



## **Northwest Children's Services Updated Bitesize Self-Evaluation of use of Pre –Proceedings, Court Proceedings and Private Proceedings**

This Self-Evaluation audit tool has been developed from the findings of the PLO peer review commissioned by the Department of Education (2020), the Public Law Advisory Group report (Dec 2020), and the Family Justice Board Statement 'Priorities for the Family Justice System' (Dec 2020).

The Self-Evaluation audit tool is intended to assist local authorities fulfil key recommendations of these reports, with Point 14 of the FJB statement being the highest priority, *'the system needs to be ready to support all vulnerable children and adults who depend upon it, and the greatest need is to ensure that those who need support and safeguarding receive it at the right time. Where appropriate, pre-proceedings work, and the extended family network should be used. The priority should be to renew existing good practice within the Public Law Outline and implement a system-wide leadership focus on practice improvement'*.

The Self-Evaluation audit tool is a framework to reflect local strengths and needs. There is no minimum or 'right' amount of information, although consideration of all five areas listed below is likely to provide the best overview. The tool should be used in conjunction with the accompanying 'Public Law Toolkit'.

**Area A: Management of cases prior to stepping into PLO**

**Area B: Pre - Proceedings**

**Area C: Care Proceedings**

**Area D: Private Proceedings.**

**Area E: Data management**

**Name of Local Authority.....**

**Completed by.....**



Questions	Describe Local Arrangements	Scale effectiveness 1(low) 10(high)	Strengths	Development areas	What needs to happen?
-----------	-----------------------------	---	-----------	-------------------	-----------------------

**Area A – How are Cases Managed before stepping into PLO?**

1. How effective is child protection planning and are children stepping into PLO at the correct time?					
2. What management oversight of child protection planning is in place, and at what stage/s do senior managers become part of planning and review?					
3. What information is gained from external partner agencies to support risk management, assessment and decision making? What services do you have to support families in crisis?					



<p>4. Are Family Group Conferences routinely held during CP cases? How is the family and wider network included in assessment and planning?</p>					
<p>5. Are you starting your expert assessments on cases likely to escalate, including gathering evidence such as drug testing?</p>					
<p><b>Area B: Pre-proceedings</b></p>					
<p>1. Are you coming in to initial legal gateways/meetings having completed timely assessments and intervention, including testing, family plans, alternative carers identified?</p>					
<p>2. Are we seeing</p>					
<p>Review Family Group Conferences</p>					



being held in Pre Proceedings?					
3. How effective is your Pre Proceedings process to support families to effect change and divert cases away from court? (Are you doing assessments in a timely manner, are viabilities now being done in PP etc.?)					
4. Looking at your data are you seeing cases stepping up and down to be proportionate and necessary, in line with your evidence?					
5. Is use of voluntary accommodation considered (Section 20) whilst being in Pre Proceedings, rather than immediately going to court?					

**Area C: Care proceedings**



1. Is this the last resort and does the evidence gathered support this? Is the 'clear blue water' test applied?					
2. Is your data showing that your urgent hearings have reduced?					
3. Are advocates meetings used proactively to identify and resolve issues? How included does the Social Worker feel in this process and do they have time to give instructions?					
4. Has CAFCASS Guardian and IRO been engaged in regular and open dialogue? How does the IRO support					



effective Care Planning?					
5. If the order applied for is not granted, how is the learning captured and used to improve practice and decision making? (Learning circles, briefings?)					
6. What are identified as the factors in your Local Authority/ courts which can lead to delay within proceedings?					
<b>Area D: Private Proceedings</b>					
1. Has your LA linked in with Early Help and Universal Services, to support family conflict and separation in the community to reduce the referrals to CSC?					



2. Are you consistent in your response to families and partners in the advice given around separated parents and parental conflict?					
3. Are you now capturing data on your private law work, to measure impact and service demands?					
4. Are you being contacted by Cafcass or the court on cases when a section 7 or 37 is going to be directed? If not what are you doing about this?					
<b>Area E: Data Management</b>					
1. What is your data telling you about the effectiveness of Pre proceedings for your					



children and families?					
2. What is your data telling you about the timeliness and outcomes of your care proceedings?					
3. What is your data telling you about the timeliness and outcomes for children in private proceedings?					

### Summary and Analysis

When thinking about the overall 'effectiveness' of the SEAT, what does our 0 and 10 look like and mean to you locally and regionally?

0 is We are unable to show how we utilise networks, oversight and assurance recordings are not as robust as needed, that means we see an escalation in issuing. We are unable to evidence that our Early Help/Years offer/Intervention reduces that need for statutory interventions, and we are seeing further escalations to a higher level of intervention. We cannot showcase what partnership working looks like and we are not robust enough within pre proceedings.





10 is We can show that we utilise networks, have good oversight and assurance recorded, that means we only issue where necessary. We can evidence that our Early Help/Years offer/Intervention reduces the need for statutory interventions, highlighting that risk could be managed at a lower level. If not, then we can highlight that strong pre proceedings process where partnerships are at the centre.

**Overall Scaling (1 low, 10 high):**

- Effectiveness of CIN and Child Protection to support families to stay outside of the PLO process.
- Effectiveness of Pre-Proceedings Process to work proactively with a family or support safe arrangements/ family placements to prevent the need for Public Law Proceedings.
- Effectiveness of Care Proceedings Process to make timely permanence decision for children.

What are the key strengths that can be built upon to improve practice and the local system?



What are the key challenges to practice and to the local system?	
How will these be addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To meet immediate needs (short term)</li><li>• To drive medium- and longer-term improvements?</li></ul>	