

Hull City Council Legal Gateway Panel

Terms of Reference

- 1 The purpose of this panel is to determine threshold for accommodation (section 20), pre proceedings (PLO) and instigation of care proceedings. It also considers requests for extensions to Supervision Orders.
- 1.1 It also acts to initiate any work that is needed to ensure Legal orders are gained at the earliest opportunity, reducing drift and delay and addressing any barriers to progress the case. The aim is to improve the timeliness, quality and planning of cases within Children's Social Care.
- 1.2 The panel should not be used to supplement assessments or undertake case management or supervision.
- 1.3 If a young person is not yet looked after and an emergency admission into care is required, the Social Worker should:
 - Seek agreement from Head of Service.
 - Give an early warning to PACT.
 - Book onto the next Legal Gateway Panel.

2. Panel Structure

- Chair of Panel – Head of Service
 - Panel Administrator
 - Legal Advisor- LA Solicitor
 - Court Case Manager
 - CP Conference Chair Manager
 - Virtual school representative
 - Team Manager and Social Worker presenting
- 2.1 The panel shall be deemed quorate if it consists of the panel chair, a legal advisor and one other panel member.

3. Panel Business

- 3.1 Panel will consider the following:
 - Requests for Section 20 (inc. relinquished babies)
 - Retrospective agreement to Section 20 (where Head of Service or Group Manager on call has agreed to accommodate in emergency situations)
 - Requests for pre- proceedings (PLO) to commence
 - Requests to initiate care proceedings

- Retrospective agreement to care proceedings (where Head of Service) has agreed in emergency situations).
- Supervision Orders due to expire within 3 months

4. Pre- panel consultation and Planning

- 4.1 Prior to requesting presentation at Legal Gateway Panel the Social Worker and Team Manager need to consult with their Group Manager about the child/children and the reasons why the current level of monitoring/support is not keeping the child/ren safe. Group Managers will expect that the harm matrix will have been completed prior to this consultation.
- 4.2 The Group Manager will then seek approval to attend Legal Gateway Panel from the relevant Head of Service who will add their management oversight to the child/ young person's case record.
- 4.3 The Group Manager/ Head of Service will agree a timeframe about expectations for attendance at Legal Gateway Panel. This must be recorded in LCS
- 4.5 Group Managers must evidence in their authorisation for request to panel the following: -
- Evidence the threshold level and what is the level of risk for the child/young person. Also, evidence whether there is any improvements or cooperation that may reduce the need for legal action.
 - Plan – The care plan, the risk management plan and the contingency plan. What care plan we are wishing to progress and what will be the outcomes for the children and young people, what are we trying to achieve and where are we trying to get to with this course of action. The risk management plan – evidence of the risk and what action we are taking to try and reduce the risk, elements we can change, improvements that we could make and those that we have identified as meeting threshold. Details of the contingency plan to be provided.

5. Administration of panel and necessary documentation

- 5.1 Legal gateway panel is held weekly on Tuesday afternoons. (Occasionally additional panels will also be arranged to meet demand).

6. New requests

(Section 20, PLO, initiation of care proceedings and extensions to Supervision Orders)

- 6.1 Legal Gateway Panel forms are available on the forms list on Liquid Logic LCS and can be initiated by the Social Worker or Team Manager.
- 6.2 This form needs to be initiated and completed by the Social Worker / Team Manager and authorised by the Group Manager by the Thursday of the week preceding panel.
- 6.3 The harm matrix must be completed on Liquid Logic LCS before panel
- 6.4 For PLO requests a draft PLO letter and agreement must be attached to the request form or sent to the panel Chair or court case manager before panel.
- 6.5 The panel administrator will formulate an agenda and ensure time slots are distributed for all attendees. Team Managers/ Group Managers are responsible for ensuring that reports are provided on time.
- 6.6 The panel administrator will send calendar invites to Social Workers and Team Managers notifying them of the time they need to attend panel (currently via Teams). Each matter is listed on the agenda for 15 or 20 minutes.
- 6.7 The panel administrator will ensure that panel members have access to all the submitted documentation in the Legal Gateway Panel 'Teams' folder as soon as it becomes available.

7. Reviews of PLO

- 7.1 The legal gateway panel review form is initiated by the panel administrator after panel. The panel date for review of the PLO process is agreed at panel.
- 7.2 The LGP review form must to be completed and authorised by the Group Manager on the Thursday before the review panel .

8. Attendance and Process at Legal Gateway Panel

- 8.1 Panel members will read the necessary documentation provided before panel- namely the Legal Gateway Panel request form, the most recent assessment, the harm matrix and, in case of PLO requests, the draft PLO letter and agreement.
- 8.2 Expectation of panel- that the risks are clearly identified within the reports; that there are clear plans, including the contingency plan, with rationale for the proposed course of action; and that there is a full analysis to evidence the threshold and why the course of action is presented.
- 8.3 The Panel Chair will ask the Social Worker and Team Manager to provide a succinct account of the circumstances leading to the request including any recent updates.

- 8.4 For reviews of PLO, the Panel Chair will ask for an update of the progress that has been made since the PLO process started.
- 8.5 Panel members will be invited by the Chair to ask the Social Worker and Team Manager questions by way of clarification.
- 8.6 The Panel Chair will review actions taken and scrutinise where actions have not been undertaken within agreed timescales.
- 8.7 The legal advisor will be invited to provide legal advice about: -
- The appropriateness of a section 20 arrangement
 - Whether 'threshold' is met for PLO and care proceedings and the reasons for this.
 - Whether the 'separation test' is met
 - Further 'evidence' that may be needed
 - Whether threshold is met for extension to Supervision Order that is due to expire.

9. Panel decisions and planning

- 9.1 Having considered all information available, the Panel Chair will invite panel members views about the requested course of action so that a decision can be made.
- 9.2 Should there be a difference of opinion the Panel Chair will ultimately make the decision.
- 9.3 The Social Worker and Team Manager will be informed of the panel decision.

In addition to a decision, plans will be made about the following: -

- Dates that PLO letter and agreements should be given to parents (after they are checked by legal).
- Dates that PLO meetings should be held with the parents
- The date when the PLO process will next be reviewed at legal gateway panel
- The date that court paperwork should be submitted to the legal department and the proposed issue date.

10. Following Legal Gateway Panel

- 10.1 The legal episode will be started or updated on Liquid Logic LCS.
- 10.2 For PLO matters, that are initiated by the Assessment teams the Social Worker and Team Manager will liaise with the new team to make plans for the PLO intervention.

- 10.3 The Court Case Manager will monitor the timely completion of PLO letters, meetings and court documentation and liaise with Social Workers, Team Managers and legal department accordingly. Drift and delay will be escalated to the relevant Group Manager.
- 10.4 Legal section will inform Court Case Manager of any matters where Social Workers need support in completing documentation.
- 10.5 The decision record summarising the outcome of the panel will be completed by the panel administrator and Panel Chair on the legal gateway panel form in Liquid Logic LCS by close of business on the Friday of the week of the panel
- 10.6 The Panel Chair will escalate concerns about drift and delay during the PLO period to the relevant Head of Service.
- 10.7 The Panel Chair will escalate concerns about missing or late reports, forms, letters and agreements to the relevant Head of Service.
- 10.8 Social Workers and Team Managers attending Panel can escalate concerns about the conduct or decision making of the panel to their respective Head of Service

11 Reporting and continuous practice improvement

- 11.1 Data reports on the functioning, throughput and outcomes of the panel will be presented to CYPFS SLT monthly. Periodic sampling, audit and additional reporting will be undertaken by IPQ / QA team to inform learning and practice development
- 11.2 Feedback gathering from Managers and Social Workers attending panel will happen annually to inform practice development and to support improved functioning and decision making.

Version 3

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