



Solihull LSCB Survey of Parents Engagement in Child Protection Conferences November 2011

Factsheet for Practitioners

Key Parental Responses:

- A significant number of parents did not receive, or see, any reports for the meeting until they arrived or just before the start of conference and often had only seen reports prepared by agencies, other than Children's Social Work Services, when the conference minutes were distributed. This was reported as unhelpful because
 - a) It did not give sufficient time for parents to consider the information in the report
 - b) For disagreements to be acknowledged and put in writing
 - c) Added to distress experienced given the explicit nature of putting concerns in writing, and reading things that are distressing during the meeting (both when discussed and when reading),
 - d) Professional participants in conference were discussing information in reports the parent was not aware of
- Parents reported that they had not been adequately prepared for the conference and did not know what would happen
- Parents reported that they were routinely not able to say what they wanted or felt that they were pressured to contribute in too short a time period and what they said was not considered relevant.
- Parents reported that the meetings are too long, and content too intense and personal, for them to maintain concentration and breaks would be a helpful addition to the meetings
- The size of the meeting makes it hard for parents to remember who is who, particularly as a sizable proportion of those present are often not known to the parent beforehand.
- Discussion of personal experiences of abuse, eg domestic abuse in the presence of ex-partners, needs to be sensitively managed because it is a very traumatic experience to re-live in conference and assumptions should not be made that ex-partners were not abusive

Practice Reminders for Staff working with Families

It is important to recognize that a conducive environment for parental participation requires all practitioners to be pro-active in supporting such an environment including

- Ensuring that the reports produced for conference are shared with the parent at least 48 hours before conference, to arrange for the report to be shared directly with the parent, with any comments and disagreements being acknowledged in writing (at the end of the report), and the parent is aware of all the issues that will be presented to the meeting.
- Talking through with parents what will happen, and will be decided, at conference, including potential outcomes, and be mindful to acknowledge parental anxiety, and ensure parents understand what will happen and be decided in conference as well as what their role is in the meeting.
- Be mindful of child care needs that may arise and pre-empt any other barriers to parental participation, including use of language, as well as support the needs of parents when other family members, particularly ex-partners, are in the conference

What the Child Protection & Review Unit will do

- The Unit will ensure in the future that name cards are available for all conference participants to complete
- Develop an Information leaflet which includes, why a conference is taking place, the parents role, what will happen and what will be decided

What the LSCB will do

- Amend the timescale in the LSCB Safeguarding Procedures for when reports should be available to parents
- Measure if the learning has been used to improve the experiences of parents/carers attending conferences

Paul Nash
Safeguarding Officer, November 2011