



Probation & Welfare Service

Family Conference

GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITIES AND VICTIMS



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What is a Family Conference?

A Family Conference is organised and run by the Probation and Welfare Service at the direction of the Court. The family conference is a meeting between the victim(s), young person's family and the relevant others to discuss the offence and its effects. The meeting will explore ways in which the offender can be held accountable, take responsibility for his/her behaviour, and where possible to put things right.

Who attends the family conference?

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

You are also encouraged to bring someone along who would be of support to you. If you are under 18 years, you should be accompanied by your parent/guardian.

Who arranges the family conference?

A Probation and Welfare Officer will meet with you to help you get ready for the family conference. It usually take place in the Probation & Welfare offices or in some circumstances in a different venue.

Why should you attend?

The meeting will give you the opportunity to explain to the young person how heir 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.

However, if you do not wish to attend you can express your views in different ways, such as writing a letter, or through the Probation and Welfare Officer. Also, you may wish to nominate someone to attend on your behalf.

What exactly happens at the Family Conference?

There are four stages in the Family Conference.

- 1. *Information Giving:*** Introductions are made, the format of the meeting is outlined and the process of information sharing begins.
- 2. *Restorative:*** This section of the meeting allows you to express how the offence has affected you. 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 to the victim and help the young person stay out of trouble.*
- 4. *Action Plan:*** The draft 'Action Plan' is then brought back to 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 and Welfare Officer. You will be informed about the outcome of the Action Plan. If the Action Plan is not adhered to, it will be returned to the Court.