

# PRE-BIRTH POLICY

Why are looked after children and care leavers referred to social services?

All under 16's are referred whether they are a looked after child or not. For 16-18 year olds a referral is always considered because of their age. This is a legal duty.

Previously, care leavers were automatically referred just because they were a care leaver. A change to the policy in 2020 means this will no longer happen. Care leavers will now be risk assessed and all decisions will be made in discussion with them.

## Understanding the referral process

### What is the Pre-Birth Timeline?

A Pre-Birth Timeline shows key dates within the pregnancy of the mother and what should be done at each stage. This process help professionals to make decisions and allow workers and their managers to make sure they're following the correct process.

★ **Early Help Assessment:** This is an assessment that allows professionals and parents to discuss and record the family needs. This will include discussing strengths, goals, and suggested improvements. Together a plan is made on how best to support the family.

★ **A Legal Gateway Meeting** is a meeting for professionals to discuss and decide whether to go forward with court proceedings.

### 6-12 Weeks

→ **6-12 Weeks:** Booking appointments with Community Midwives. Referrals and contacts can be sent/received. ★  
Early Help assessments can also commence.


When requesting a referral, the professional involved will have to voice their concerns as clear/soon as possible in regard to the circumstances and behaviours that may impact the unborn baby and what risks may be involved.

### 20-24 Weeks

← **20 to 24 weeks:** (in situations where the legal framework may be required) Legal Gateway Meeting and PLO letters to be issued where possible. CP process to also be initiated parallel to legal process. ★ ★



### 24 Weeks


→ **24 weeks:** Pre-Birth Child and Family (C&F) assessment to be completed where sufficient notice has been given.

A Public Law Outline letter is sent to the parent(s) and outlines the professionals worries about both the child(ren) and the parent(s). 


When the professionals hold a PLO meeting they set out the Local Authority's responsibilities and court plans or decisions.


## 28-30 Weeks

 **28-30 weeks:** Unborn Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) to be held and/or linked to sibling. Any psychological assessments to be completed by the ICPC. 



 A Pre-Birth meeting is where professionals discuss and make plans about giving the best possible care and support for pregnant mothers who have a current or previous severe mental health problem. An assessment is also done during this meeting.


## 40 Weeks

**40 weeks/Baby born:** there must be a discharge planning meeting for an unborn child on a Child Protection Plan (and some Child in Need) before leaving the hospital. 




This means that within 7 days before the baby is due, all of the work done to safeguard the unborn baby must be sent to the Court to ensure the baby will be placed into care. 


## 25-27 Weeks

 **25-27 weeks:** Strategy Discussions to be held for unborn children who require a Child Protection Plan. Pre-birth meeting to take place with Health to develop a Birth Plan. Peri-Natal Team to be present if mental health issues are a concern. 



 A Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) is a meeting that will decide what plans need to be put into place to keep the unborn baby safe. Parent(s), families and professionals will all be involved in this meeting.


## 39 Weeks

 **39 weeks:** If care plan is to issue proceedings at birth, paperwork should be with legal 7 days before the estimated due date.  

 These assessments include: Early Help Assessment, Risk Assessment (identifying any risks the unborn baby) & the Pre-Birth Assessment.

## Baby Born

 **Baby Born:** If in the Care Plan states that the baby is to be removed from the parent(s) at birth, all of the paperwork completed over the pregnancy should be given to Court within 24 hours of the birth. 

 This means that as soon as the baby is born, all paperwork and assessment information must be given to the Court within 24 hours if the baby is to be placed into care.