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| (RecipientName)  (Address1)  (Address2)  (Address3)  (Postcode) | **London Borough of Merton**  **Merton Civic Centre**  **London Road**  **Morden SM4 5DX**  ***Direct Line:***  ***My Ref:***  ***Date:*** |

Dear XXXXXX

**Letter before proceedings**

I am writing to let you know how worried we are about the care of *[name of child/children].* We want to work with you to support your care of *[name of child/children]* and avoid going to Court. We always want children to stay with their families where it is safe to do and want to work with you to achieve the changes necessary for *[name of child/children]* to remain safely in your care. However, if things don’t get better then we may need to think to think about applying to the Court so a Judge can help decide what is best for *[name of child/children]*. However, we want to avoid this and to work with you in pre-proceedings which is the step before Court.

We want to work with you to address our worries. We are worried about *[detail the worries under headings, dates and specific information is required].* We want to help you improve things by *[detail the changes that need to be seen].*

I’d like to invite you to a meeting on *[date]* at *[time]* where we can talk about the worries and discuss how we can work together to support your family. These are the things we would like you to agree to undertake and we will be able to discuss about this more at the pre-proceedings meeting - *[brief summary of proposed work].*

Included with this letter is a Working Together Agreement which sets out the expectations of you and of us which we would also like to discuss at the pre-proceedings meeting.

It is important for you to have your own independent, free, legal advice and the support of a solicitor at the pre-proceedings meeting. You can take this letter to a solicitor and they will be able to work with you and offer you legal advice, support and guidance free of charge. I have enclosed a list of solicitors which you can choose from. If you would prefer you can seek any alternative solicitor who accepts legal aid.

Whilst we would encourage you to seek legal advice, should you wish not to and would prefer to bring a family member, friend or support worker to the meeting you are welcome to do so. However, I want you to be aware that personal information will be shared in this meeting which any person you bring will hear.

It would be helpful for you to think about who might support you to look after *[name of child/children]* or might be able to look after *[name of child/children]* should we get to the stage where we do need to approach the Court and ask a Judge to consider whether *[name of child/children]* should remain in your care. We can discuss this at the meeting.

The details of our solicitor are:

XXX, Solicitor, Social Care and Education, South London Legal Partnership. Email: [XXXXX@merton.gov.uk](mailto:XXXXX@merton.gov.uk) Direct: 020 8545 46XX,

I appreciate this will likely be a difficult letter to read and that this meeting may feel frightening. I want to reassure you that the aim of this work is to support you to look after *[name of child/children].* If you cannot attend the meeting on *[date]* and *[time]*, please let me know and we will find a date and time that suits us all. Additionally to this, if you need some help with childcare, or transport to the meeting, do let (*name of social worker*) know and we will try to help.

Yours sincerely

Team Manager

Family Support and Safeguarding Team X

Merton Children Social Care

Enc. List of solicitors