**Appendix 1**

***Template Letter Before Proceedings***

***(Annex B, Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Court Orders and Pre-Proceedings (2014))***

**Letter Before Proceedings**

**IMPORTANT!**

**PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER - TAKE IT TO A SOLICITOR NOW**

**Office Address Contact**

**Direct line**

**My ref Fax**

**E-mail Date**

SENT BY [HAND/ RECORDED DELIVERY]

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

**Re: Insert [name(s) of child(ren)] –**

**LAST OPPORTUNITY TO STOP YOUR CHILDREN BEING REMOVED FROM YOUR CARE**

I am writing to you on behalf of [name of LA] Children’s Services.

As you know, [insert name of social worker] has been very concerned about your care of [name(s) of child(ren)] for some time. Things have not improved sufficiently and the situation for your child(ren) has become so serious that we may need to take action.

We are writing to you now to give you a last chance to make the changes to make sure [name(s) of child(ren)] is/are safe. Otherwise we will go to Court to ask for them to be removed from your care, if the Court decides that is best for them.

We have set out below why we are so concerned about your care of [name(s) of child(ren)]and the things you can and MUST do if you want to avoid us asking the Court to remove them from your care.

**HERE ARE OUR MAIN CONCERNS:**

***[Outline concerns and give examples of when this happened. This***

***should capture ongoing concerns as well as specific concerns]***

***Date(s) Problem***

***Date(s) Problem***

**WHAT YOU MUST DO SO THAT WE WILL NOT GO TO COURT:**

**Come to a meeting with us to talk about these concerns**. This meeting will be 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. At the meeting we will:

• discuss with you what you will need to do to make your child(ren) safe;

• discuss with you how we will support you to do this;

• discuss with you who in your family could look after your child(ren) if you are not able to; and

• explain what steps we will take if we continue to be worried about [name(s) of child(ren].

**Please contact your social worker on [tel.no.] to tell us if you will come to the meeting.**

1. **Get a solicitor**: It is really important that you get advice from a solicitor who specialises in family law as soon as possible. They will help you to understand the situation and advise you about your rights and your options. You also have a right to bring your solicitor with you to the meeting. If you give them this letter you will not have to pay.

In case you do not have a solicitor, 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 very helpful if you do.

Information your Solicitor will need is:

Local Authority Legal Contact: Name, Address & Telephone:

2. **Get your wider family involved:** 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 and place them with one of your relatives or a person or person(s) close to your child(ren), if it is best for your child(ren) to do this. At the meeting we will discuss with you and your solicitor 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 [tel. 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]

Local Authority In-house Legal Team

Enc:

Map of office

List of solicitors firms who are members of the Law Society’s Children Law

Accreditation Scheme