**Terms of Reference: Legal Gateway Panel**

**Purpose / role of the group**

**The Legal Gateway Panel (LGP) has the decision making function in relation to consideration of threshold to initiate Public Law Outline through pre-proceedings or care proceedings. This includes:**

* **Decision to enter into pre-proceedings and review at 9 weeks**
* **Decision to end pre-proceedings whether this is through issuing care proceedings or a step-down plan**
* **An application for a public law order in relation to a child / children**
* **Decision to make an application to extend a Supervision Order or for the Supervision Order to lapse**
* **All discharge of care orders and revocation of placement orders**
* **All Section 20 placements at 10 weeks**
* **Consideration to be given for any child subject to police protection to have an extraordinary Legal Planning meeting**

Exceptions to the above may include the urgent request of legal advice in cases which may result in an application for an Emergency Protection Order or Short notice Interim Care Order. In these circumstances the case will need to be presented to panel retrospectively.

**Aims and responsibilities**

* To ensure every attempt has been made to support, advise and protect children as part of social work practice before consideration is given to the move towards legal intervention in a child and families lives
* To offer challenge and scrutiny in relation to requests to invoke PLO for children
* Where the panel makes a decision NOT to move towards legal intervention, the panel will be clear about the rational and expectations of the social work intervention including any subsequent actions
* To ensure oversight of the practice leading to the issuing of public law proceedings and that this is in line with the requirements of the Public Law Outline (2013, as updated)
* To ensure the application of consistent practice and threshold in decisions to initiate pre-proceedings or care proceedings stages of PLO
* To ensure that improving outcomes for children remains at the centre of any decisions in relation to PLO and all alternatives have been considered
* To ensure clear planning within pre-proceedings with an outcome focus for children
* To review and approve the decision that children currently subject to the pre proceedings PLO process should be brought to an end and if so, what the next steps should be
* The Chair is able to make financial decisions for specialist assessments, hair-strand testing etc. to be commissioned
* Gather appropriate information to inform sufficiency planning
* Outcomes are as positive as they can be for children

**Membership**

* Head of Service – Chair (or nominated Officer)
* Legal representative
* Service Manager - SAFS
* Representative from specialist services
* Representative from ARC
* Family Group Co-ordinator
* Fostering Manager

**Review**

A review of the relevance and value of the terms of reference is to be undertaken annually.

**Working Methods**

* The meeting will be held every week, normally on a Thursday afternoon between 1.00 and 4.30pm
* Referrals to panel must be made by 4pm on Monday
* The referral will be made on legal gateway form to the LGP panel via email
* Minutes will be recorded by the panel administrator who will add the actions and decisions to child / young person’s case file
* The panel administrator will circulate the minutes to the Team Manager and Social Worker to complete their actions and ensure the case file is kept updated
* Social Worker to submit their SWET form 3 full working days in advance of the panel meeting**.**
* SWET to be provided ( informed by an assessment dated within the last 12 months)
* Team Manager and Social Worker must prioritise attendance at the meeting to give a verbal update or arrange for a colleague to attend on their behalf
* Team Managers and Social Workers will be allocated a specific time slot to attend panel
  + The administrator will confirm with the social worker and / or team manager the time to attend in case of any changes prior to the panel meeting
  + It is important you are on time for the meeting and if the panel is running ahead of time the administrator will come find you / call for your earlier attendance
  + If there is an urgent request after panel cut-off, please refer to HOS who will advise whether the case needs to be referred to panel for consideration
* Late applications will only be heard by Panel in exceptional circumstances
* If an emergency LGM is required outside of panel this must be discussed with the relevant Head of Service and agreed, and retrospectively brought to the next panel

**Case Presentation Guidance for Social Workers and Team Managers**

The social worker and team manager are required to ensure the relevant referral form is produced which will have been automatically created by using data contained in PARIS.

The Social Worker, accompanied by the Team Manager, will present the case to the panel

The social worker must complete a draft SWET which should incorporate all relevant detail which will be presented to court. All other documentation is updated on the PARIS system (chronology, genogram, assessment no older than 12 months) and available in advance of the panel. No other documentation needs to be made available but it is expected this will be available if required on the PARIS system

The panel chair has delegated authority to determine the appropriate expert reports required as part of any PLO process and authorise the required expenditure, the panel chair will ensure this information is fed into the Access to Resources panel. The only exception is if a residential setting is required which needs to be approved by iPOP.

**All information and reports are confidential and only for the purpose of the panel, unless individuals are tasked with actions.**