

**YOUTH CONFERENCE SERVICE,  
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### WHAT HAPPENS AT A CONFERENCE?

The Youth Conference Co-ordinator asks everyone to introduce themselves and explains the private/confidential nature of the meeting. The Co-ordinator asks that everyone shows mutual respect and affords each other the opportunity to speak uninterrupted.

The Co-ordinator invites the young person to give an account of what happened. The victim is then encouraged to ask the young person questions about what has been said.

The Co-ordinator invites the victim to tell the young person how they have been affected by the crime.

The Police Officer outlines the facts of the case and the effect of the crime on the community.

The Co-ordinator invites others present to give their views in relation to the crime and the effect it may have had on them.

The Co-ordinator asks the victim what they would like the young person to do to repair the harm caused and to make amends.

The young person and the appropriate adult are invited to suggest suitable actions which the young person will undertake to make amends and prevent further offending.

The Co-ordinator asks the victim and supporters to comment on the suggested actions.

If the young person agrees to the actions this agreement becomes known as the Youth Conference Plan. If no agreement is reached the matter is returned to the Public Prosecution Service or Court.

The Conference is closed.

### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A CONFERENCE?

A report is sent to the Public Prosecution Service or Court and they will decide to accept or reject the Plan.

When a Plan is accepted by the Public Prosecution Service the young person completes a Youth Conference Plan. This is not classed as a conviction on a young person's criminal record but can be referred to if there are further criminal prosecutions.

When a Plan is accepted by the Court the young person becomes subject to a Youth Conference Order and this is recorded on a criminal record in the same way as any other Court disposal.

If the Public Prosecution Service does not accept the Plan it may then prosecute.

If the Court does not accept the Plan it may then give an alternative sentence.

If requested the Youth Conference Co-ordinator will inform the victim of the decision.

The Plan is then monitored by the Youth Conference Co-ordinator.

If the Plan is satisfactorily completed the Youth Conference Co-ordinator will inform the Public Prosecution Service or Court.

If the young person fails to complete the Plan the Youth Conference Co-ordinator will send a report to the Public Prosecutions Service or Court who will then deal with the matter.



# YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERRING

A BALANCED APPROACH FOR YOUTH  
WHO OFFEND AND THEIR VICTIMS  
INFORMATION GUIDE



## A DIFFERENT TYPE OF JUSTICE

The Justice (NI) Act 2002 included a creative new approach to dealing with young people who offend and their victims. It is called a Youth Conference based on a concept called Restorative Justice.

Youth Conferencing gives young offenders the opportunity to both, understand the harm caused by their offences, and make amends to their victims, family and community. It also assists with taking the steps to avoid offending in the future.

## HOW IS A YOUTH CONFERENCE DIFFERENT?

In Court it is usually the prosecutor, solicitor and magistrate who talk. The young person is only asked if they plead guilty or not guilty.

**A Conference is based on everyone talking and reaching agreement on a plan to meet the needs of the victim and stop the young person re-offending.**

In Court the legal representative speaks for the young person.

**In a Conference the legal representative may advise the young person but the young person speaks for themselves. He/she speaks to the victim about what was done and with the victim, agree what he/she will do to make up for the harm that was caused.**

In Court victims are not present, their voice is usually absent.

**The Conference includes victims. They can say what they feel about the crime and what they would like the young person to do to make up for the effect of the crime.**

In Court proceedings are formal.

**The Conference is a safe and welcoming environment. It allows everyone to tell their story, which can be difficult and emotional. Everyone is respected and supported.**

## A YOUTH CONFERENCE MAY BE HELD WHEN:

The Public Prosecution Service decides not to prosecute and refers the matter for a Diversionary Youth Conference. The young person must admit guilt and agree to participate in a conference.

**Or**

The Public Prosecution Service decides to prosecute and the matter proceeds to Court where the young person is referred for a Court Ordered Youth Conference. The young person must admit guilt or be found guilty and agree to participate in a conference.

## WHERE AND WHEN WILL THE CONFERENCE TAKE PLACE?

The conference will take place in a location convenient to everyone.

Efforts will be made by the Youth Conference Co-ordinator to arrange an agreeable time for the conference.

A victim is entitled to claim any loss of earnings/travel expenses as a result of attending the conference.

## WHO MUST ATTEND?

The Youth Conference Co-ordinator.

The young person.

An appropriate adult for the young person, usually a parent or another adult chosen by the young person.

A Police Officer.

## WHO ELSE MAY ATTEND?

The victim.

The legal adviser for the young person.

The supervising officer if the young person is under a court order.

Supporters/friends/family of the victim.

Family members of the young person.

An approved observer.

Others approved by the Co-ordinator who can assist the victim or enable the young person make amends for the harm caused.

