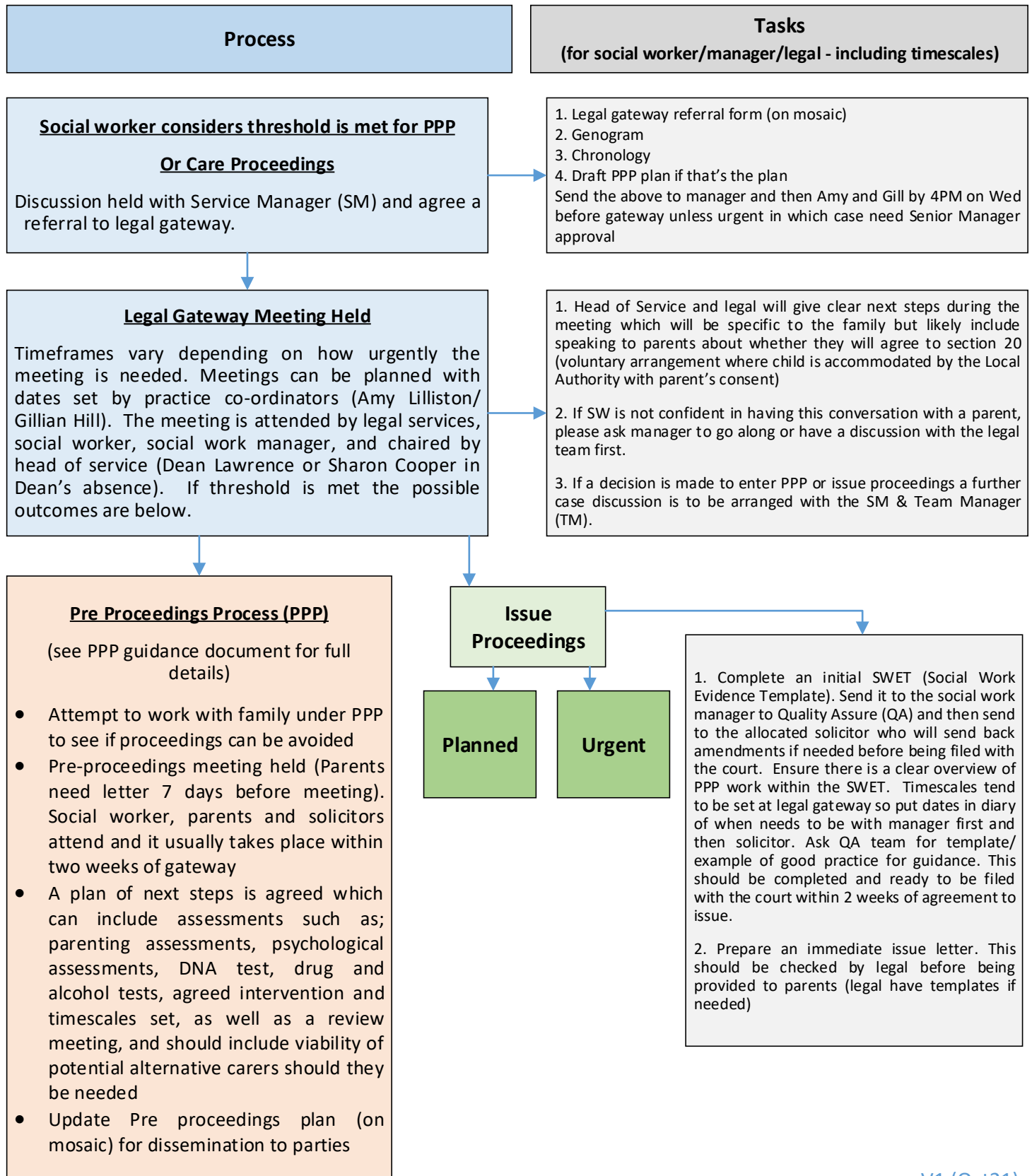


# Care Proceedings Processes

## Things to Note:

- Consider all other possible options for safeguarding the child and achieving legal permanence
- Child In Need/Child Protection Processes should address options to keep children with parent(s) (where safe) and other options for achieving legal permanence should be explored so that there is a contingency plan if remaining with parent(s) is not possible



## Process (Continued)

## Tasks (Continued) (for social worker/manager/legal - including timescales)

### Consider Placement Options

- Placement with relative/friend as Regulation 24 (Reg. 24) placement. If suitable relative/friend available, assessment as foster carer required. If there are none, an urgent application for a FGC (Family Group Conference) should be completed
- If there is no suitable family member a foster placement or residential placement will need to be found

1. Complete placement and matching form on mosaic if a foster placement is needed
2. Contact the fostering team if a Reg 24 assessment of a family member is required as this is a joint assessment between the SW and fostering team
3. Parents and social worker must complete a delegated authority form to show what decisions the carer is allowed to make on the parents behalf
4. If section 20, the s.20 form must be signed by the parent as well as medical consent form

### Child comes into Care, under Section 20 or Section 31 (Care Proceedings)

1. **Social worker visits to the child to be made within 72 hours of placement** and then weekly until initial approval of carers if child placed with relative or friend, or otherwise at minimum of six weekly intervals in first year
2. **Agree frequency of family time between child and parents.** This tends to be more frequent when a young baby or child but will need to be discussed with the manager to ensure it is tailored to the child. Family time only tends to be with parents and siblings initially and then close extended family can be considered at a later date if in the child's best interest. The LA will likely supervise the family time or explore and risk assess family members who could. A contract of expectations tends to be drawn upon between the person supervising family time and the local authority to ensure that the supervisee and family is clear on the details of family time and what is expected. If s20 we cannot offer a lower level of contact than parents are willing to accept.
3. **Ensure that parents are kept updated throughout** and informed of how the child is doing; particularly when in foster care
4. **Arrange a discussion between social worker, manager and solicitor** for introductions; put key dates in calendars including when documents/assessments need to be QA'd by the manager and also by legal, as well as the actual filing date and court hearings. This could be combined with the court date itself if an urgent application, or once the case has been allocated to a solicitor. Ensure these dates are also recorded on file in case there is staff sickness or another social worker takes over. If a case is taken over, this should also be the point at which a discussion is held with legal
5. If needed, request examples of good practice from the QA team; for example for SWETS, parenting assessments etc.
6. **Complete Child in Care documentation:**
  - Placement and matching form and Record of accommodation decision** – on the day of the child coming in to care
  - Change of circumstances form** – within 24 hours (this triggers an IRO being allocated)
7. **Arrange placement planning meeting** – to be held within 5 working days – make sure SSW (Supervising Social Worker) is there as they do the placement plan document.
8. **Arrange Care planning meeting** – Within 10 working days but explore whether this could be combined with the placement planning meeting. Parents should be there in both meetings where possible and consult them if not to be able to get child's routines, likes, dislikes etc.
9. **Arrange health assessment and PEP (Personal Education Plan) meeting** – to take place within 4 weeks
10. **Notify all people and agencies involved including school and health**

## Process (Continued)

## Tasks (Continued) (for social worker/manager/legal - including timescales)

### First Court Hearing

SW attends along with solicitor/barrister

When the initial hearing takes place depends on whether it is an emergency application or a planned application to court

Interim Care Orders tend to be made until conclusion of proceedings but can be made for a shorter period

1. Arrange a care planning and placement planning meeting – this should be held within 10 days of the Interim Care Order (ICO) being granted
2. Arrange case discussion with SM, TM & SW within 10 days of hearing
3. Ensure that key dates are put in the SW's diary for when assessments are needed to be with manager and with the solicitor to ensure that documents are filed on time and prevent delay for the child. Once legal send the order, input the dates (should be with legal 1 week before filing date)

### Case Management Hearing (CMH)

Should take place between day 12 and 18 (day 1 is date of issue)

1. Develop a care plan and consider viable options such as possibility of rehabilitating back home, adoption etc. – within 4 weeks. If unsure about what the options are in terms of permanency for a child, have a discussion with the IRO, solicitor or with one of the adoption social workers/SGO (Special Guardianship) social workers and they can talk through the options. If the case management order includes placement directions you will need to obtain a SHOBPA decision timetable from the Agency Decision Maker's PA. If any assessments of connected persons are directed, notify fostering team so that screening /Viability Assessments can be set up.

### Issues Resolution Hearing (IRH)

By week 20 or earlier, to identify the remaining key issues that will need to be determined at the final hearing

2. SW prepares: Final Statement (to include Final Care Plan) – authorised by Head of Service and any other documents as instructed.
3. Case discussion with SM prior to filing to ratify the plan. If proposing a Care Order at Home, take to complex case discussion

### Final Hearing (FH)

This is when the relevant orders will be made or no order if that is in the best interest of the child

SW's may be required to give evidence; particularly in contested hearings which is where a parent or children's guardian is not in agreement with the local authority's plan

To take place by week 26 or earlier

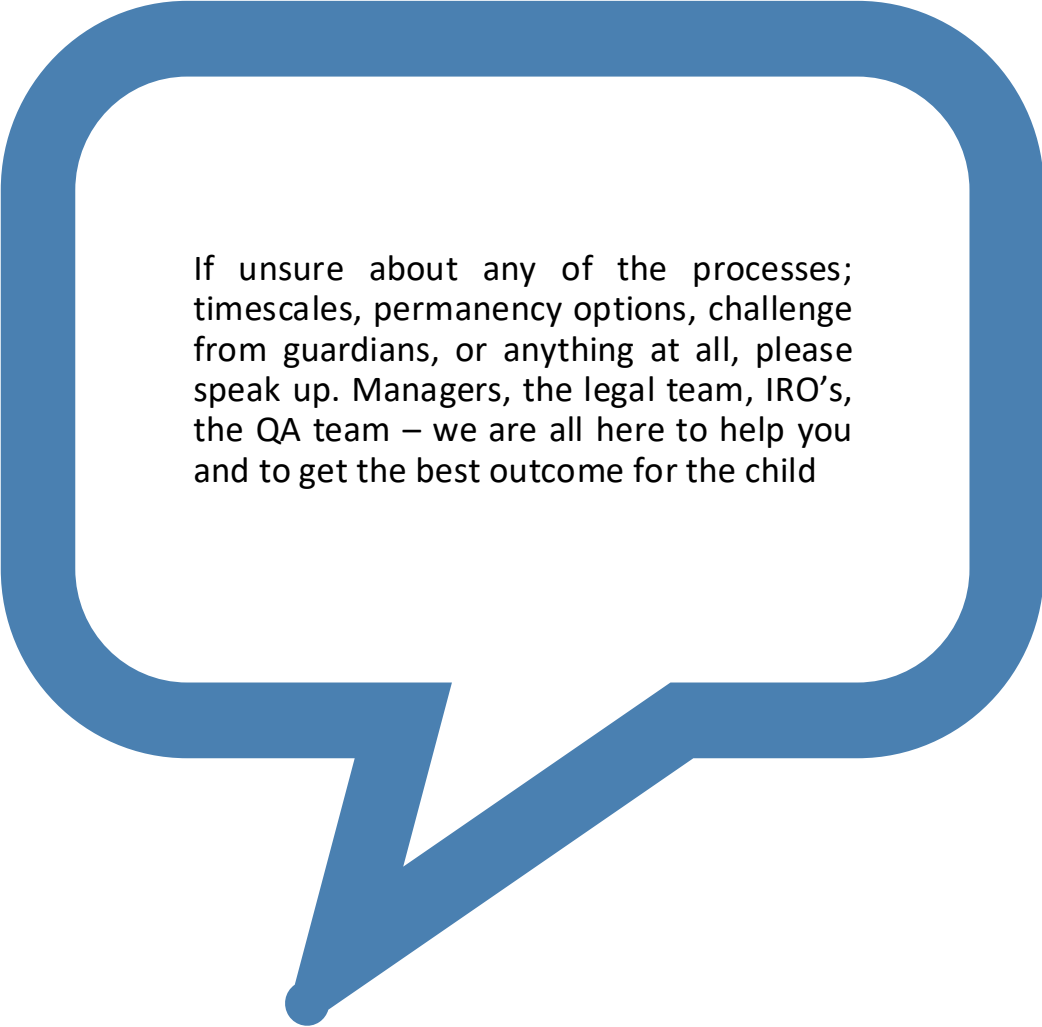
4. Include the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officers) and guardian in planning and ensure that discussions held and any challenge is recorded in case notes. IRO should be sent final evidence before it is sent to court as their views should be included in the final evidence.

5. Keep foster carers up to date following each court hearing and the child where age appropriate. There are books that can help younger children understand the court process and judges making decisions

# Overview of Meetings During Proceedings

Meeting (In order of when they take place)	Purpose	Timescales	Who Arranges It?
<b>Placement Planning Meeting</b>	To discuss the child, their background, their day to day needs, answer any questions the carer may have and ensure they have all relevant documentation	Within 5 days of placement	Social worker *carers must be invited, along with parents where appropriate, and all professionals involved
<b>Care Planning Meeting</b>	The meeting will address what needs to be done to put in place an initial Care Plan for the child and the actions and information that are required to plan for the child's future	Within 10 days of coming in to care	Social worker *manager chairs, parents should be invited, someone from the fostering team and professionals involved
<b>Case Discussion with SM</b>	To plan proceedings	Within 10 days of initial hearing	SM chairs
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Statutory Review</b>	This is where the child's care plan and needs are reviewed, timescales for achieving permanence are set, consideration of parallel/contingency planning (e.g. plan to assess family member under SGO but with a parallel plan for adoption if the family member assessment was to be negative)	To be held within 20 working days of child being accommodated	An IRO will be allocated once Change of circumstances comes through to Safeguarding team. IRO will contact SW to arrange a date for a review. SW will then need to discuss with the child who they want to attend and where case review should be held. SW then completes invite list and Safeguarding admin will send out invites.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Care Planning Meeting</b>	Permanence planning needs to be in place prior to the second statutory review - viability of rehabilitation home should have been assessed and other options considered if rehabilitation home is not a viable option; such as SGO or long term foster care. A permanence plan needs to be developed by this meeting and review child's plan	2 weeks before the 2 <sup>nd</sup> statutory review	Social worker
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Statutory Review</b>	Social work report needs to be completed prior to this meeting which is on mosaic. This again reviews child's plan and needs and a permanence plan is agreed	Within 4 months of child being in care	IRO
<b>Attend Complex Case Discussion (if proposing care order at home)</b>	Care Order at Home plan needs to be agreed by senior management	Prior to filing final evidence	Social worker and manager to arrange
<b>Meeting with SM, TM and SW to Ratify the Care Plan</b>	To ratify the final care plan	After final evidence is complete and before filing with the court	Social worker and manager to arrange

\* The Children Act provides that proceedings must be concluded within 26 weeks unless a longer timetable is necessary for the just resolution of the proceedings. The duration of the proceedings will influence how many care planning meetings and statutory reviews there are but the pattern would continue whereby there would be a 3<sup>rd</sup> care planning meeting 2 weeks before the 3<sup>rd</sup> statutory review, and so on and so forth until proceedings are finalised **NB:** The documents to fill in following the above meetings are found on mosaic. **NB:** All legal documents need to have been QA'd by a manager and with the solicitor 1 week before the filing date



If unsure about any of the processes; timescales, permanency options, challenge from guardians, or anything at all, please speak up. Managers, the legal team, IRO's, the QA team – we are all here to help you and to get the best outcome for the child