. Agencies will be expected to accept the read receipt so that QA admin are aware they have been received.
- Agency partners will be expected to provide their views on registration during the call/Skype meeting or to email them and their reasons for this at the time of the conference. Emails received will be saved under the child's name on the QA folder and this information will be included in the minutes.
- The Chair will then review all the responses made in the call or via email and will confirm the conference decision in an email directly after the conference to all conference members.
- The Chair will ring the family and explain the decision of the meeting if they have not been able to take part in the call/Skype meeting. This will be followed up the same day by the social worker to discuss with the family the Care and Support Protection Plan and how visits etc. will proceed.

- The Plan will be emailed by QA admin to the Core Group Members in advance of the Core Group meeting. The minutes of the meeting will be completed by QA admin within the required timescale and sent out via email.

RCPCs

Prior to conference;

- Invitations to agencies and family will be sent out by email with a conference date & time from the QA admin.
- Agency reports are to be submitted to the QA admin team 48 hrs in advance of the conference
- QA admin will establish with each agency how they will they take part in the conference. The social worker will contact the family to establish how they take part.
- Agencies are to share their reports with the family by phone (preferably) or email 24 hrs in advance of the conference. If email is used the report must be password protected.
- On the day of the conference, the Conference Chair will contact the family to ensure they have received all of the reports, seek their views/responses and share any reports not sent to them. They will ask the family's views on registration if the family is unable to take part in the call/Skype meeting.
- QA admin will be on the call/Akype and in receipt of the emails, and will produce concise minutes as a record of the meeting and decision and agreed actions in the plan.

Conference Process

- Agency partners are expected to be available via conference call or Skype meeting or email at the time and date of the conference for roughly 1 ½ hrs.
- QA admin will email agency partners all reports (password protected with the date of conference) 24 hours before the conference. Agencies will be expected to accept the read receipt so that QA admin are aware they have been received.
- Agency partners will be expected to provide their views on registration during the call/Skype meeting or to email them and their reasons for this at the time of the conference. Emails received will all be saved under the child's name on the QA folder and this information will be included in the minutes.
- The Chair will then review all the responses made in the call or via email and will confirm the conference decision in an email directly after the conference to all conference members.

- The Chair will ring the family and explain the decision of the meeting if they have not been able to take part in the call/Skype meeting. This will be followed up the same day by the social worker to discuss with the family the Care and Support Protection Plan and how visits etc. will proceed.
- The Plan will be emailed by QA admin to the Core Group Members in advance of the Core Group meeting. The minutes of the meeting will be completed by QA admin within the required timescale and sent out via email.

Appendix 3 – Pembrokeshire

The following processes will be adopted in Pembrokeshire; ICPC and RCPC will run as a virtual desktop conference with immediate effect.

ICPC and RCPC – Desktop Conference

Prior to conference;

- Invitations to professionals will be sent out by email with a conference date & time for a desktop conference to take place.
- Parents will receive paper invites and be advised over the phone by the Social Worker.
- Agency reports to be submitted to the conferencing support team 48 hrs in advance of the desktop conference (as per Wales Safeguarding Procedures).
- Agencies to share their reports with a family by phone (preferably) or email 24 hrs in advance of the desktop conference (as per Wales Safeguarding Procedures).
- One hour before the official start time on the day of the conference, the Conference Chair will contact the family to ensure they have received all of the reports and seek their views/responses. They will also share any reports which have not been received by the family (usually GP and Police reports). Should the family have not received the reports and the family feel they have not had sufficient time to ensure that family members are aware of the contents of the report, to draw attention to any inaccuracies and make sense of the report contents (Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019) then the conference will be postponed. The Chair will ask the family's views on progress against the plan (RCPC) and registration. The Chair will write this up to share with agency partners (Chair form to complete with Parents).

Desktop Conference

- Agency Partners are expected to be available on email/ phone at the time and date of conference for roughly 1 ½ hrs.
- Conference support team will e-mail the agency partners all of the reports, as well as a summary of the parent's views at the start of the allocated time. Partners will be given 1 hr to read the reports and parent's views.

- After 1 hr agency partners will be expected to email the Chair their analysis sheets (What is working well/ What are we worried about/ What do we need to see) and views on registration and their reasons for this.
- The Chair will then review the responses and confirm the decision in an email, this will be followed up by a decision letter
- The Chair will ring the family and explain the decision of the meeting, this will then be followed up the same day by the Social Worker to inform the family of any Care and Support Protection Plan and how visits etc. will proceed.
- Chair will be available by Skype/phone should any family/agency partner need to speak with them.

Appendix 4 – Powys

ICPC and RCPC – virtual conferences

- Invitations will be sent to children and families by post or secure access email.
- Professionals will receive invitations electronically. Generic emails for partner agencies will also be sent invites. The Safeguarding Unit will email the agenda, confidentiality statement and information in relation to requirements of registration and categories of abuse alongside the invite to conference.
- Professionals are required to send reports to the Safeguarding unit 2 working days prior to conference. The Safeguarding unit will email these reports to professional attendees and Chair of conference. Police reports will not be shared.
- Professionals are required to share the content of their report with children and families 2 days prior to conference.
- Chairs will contact the family 30 minutes prior to conference starting to discuss the conference process and to seek their views on registration.
- Professionals are required to join the virtual conference promptly.
- The conference will occur virtually. Children and families can either join by invite through Skype or can be dialled into the conference.
- Minutes will be sent to professionals via email and posted to parents or sent via secure access email if necessary.
- The Chair will be available to speak with the child and family members after the virtual conference if this is wanted.