

CARE PROCEEDINGS

Sometimes social services departments find it necessary to intervene in the lives of children. They can do this in a number of ways – either through court application or through child protection plans. It may be that you have received a PLO or “pre proceedings letter”; which outlines the concerns the social services department has and should set out what you are to do. Any involvement by a social services department is a serious thing and can lead to a lot of upset and uncertainty.

Legal Aid is available for you to go to solicitors but only if you are either a parent or a parental responsibility holder. Care proceedings are so serious that as a parent or PR holder you would wish to go to a suitable “children panel” solicitor as soon as you can. This is what we would encourage you to do.

However at 12 College Place we recognise that there are certain people who do not have the advantage of Legal Aid to pay for their legal costs. Those people include –

- Uncles and aunts
- Grandparents
- Older siblings who are not part of the social services application/case

These people may well have cared for a child that the social services department are now interested in. Or indeed that may wish to be considered as a carer in the future. This will be a very important time for you as the social services department will be under a duty to consider and assess you as a carer if you choose to put yourself forward.

Sadly often either the social services department do not assess people or they don't do the right assessment. You may therefore benefit from timely and sound advice over what you can do.

12CP BARRISTERS FAMILY

FACT 3

Your options may include –

- Applying to the Court to become a party to the care proceedings
- Issuing your own application for a residence order, special guardianship order or contact order
- Ensuring that you are assessed as a carer by the social services department and the Court
- Offering a place for the child or children to live now in the immediate future to save them going into foster care or into a children's home

At 12 College Place we have years of experience in dealing with care proceedings and can advise and assist you through every part of the court process. We can advise you about your chances of success, about the contents of assessments on you and represent you at court hearings.