

What to expect: PLO (Public Law Outline) / Pre-proceedings



The PLO process is used when Children and Family Services believe that the risk to a child or children is so great that it might be necessary to ask the court to decide where a child or children will live and who they should live with.

Unless there is an emergency, Children and Family Services have to show the court what work they have done to support you and your family to resolve their concerns before going to court. [Re: B-S (Children) [2013] EWCA Civ 1146]

If you are a parent or you have parental responsibility you will receive a **Pre-proceedings letter** inviting you to a **pre-proceedings meeting**. This letter will tell you;

- When and where the pre-proceedings meeting will be.
- What Children and Family Services are worried about.
- What you must do to show that your child or children are safe.
- What Children and Family Services will do to help you to carry out these actions.

The letter will also tell you

- How to get free Legal Advice.
- Which solicitors can help you.

It is very important that you go to the Pre-Proceedings meeting and that you read the pre-proceedings letter carefully so that you understand what is happening and why.

You must seek the free legal advice you are entitled to immediately. This is the last chance you will have to show Children and Family Services that you can keep your child or children safe. A solicitor will help you to do this.

At the pre-proceedings meeting families are given a final chance to show that they are willing to address the concerns which Children and Family Services have about the safety of their child or children.

People who will be at the pre-proceedings meeting.

- Those with Parental Responsibility and Carers.
- The allocated Social Worker and the Manager who is over-seeing the case.
- The families' Lawyer or Lawyers.
- The Local Authority's Lawyer.

Paperwork which Children and Family Services will bring to the meeting.

- An up-to-date chronology.
- Assessment documents
- Other relevant documents, for example, Child Protection Reports.

At the meeting everyone will agree:

A final plan showing what has to be done to keep a child or children safe, when these changes need to be made and who will check how well children are being cared for

If Children and Family Services still do not believe that your child or children are safe, the next step will be to ask the court to make a ruling on who your child or children should live with and where they should live.

Once a decision has been made by the court, only the court can change this.

Children and Family Services want you to understand how we can best work together to put the needs of your child or children first.

