

CONFIDENTIAL

To Whom it May Concern

Solicitors Attendance at Child Protection Conferences

Child Protection Conferences enable information to be gathered and encourage family members and agencies to work together for the welfare and best interest of the child. Parents and other carers are therefore encouraged to attend and to participate in the meeting.

Parents may bring an advocate, friend or supporter, who may be their Solicitor, to assist them in understanding the meeting and the concerns being expressed for the child's welfare. It is hoped that a Solicitor will have discussed the situation with the parent prior to the conference and will help the parent to contribute to the meeting.

With those points in mind the following Code of Practice has been drawn up and applies to the attendance of Solicitors at Child Protection Conferences in Telford & Wrekin.

Please hand this notice and Code of Practice to your Solicitor as soon as possible if you wish them to attend the conference with you. Please also inform your social worker if you intend your solicitor to be present.

Code of Practice for Solicitors Attending Child Protection Conferences with Parents or Carers

- ❖ The conduct and procedure of the Child Protection Conference is a matter for the Chair of the meeting at all times.
- ❖ Solicitors may accompany a parent or carer who has been invited to attend and who is admitted to the conference. Solicitors will not be admitted instead of a Parent or Carer unless the Chair agrees. This will normally be only when a parent or carer is unable to attend due to circumstances beyond their control.
- ❖ Solicitors will be admitted only for such part, or parts, of the Conference as their clients may be permitted to attend, whether or not their clients attend the conference personally.
- ❖ Solicitors are not permitted to question or cross-examine others attending the Conference. Any requests for information to be clarified are too made through the Chair, who will have discretion to decide whether the request is appropriate.
- ❖ Solicitors are not permitted to participate in the decision regarding the need for a Child Protection Plan or in the formulation of recommendations.
- ❖ Solicitors attending Child Protection Conferences are expected to have read and be aware of the Law Society Family Law Committee's guidance issued in June 1997 in respect of legal representation at conferences.
- ❖ Every effort will be made to provide parents and carers with sufficient notice of Child Protection Conferences to enable them to arrange for the attendance of their Solicitor. The fact that a Solicitor is unable for any reason, to attend a Conference will not be justification for delaying or deferring that conference.
- ❖ Solicitors who wish to make further representations to the Children's Services Authority following the formulation of a conference recommendation, but prior to the commencement of any Court proceedings, may do so by writing to the Conference Chair or Key Social Worker.
- ❖ Once Court proceedings have commenced Solicitors should correspond only with the solicitor who has the conduct of the case from Legal Services in Telford and Wrekin Council.