

Flowchart of the PLO process

The concerns for a child/ren are such that the social work team is of the view that a Legal Planning Meeting is required to consider the most appropriate support and actions needed to keep the child/children safe. Except for in exceptional circumstances, the child/ren will already be supported by way of a Child Protection Plan and a discussion held with the Child Protection Chair about the escalating concerns. Head of Service considers all the information and if appropriate agrees Legal Planning Meeting.

Outcome of Legal Planning Meeting is recommended as Public Law Outline (Pre-Proceedings) as the best way to support the child and family. It is important at this stage to consider what experts/testing may be required during PLO period.

This outcome (as well as any requests for experts/tests) is taken to the following Practice and Resources Panel (PARP) for ratification (If there is likely to be any delay to this, Head of Service to be alerted by Social Work team). Public Law Outline and any experts/tests to be agreed at this Panel.

Public Law Outline letter is shared with parents and Childcare Litigation Unit within 3 working days of Panel. The letter will be shared with parent/s face to face and the process carefully explained. A list of solicitors needs to be provided with the letter and parents given 10 working days between receipt of the letter and the date of the first Public Law Outline meeting. A copy of the letter needs to be uploaded to Livelink: Legal - statutory documents and advice folder.

5 days after parent/s have been provided with the letter, the social worker will contact the family to check in with them and ensure parent/s have contacted a solicitor. This ensures that parent's are being fully supported within the process as well as avoiding any delay.

Initial Public Law Outline meeting takes place. Childcare Litigation Unit colleagues will provide notes, but the social work team is responsible for taking and writing up the minutes of the meeting using the LCS form. It is important to explore any alternative carers for the children and any potential Viability Assessments at this point. The LCS form will also contain the plan. The plan should have no more than 5 key points that summarise the areas we are most concerned about and reflect the Child Protection Plan. The minutes need to be sent to parent/s and the Childcare Litigation Unit within 5 working days of the meeting to support timely progression of the agreed actions.

After the meeting has taken place, the PLO flag on the child's LCS record needs to be started and the PLO tracker form initiated.

In order to fully consider the ongoing permanence plans for children, a Permanence Planning meeting needs to take place within 2 weeks of the first Public Law Outline meeting.

In the 6 weeks after the initial PLO meeting, parent/s need to be supported to make the necessary agreed changes to reduce the concerns. This support and progress is explored and monitored through existing mechanisms such as Core Group meetings.

6 weeks after the first Public Law Outline meeting, a review needs to take place to consider progress made and further support required. If the concerns for the child/ren's safety have adequately reduced, the PLO process can end at this point. The allocated Social Worker will take minutes from the meeting and update the plan using the LCS PLO meeting form and share with the parents and Childcare Litigation Unit within 5 working days of the meeting. It is important that Childcare Litigation Unit colleagues are updated and consulted if concerns remain in order for threshold discussions to continue to take place.

If further meetings are required, which is often the case, the final review needs to be held 12 weeks after the first PLO meeting. At this meeting, the plan is reviewed, and a decision needs to be made to either end the PLO process due to positive progress made or, progress has unfortunately not been made to reduce the level of concern and Care Proceedings need to be initiated in respect of the child. If the process needs to extend beyond 12 weeks, the relevant Head of Service will need to be made aware of this to provide oversight and agree justification. This decision needs to be recorded as an LCS casenote. The allocated Social Worker will take minutes from the final meeting using the LCS PLO meeting form, update the action plan and share with the parents and Childcare Litigation Unit within 5 working days of the meeting.

At the final PLO meeting (be this at 6 or 12 weeks) it needs to be highlighted to all in attendance that the recommended outcome made will need to be taken to Practice & Resource panel within one week to be ratified and the social worker will confirm the decision with the family and professionals as soon as that panel has taken place. (To support this, each panel will have dedicated PLO slots and these decisions can be taken to East or West panel in order to prevent any delay)

A final decision letter then needs to be sent to parents and the Childcare Litigation Unit within 5 working days of Panel.

The PLO tracker form can then be finalised, and the PLO flag ended.