

Guidance - How Child Protection Plans and Public Law Outline work together

Policy Owner: Quality Assurance Service Manager – Safeguarding

Version number	Date updated	Updated by	Review date
Version number 1	November 2021	Jane Sprague	November 2022
Version number 2	October 2024	Jade Hill	October 2026

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1. Introduction and Purpose

To ensure that CP and PLO work together in a way that is clear and consistent.

To ensure that families have opportunities to make changes with strong family focused practice and tailored support services before progressing to PLO.

This guidance does not apply to acute situations where a child is in need of emergency protection via the courts

2. Scope of Policy

Children at risk of significant harm

3. Guidance

Our aim in Children’s Services is to provide effective support for families at the earliest point possible via early help or child in need services; the desired outcome being that parents make and sustain changes that improve their child’s well-being without the need to progress to child protection. This is in line with the principles of the Children Act 1989: primacy of family, the principle of partnership with parents and the concept of least interventionist approach and No Order principle.

Should there be concerns that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, in line with Working Together 2018, a multi-agency Child Protection conference will be convened. This period is likely to be stressful for parents and early

parental engagement in the child protection process is key to avoiding the creation of barriers between Children's Services and the family. Child Protection gives families the opportunity to understand the seriousness of the concerns for their child and gives them the opportunity to demonstrate that they can make the changes needed to keep their child safe with a package of multi-agency support to help them.

Work with families prior to court proceedings should promote working together between professionals and agencies, working with families to support management of the risk responsibly in the community, safely diverting children and families from the court system. Because threshold is met does not mean we have to go to PLO or court. We should work in partnership with the family in an informed and purposeful way, including the co-production of plans to avoid escalation and achieve better outcomes for children.

PLO would not routinely happen for a family before they have been given every opportunity to be supported to make changes for the child. Usually when PLO is initiated, the child has a multi-agency child protection plan where the ongoing risk of significant harm is not reducing, the family have made insufficient progress and are assessed as being unlikely to make the necessary changes within the child's timeframe.

When escalation to PLO takes place, this does not replace multi-agency child protection planning. The child protection plan and the PLO pre-proceedings plan should run **alongside and complement** each other. Multi-agency review conferences and core group meetings continue to take place while in PLO pre-proceedings.

For unborn children who are at risk of significant harm, please see:

<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/21129/somerset-prebirth-timeline-december-2023.pdf>

4. References

DfE, (2014) Court orders and pre-proceedings. For local authorities. Available at: DFE stat guidance template (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Trowler, I (2018) Care Proceedings in England: the case for clear blue water. Available at: Clear_Blue_Water_Policy_Briefing.pdf (sheffield.ac.uk)