



One Minute Guide - Public Law Outline

What is Public Law Outline?

The Public Law Outline (also known as PLO) sets out the duties of Local Authorities when considering making an application to the family court for a Care or Supervision Order. When an application is made to the court, the PLO (2014) alongside the Children and Families Act 2014, set out guidance as to the timescales in which proceedings should be completed.

The PLO has an important role in prevention, alongside other functions, and duties of the Local Authority. Where possible, pre-proceedings intervention and support, should be a mechanism to support families to address risk so to prevent the necessity to make a care application to be made.

What should pre-proceedings work include?

Legal Planning Meeting – All decisions as initiating PLO, should be informed by appropriate legal advice. The legal planning meeting will be attended by the allocated Social Worker, Team Manager, Solicitor and chaired by the Head of Service or Practice Manager.

Letter Before Proceedings – This is the letter sent to parents/carers in advance of a PLO meeting being held. The letter sets out the concerns the Local Authority hold, and the schedule of expectations parents/carers are asked to work towards. This letter should always be hand delivered to parents and will be required by any Solicitor representing the parent/carer. A list of local solicitors should accompany this letter.

Pre-Proceedings Meeting – This meeting should usually be held within seven working days of the letter before proceedings being shared with parents and should not exceed 10 working days. The meeting is attended by the parent/carer and their respective solicitors, the allocated social worker, team manager and legal representative of the Local Authority. The first PLO meeting should be chaired by the Head of Service. During the meeting the discussion will be documented, and all attendees should be sent a copy of the minutes within 7 working days.

Period of Change – This refers to the time given to parents/ carers to make the necessary agreed changes, as outlined within the schedule of expectations. During this period any agreed assessments should be undertaken and additional support for the family offered.

Pre-Proceedings Review – This meeting will usually be held 6 weeks after the initial meeting, the purpose of which is to review progress made against the schedule of expectations. Review meetings will continue to be held until pre-proceedings can conclude because sufficient progress has been made, or the risks necessitate an application to the court.

What Happens if the Local Authority Decide to Initiate Care Proceedings?

If, through pro-proceedings pathways, supported with other duties and functions within the Local Authority, the risk of significant harm for a child(ren) or young person(s) cannot be reduced – it may be necessary for an application to be made before the court.

Decisions regarding any application must be agreed by the Head of Service and Assistant Director.

An application is made to the court by the legal representative for the Local Authority and will be supported by a combined statement and care plan setting out the risks and needs for each subject child/ young person.

Useful Reading

[Re-Launch of the Public Law Outline \(PLO\) - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#)

[Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)