

What is a Family Conference?

A family conference is a meeting involving the young person and members of his/her family, the victim and relevant others. It is ordered by the Court and run by Young Persons Probation. At the meeting the young person's offence will be discussed with regard to its effect on the victim, the community and on the young person's family.

The conference will explore ways that the young person takes responsibility for his/her behaviour, for the consequences and where possible to put things right by making good the damage. It also aims to come up with an agreed plan which will help the young person to avoid getting into trouble in the future.



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Family Conference

A guide for **victims**



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Who else attends?

The young person who has admitted responsibility for their offence, members of their family, other persons who may be involved with the young person.

You are also encouraged to bring someone along who would be a support to you. If you are under 18 years, you should be accompanied by your parents or guardians.

Who arranges it?

A Probation Officer will meet you to help you get ready for the family conference. It usually takes place in a Probation office or in some circumstances in a different venue.

Why should I attend?

This meeting will give you an opportunity to explain to the young person how their offence has affected you. You will also have a say in how the young person can make amends. In fact, your attendance is vital to a positive outcome.

What if I do not wish to attend?

You can express your views in different ways, such as writing a letter, or through the Probation Officer. Or you may wish to nominate someone to attend on your behalf.

What actually happens at the Family Conference?

The meeting is divided into four sections:

- 1 Information Giving**
Introductions are made, the format of the meeting is outlined and the process of information sharing begins.
- 2 Restoration**
This section of the meeting allows the victim to express how the offence has affected them. It also facilitates the young person to account for their behaviour and to make amends.
- 3 Family Time**
The young person and his/her family then meet privately to draft an 'Action Plan', which will be designed to make amends and help the young person stay out of trouble.
- 4 Action Plan**
The draft 'Action Plan' is then brought back into the group for discussion, agreement and submission to the Court for approval.

The Family Conference shouldn't go on for any longer than two hours.

What happens next?

Following its submission to Court, the Action Plan is overseen by the family of the young person, other identified individuals and supervised by the Probation Officer.

You will be informed about the outcome of the Action Plan, if you so wish. If the Action Plan is not adhered to, it will be returned to the Court.


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