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Date: 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Angela

## **Bradford Council Children's Services concerns about Josh and Mia - Letter before proceedings**

### **How to avoid going to Court**

I am writing to you on behalf of Bradford Council.

As you know your family's social worker Sally is very concerned about your care of Josh and Mia. Things have not improved enough and the situation for your children has become so serious that we may need to apply to court.

There are things that you can do to stop this from happening and we are writing to you now to give you a last chance to make the changes needed to make sure Josh and Mia are safe. Otherwise we will go to Court to ask for them to be removed from your care, if the Court decides that is best for them.

We have set out in this letter the concerns we have about Josh and Mia and the things that have been done to try to help your family.

Also in this letter we will tell you what you need to do so that we will not go to Court.

## Here are our main concerns:

What we are concerned about	Examples of when this happened	Date of when it happened
That you continue to drink alcohol on a regular basis and it is causing you to behave in a way which is frightening and harmful to Josh and Mia. This has included arguments and fights with your partner and neighbours which they have seen.	Josh and Mia were placed under police protection because you were drunk and assaulted your neighbour. It is reported that you were screaming and shouting and you were unable to care for and supervise Josh and Mia safely. The Police tell us that you stopped your neighbour from trying to keep the children safe.	14.7.2020
	There have been a total of 9 Police reports of arguments between you and your partner Tony when you have been under the influence of alcohol. These have all taken place in front of Josh and Mia and will have made them feel upset and scared. Josh and Mia could also have been physically hurt on these occasions.	23.7.2019 – 22.6.2020
	Mr Baxter at St Jospeh's school has reported that Josh was very upset and tearful after the most recent argument between you and Tony and is struggling to concentrate on his learning when in class.	23.6.2020
	Josh has also spoken to his teaching assistant at school and said that he is scared of Tony when he shouts and swears.	28.5.2020
You are often unable to meet all of the basic care needs of the Josh and Mia due to your alcohol use and your depression. I am worried that Josh and Mia's learning and behaviour is being affected because they are missing too much school and when they do attend	Historically the children's school attendance has been poor, and this hasn't improved. At the last Core Group meeting Mr Baxter reported that Josh has only attended 40% of the time this year and his learning is now behind most of the other children in the class.	19.7.2020
	The School Nurse reported at the Core Group meeting on 19.7.2020 that Mia has now missed her last 6 sessions with	5.1.2020 2.2.2020 23.3.2020

they are often tired and not able to learn properly. You are also neglecting Mia's health due to missing lots of important health appointments to help with speech and language	the speech therapist.	16.4.2020 19.5.2020 17.6.2020
	Mr Baxter has spoken how St Joseph's school are worried that Mia is getting increasingly frustrated and angry due to her not being able to speak properly. There have been three recent examples since March 2020 involving Mia lashing out and hitting or biting other children which has meant she has had to be taken out of class.	23.3.2020 12.5.2020 27.6.2020

## This is what Children's Services have done to try to help your family

Who has helped	What help has been given	Dates of when we provided it
Sally Johnson – Social worker	Sally has visited you every 2 weeks since she became involved to offer you practical and emotional support to try and help you to stop drinking and improve your parenting of Josh and Mia.	19.7.2019 - Present
	Sally has identified and made referrals to a number of services who have tried to work with you to reduce your alcohol use and keep yourself safe when Tony has been violent to you.	
	These have included; Domestic Violence Services	23.8.2019
	Alcohol Services	3.9.2019
	Intensive Family Support Team	18.8.2019
	Sally has completed direct work with both Josh and Mia to try and understand what their feelings and thought are about things at home when she has seen them every two weeks.	
	Sally has recently made a referral for both children to go to Hope Project which offers support to children who experience domestic abuse in their home lives. This work will start on 18 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.	4.4.2020

Imran Khan – Intensive Family Support Team	Imran has tried to complete visits to you twice a week to help you to improve your home conditions and provide better routines, boundaries and more consistent parenting responses to Mia and Josh. Imran has tried to help you to get Mia and Josh to school more regularly.	22.2.2020 - Present
Gemma Jones – Change Grow Live	Gemma has offered you weekly appointments to try and help you to reduce your alcohol use. This has involved counselling and offering strategies to help you.	Since 11.10.2019
Health Visitor – Debra Green	The Health Visitor has worked with you and Josh and Mia’s social worker to help you attend Mia’s speech therapy sessions. You have been given a reminder phone call and message the day before each appointment to help you get there. Debra has also provided you with hints and tips to try at home with Mia to help her encourage her speech.	19.7.2019 - Present
Nazia Ahmed – Domestic Violence Services	Nazia has worked alongside you and your children’s social worker to help you to understand the impact of your behaviour and fights with Tony on your children. Nazia has provided you with regular support over the phone and through direct appointments where she has tried to complete the Freedom Programme with you to help you to make better choices for your children to keep both you and them safe.	11.12.2019 - Present

### **What you must do so that we will not go to Court:**

#### **Please come to a meeting with us to talk about these concerns**

This meeting will be on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August at 2pm at Sir Henry Mitchell House. The address of the meeting is 4 Manchester Road, Bradford, BD5 0QL. There is a map with this letter to help you find it.

**At the meeting we will:**

- Discuss with you what the local authority believes you will need to do to make Josh and Mia safe.
- Discuss with you how we will support you to keep Josh and Mia safe;
- Discuss with you what you believe you need to do to make Josh and Mia safe;
- Discuss with you who in your family could look after Josh and Mia if you are not able to; and
- Explain what steps we will take if we continue to be worried Josh and Mia

**The local authority is proposing:**

1. To provide you with a written assessment plan at the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The plan will tell you how you need to work with us and other services whilst we complete an assessment. The assessment will help us to make a decision about whether you can keep Josh and Mia safe and if we will apply to court. We are aiming to complete the assessment by 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.
2. Angela you are to ensure that the children are protected from any further fighting and arguing which will help them to feel safer. We would also expect you to report any further incidents of domestic abuse from Tony, including physical violence and verbal abuse to Police and Children's Social Care to demonstrate your ability to protect Josh and Mia and keep them safe from witnessing these frightening incidents.
3. Tony is not to visit or live in the family household or have any contact with Josh and Mia until the completion of a risk assessment which will be concluded by 28.9.2020. This will require Tony to attend 4 assessment sessions which will take place with the allocated social worker between 27.8.2019 and 24.9.2019.
4. You will attend the Freedom Programme which begins on 11.8.2020 and attend all sessions on a weekly basis. This will help you to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and understand the impact of domestic abuse on your, Josh and Mia's safety and emotional wellbeing and to develop strategies to keep yourself and your children safe.
5. You will work with CGL towards reducing your alcohol use and towards abstinence to help improve your availability to Josh and Mia and to help you provide them with a safe home to live in. It is expected that you will begin attending weekly sessions by 8.6.2020. Your commitment to this work will help you demonstrating your commitment to improving your life for your children's safety and welfare.
6. You will agree to a hair strand drug test which will be undertaken by 20.8.2020. This test will enable us to check the level of your alcohol use and whether you have been using other drugs. This will help us to understand what other support you may need in order to improve the lives of Mia and Josh.

7. We expect you not to use alcohol when caring for your children to show that you are willing to meet their needs for a safe home environment. In the event that you do start to drink alcohol you must make alternative arrangements for one of your family members to care for your children who have been approved by the children's social worker. This includes your mother Annette, Sister Becky and friend Amy Johnson.
8. Joshua and Mia will attend school every day to help improve their school attendance and learning unless illness prevents them from doing so. In the event that any of the children are too unwell to attend school then you must report the absence to the school office before the beginning of the school day they are missing.
9. You will take Mia to all of her speech and language sessions to give her the best opportunity to develop her speech and communicate better with her friends and adults around her. This will help her to feel less angry and more able to tell people about what she needs. The first available appointment is on 11.09.2020.
10. We intend to complete viability assessments of any family or friends that are identified as possible alternative carers for Mia and Josh should they be required by 30.9.2020.

Please contact Josh and Mia's Social Worker, Sally Johnson on 01274 434356 to tell us if you will come to the meeting.

### **Get a Solicitor**

It is really important that you get advice from a Solicitor who specialises in family law as soon as possible.

They will help you to understand the situation and advise you about your rights and your options.

You will also have a right to bring your Solicitor with you to the meeting. If you give them this letter you will not have to pay.

If you don't already have a Solicitor, with this letter we have provided a list of local Solicitors who work with Children and Families. They are separate from Bradford Children's Services.

You do not have to bring a Solicitor to the meeting, but it will be very helpful if you do.

**Information your solicitor will need is:**

Local Authority Legal Contact: Jayne McConnell; Tel: 01274 433454

### **Get your wider family involved**

Our concerns about Josh and Mia are very serious.

If we do have to go to Court and the Court decides you cannot care for Josh and Mia we will first try to place them with one of your relatives or someone close to them if it is in their best interests.

At the meeting we will discuss with you and your Solicitor which family members we will contact to complete viability assessments. This is in case the Court decides it is no longer safe for you to care for [name(s) of child(ren)].

### **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 Josh and Mia are safe.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting and with your Solicitor on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020

If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your child's social worker Sally Johnson on 01274 434344

Please tell Sally if you need any help with child care or transport arrangements so that you can come to the meeting, and we will try to help.

Yours sincerely

Evelyn Grayson  
Team Manager

Copies of the letter have been sent to:

- Sally Johnson and the Local Authority In-house Legal Team

Enclosed with this letter are:

- A map and directions to where the meeting will take place

- A list of Solicitors who are members of the Law Society's Children Law Accreditation Scheme
- Parents Pack