

Probation & Welfare Service

Family Conference

GUIDANCE FOR OFFENDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES



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Family Conference Guidance for Offenders & their Families

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 organised and run by the Probation and Welfare Service. 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 take 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.

Why should the young person and his/her family attend?

The meeting will give the young person an opportunity to learn about how his/her offending behaviour affects other people. It also provides an opportunity for the young person to apologise to the victim. If the young person cooperates throughout the process the court may decide to dismiss the charge.

Who else will be there?

The young person, his/her family and possibly a teacher or social worker who may be involved with the young person. The victim can attend the Family Conference and may bring someone to support them.

Who arranges the family conference?

A Probation and Welfare Officer will meet with the child/young person and his/her family to help get ready for the family conference.

Where does the Family Conference take place?

The family conference will usually take place in a special room in the Probation & Welfare offices. In some circumstances it may take place outside in a different venue.

How long will the meeting last?

The meeting could be long or short depending on how quickly an agreement is reached between all the people at the meeting. However, it shouldn't go on for any longer than two hours.

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 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 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.

What happens next?

Following its submission to Court, the Action Plan is overseen by the family of the young person or other identified individuals and supervised by the Probation and Welfare Officer. If the action plan is not adhered to it will be returned to Court.