

What is Pre Proceedings?

The aim of the pre -proceedings meeting is to agree a plan that sets out the concerns the LA has about your child or children.

It is the final process before court but this does not mean that all cases will go to court. You will receive a letter telling you what the local authorities concerns are and what they expect of you and the professionals supporting you.

You will be expected to attend a meeting where you will receive a plan about what changes you need to make and when they should be done by.

The plan will :-

- Clearly set out for you what concerns children's services have.
- Make clear what changes children's services would like you to make.
- Identify and put in place extra help and services needed to support you and your family.

There will be a review to see if plan is working and things are getting better or if they need to go to court. This usually takes place 6-8 weeks after the initial meeting.

You are entitled to free legal advice and your solicitor will attend meetings with you.

Your rights and responsibilities

You have parental responsibility, this can only change if a court order is in place.

Right to be included in decisions about your child or children

Right to information

Right to reasonable adjustments if needed. For example information that is meaningful to you, an interpreter

Right to participate in meetings about your child or children

Right to advocacy

Your responsibility

To be open and honest with professionals

To attend meetings and follow advice from your solicitor about plans in place

Duty of a social worker

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The local authority have a duty to provide services and support to children in need. This includes children who are at risk of harm or suffering from neglect or abuse. The local authority have to make sure that the services they provide are appropriate to the child's needs, promote their well-being, and take into account the child's and their parents' wishes and feelings.

The social worker will have completed a child and families assessment that they must share with you before any meeting takes place. They will also have completed a section 47 report which will explain what they are worried about and why.

You may be asked to think about a section 20.

This is a voluntary agreement with you and the local authority to place your child or children in temporary foster care. It cannot be used if you object.

Section 20 can be used if your child has nowhere to live and no one to look after them. For example it might be used if a parent is ill, in hospital or other difficulties.

The local authority can sometimes ask for this even if they have made an application to court.

You should not sign this before seeking advice from a solicitor

If a section 20 is agreed this must be recorded in writing and you and the local authority have a copy.

This agreement should be written in clear straight forward language

A section 20 agreement is only valid if you have capacity to give consent

You can contact an advocate on 01925 246888