**VERSION 5**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE - LEGAL PLANNING MEETING (LPM)**

Legal Planning Meetings are one of the Local Authority’s internal decision-making forums. Consistent, timely and balanced decisions should be made on all cases. The Chair’s role is to consider all the information and advice available and decide the most effective course of action to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child(ren). The decision, reasoning and legal advice will be minuted.

**Cases should be presented to a Legal Planning Meeting to obtain legal advice on threshold. If threshold is met, the following can be made :-**

1. **Decision to enter into pre-proceedings**
2. **Decision to apply to discharge a care order**
3. **Decision to revoke a placement order**

Exceptions to the above may include the request for urgent legal advice (not in a formal Legal Planning Meeting) in cases where a child has been subject to police protection or in circumstances which may result in an application for an Emergency Protection Order or Short notice Interim Care Order.

**Legal Planning Meeting Attendees:-**

* Service Manager (Chair)\*
* Presenting Social Worker\*
* Presenting Team Manager
* Legal Advisor\*
* Case Progression Officer

\*Quorate member

**Working Methods**

* The meetings will be held weekly, normally on a Wednesday morning immediately following Legal Gateway
* The legal advisor will circulate the legal advice within 2 days of the LPM taking place

**Aims and responsibilities**

* To obtain legal advice on threshold and based on that advice, for a decision to be made on the next steps to take.
* 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.
* Information should be available from the Social Work team regarding all interventions which have been utilised and which are planned eg Edge of Care/Early Help/ Family Group Conference/CP Plan
* To offer challenge and scrutiny in relation to requests to invoke PLO for children
* Where a decision is made NOT to move towards legal intervention, the Chair 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
* To ensure the application of consistent practice and threshold in decisions to initiate pre-proceedings
* 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
* 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

**Working Practice.**

LPM referral forms & accompanying documents will be sent to LPM inbox by 12 noon on a Friday, otherwise the meeting will be postponed. Documentation to accompany referral:-

* Birth certificate (to be sent to legal within 3 weeks of any decision to enter the Public Law Outline if not immediately available)
* Any relevant child and family/parenting/pre-birth/family time assessments completed within the past three months
* ecomap
* Genogram (three generational)
* Impact Chronology
* The most recent child protection/child in need or care plan
* The most recent child protection conference minutes
* S.37

**Review**

A review of the relevance and value of the terms of reference is to be undertaken annually, with the initial review to take place on 14th August 2023.

2 April 2023

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