**Carolyn Godfrey**

**Director, Department for Children & Education**

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|  | Children & Families Team  Telephone:  Fax: |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Please ask for: |  | Our ref: |  | Your ref: |  |

Ext:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Date: |

**PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER**

**TAKE IT TO A SOLICITOR NOW**

Dear

**Re:**

**HOW TO AVOID GOING TO COURT**

I am writing to let you know how concerned Wiltshire Council has become about how you care for your child. I am writing to tell you that Wiltshire Council is thinking about starting Court Proceedings in respect of your child.

We are so worried about your child that we will go to Court unless you are able to improve things.

If we go to court this could result in your child needing to be cared for by someone else.

There are things you can do which could stop this happening. We have set out in this letter the concerns that we have about your child/ren and the things that have already been done to try to help your family.

**AN IMPORTANT MEETING ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT**

Please come to a meeting with us to talk about these concerns on *DATE AND TIME****.***The address is *ADD* *ADDRESS* and there is a map with this letter to help you find it. Please contact your Social Worker *ADD NAME* on *TELEPHONE NUMBER* to tell us if you will come to the meeting.

At the meeting, we will discuss with you and tell you what you will need to do to make your children safe. We will also talk to you about how we will support you to do this. We will also make clear what steps we will take if we continue to be worried about your child.

When we have concerns for children, which might involve the Local Authority going to court, we always offer parents, their children and wider family the opportunity to take part in a meeting so their views on how to help can be heard, the meeting is called a Family Group Conference.   This meeting is not organised by us but an independent organisation called Day Break who specialise in this work.

We have enclosed a leaflet about Family Group Conferences, and would ask that you take the time to read this and share it with your solicitor.

If on reading the leaflet you think it would help you to have a family group conference you can contact Day Break, the service  who run Family Group Conferences on Wiltshire’s behalf, before the meeting with us and they will take all your details and begin to set up a meeting. We will talk with you further about this at the meeting with your solicitor.

**PLEASE BRING A SOLICITOR TO THE MEETING ON**

Take this letter to a Solicitor and ask them to come to the meeting with you. The Solicitor will advise you about getting legal aid (free legal advice). We have sent with this letter a list of local Solicitors who work with children and families. They are all separate from Children’s Services.

Information your Solicitor will need is:

*The Local Authority is Wiltshire Council,*

*The Legal Contact is:*

*Legal Officer*

*County Hill*

*Trowbridge*

*Wiltshire BA14 8JN*

*Telephone no: 01225 718365*

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DO NOTHING**

If you do nothing we will have to go to Court. If you do not answer this letter or come to the meeting, we will go to Court as soon as we can to make sure your child is safe.

YOUR WIDER FAMILY

Our concerns about your child are very serious. If we do have to go to Court and the Court decides you cannot care for your child/ren, we will first try to place them with one of your relatives, if it is best for your child/ren to do this. At the meeting, we will want to talk to you and your Solicitor about who might look after your child if the Court decides that it is no longer safe for you to do so.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting with your Solicitor on DATE*.* If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your Social Worker on *01722 438165.*

Yours sincerely

Cc Social Worker

LA in-house Legal Team:

Enc Map of office

List of Law Society Children Panel Solicitors

List of things we are worried about

Family Group Conference leaflet

**PLEASE SHOW / TAKE THIS TO A SOLICITOR**

**HERE ARE THE MAIN THINGS THAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Concerns |  |
| History of Social Care Involvement  Accommodation |  |
| Mental Health |  |
| Drug Use |  |

**WHAT CHILDREN’S SERVICES HAVE DONE TO TRY TO HELP**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Who?* | *What help has been given?* | *When?* |

**THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO AVOID US GOING TO COURT**

**Pre-proceedings Plan:**

*Example:*

1. *Agree to a Family Group Conference (FGC) referral (following this viability assessments of your friends/family will be completed as identified at the FGC).*
2. *Agree to participate in a parenting assessment.*
3. *Agree to participate in a psychological/psychiatric assessment.*
4. *Agree to participate in hair strand testing to assess your alcohol/drug use.*
5. *Agree for your child(ren) to be accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989 and to give 14 days’ notice if you wish to withdraw your consent.*
6. *Agree to comply with the Child Protection Plan already in place and any actions listed within this.*
7. *Agree to DNA testing to determine paternity.*

Signed:

Print name……………………………………………………………………………

Signature……………………………………………………………………………..

Print name……………………………………………………………………………

Signature……………………………………………………………………………..