

Document Quality Control		
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Our practice principles and our pledge to families:

- Person-centered values and restoring relationships are at the heart of all our activities.
- We will work intentionally to support more children to live safely at home by supporting parents so they are able to care for their own children.
- Using a strengths-based approach, we seek to build on motivation and promote behaviour change.
- We endeavour to recognise and respond to the impact of trauma both for parents and their children, as well as each other. We will attempt to minimise the impact of triggering past traumas, as well avoid unintentionally creating new traumatic experiences.
- We will ensure children's voices and an understanding of their lived experience are central to our plans and activities.
- We will seek explicit consent and work in partnership with parents and families.
- We will prioritise maintaining relationships between family members and friends and harnessing the strength of the kinship network.
- We will understand diversity and the identity of families and individual members, respecting what makes each of us unique, and acting to address any inequalities and inequities.
- We will use strengths based, respectful language both in records and within dialogue.

## **1. Purpose:**

The purpose of the Legal Gateway Planning Meeting is:

- 1.1 To consider all requests to issue PLO, both pre-proceedings and care applications to the Court
- 1.2 To consider any other requests to issue applications to the Court, including applications for Secure Accommodation Orders, Deprivation of Liberty applications, as well as applications to vary or discharge an order.
- 1.3 To review all cases subject to PLO pre proceedings planning
- 1.4 To track all court directions and ensure compliance with court orders for all cases currently in proceedings
- 1.5 To ensure early identification of children who may need permanent alternative care, including Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders
- 1.6 To quality assure the quality of practice and related evidence
- 1.7 To monitor relevant key performance indicator

## **2.0 Decisions that can be made:**

Legal Gateway will be chaired by a Head of Service. The Chair, in consultation with relevant social care practitioners, managers and the legal representatives, will make decisions to:

- 2.1 Enter pre-proceedings PLO
- 2.2 Extend PLO pre-proceedings beyond the 12 weeks (to 16 weeks if appropriate)
- 2.3 Issue court proceedings
- 2.4 Agree Secure Order applications
- 2.5 Agree applications for Deprivation of Liberty
- 2.6 Agree applications to discharge a Care Order

2.7 Legal Gateway decisions for application of care order or secure order are ratified with the Deputy Director - within 24 hours

### **3.0 Key Performance Indicators**

3.0 All PLO care proceedings before the Court will conclude in 26 weeks

3.1 Applications will conclude in line with the Local Authority's Care Plan

3.2 Families in pre-proceedings will conclude within 12 weeks, or within 16 weeks if an extended period is agreed

### **4.0 Referral Documentation**

#### ***Legal Gateway Planning Meeting***

4.0 The weekly Legal Gateway Planning Meeting will take place at 1:30pm every Wednesday. Legal Gateway Meetings can also be called at other times when demand or need requires it.

4.1 Referrals should be agreed by the Service Leader before an agenda request is made by the Social Worker or Team Leader. Service Leader's should add a case note to Mosaic evidencing management decision making.

4.2 Trackers for pre-proceedings and care proceedings must be updated by Service Leaders by 12 noon every Tuesday for consideration by the Head Family Safeguarding. The last hour of the meeting will focus on this tracking. With the remainder of the meeting being for family presentations.

4.3 Information provided by the Social Worker for the Legal Gateway Planning Meeting process should include the following:

(a) A referral - which must clearly state the name of the child/ children, date(s) of birth, electronic identification number(s), the purpose of the request and the desired outcome that is being sought for the child - to be sent to PA for Head Family Safeguarding

(b) MOSAIC workflow for Legal Gateway to be completed by 11am on the Tuesday prior and passed to the Service Leader to quality assure, prior to the Legal Gateway.

- (c) An up-to-date chronology & genogram (to include at least 3 generations)
- (d) A current /up to date assessment, that sets out the current concerns and the reason for the Legal Gateway meeting.
- (e) Plus:
  - a. The outcome of viability assessments of connected persons (family/ friends) where applicable
  - b. The child's birth certificate
  - c. Any other evidence that the local authority may wish to rely on
- (f) For requests to extend pre-proceedings:
  - a. A written outline of justification to extend, along with evidence of the assessment, chronology, and genogram.
- (g) A summary of actual/likely legal spend for any assessment/ expert requests.

4.4 The Service Leader will send all paperwork to Head of Safeguarding PA by 11am on the Tuesday prior to the Legal Gateway and inform of any gateways that do not have the correct paperwork and therefore need to be cancelled.

4.5 It is the responsibility of the Team Leader to assure themselves that all the relevant paperwork has been completed and shared in time, with final sign off by the Service Leader.

## **5.0 Timescales**

5.0 Where a decision is made to enter pre proceedings PLO the letter should be served within 1 working day of the agreement. The PLO meeting should then be held within 7 working days of the decision.

5.1 Where a decision is made to issue care proceedings the application must be filed with the court within 6 workings days. The Social Work Team must have all relevant paperwork with Legal representative within 4 working days, legal will then issue with the Court within a further 2 working days. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- a) All paperwork, including the statement, care plan, chronology & genogram, current assessments of the family, including viabilities, a

copy birth certificate and any supporting evidence that has been requested, will be provided by the social worker to legal services in a timely manner. Specifically, this will be emailed by the social worker directly to the solicitor with conduct of the case and to the childcare inbox by 4:30pm on the fourth day after the agreement to issue has been made and verified. This must allow for quality assurance to have been undertaken by the relevant Team / Service Leader.

- b) In the event that Legal Services having any comments or further legal advice they will be provided to the social worker within 24 hours with an expectation that any final amendments will be completed by the social worker within 24 hours.
- c) Subject to the above being achieved, Legal services will lodge the application with the court by 4pm on the sixth day (Thursday usually)
- d) In respect of unborn babies, where a plan to issue care proceedings has been agreed in advance of the birth, the paperwork referred to in 5.1 (a) shall be completed and sent to Legal Services 2 weeks prior to the expected date of delivery (EDD). The paperwork will refer to the baby by his/her "family name" using the EDD instead of the date of birth.

5.2 Where an application is necessary in a crisis, or a significant incident has occurred, the timescale for action will be decided as part of the Legal Gateway Meeting. This will be when there is potential need for EPO/ Short notice ICO.

5.3 The Team Leader for Adoption will ensure close working with the Family Support & Safeguarding Team for cases where there may be a need for permanent care through adoption or Special Guardianship Order, including opportunities to place babies in early permanent placements with approved Foster to Adopt Carers.

## 6.0 Membership

- Head Family Safeguarding (Chair)
- Service Leaders from North, South, Central 1 and Central 2 FS&S Team  
(Where Service Leaders are absent a Team leader will attend on their behalf)
- Service Leader for Adult Family Safeguarding Team (Where Service Leader is absent a Team leader will attend on their behalf)

- Legal Services
- Adoption Team Representative
- Battenburg Centre Representative
- Fostering Representative

Requests will be presented by:

- Social Worker
- With Team Leader support where appropriate