**LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS – TEMPLATE LETTER**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Office AddressContact |  |
| **Direct line** |  |
|  |  |
| **My ref** |  |
| **Fax** |  |
| **E-mail** |  |
| **Date** |  |

**IMPORTANT**

**DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER**

**TAKE IT TO A SOLICITOR IMMEDIATELY**

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

**Re: [*insert name(s) of child(ren)*] – LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS**

Lancashire County Council is concerned about your ability to care for your child/ren. A decision has been made that unless improvements are made within [*timescale*], Lancashire County Council will start Court Proceedings, and apply for a Care Order. This may result in your child/ren being removed from your home.

This letter sets out our concerns, and what action has already been taken to try to help you.

**You still have the chance to improve things and stop Lancashire County Council applying to Court.**

You are invited to attend a meeting which will take place on [*date and time]* at *[insert name and address of office]*. A map is also enclosed. Please contact the child(ren)’s social worker [*name*] on [*tel. no.*]to confirm you will come to the meeting.

You can get FREE independent legal advice before the meeting takes place. You should take this letter to a solicitor immediately so that they can attend the meeting with you. A list of local solicitors who work with children and families is available via <http://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk>. They are all separate from Children’s Social Care.

The meeting is to discuss why Lancashire County Council is worried about your child/ren, what you need to do to improve matters, and the support we will offer to help you. We will also make clear what steps we will take if there are no improvements.

Our concerns about your child/ren are very serious. If we begin court proceedings and the Court feels the child/ren cannot remain with you for the time being, then we will consider whether he/she/they can live with one of your relatives rather than with foster carers. We will discuss this at the meeting.

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

**YOUR WIDER FAMILY**

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 children, we will first try and place them with one of your relatives, if it is best for your child to do this. At the meeting we will want to talk to you and your solicitor about who might look after your child if the Court decides that it is no longer safe for you to do so.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting with your solicitor on [date]. If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your social worker [name] on [tel. no.]. Please tell your social worker if you need any help with child care or transport arrangements in order to come to the meeting, and we will try to help.

Information your Solicitor will need is:

|  |
| --- |
| Local Authority Legal Contact:  *Name of Lawyer:……………………………….*  [*Enter name of the Local Authority, Lawyer’s address, phone numbers and email]* |

Lancashire County Council

PO Box 78

County Hall

Preston

PR1 8XJ

Solicitor:

Reference: LSG2/

Tel: 01772-

Fax: 01772 533493

DX: 710928 Preston County Hall

Yours faithfully

*[name]*

Team Manager

Local office/service

cc Social Worker [name]

Local Authority Solicitor

Enc: Map of office

**PLEASE SHOW / TAKE THIS TO A SOLICITOR**

**Here are the main things that we are worried about:**

**Brief Case History:**

**Impact on child:**

**Precipitating incident:**

**Parenting capacity and gap in capacity causing risk of or actual significant harm:**

**Proposed outline Permanence/Care Plan:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DATE(S)** | **PROBLEM** |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Here are the things that you have done well:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DATE(S)** | **STRENGTH** |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**What Children's Services have done to try to help:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WHO** | **WHAT HELP HAS BEEN GIVEN** | **WHEN** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |