



The hope is that the parents will come to the meeting with a Solicitor. The Solicitor will be able to help the parents to negotiate an agreement with the Social Services department to try to avoid the need to go to court. This formal meeting is often known as a “**pre-proceedings meeting**” or “**PLO meeting**”.

In some cases the Social Workers may feel that the risk of harm to a child is so great, or the case is so urgent, that the case should go straight to court. In these cases often no meeting takes place at all.

If you have been asked to go to a PLO or pre-proceedings meeting it is important that you seek urgent legal advice. **If you are a parent or person with parental responsibility you will be entitled to legal aid and you will not have to pay for legal advice.**



Who We Are

About Us

Steven Barratt at Alison Fielden & Co in Cirencester (01285 653261) is an accredited member of the Law Society Children’s Panel. **He is the only member of this panel based in Cirencester.** He has several years experience of representing parents and other family members involved in care cases.

Steven works with care and professional sensitivity, always keeping children’s welfare at the forefront of the case while making sure that your voice is heard.

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**CHILDREN &
SOCIAL SERVICES.
DO YOU NEED
OUR HELP?**



If you are a parent involved in these types of cases you'll probably be automatically entitled to receive **free legal representation**. Other family members might be entitled to legal aid depending on their circumstances.

If you have been asked to go to a **social services case conference**, to go to a **pre-proceedings (PLO) meeting**, or have **received court papers** please contact us **urgently**.

Social Services Court Proceedings

If social services are very concerned about your child they may go to Court to ask for a care order or a supervision order, or sometimes an emergency protection order.

They will only do this if they believe that your child is suffering significant harm, or that your child would be likely to suffer significant harm if a court order is not made.

If court proceedings are started it is likely to be several months before the Court makes a final decision. Before the Court reaches a final decision it can make temporary or "interim" orders about your child. These can include an interim care order which could result in your child being placed in temporary foster care or with a relative, while the court case continues.

If you have been told that Social Services are going to Court about your child then it is important that you get legal advice without delay. Steven Barratt has experience in representing clients in all levels of courts and in just about every type of case.

If you are a parent of the child concerned, or a person with parental responsibility, you will be entitled to legal aid regardless of your financial circumstances and so you won't have to pay any legal costs.

Child Protection Case Conference

If Social Workers are concerned that a child is at risk of harm they may arrange a child protection conference. A child protection conference is a meeting of all of the different agencies who might be involved in a child's life. As well as Social Services this could include a child's school, nursery, doctor, health visitor, support worker, probation or the police.

The purpose of the child protection conference is for representatives from these agencies to share information about the child and to decide whether the child needs a "*child protection plan*".



As a parent you have the right to attend a child protection case conference. You **will** have an opportunity to have your say and to correct any information that is incorrect. However, only the professional agencies vote on whether there should be a child protection plan.

If you have been asked to go to a child protection conference Steven can advise you about what is likely to happen and about how best to deal with the meeting. In certain cases he may be able to come to the meeting with you in order to give you support.

PLO or Pre-Proceedings Meetings

When Social Workers are concerned about the welfare of a child, they may be thinking about taking the case to court so that they can ask the court to make orders to protect the child.

In most cases the Public Law Outline requires the Social Services department to arrange a meeting with the parent(s) to see if it is possible to reach agreement about what needs to happen to protect the child from harm, so that court proceedings can be avoided.