

# Edinburgh Child Protection Committee

## Child Protection Planning Meeting Dispute Resolution Protocol

Management Information	
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<b>Lead Service Area</b>	Edinburgh Child Protection Committee
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<b>Agreed by</b>	Edinburgh Child Protection Committee

### 1. Purpose

1.1 This protocol sets out arrangements for the resolution of dissent at Child Protection Planning Meetings in Edinburgh (CPPMs). It gives due consideration to the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023) and the arrangements set out in the Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures for Edinburgh and Lothians (2024).

### 2. Scope

2.1. Robust discussion, challenge and differences of opinion are a valuable part of CPPMs and enable professionals to reach consensus about the best way forward. This will include differences of professional judgement on whether a child is at risk of significant harm applies and should subject to Child Protection Registration and the expectations of the ongoing plan.

2.2. Mostly, when an individual expresses their personal disagreement with the outcome(s) of a CPPM they can agree to accept and abide by the overall decision of the group and are content for their disagreement to be recorded in the minute. The Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures for Edinburgh and the Lothians (2024) state consensus or widespread agreement is aspired, and that one person cannot control the overall decision-making process.

2.3. There are occasions where, after full and free discussion by all parties during the CPPM, professional(s) continue to formally disagree about decision making based on the level of perceived risk of significant harm to the child and their professional judgement.

2.4. In such situations, the Chair of the CPPM will inform the Lead Officer for Child Protection of the formal dissent and the Dispute Resolution Protocol will be followed, as stated in the Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures for Edinburgh and the Lothians (2024).

2.5 This protocol sets out arrangements for such cases to be reviewed by a multi-agency Review Group.

### **3. Underpinning Principles of Child Protection**

These principles are detailed within the National Child Protection Guidance and the Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures for Edinburgh and the Lothians (2024) and should apply to all aspects of the process, including dispute resolution. The dispute resolution process should, wherever possible, be:

- Rights respecting
- Inclusive of children (up to 18) and family
- Needs-led and strengths-based
- Trauma informed and responsive
- Cognisant of diversity and inclusion.

### **4. Definitions**

#### **4.1. Consensus:**

Consensus means 'general or widespread agreement'. It does not mean a majority vote, nor does it mean unanimity is required and that one person who dissents can control the overall decision-making process.

The role of the chair is an important one in eliciting key assessment information and supporting the CPPM participants to reach consensus about whether a child is at risk of significant harm, based on the facts and professional judgement.

Consensus means that irrespective of the view of any agency representative on the decision, all involved will abide by it. This includes implementing any child protection plan agreed at the meeting.

### **5. Process**

5.1. Where no consensus can be reached and professional(s) believe the decision of the meeting or plan leaves a child at risk of harm, their dissent and the reasons for it should be formally recorded in the minute.

5.2 The Chair will explore the reasons for dissent and try to achieve consensus within the CPPM (as detailed in the Multi-Agency CP Procedures). If this has not been possible the Chair will inform the CPPM participants of the formal dispute resolution process and record this in the minute.

- 5.1.1 Initial or Pre-birth CPPMs:  
The Interim Safety Plan should be reviewed as part of the CPPM and recorded by core Child Protection agencies after the CPPM until such time as the dispute has been resolved.
- 5.1.2 Review CPPMs:  
The child's name should remain on the Child Protection Register until such time as the dispute has been resolved and another CPPM can take place.
- 5.2 Immediately following the CPPM or within one working day, the Chair will inform the Lead Officer for Child Protection and share all available reports to the CPPM. The draft minute of the CPPM will also be expedited and made available to the Lead Officer when it is ready.
- 5.3 The Lead Officer will organise a CP Dispute Resolution Meeting to take place within 10 working days of the CPPM. This will include the members of the multi-agency review group (detailed below), the Chair of the CPPM and the professional(s) who dissented. All available paperwork will be distributed to attendees by the Lead Officer ahead of the meeting.
- 5.4 Members of the multi-agency review group involved in CP Dispute Resolution Meetings will include representatives from the following agencies.
- City of Edinburgh Council: Director or Head of Service, Children's Services.
  - Police Scotland: Detective Chief Inspector or Detective Inspector, Public Protection Unit.
  - NHS Lothian: Director Public Protection,  
Lead Nurse Public Protection  
or Lead Paediatrician for Child Protection, as appropriate.
  - Edinburgh Child Protection Committee: Lead Officer.
- 5.5 The CP Dispute Resolution Meeting will be quorate if there is a representative from each of the 2 of the 3 core child protection agencies. The meeting will be chaired by a nominated attendee and a brief action record produced by the Lead Officer.
- 5.6 The purpose of the meeting is to consider all the information within the CPPM, explore the reasons for the recommendations and the concerns raised by the professional(s). The meeting will agree one of the following outcomes:

- The multi-agency review group ratifies the original assessment of risk and the child's name is removed from the register (see below 5.10 for further details).
- The multi-agency review group ratifies the original assessment but has identified wider practice development. However, the child's name is removed from the register (see below 5.10 for further details).
- The multi-agency review group outlines gaps or areas for further consideration, which should be considered at a reconvened CPPM within 15 working days of the Dispute Resolution Meeting.

5.7 Regardless of the outcome, the Dispute Resolution Meeting will agree who is best placed to inform the family and child (if appropriate) of the outcome.

5.8 Within 10 working days, the Action Record of the Dispute Resolution Meeting will be distributed to attendees and stored in Public Protection Electronic records in line with Child Protection data retention policy. It will also be shared with the Chief Social Work Officer.

5.9 Within 10 working days the Lead Officer will also communicate this decision in writing to the parents, and where appropriate, the child, on behalf of the Child Protection Committee.

5.10 Child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register:

Where the decision is taken to remove the child's name from the Child Protection Register, there will be no need for a review CPPM to endorse this decision. This decision ends the period of Registration and avoids putting undue stress on the family to return to a CPPM.

A final multi-agency meeting, in place of the next scheduled core group meeting, should be convened to revise the child's plan and consider future support arrangements for the family, post registration. This could be Chaired by the CPPM Chair or the Lead Professional depending on the circumstances.

## 6. Immediate protection

6.1. There will be no delay in any necessary immediate protective measures pending the outcome of the dispute resolution process.

- 6.2. Where there is dissent regarding decisions to take immediate action to protect the child, the social work team leader will make the required decisions in consultation with the practice team manager and the reviewing officer who led the discussion during the CPPM. Should the practice team manager be unavailable, this should be in consultation with the duty senior manager for Children and Families (social work).

## **7. Responsibilities**

- 7.1. The Lead Officer to the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee is responsible for the maintenance of this procedure. Specific responsibilities for following this procedure are contained in section 4.