
The framework incorporates pre-proceedings case work and the child’s timeframe for decision making – 26 week care proceedings

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE GUIDANCE

NB. Early help/family support strategy and services for CAF, CIN, CP and LAC should be fully considered and provided EARLY on in the support of families to promote prevention and early help. Please refer to Family Service Directory.

The purpose of the PLO case management practice framework is to use the PLO process to best effect. The PLO pre-proceedings and the 26 week care proceedings process is an important part of case planning in respect of care proceedings and ensuring that parents are fully informed as early as possible of concerns and the possible implications. www.proceduresonline.com/greater_manchester/childcare/

The PLO case management practice framework should reflect the revised Public Law Outline (PLO) with the legal process fully joined up with analytical social work thinking. The practice model below places the family social worker at the heart of the expert group.

1. A CASE MANAGEMENT MEETING (Pre-proceedings process commences)

   This meeting should be convened when a decision is required from a Practice Manager at the point ‘concerns escalate’ within a family and or for a child’s safety and wellbeing. PLO-Pre-proceedings-pra dcticeigram.pdf

   - The outcome of this meeting should be recorded on ICS as a case management meeting by the allocated Social Worker to include a summary of the issues discussed and the outcome in terms of case plan within 24 hours.
   - The Practice Manager should record any management decisions from this meeting as a Manager’s Decision within 24 hours.
2. **LEGAL PLANNING MEETINGS (LPM)**

This meeting should be convened when a decision is made in a case management meeting to progress to LPM, and where legal advice is needed by a Solicitor regarding threshold for ‘significant harm’ suffered or at risk of suffering by a child.

- The terms of reference and an agenda is available for this meeting and this should be followed to promote consistency of practice across the service. [Legal Planning Meeting Terms of reference and agend.docx](#)
- The case will be allocated to a Solicitor from this point and legal advice on threshold or any evidential gaps within the case presented should be given and recorded. Safeguarding the child/ren and promoting wellbeing is the central task and interim safeguarding plans and decisions regarding a child’s safety and welfare should be clearly outlined and recorded on ICS.
- The Forms needed for the legal planning meeting that are to be forwarded to the Legal Team at the point of a request for a legal planning meeting are PLO 7, PLO8 and PLO9 (updated from the case management meeting) plus updated assessment (if available). [PLO Forms\PLO 7 Documents to be filed with ICO application.doc](#) [PLO Forms\PLO 8 Summary of SW Investigations.docx](#) [PLO Forms\PLO 9 Record of Legal Planning -Gateway Meeting (2).docx](#)
- The Practice Manager, Social Worker and Solicitor will attend as a minimum. The Practice Manager is responsible for recording any Practice Manager decisions from this meeting on ICS, and the allocated Social Worker is responsible for updating ICS case notes with a summary and outcome of the meeting (including an outline of the safeguarding interim/plan), and updating the PLO 9 ready for gateway. The solicitor is responsible for updating the legal section of the PLO 9 with the legal advice within 24 hours and at the latest 48 hours. The PLO 9 should then be uploaded onto the legal tab on ICS within 3 days of the outcome of the legal planning meeting with PM, SW and solicitor updated information from the meeting.
- The letter before proceedings (LBP) and the contract of expectations should be drafted at this meeting if the meeting outcome is to recommend progressing to legal gateway and seeking PLO. [PLO Forms\PLO 12(a) Letter Before Proceedings into PLO.doc](#) [PLO Forms\PLO 10 Working Agreement.docx](#)
3. **LEGAL GATEWAY MEETINGS (LGW)**

This meeting is convened when a decision is required for a child/ren and family to enter into the PLO process, or for a decision to be made regarding immediate care proceedings to be issued, or a child is to become Looked After.

- There are terms of reference and an agenda available for this meeting to promote consistency across the service in legal gateway practice and function. [Updated Terms of Reference for Legal Gateway Meetings - Oct 13.docx](#)
- The forms needed for Legal Gateway are an updated PL0 9 from the LPM (to include legal advice in full), the LBP, contract of expectations and any other document like an updated assessments with genogram/chronology/Eco map (if available) and any expert assessments.
- Any expert assessments required should be considered and agreed at the legal gateway meeting as a part of the pre-proceedings process to prevent delay in care planning, to promote a full understanding of the family issues, and to demonstrate fair process.
- LBP should be available with PL0 9 for legal gateway and the contract of expectations for consideration by the panel
- The PLO 9 is a revised document and includes a ‘one referral’ option for services at this point. This is to promote consistency in information and to trigger key services pre-proceedings. Ensuring key services are involved at this stage can reduce delay for children reaching permanence once proceedings are issued.
- The services that should be considered and triggered at this point in terms of pre-proceedings planning are family group conferencing (if not already considered), fostering friends and family (F & F), adoption services, contact services and CAMHS.
- Representatives from these services should be in attendance at the legal gateway mtg in order to give the case presented full consideration of services in terms of the child remaining at the centre of the pre-proceedings work.
- The outcome of the LGW meeting should be recorded as an outcome on PLO 9 by the minute taker and quality assured by the chair of LGW and the solicitor in attendance giving their advice. The PLO 9 should then be updated onto ICS within 3 working days of the outcome of the LGW meeting. This gives 48 hours for the legal advice to be checked and verified as accurate by a solicitor.
- The outcome of LGW should be sent to the IRO for their information regarding the child/ren presented to LGW by admin and noted as having been sent on ICS.
4. **PO** [Pre-proceedings evidence on ICS.docx](#)

When/if PLO commences from LGW – this should be clearly recorded on cases on ICS with date it commenced by the Social Worker.

- LBP should be sent to the parents within 7 days of commencing PLO with a parents pack, together with the contract of expectations. The first PLO meeting should commence within 2 weeks of the LGW decision. There should be a first review of the PLO contract after 4 weeks, then second review after 8 weeks and third and final review at 12 weeks. The outcome after week 12 should be out of PLO as progress has been made around the child/ren and risks have reduced or a decision to issue proceedings should be re-considered at LGW.

- Should at any point in the 12 week PLO process risks have increased to a child the case should be referred back to LGW without delay for re-consideration.

- All PLO meeting minutes, LBP and contract of expectations should be uploaded onto ICS (legal tab) and recorded on ICS as having taken place to evidence the pre-proceedings process on ICS case notes. The Social Worker is responsible for the up to date case record on ICS.

- Any legal advice or Practice/Senior managers decisions required for emergency intervention should be practiced in the usual way for EPO/Sec 47/LAC as per the procedure’s for children at risk of harm. Please see RMBC CSC Child Protection Procedures.
5. **ISSUING – PLO 26 WEEKS TIMEFRAME**

If a decision is made from Legal Gateway to issue proceedings straight away,

Legal documents that are needed should be sent to the legal team within 2 weeks of the decision of the LGW. The two weeks should incorporate quality assurance of the legal documents with the Practice Manager. A child’s/ren suffering should not be prolonged due to incomplete documents. The documents required are:-

- Genogram [PLO Forms\PLO 1 Genogram and family composition information.docx](PLO Forms\PLO 1 Genogram and family composition information.docx)
- Eco map [PLO Forms\PLO 2 Ecomap.docx](PLO Forms\PLO 2 Ecomap.docx)
- Chronology [PLO Forms\PLO 3 Chronology of significant events.docx](PLO Forms\PLO 3 Chronology of significant events.docx)
- Social Worker initial statement [PLO Forms\PLO 14 Social Worker Initial Statement.docx](PLO Forms\PLO 14 Social Worker Initial Statement.docx)
- Appendix documents – relied upon
- Expert documents – relied upon

All these documents should be uploaded onto the legal tab when completed and sent to legal.

- After the first hearing when the Case Management Hearing order is available this should be uploaded onto the legal tab with key court timeframes/dates of Case Management i.e. Social Worker assessment due, friends and family assessment dates, new evidence due, date of advocates meeting, IRH, final hearing dates and dates of papers due with ADM (Agency Decision Maker). A copy of the court order should be sent to the SW, PM, fostering and adoption managers, PLO Case Manager and the IRO for planning and compliance timeframes by the allocated solicitor. [PLO week 1 - 26 outline.docx](PLO week 1 - 26 outline.docx)
- Friends and family assessments outcomes should be uploaded onto the legal tab as a completed piece of work.
- If a child/ren’s care plan is for permanency, a legal care planning meeting should be held (at week 16) with invites to IRO (to integrate the IRO into the legal process. The 2nd LAC review should be held 2 weeks before the legal care planning meeting at week 13/15 to ratify the care plan proposed (in the 26 week process). The ADM decision maker can then make their decision at week 18 (in the 26 week process). The LA can file at week 19. [CLA review procedures the role of the IRO.docx](CLA review procedures the role of the IRO.docx) [Rochdale CLA Review Process December 2013.docx](Rochdale CLA Review Process December 2013.docx)
- Any potential for delay in the care proceedings cycle should be notified to Team Manager, PLO case Manager and the solicitor.
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