**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING REPORTS UNDER S.37 CHILDREN ACT 1989**

1. Under Section 37 the court can order the local authority to investigate and report back on the circumstances of a child involved in private law proceedings.
2. The court order may specify the date by which the report must be available. Where no date is specified, the usual time limit is 8 weeks from the date of the order.
3. The Order may also require the person who writes the Report to attend Court on a specified date.
4. Once it makes a S.37 order the court can appoint a Guardian ad Litem and may make an interim care or supervision order even though no local authority has applied for one.
5. The role of the social worker is to carry out the investigation and to report back to the court. S.37 lists certain matters which must be covered in the report.
6. The maker of the report is not providing a witness statement as they would be in a public law matter. (The `declaration' required in witness statements should not be used.) The report should therefore be relatively short, provide information on the investigation and focus on assessment and conclusions.
7. It is important to read the order carefully and any statements or other documents provided by the court.
8. In most S.37 cases the family will already be known to social services. The parties may have made statements giving information about social services involvement. To ensure accuracy, it may therefore be necessary to summarise the facts of previous social services contact.
9. Under S.37 the court will "direct the appropriate authority to undertake an INVESTIGATION of the child's circumstances" where "it appears to the court that it may be appropriate for a care or supervision order to be made with respect to him"
10. This means that the court has reason to believe the child may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and is, in effect, making a child protection referral.
11. The court will be seeking an objective professional view as to whether a child protection order is needed and if not, what other services or action would assist the child.
12. When undertaking a S.37 investigation the authority must consider whether they should apply for a care or supervision order provide services for the child or the family; or take any other action with respect to the child
13. When the authority decides NOT to apply for a care or supervision order they must inform the court of the reasons for that decision whether the decision will be reviewed if so, date of the review what services, if any, have been or will be provided any other action taken or proposed with respect to the child
14. These matters MUST be included in the S.37 report. There is no prescribed format for S.37 reports. The headings outlined below are for guidance only and may not be suitable for every case. The format for the front sheet should always be used. Pages and paragraphs should be numbered and sub-headings used if appropriate. All reports should be signed and dated.

**THIS REPORT IS CONFIDENTIAL AND MUST NOT BE DISCLOSED WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE COURT**

**IN THE INNER CENTRAL FAMILY COURT**

**Re: [CHILD/RENS FULL NAME] DOB:**

**REPORT UNDER S.37 CHILDREN ACT 1989**

**Date:**

**Made by: [FULL NAME OF PERSON PREPARING THE REPORT]**

**of: [PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS]**

**WHO YOU ARE:** current post, qualifications and experience

**DETAILS OF ORDER:** date made, date received, issues asked to address

**SUMMARY OF ENQUIRIES UNDERTAKEN:**

List documents read: Example: Statement of mother, date ---

Statement of father, date ---

Report of , date

Social work files

List interviews: Examples: Mother, at her home on date

Child, at home on date

Father, at office on date

List contact observed: Examples: Child and Father at - - on dates

List agencies consulted:

**FAMILY STRUCTURE:**

Mother: name DOB: Address: Child: name DOB: Address:

**SHORT SUMMARY FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF PREVIOUS SOCIAL SERVICES CONTACT:**

**FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF ENQUIRIES UNDERTAKEN:**

It may be useful in this section to use subheadings, for example:

Mother Father Child

**WISHES AND FEELINGS:**

Each parent Other relevant adults

**CHILD – WELFARE CHECKLIST** S1(3) (a) to (f)

a. The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of his age and understanding).

b. His physical, emotional and educational needs.

c. The likely effect on him of any change in his circumstances

d. His age, sex, background and any characteristics of his, which the court considers relevant.

e. Any harm which he has suffered or is at risk of suffering.

f. How capable each of his parents, and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant, is of meeting his needs.

g. The range of powers available to the court under this act in the proceedings in question

**ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION:**

**ANY AGREEMENTS REACHED:**

**CONSIDERATION OF CARE OR SUPERVISION ORDER:**

Will the local authority apply for CO/SO

Reasons for this decision

If decision is NOT to apply for CO/SO, will decision be reviewed?

If so, date of review

**CONSIDERATION OF PROVISION OF S.17 SERVICES:**

Current services to child and family

Planned services for child and family

**ANY OTHER ACTION PROPOSED WITH RESPECT TO THE CHILD:**

This section 37 report has been prepared by

Full name:

Professional position:

Signature:

Date:

Work address and telephone number:

**To be endorsed by PO only if SO/CO application to be made**

**Delete below if not required**

This section 7 has been endorsed on behalf of the London Borough of Camden by

Full name:

Professional position:

Signature:

Date:

Work address and telephone number: