

Information for Parents and Carers

Public Law Outline (PLO)

Pre-proceedings Meeting

When Durham Children's Services (the Local Authority) is so concerned about the care and safety of your children, we have to consider whether to go to court to ask for a court order to keep your children safe. This means that a Pre-proceedings Meeting will be held so that we can work out what to do next.

It is really important that you come to the Pre-proceedings Meeting with a solicitor who specialises in family law so that they can give you advice about this.

These types of meetings are usually chaired by a Team Manager and other professionals will be there too, like your social worker, the solicitor for Durham Children's Services and a minute taker who will keep a record of the meeting.

Legal Aid

Parents or a person with parental responsibility for the children are entitled to legal aid once Durham Children's Services have written to you about the possibility of going to court. This means that bringing a solicitor with you to these meetings is free of charge.

Who to bring with you

It can be helpful for you to bring someone with you who is a support to you and the children, who knows about the worries and who can help us to think about what else would help to keep the children safe.

What will happen at the meeting?

At the meeting, Durham Children's Services will be clear with you about what the worries are, how this is affecting the children and what we think needs to happen so that the children can be safe.

We will talk to you about anything that might be making it harder or getting in the way of you being able to safely care for your children and think together about what else would help to make sure that the children are safe and well cared for.

If you and the other people in your children's lives who love and care about them can show Durham Children's Services that you can make the changes needed to reduce or manage the worries, then this could mean that we no longer need to consider going to court to keep the children safe.