Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Tel:

SENT BY *[RECORDED DELIVERY/BY HAND]*

|  |
| --- |
| **IMPORTANT- PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER** |

Dear *[parent and/or full name(s) of all people with parental responsibility]*

***[Insert name(s)of child(ren)]*- letter before proceedings**

*[insert name of social worker]* has been very concerned about your care of *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* for some time. Things have not improved enough, and we are so worried we may need to go to Court to ask for your child*(ren)* to be removed from your care.

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 the children are safe.

We are worried because*[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* have; -

*below are some simply worded examples of our worries that you can use, or you can describe our concerns yourself*

* Been frightened when they have witnessed domestic abuse.
* Been in your care when you have been drunk or under the influence of substances.
* Been missing meals and have not been bathed or showered regularly.
* Received bruises and marks when you have told them off or attempted to discipline them.
* Been left in the care of an adult who presents a risk of sexual harm to children.

We are writing to you now to give you a last chance to make the changes to make sure *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* is/are safe, otherwise we will apply to Court to ask for them to be removed from your care. It will then be for the Court to decide what is best for them.

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

Come to a meeting on ***[insert date and time]*** at the *[insert name of office]* to talk about these concerns. The address is *[insert address]* and there is a map with this letter to help you find it.

At the meeting we will talk to you about how we *[are going to help you/will continue to help you]* We will also let you know what we think you need to do to make your *[child/ren]* safer, who in your family could look after your child(ren) if you are not able to and what will happen next if we continue to be worried about *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]*

The Trust is proposing to give you a written assessment plan and agreement. This will tell you how you need to work with us and other services while we complete an assessment. The assessment will help us to make a decision about whether you can keep *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* safe and if we will apply to Court. We will aim to complete this assessment by *[insert date]*

We are proposing to include the following in the agreement:

*List expectations, e.g.*

* *When the assessment will be completed by*
* *What parents need to do to keep children safe during the assessment (eg reporting incidents of domestic abuse, having hair strand drug tests, not using alcohol when caring for children, making sure they attend school every day, making sure they have clean clothing*
* *Date for completion of any viability assessments of family members*

**Get a Solicitor**

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

You have the right to bring your solicitor with you to the meeting, if you give them this letter you will not have to pay. 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.

The Trust’s legal contact is *[insert name]* and their contact details are *[insert address and telephone number].* Your solicitor will need this information.   
   
If you do not have a solicitor you can find one through the Law Society Website find a solicitor service. We have also included a list of solicitor’s firms who are members of the Law Society’s Children Law Accreditation Scheme with this letter.

**Get your wider family involved**

Our concerns about *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* are very serious.

If we do have to go to Court and the Court decides you cannot care for *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* we will always look to for them to live with one of your relatives or a close friend if this is safe for them.

At the meeting we will discuss with you and your solicitors which family members you would propose could care for the children if the Court decides it isn’t safe for them to stay in your care.

If you have relatives who could care but you don’t want us to speak to them we will consider this but may decide that it is in the children’s best interests to have a discussion with them, but we will always take your views into account.

**If you need support to attend the meeting**

I know this will be a difficult letter to read and I know that this meeting will feel frightening. I really would like to see you there and will support you to attend however I can. If you need some help with childcare, or transport to the meeting, do let your social worker know and we will try to help.

**Please do not ignore this letter**

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 *[insert names(s) of child(ren)]* are safe. Please contact your child’s social worker *[insert name]* on *[insert telephone number]* to tell us if you will come to the meeting.

If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your child’s social worker on *[insert telephone number]*.

Yours faithfully

*[insert name]*

Team Manager

*[insert Local office/service]*

cc Social Worker *[insert name]*

Children’s Trust Legal Team*[insert name]*

Enc Map of office

List of solicitors’ firms who are members of the Law Society’s Children Law Accreditation Scheme