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| **PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER**  **TAKE IT TO A SOLICITOR NOW** | Contact:  Tel: (0191)  Fax: (0191)  Email:  Date: |

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

**Newcastle City Council’s Concerns about Insert [name(s) of child(ren)]**

**LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS**

**How to avoid going to Court**

I am writing to let you know how concerned Newcastle City Council have become about your care of you child/ren.

Newcastle City Council is thinking about starting Care Proceedings about [name(s) of child(ren)].

This means that we may apply to the Court and if the Court decides that this is best for them, [name(s) of child(ren)] could be taken into care.

We are so worried about your child/ren that we will go to Court unless you are able to improve things. There are things that you can do which would stop this happening.

We have set out in this letter the concerns we have about your child/ren and the things that have been done to try to help your family.

Also in this letter we will tell you what you need to do so that we will not go to Court.

**Here are our main concerns:**

*[Outline the bottom line concerns that we have and give examples of when this happened. This should capture ongoing concerns as well as specific concerns]* ***Delete this guidance in italics***

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| **What we are concerned about** | **Examples of when this happened** | **Date of when it happened** |
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**This is what Children’s Services have done to try to help your family**

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| **Who has helped** | **What help has been given** | **Dates of when we provided it** |
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**What you must do so that we will not go to Court:**

**Please come to a meeting with us to talk about these concerns**

This meeting will be on [date] and at [time] at [name of office].

The address of the meeting is [address]. There is a map with this letter to help you find it.

At the meeting we will:

* Discuss with you what the local authority believes you will need to do to make your child(ren) safe. The local authority is proposing:

*(Please put in here the outline of the plan whilst in PLO, e.g. father has to move out, contact arrangements, DNA testing, psychological assessment, working with a specialist service or family support intervention, hair strand testing, keeping appointments etc.)*

***Delete this guidance in italics when you have put in the outline of the plan***

* Discuss with you how we will support you to keep your child(ren) safe;
* Discuss with you what you believe you need to do the make your child(ren) safe;
* Discuss with you who in your family could look after your child(ren) if you are not able to; and
* Explain what steps we will take if we continue to be worried about [name(s) of child(ren)].

Please contact your child/ren’s Social Worker [name] on [tel. no:] to tell us if you will come to the meeting.

**Get a Solicitor**

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.

You will also have a right to bring your Solicitor with you to the meeting. If you give them this letter you will not have to pay.

If you don’t already have a Solicitor, with this letter we have provided a list of local Solicitors who work with Children and Families. They are separate from Newcastle Children’s Services.

You do not have to bring a Solicitor to the meeting, but it will be very helpful if you do.

**Information your solicitor will need is:**

Local Authority Legal Contact: [name, address and telephone]

**Get your wider family involved**

Our concerns about [name(s) of child(ren)] are very serious.

If we do have to go to Court and the Court decides you cannot care for your child(ren), we will first try to place them with one of your relatives or a person or person(s) close to your child(ren) if it is best for your child(ren) to do this.

At the meeting we will discuss with you and your Solicitor who might look after your child(ren) if the Court decides that it is no longer safe for you to do so.

**What will happen if you do nothing?**

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 about [name(s) of child(ren)] are safe.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting and with your Solicitor on [date].

If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your child’s social worker [name] on [tel. no:].

Please tell your child’s social worker if you need any help with child care or transport arrangements so that you can come to the meeting, and we will try to help.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

Team Manager

Copies of the letter have been sent to:

* Social Worker [name] and the Local Authority In-house Legal Team

Enclosed with this letter are:

* A map and directions to where the meeting will take place
* A list of Solicitors who are members of the Law Society’s Children Law Accreditation Scheme