|  |
| --- |
| **Date:** |
| **Ref:** |
| **Officer:** |
| **✆** |
| **🖂** |

 ««AddressBlock»»

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

**Re: Dorset Council Children’s Services Concerns about [insert name(s) of child(ren)]**

**LETTER BEFORE PROCEEDINGS**

**HOW TO AVOID GOING TO COURT**

I am writing to let you know how concerned Dorset Council’s Children’s Services have become about your care of your child/ren. I am writing to tell you that Dorset Council is thinking about starting care proceedings in respect of [name(s) of child(ren)]. This means that we may apply to court for care orders and [name(s) of child(ren)] could, if the Court decides that this is best for him/her/them, be taken into care.

We are so worried about your child(ren) that we will go to court unless you are able to improve things. There are things you can do which could stop this happening. We have set out in this letter the concerns that we have about [name(s) of child(ren)] 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 [date and time] at the [insert name of office] . The address is [address] and there is a map with this letter to help you find it. Please contact your social worker on [tel no] 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 [name(s) of child(ren)].

**PLEASE BRING A SOLICITOR TO THE MEETING ON [insert date]**

**Take this letter to a solicitor and ask him or her to come to the meeting with you. Your 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 Children’s Services. 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:

Name:

Address: Legal and Democratic Services, Colliton Park, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

e.mail:

Telephone: 01305 22 [insert extension number]

**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 child(ren), we will first try to find a placement 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(ren) 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 [tele 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.

Yours sincerely

NAME

**Team Manager**

**Local Office/Service**

CC: Social Worker [name]

 Dorset Council Chidlren’s Services

Enc: Map of Office

 List of Law Society Children Panel Solicitors

List of things we are worried about

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

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

[Outline concern and give examples of when this happened. This should capture chronic ongoing concerns as well as acute episodes/incidents]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Date  | Concern  |
| 1. |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |

**WHAT CHILDREN’S SERVICES HAVE DONE TO TRY TO HELP**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Date  | Assistance provided  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**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 try to bring a Solicitor with you, and ask your Solicitor to contact Dorset Council Child Care Legal Services on the number given in the accompanying letter.
2. Continue to see and work with your Social Worker [insert name] and allow him/her to see [name(s) of child(ren)].
3. At the meeting you will be asked to talk about how [name(s) of child(ren)] will be kept safe, with our help.
4. [Set out everything else you are asking of the parent such as agreeing to a family group conference, complete a cognitive functioning assessment, child protection plans]