Guidance for completing letter before proceedings

**Letter to be completed on the letter before proceedings document on Tri.x**

When writing the letter before proceedings social workers should:

• Be honest and respectful

• Ensure the letter is written clearly and is jargon free

• Try to engage rather than alienate the parents

• Be clear about the seriousness of the matter

• Avoid delay but give reasonable notice of the meeting

• Provide sufficient detail to inform the parents’ lawyer

• Do not delay the letter by writing more than necessary

• Make sure the letter links with the child protection plan

• Identify and locate both parents, where the child is not living with both of them

• Ensure that the parents understand the contents of the letter and have an opportunity to discuss it prior to the pre-proceedings meeting

• Where a parent may lack capacity, consideration should be given as to whether a discussion involving an advocate/and or legal representative should take place before sending out this letter

• Where English is not the first language of one or more parents then interpretation services may be required.

The letter should set out:

• A summary of the local authority’s concerns, balancing it out with positives/strengths in the family in simple and respectful language

• The impact of the identified concerns on the child(ren) should be set out clearly

• A summary of what support has already been provided to the parents

• What needs to change and what the parents should do to bring about change

• What support will be provided by the local authority for them to avoid care proceedings including clear timescales of identified actions to be undertaken

• Information on how to obtain legal advice (and advocacy where required), highlighting the importance for the parent to get legal representation

• An invitation to pre-proceedings meeting, to be held within a maximum of 15 working days after the Legal Planning meeting.