



Coventry City Council

LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS

**PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER  
TAKE IT TO A SOLICITOR NOW**

Coventry City Council  
South Neighbourhood  
Children Services  
257 Stretton Avenue  
Willenhall  
Coventry  
CV3 3HQ

Adult A

4 August 2021

Dear Adult A,

**RE: COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL CONCERNS ABOUT *CHILD A, CHILD B, CHILD C, CHILD D* and *CHILD E***

**LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS**

**HOW TO AVOID GOING TO COURT**

I am writing to let you know how concerned Coventry City Council has become about your care of your children. I am writing to tell you that Coventry City Council is thinking about starting Care Proceedings in respect of Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E. This means that we may apply to Court and Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E could, if the Court decides that this is best for them, be taken into care.

We are so worried about your children that we will go to court unless you are able to improve things. There may be things you can do which could stop this happening. We have set out in this letter the concerns that we have about Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E, and the things that have been done to try to help your family.

## AN IMPORTANT MEETING ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

Please come to a meeting with us to talk about these concerns on **tbc** at the Children's Services South Neighbourhood Team Offices. The address is 257 Stretton Avenue, Willenhall, Coventry CV3 3HQ and there is a map with this letter to help you find it. Please contact your social worker on 02476 785572 to tell us if you will come to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss with you and tell you what you will need to do to make your child safe. We will also talk to you about how we will support you to do this. We will also make clear what steps we will take if we continue to be worried about Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E.

## PLEASE BRING A SOLICITOR TO THE MEETING ON **tbc**

**Take this letter to a solicitor and ask them to come to the meeting with you. The solicitor will advise you about getting legal aid (free legal advice). We have sent with this letter a list of local solicitors who work with children and families. They are all separate from the Local Authority. You do not have to bring a solicitor to the meeting, but it will be helpful if you do.**

### ***Information your Solicitor will need is:***

Local Authority Legal Contact: [REDACTED] Address: Coventry City Council, PO BOX 15, Council House, Earl Street, Coventry, CV1 5RR Email: [REDACTED]@coventry.gov.uk
--

## 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 Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E are safe.

## YOUR WIDER FAMILY

Our concerns about Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E 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. However, we will only be able to place the children with your relative, rather than in foster care, if you provide us with full information now about who your relatives are and how to contact them so we may assess them. 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. It will assist if you complete the attached form with details of family members/friends who you wish to be considered to be assessed to the meeting with you.

We also attached a consent form for you to sign to give consent for an adoption medical to be undertaken in respect of your children so not to cause any delay in future planning for your children. For the avoidance of doubt this consent does not mean that you consent to any proposed permanency plan that the Local Authority may have in relation to your children either now or in the future.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting with your solicitor on the **tbc**. If you do not understand any part of this letter, please contact your social worker or the assigned worker [REDACTED] on 02476 78[REDACTED]. 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.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Operational Lead South area Help and Protection  
257 Stretton Avenue  
Willenhall  
Coventry  
CV3 3HQ

cc Social Worker  
Assigned Worker; [REDACTED]  
Local Authority In-house Legal Team

Enc: Map of office  
List of Law Society Children Panel Solicitors  
List (to be completed by parent) of prospective carers  
Consent to adoption/permanency medical (to be completed by parent)

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

**HERE ARE THE MAIN THINGS THAT WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT:**

**1. Domestic Violence and Abuse**

Children's Services have a significant recorded history of domestic violence and abuse incidents, with the first recorded in 2011. Since then, incidents have been reoccurring throughout multiple involvements from Children's Services in the form of Children and Family Assessments or Child in Need Plans.

Throughout our most recent involvement, including the Child Protection Plan, there have been domestic violence and abuse incidents and incidents of intense family arguments which have significantly frightened the children. These have been shared with Children's Services and other professionals by the children, and have continued to reoccur despite Children's Services and Early Help's interventions and attempts to work with you.

**For Example**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Incident/Episode</b>
<b>13 July 2021</b>	<p>On 13 July 2021 the Police were called to the family home and reported an Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery.</p> <p>During this incident, it was reported that you hurt Adult B by grabbing her hair and her waist. It was also reported that Adult B threw a mobile phone and damaged it.</p> <p>You were observed and reported to be intoxicated during this incident and were asked to leave and not return until the following day. You allegedly returned around 1am on the 14 July.</p> <p>The children were at home and present during these incidents. Due to being frightened, the children contacted a neighbour and asked for help to call the police. The children were visibly distressed throughout. The children's actions of needing to leave the home and contact a neighbour and share their worries show that this incident was significant and frightening to them.</p>
<b>25 June 2021</b>	<p>The children that attend Ernesford Grange emailed school staff regarding an ongoing incident in which they felt the need to leave the home in the evening due to your shouting and arguing with Adult B.</p> <p>Adult B shared via an email that you and her had an argument in which you called her names and Stepson was shouted at due to not having a passport.</p>
<b>4 February 2021</b>	<p>Police visited your home address after Stepdaughter called and stated that you and Adult B had been "arguing and fighting". The children shared with the police that "arguing is frequent" and that "they are slightly scared".</p>
<b>1 March 2017</b>	<p>Police attended your address after a "verbal altercation" for an undisclosed reason, in which you were intoxicated, had urinated on the living room floor, and were removed from the address. The</p>

	children were in the home during this incident and upset by the shouting.
<b>3 February 2017</b>	Police Domestic Abuse notification regarding a verbal altercation between yourself and Adult B.
<b>27 January 2011</b>	Domestic Violence Notification was received from the police after reports from the neighbours that there was arguing and banging in your home. The children were reportedly present and witnessed the incident.

## 2. Alcohol Use

Children's Services have a long and significant history of worries shared by the children and other agencies regarding your alcohol use since 2012. The children have continued to express that they are worried about your use of alcohol and the consequences of this throughout our most recent involvement. The children have continued to be exposed to your alcohol use, including since the Child Protection Plan was put in place, which made it clear this was not to happen. Since the beginning of our most recent involvement, Adult B has also shared her concerns and worries regarding your alcohol use.

Children's Services have repeatedly raised this issue with yourself, and you have agreed in formal meetings to stop drinking in the family home. Additionally, you have also expressed repeatedly that alcohol use is not a problem for yourself, and that Children's Services worries regarding this are not justified, even when the children's worries have been shared with you. Alcohol testing was arranged for you, and while your results were inconclusive, you acknowledged that your own alcohol use was higher than that of Adult B, which was "Chronic and Excessive".

Children's Services are worried that incidents of your excessive alcohol use, and associated behaviours including verbal and physical abuse of the children and the harm caused, continue to frighten and distress the children to the extent that they believe you cannot and are not willing to change this.

### For Example

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Incident/Episode</b>
<b>7 July 2021</b>	Stepson shared in a Family Meeting attended by Children's Services that you and Adult B's drinking continued to make him and his siblings feel uncomfortable in the family home.
<b>2 July 2021</b>	Disclosures by children at Ernesford Grange that you are frequently drinking alcohol at home.
<b>28 June 2021</b>	Adult B shared her worries regarding your episodes of binge-drinking while the children were subject to a Child Protection plan, that you are frequently not receptive to advice or the worries shared, and that she was worried you would continue to drink.
<b>25 June 2021</b>	Adult B shared her worries about you continuing to drink and "not being able to bear it anymore".
<b>8 June 2021</b>	Disclosure by a child via Ernesford Grange staff that you and Adult B continued to drink alcohol most days over half-term.
<b>25 May 2021</b>	Disclosure by a Child via Mind of My Own that you and Adult B continued to drink alcohol and will be shouted at if they share this information with Children's Services.

<b>17 December 2018</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns about the children's exposure to your alcohol use was shared with you.
<b>5 April 2018</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns about the impact of your alcohol use on the children was shared with you, including affecting schoolwork and sleep.
<b>5 June 2017</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services which initiated a Child in Need Plan. Concerns were shared with you and Adult B regarding safe and unsafe alcohol use, and this impacting your ability to responsibly take care of the children.
<b>27 April 2017</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns were shared with you about your alcohol use triggering domestic disputes, and this negatively impacting the children's emotional wellbeing.
<b>16 November 2012</b>	Concerns shared by St Gregory's School with Children's Services that you had picked up children from the school under the influence of alcohol.

### 3. Verbal and Physical Abuse of the Children

The children have made repeated disclosures about being afraid to speak with Children's Services workers due to the repercussions at home, which included being called names or being belittled. When this issue has been raised with you throughout our most recent involvement, you have minimised these concerns and shared that you are unsure as to why the children feel this way. Due to our worries, the bottom-line was included in the Child Protection Plan that you "cannot verbally or physically abuse the children". Throughout the Child Protection Plan, the children have continued to express that they are worried about being called names at home or getting into trouble for expressing their concerns with either Children's Services or professionals.

Children's Services are worried that there have been incidents whereby the children reported being hit by you or witnessing this happen to siblings. This includes an incident which led to the Child Protection plan where you have hit Stepdaughter to the side of her face. This and historical incidents may be leading the children to express their fear or worries about what may happen at home if they share their concerns and experience with Children's Services.

#### For Example

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Incident/Episode</b>
<b>21 June 2021</b>	Children shared with Wish project workers that the children are called "idiots" or "stupid" for sharing their concerns with Children's Services.
<b>9 June 2021</b>	Children have shared with Wish Project workers that they fear getting into trouble if their worries are shared with Children's Services.
<b>8 June 2021</b>	Children shared concerns at Ernesford Grange school that they continue to be "in trouble" for sharing with Children's Services and that this has led to home visits.

<b>25 May 2021</b>	A child shared via Mind of My Own app that they are worried about getting into trouble when sharing concerns with professionals.
<b>29 January 2021</b>	Child A disclosed at school that you had slapped Stepdaughter to the side of the face during an argument, which Stepdaughter confirmed when calling the police on the 5 February 2021. Child A, Child B, and Stepdaughter expressed their worries they could be physically hurt, as this has happened in the past.
<b>5 April 2018</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns about the impact of your alcohol use on the children was shared with you, including affecting schoolwork and sleep.
<b>27 April 2017</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns were shared with you about your alcohol use and domestic arguments having a negative impact on the children's emotional wellbeing.

#### **4. Lived and historical experience of the children**

Children's Services are worried by the children's reports regarding their lived experience in the family home, connected to the worries about alcohol use, verbal abuse, and domestic abuse and intense arguments outlined above.

Children's Services are worried that these worries have been shared with you in past Children and Family Assessments, and that things have not improved since then.

Throughout the most recent involvement, all of the children have expressed negative feelings about life at home. Child A, Child B, and Child D have expressed that they do not believe that life at home can change for the better, and that Children's Services steps to support you and the family will not have a positive effect. Child A, Child B, Child C, and Child D have expressed that they would like for your drinking and arguing in the home to stop.

Children's services are worried that Child A and Child B have connected their negative emotions and feelings with their lived experience at home, and that Child B has expressed her self-harming behaviours are connected to life at home in reference to intense arguing, domestic abuse incidents, and alcohol use.

#### **For Example**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Incident/Episode</b>
<b>14 July 2021</b>	Child B was supported to attend a GP appointment with concerns around self-harming and mental health, where she shared that her concerns and emotions were connected to life and circumstances at home, including alcohol use and the recent domestic violence incident.
<b>24 May 2021</b>	Child A shared via Mind of My Own that she and Children's Services want you to give up drinking, but that you "don't care what social workers think", and described feeling "unsafe, scared, ignored, and sad" due to where she lives.
<b>29 April 2021</b>	Child D expressed via a Mind of My Own statement that you and Adult B continue to argue, that this was worrying her, and that she wants this to change, and that when this happens she feels like "screaming" to "make everything stop".

<b>25 February 2021</b>	During a home visit following the Initial Child Protection Conference, the children shared with the Assigned Worker that Children's Services should have helped them "ten years ago", and that they do not think anything will change with a Child Protection Plan.
<b>5 February 2021</b>	During the home visit following when Stepdaughter called the police due to "arguing and fighting" in the family home, Children's Services shared a Safety Plan with you. When the children were seen by the Assigned Worker they said they do not think giving you and Adult B a Safety Plan will change anything.
<b>22 January 2021</b>	During direct work with Child B, Child C, and Child A and the Assigned Worker, the children expressed that they feel Children's Services cannot help you or Adult B, or improve life for the children at home, despite having asked the Assigned Worker to do so.
<b>10 October 2018</b>	Children and Family Assessment was started with concerns shared regarding Child B's mental and emotional wellbeing, with concerns including her wanting to commit suicide. As you shared you were not worried about Child B's concerns, a full assessment regarding the circumstances of Child B's mental health was not completed.
<b>5 April 2018</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns about the impact of your alcohol use on the children was shared with you, including affecting schoolwork and sleep.
<b>27 April 2017</b>	Children and Family Assessment was completed by Coventry Children's Services in which concerns were shared with you about your alcohol use and domestic arguments having a negative impact on the children's emotional wellbeing.

#### WHAT CHILDREN'S SERVICES HAVE DONE TO TRY TO HELP

<b>Who</b>	<b>What help has been given</b>	<b>When</b>
Children's Services	Child Protection Plan and associated support.  Assigned and Allocated Worker consistently have raised concerns about bottom lines being breached and discussed strategies for maintaining safety.	25 February - ongoing
Children's Services	Safety plans have been signed to increase the children's safety from significant harm.  Yourself, Adult B and the children contributed to these plans	26 February 2021  12 March 2021
Children's Services	Parenting Assessment was completed to explore parenting capacity	Completed June 2021
Children's Services	Family Meetings held to discuss family solutions to worries shared by Children's Services (as an	7 July 2021



	alternative to Family Group Conferencing).	
Children's Services	You were supported to temporarily stay in alternative accommodation provided by the local authority to give Children's Services and the family the opportunity to consider which steps need to be taken to ensure the children's safety.	14 July 2021
Mind of My Own	The children were given access and encouraged to share any thoughts and feelings including any worries they may have. This allowed Children's Services to support the family.	11 February 2021
WISH Project	Referrals were made and accepted for the children to receive support around their experience of domestic violence and abuse, which Child D and Child E completed.	12 March 2021

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO SO THAT WE WILL NOT GO TO COURT:

1. Confirm that you will come to a meeting to talk about these concerns. Please bring a solicitor with you. An interpreter will be present during the pre-proceedings meeting.
2. Continue to see and work with your social worker and assigned worker [REDACTED] and allow them to see Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E, including as part of a sibling assessment.
3. At the meeting you will be asked to talk about how Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E will be kept safe, with our help.
4. Engage with specialised work regarding healthy and unhealthy relationships to raise your awareness of domestic abuse and to understand the impact this has on the children. The work will be provided by [REDACTED] (Children and Family Worker for Coventry City Council) and a referral has been made.
5. Engage with specialised work to address your misuse of alcohol. Change Grow Live has been identified to complete this work and a referral will be made by 23 August. A referral has also been made to [REDACTED] (Children and Family Worker) to complete work regarding alcohol use and its impact on the children, dependent on the outcome of the Change Grow Live referral.
6. Complete testing to establish your alcohol usage. This will cover a period of 3 months. Abbot Toxicology or AlphaBio Labs have been identified to complete the testing and a referral will be made by 6 September 2021.
7. Allow Children's Services to complete an addendum parenting assessment by

engaging in a further four sessions. This will explore the work completed since the last parenting assessment in May 2021 and any additional concerns raised since then.

8. Engage with Children's Services to explore the support available to you by discussing your support network including family and friends. You will also explore whether you would want any of those persons identified to be assessed to care for your children if it is deemed that you can no longer care for them.
9. To follow Children's Services expectations as agreed by:
  - Not drinking alcohol while caring for the children.
  - Avoiding further incidents of domestic violence and intense family arguments.
  - Engaging in the Child Protection Plan
  - Following the agreed Safety Plans.



Coventry City Council

**Prospective Carers to be considered in respect of Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E.**

	1 <sup>st</sup> Applicant	2 <sup>nd</sup> Applicant
Surname:		
Previous Names:		
Forename(s):		
Relationship to the child/ren who is/are the subject(s) of this pre proceedings meeting		
Home Address (including postcode)		
Telephone Number:		



**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PERMANENCY/ ADOPTION MEDICAL**

I, ..... MOTHER/ FATHER OF  
..... HEREBY CONSENT TO A MEDICAL  
ASSESSMENT BEING UNDERTAKEN IN RELATION MY CHILD(REN), TO  
ENABLE THE LOCAL AUTHORITY TO PLAN FOR MY CHILD(REN)'S FUTURE  
WITHOUT DELAY.

**FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT THIS CONSENT DOES NOT MEAN THAT I  
CONSENT TO ANY PROPOSED PERMANENCY PLAN THAT LOCAL  
AUTHORITY MAY HAVE IN RELATION TO MY CHILD(REN) EITHER NOW OR IN  
THE FUTURE.**