



south ayrshire
health & social care
partnership



**Child Protection
Committee**
South Ayrshire

Practice Note for Professionals: Dissenting at Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPMs) and Care and Risk Management Meetings (CARM)

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This practice note outlines the procedures for all professionals who wish to dissent from the decision of a CPPM or CARM meeting This aligns with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023).
- 1.2 To dissent means that a professional disagrees so strongly with the meetings decision that they cannot allow their professional name to be associated with it. Professionals must consider whether dissenting will enhance the parents' understanding of the risks and ultimately benefit the child.
- 1.3 Robust discussion, challenge, and differing opinions are essential components of the meetings These enable professionals to reach consensus on the best course of action. Differences in professional judgement may arise regarding whether a child/young person is at risk of significant harm and whether Child Protection Registration is appropriate, along with expectations for the ongoing plan.
- 1.4 In most cases, professionals who disagree with the outcome of a meeting may choose to accept the overall decision, with their disagreement noted in the meeting minutes. However, there are occasions when, after full and open discussion, professionals continue to formally disagree with the decision based on their assessment of the risk of significant harm and their professional judgement.
- 1.5 At the CPPM or CARM the Chair will inform participants of their right to dissent. If a professional intends to dissent, they must notify the Chair during the meeting. The dissent and the reasons for it will be formally recorded in the minutes. The Chair will explore the reasons for dissent and attempt to reach consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair will inform participants of the formal dispute resolution process and record this in the minutes.
- 1.6 To formally dissent from the meetings decision, the professional must submit their dissent in writing to the Head of Childrens Health, Care and Justice Services within five working days. Dissent cannot be lodged by professionals who did not attend the meeting. The status quo of the meeting should remain during the dissent review.
- 1.7 Dissent may be raised in response to one or more of the following decisions made during the CPPM or CARM:
 - The outcome of the meeting, including the identified category of primary concern at the time the child became subject to a Protection Plan
 - The decision regarding whether the child should become, continue to be, or not become the subject of a Protection Plan.

- 1.8 When dissent is raised, the Head of Childrens Health, Care and Justice Services will review the dissent letter, draft minutes of the meeting alongside the assessment and plan. They will conduct a review of the dissent which will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the National Child Protection Guidance, which apply to all aspects of the process, including dispute resolution.
- 1.9 The dissent resolution process should, wherever possible, be:
- Rights-respecting
 - Inclusive of children and families
 - Needs-led and strengths-based
 - Trauma-informed and responsive
 - Cognisant of diversity and inclusion

2 Purpose of the Dissent Review

- 2.1 The review will consider all information presented at the CPPM or CARM, explore the rationale behind the recommendations, and assess the concerns raised. The reviewer will determine one of the following outcomes:
- Ratify the original decision of the meeting. Note: Where the decision was made to remove the child's name from the register: No review CPPM is required. This decision ends the registration period and avoids placing undue stress on the family. Deregistration Core Groups should be convened in accordance with South Ayrshire Council De-Registration from the Child Protection Registers Practitioner Guidance.
 - Ratify the original assessment but identify areas for wider practice development.
 - Agree or amend the identified category of primary concern.
 - Identify gaps or areas requiring further consideration: A reconvened initial or review CPPM or CARM should be held within 15 working days of the reviewer's decision. The meeting should be chaired by a different individual than the one who led the initial review.
- 2.2 Regardless of the outcome, the reviewer will decide who is best placed to inform the family and child (if appropriate) of the decision. Within 10 working days, a note of the decision will be distributed to attendees and updated in the child's electronic records, in line with the Child Protection Data Retention Policy.

3 Dissent Audit

- 3.1 The Child Protection Admin Team will monitor and track all instances of dissent. The number of dissents will be recorded and reported quarterly as part of the minimum data set, for review by the Child Protection Committee.

4 Understanding Disagreement in Child Protection Meetings

4.1 Information for Parents and Carers

Child Protection Planning Meetings and Care and Risk Management Meetings bring together professionals to make decisions about your child's safety and wellbeing. These meetings aim to agree on the best plan to support and protect your child.

4.2 What Does "Dissent" Mean?

Sometimes, a professional may strongly disagree with the decision made at a meeting. This is called dissent. It means they feel the decision could affect your child's safety or wellbeing and they cannot support it professionally.

4.3 Why Might Someone Dissent?

- A professional might raise dissent if they are concerned about:
- The decision made about your child's protection plan
- The category of concern identified.
- Whether your child should be on the Child Protection Register

4.4 What Happens When Someone Dissents?

- Chair of the meeting will ask if anyone wishes to dissent.
- If someone does, their reasons will be recorded in the meeting notes.
- The Chair will try to resolve the disagreement during the meeting.
- If it cannot be resolved, the professional must write to the Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice Services within five working days.

4.5 What Does the Review Involve?

The Head of Service will:

- Look at the meeting notes, the protection plan, and the dissent letter.
- Review everything carefully, following national child protection guidance.
- Decide whether to:
- Keep the original decision.
- Suggest improvements to practice.

- Change the category of concern.
- Recommend a new meeting to look again at the decision.

4.6 What Happens During the Review?

- The decision made at the meeting will stay in place while the review is being carried out.
- You will be informed of the outcome by someone chosen by the reviewer.
- A written note of the decision will be shared with everyone involved and added to your child's records.