

Advice for Chairs of Initial Child Protection Conferences And Reviews Exclusion of Participants.

While there may be exceptional occasions when it will not be right to invite one or other parent to attend a Conference in whole or in part, exclusion should be kept to a minimum and needs to be justified by the Chairperson and recorded in the minutes. It may be that other participants should also be excluded, for example when the Chair seeks legal advice from a Council Legal Representative.

Exclusion should only happen if one of the following grounds exist:

- ❖ For a Police Report on an investigation not yet completed or awaiting the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service.
- ❖ Where there is clear evidence that the attendance of a participant may seriously disrupt the Conference and put people at risk.
- ❖ Where professional opinion based on previous knowledge of the participant indicates attendance may not be in their best interests, e.g. inability to cope with stress, mental health problems.
- ❖ For the Chair to receive confidential Legal advice from the Local Authority Lawyer.
- ❖ When older children do not want someone who would normally be a participant to be present, a decision is to be made by the Chairperson based on what they consider to be in the child's best interests.

Whenever possible, exclusion should only be for that part of the Conference which is justified by the above criteria.

Any professional can request the exclusion of a person with Parental Responsibility from the Conference on the above grounds. The request must be made direct to the Chairperson prior to the Conference. The Chairperson's decision is final.

When a participant is to be excluded from the full meeting, they must be informed in person (and by letter in confirmation) of the reasons for exclusion. They must be informed also that they can put any matters in writing to the Chairperson that they wish to be considered at the Conference.

Where a parent is to be excluded from a Conference consideration must be given to inviting a Solicitor or other representative to attend on their behalf. This representative may be excluded for any section of the meeting where any of the above criteria apply.

In the event of an exclusion from a Conference, a participant will only be sent minutes of that part of the meeting that they were permitted to attend.

Individual Conferences, under the leadership of the Chairperson, should decide whether or not to send minutes to absent parents, taking account of any particular confidentiality matters that have been raised.