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| In the family court sitting at |
| In the matter of the Children Act 1989 |



 **Initial social work evidence template (SWET)**

This document is intended to summarise **not** duplicate other documentation contained within the court bundle and should be succinct, approx. 20 pages in length (excluding appendices), with clear links or references to other sources of more detailed information e.g. an expert report or parenting assessment.

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| **Local Authority and Social Worker details** |
| Court case number |  |
| Filed by [local authority] |  |
| Social work statement number in the proceedings, e.g. 1st, 2nd (**N.B**. A final statement should be completed on the Final Statement Template) |  |
| Social work statement number of this witness e.g. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and date of statement |  |
| This author/witness’s name, qualifications and office address |  |
| This author/witness’s Social Work England registration number |  |
| I have been the allocated social worker for [insert name(s)] since [date(s)] |  |

**The facts in this application are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and the opinions set out are my own.**

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Signed:

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Date of completion or

most recent update:

**Please ensure that you update the page numbers on the table by clicking on the table followed by the “update” tab, selecting “update page numbers only” once the report is completed.**

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**Please ensure that ALL the guidance notes are deleted from the template prior to the statement being submitted to the Legal Department for filing with the court.**

## **1. Overview of which court order or order/s are being sought**

***Guidance:***

* *State the order being sought from the courts and why the local authority believes action is required now. Set out very briefly what the proposed care plan is. If the LA seeks immediate separation then say this and your evidence in this section (can be bullett points) needs to clearly set out why immediate separation is required.*
* *This is an overview of the significant harm and an opportunity to summarise the succinct summary of reasons.*
* *There is no need to repeat in detail anything covered in subsequent sections of the SWET or other documents contained within the court bundle (cross reference to dates in the chronology or any page numbers from assessments which support the evidence you are placing before the court.*
* *It might be helpful to think about: past harm, future danger and complicating factors here.*
* *This should ideally be no longer than 1 page (2 maximum).*

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## **2. Family network composition**

### **2.1 The child/ren – use one template per family**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name(s)**  | **Gender** | **Date of Birth** | **Child’s current placement status** | **Child’s current legal status (if any)** |
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### **2.2 Child/ren’s family network**

***Guidance:*** *This section should include family members and any other people the child/ren have significant relationships with, such as close family friends. Who is important to them? Please specify the individual’s relationship in respect of each child subject to the application. Please set out these individual’s full names, their dates of birth, their nationality, ethnicity and their current addresses unless this needs to be kept confidential for safety reasons. In such situations, send this information directly to the court as well as Cafcass,* ***do not*** *record it here (via Legal Services).*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Relationship** | **Parental Responsibility** | **DOB** | **Nationality** | **Ethnicity** | **Address (where safe to disclose)** |
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### **2.3 Has anyone listed, above, been identified as an alternative carer(s) for the child/ren?**

***Guidance:*** *Alongside the name, it is helpful to include a brief note about how and when they were identified e.g. put forward by a parent, via a family group conference (or similar), or identified by the social worker. Detail any potential alternative carers who have been ruled out in section 5.*

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## **3. Child impact analysis (complete for each individual child)**

 **3.1 Description of the child’s day to day experiences during the period under consideration.
*Guidance:*** *Think about what has it been like for them, what it is like for them now and why a court order is now being sought? What is their daily lived experience? You may find it easier to describe some aspects of the daily lived experience for all the children (if a sibling group) as many aspects of harm may be the same; however if you can still individualise this for each child/ or highlight the experience of a particular child (so use sub headings for each child). For instance the daily lived experience for the children as individuals may be different for each child because of a number of factors; by way of example: a child having a disability; the age of the children in the family; a child being scapegoated by a parent/s; or a child having a caring role for siblings.*

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**3.2 The child’s needs. An analysis of the harm they face. Risk and protective factors.
*Guidance:***

* *The social worker’s analysis of the harm the child (or each child) has suffered or is likely to suffer, and why they are at a high level of risk, should touch on the event/s that led to the application. This information should be balanced, and protective factors should be identified here too. The welfare checklist should be applied as appropriate throughout (see section 11).*
* *It may be helpful to specifically consider the interim position, harm and any changes proposed.*
* *Set out the steps taken to meet the child’s identified needs e.g. the services and support that have been and/or are being provided as well as the outcomes (or intended outcomes).*
* *The aim here is to provide an understanding of the impact of what has happened on the child (or each individual child within a sibling group).*
* *It is important to note that the same event can affect children within the same family differently, so this differential impact should be drawn out in the analysis, as well as the factors supporting a child’s resilience in the face of what has happened.*
* *The evidence used here can be primary – the direct experience of the social worker – or secondary – the social worker’s evaluation of evidence from assessments or the views of other people who know the child/ren or who have assessed their needs; or from the children themselves.*

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**3.3 The child/ren’s wishes and feelings and how these have been identified (please include the child/ren’s own statement, where age appropriate).**

 ***Guidance:*** *It is important that how, when and in what circumstances the child/ren’s views were expressed is documented here. For the very young, and those with additional needs or disabilities which may limit verbal communication, the use of creative approaches and direct observation by social workers is crucial. This space may be used to summarise the direct work that has been completed with the child and the outcome of this, who they enjoy spending time with, plus their view of the proposed care plan and their understanding of proceedings (where applicable).*

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### **3.4 The child/ren’s participation in the court case.**

***Guidance:*** *Child/ren should be as fully involved in proceedings as their needs dictate.* *Set out the appropriate level of involvement for each child in line with their best interests, with clear reasoning.*

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## **4. Analysis of the evidence of parenting capability**

### **4.1 Summary of work previously undertaken with child/ren and the family that has led to these proceedings e.g. pre-proceedings or convening a family group conference (or similar).**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Organisation** | **Description of assessment/intervention** | **Outcome and effectiveness** |
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**Guidance:** For the child’s mother, father and anyone else with parental responsibility, please consider:

* *Analysis of the capabilities of each parent to meet the child/ren’s needs, including relevant risk and protective factors and an analysis of the evidence of any capability gap (why is an order being sought now?) and if/how this can be bridged in the child/ren’s timescale.*
* *Include details of support or interventions (either past or present) from any professional agency involved with individual members of the family or the family as a whole, as applicable, detailing learning, changes, progress and the gaps that remain.*
* *If a parenting assessment is required, is in progress or has been completed, please include this information here (a summary / cross referencing to any assessments).*
* *Indicate whether there is an international dimension and whether the relevant consulate has been notified.*
* *Be clear that if a parent has a learning difficulty how this impacts on their understanding of concerns; on their capacity to meet the needs of their child/ren; how this has informed how they have been assessed (PAMS / PAMS tools/ or use of the Good Practice Guidance -2016).*
* *Think carefully about the impact on parenting from environmental factors and think about the complicating factors (what makes parenting more difficult).*
* You may want to specifically consider the parenting of both parents as a couple (in addition to their individual parenting capacity).
* Ensure that you analyse or set out your observations in terms of capacity and motivation.
* You may need to set out the capability of more than one father at this stage so ensure that subheadings are used to set out which father you are referring to.
* *Please also use this space to record details of attempts to seek out absent parents.*

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| **Mother**  |
|  |
| **Father** |
|  |
| **Both parents together** |
|  |
| **Other members of the household and/or person(s) with parental responsibility** |
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## **5. Analysis of the evidence of wider family and friends’ capability as alternative carers for the child/ren**

***Guidance:*** *Demonstrate what is known about the capabilities of wider family members and/or friends to meet child/ren’s needs as alternative carers, including an analysis of skills or resource gaps and if/how they can be bridged in the child/ren’s timescale. Key considerations for a viability assessment:*

* *Unsuitable family network members should be excluded via a comprehensive filtering process.*
* *In considering the viability of someone to become a child/ren’s permanent carer, three additional tests should be met in line with the current Regulations that apply to proposed placements. They are:*
1. *That the carer understands in broad terms the needs of the child/ren*
2. *That they understand the level and type of care the child/ren will need throughout their childhood because of their earlier experiences*
3. *That the carer has expressed an authentic willingness to be part of the team around the child/ren until matters are fully resolved.*
* *With reference to (a), it would be helpful to share an overview of what information has been shared with potential carer(s) to enable their understanding of the issues.*
* *The genogram in section 12 should be colour coded as far as possible at this initial stage of proceedings.*
* *Set out the reasons as to why any family members / kinship will not be assessed (as per the colour coded genogram).*

*It may also be helpful to reference the status or outcome of viability assessments – if they have not yet started, include details of when such assessments will happen or note whether they are currently in progress.*

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## **6. The proposed S31A interim care plan – the ‘realistic placement options’ analysis**

### **6.1 Options considered for the placement. Please have regard to the following:**

**Realistic options**

1. *To be defined as realistic, the proposed placement must be assessed as sufficiently resilient and sustainable.*
2. *In care proceedings, no arbitrary limit can be placed on the number of realistic options available for the child/ren, but one option must always be preferred. A clear reason (or reasons) must always be given for this preferred status in the body of this document.*
3. *Preferred status means that on the assessments and evidence available, the preferred placement should offer the child/ren the prospect of recovering from any trauma they have experienced: personal growth and development within a family where they are guaranteed unconditional love; strong educational prospects; good health outcomes; and – as far as can be predicted – one or more positive lifelong attachment/s which promote their unique identity.*
4. *Determining the rank order between realistic options is a matter of professional judgement about the relative importance to the child/ren of various attributes of the carers and/or the relationship between the carers and the child, or the carers, child and birth parent/s. Ideally placements should be listed in order of preference / strength.*

***Guidance:*** *If there is a different placement proposed at this time for different children as part of a sibling group then set out within the balance sheet analysis why this is; if it has been informed by a Sibling Assessment (Beyond Together or Apart); potential impact of separation of the siblings; how this impact might be reduced. Always ensure that you set out the Local Authority's preferred placement option/s but also ensure that you are able to consider, value, and balance those options that others may put forward to the court and why these have been discounted (add further tables as needed for each unrealistic option). Please note you should set out each placement option (just add more tables as needed).*

The proposed realistic placement option of the Local Authority is:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Realistic Placement Option – factors in favour** | **Realistic Placement Option – factors against** |
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| **Unrealistic Placement options - factors in favour (why the court or other parties may wish it to be considered)** | **Unrealistic Placement Option – factors against (why the Local Authority has discounted this option)** |
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### **6.2 Summary of diversity and cultural considerations**

**Guidance:** *Please have regard to* [***protected characterisitcs***](https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights) *including gender, religon or belief, race, disability, and how the child/ren’s cultural identity and beliefs will be met.*

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### **6.3 Summary of any health, wellbeing and educational considerations**

**Guidance:** *It may be helpful to very briefly say how schooling arrangements have been considered as part of the care planning process and whether the child or one of the children has any regular medical appointments or on-going health needs that have been factored into this decision. Consideration should also be given to ensuring the child’s interests and activities are supported.*

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## **7. Family time plan**

***Guidance:*** *The family time plan should involve siblings and anyone else with whom the child/ren has a significant relationship, in line with the genogram and ecomap. It must be kept under review as circumstances change.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Child/ young person** | **Who family time is with and relationship of that person to the child/ young person** | **Frequency and duration** | **Level of support/ supervision required and location if known** | **Brief rationale for the level / type of family time proposed** |
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## **8. The range of views of parties and significant others**

***Guidance:*** *This section has a vital opinion-sharing purpose:*

* *Set out and analyse the individual’s views about what should happen for the child/ren now and in the future.*
* *Facts should be confined to those relied upon in evidence.*
* *Where possible, an indication of whether the facts are accepted or contested should be given here.*
* *Please remember to include the views of all fathers if there are multiple fathers/ putative father.*

### **8.1 Mother’s views**

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### **8.2 Father’s views**

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### **8.3 Views of anyone else holding parental responsibility or wider family members**

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### **8.4 Views of other parties or significant others**

***Guidance:***

* *Significant others may include**the**Cafcass guardian, CP chair, a health visitor, the IRO or court appointed experts.*
* *Where possible a short statement from the IRO/ Conference Chair (if there is one) should be included here.*
* *Please be sure to include the full name and job title of anyone providing a statement for inclusion here as well as the date on which they provided it.*

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## **9. Case management issues and proposals**

### **9.1 Record case management issues here alongside details of any further proposed assessments**

***Guidance:*** *Use this space to list any factors that may lead to delay, including any special factors or the vulnerabilities of key participants plus any further proposed assessments including why they are necessary. For example, this may include the assessment of family members in other countries, a parent having bail conditions, or the requirement for an interpreter or an advocate etc.*

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### **9.2 Significant events happening in the near future which are relevant for the child**

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| **Date** | **Event e.g. transitioning from primary to secondary school** | **Source of evidence/document reference** | **Significance** |
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## **10. Statement of procedural fairness**

***Guidance:*** *Confirm here that the local authority’s concerns and the contents of this statement have been communicated to the child/ren, mother, father, and significant others, and state how this has been communicated. Have these concerns been clearly understood? If not, please be explicit about attempts to engage parties and any help that has been provided to them to participate in the process. This may include access to legal advice and representation, translators, advocates etc. Please also include if there has already been a Pre-Proceedings process; the timescale of this and the legal representation for the parent/s within this process.*

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**[All guidance text to be deleted before submitting to court.**

**Please update the table of contents.]**

## **11.** **The welfare checklist in full for reference**

The full Children Act checklist, to be used in care and supervision proceedings is found at section 1(3) (a) – (g) and requires the court to have regard to the following matters:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a) | The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child/children concerned (considered in the light of their age and understanding); |
| b) | Their physical, emotional and educational needs; |
| c) | The likely effect on them of any change in his/her/their circumstances; |
| d) | Their age, sex, background and any characteristics of his/hers/theirs which the court considers relevant; |
| e) | Any harm which they have suffered or are at risk of suffering; |
| f) | How capable each of their parents, and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant, is of meeting his/her/their needs; |
| g) | The range of powers available to the court under this Act (Children Act 1989) in the proceedings in question. |

25. The full Adoption and Children Act welfare checklist, to be used in care proceedings where the plan is for adoption and in placement proceedings, is found in section 1 (4) (a) – (f) and requires the court and the adoption agency to have regard to the following matters (among others):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a) | the child’s ascertainable wishes and feelings regarding the decision (considered in the light of the child’s age and understanding); |
| b) | the child’s particular needs; |
| c) | the likely effect on the child (throughout theirlife) of having ceased to be a member of the original family and become an adopted person; |
| d) | the child’s age, sex, background and any of the child’s characteristics which the court or agency considers relevant; |
| e) | any harm (within the meaning of the Children Act 1989 (c. 41)) which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering; |
| f) | the relationship which the child has with relatives, and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant, including:1. the likelihood of any such relationship continuing and the value of the child of its doing so,
2. the ability and willingness of any of the child’s relatives, or of any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child’s needs,
3. the wishes and feelings of any of the child’s relatives, or of any such person, regarding the child.
 |

**Appendix**

### **12.** **The social work chronology**

### **If there has been involvement with the family over a longer period, please summarise this involvement here (historic context).**

***Guidance:*** *Summarise historic incidents and events of relevance e.g. any previous proceedings; any patterns of involvement (you can set time periods); any evidence of support and intervention having been repeated over and over; previous children removed from the care of a parent or parents.*

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## **12.1 The Social Work chronology (last two years)**

***Guidance:***

* *List significant events which can be evidenced. It may be helpful to include details of the nature of assessments carried out, family engagement, interventions and their successes. Please note there is no need to include detailed supervision notes here.*
* *Focus on the* ***last two years*** *unless prior events are felt to be both significant and relevant, then provide a summary drawing out key incidents or events in the box, below.*
* *Please ensure that the chronology is factual and not opinion.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DATE | SOURCE/ EVENT/ DETAIL | IMPACT | Support offered by Social Care/  |
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**[All guidance text to be deleted before submitting to the court]**

### **12.2 Genogram (mandatory)**

Include family members and their relationship to each child – please ensure where possible that the genogram is colour coded.

### **12.3 Ecomap (risky and protective contacts) (optional)**

This document is confidential and contains sensitive information. It should not be disclosed without permission of the court. Data protection standards must always be complied with.

**Accompanying guidance for completing the SWET can be found here:** <https://adcs.org.uk/care/article/SWET>