



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

The Legal Gateway Panel; a short guide for social workers

The Legal Gateway Panel is replacing the Care Pathway Panel and now includes the functions of a Legal Planning Meeting. This will avoid duplication and streamline requests.

Social workers will need to apply to the Panel whenever they are considering applying for care proceedings or other court order.

For more details see the [Panel Terms of Reference](#).

When to refer to the Panel

- You are considering care proceedings in respect of a child and need to find out if the threshold has been met.
- You need to restrict the movements of a looked after child for their own safety and this may require a Deprivation of Liberty order or Secure order.
- Any other legal order such as a placement order, special guardianship order etc.
- Where a child has been accommodated under section 20 for more than 6 months.
- A child is subject to a Supervision order that is due to return to court: these cases should be referred to the Panel **at least 3 months prior to the expiration date** of the order for a decision on whether or not to apply to the Court to extend the duration of the order.

Cases that already in the PLO must be referred back to the Panel for monitoring and reviewing progress at **4 weeks, 8 weeks and 12 weeks** and where a case is likely to carry on **past 16 weeks**. Return dates for these cases will be fixed at each Panel hearing.

Cases involving UASC and homeless 16 and 17 year olds continue to be referred to the Resources Panel.

About the Panel

The Panel is held every Monday morning and is chaired by the Director or designated other and attended by the CIN Head of Service, the Director of Relational Practice, the FGC manager and the Edge of Care manager. Legal Services also attend to provide legal advice.

The purpose of the Panel is to discuss and make decisions on cases where legal intervention is likely to be needed in order to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

How to refer

- Complete the Panel Referral and Recommendations form available on MOSAIC ([guidance available here](#)). The form should provide a summary of the circumstances of the case and the primary evidence for making the request.
- Send the form to your service manager for authorisation and comment.
- Your application should be supported by the following documents:
 - Most recent child and family assessment
 - Chronology
 - Genogram
 - Current CP/CIN plan
 - Outline initial care plan (where care proceedings are sought)
 - Other relevant assessments
 - A clear statement of the primary evidence that would form the basis of any court application to be clearly indicated on the referral form referencing these documents.
- It is important that the relevant supporting documents are forwarded to the Panel in time to allow them to read and digest the information and that the information is as succinct as possible.
- Once you have authorisation, send the completed referral form and the relevant documents to the Panel administrator via MOSAIC **by 3pm on the Thursday prior to the Monday Panel meeting**. If referrals are not received by the deadline the case will not be considered at Panel.

Attending the Panel

Social workers and their managers are expected to attend the Panel meeting and should be ready to present the evidence, clarify any points and be part of the discussion around next steps. Each case will have an allocated slot of 15 minutes and following discussion, the Panel will make a decision on the next steps for the case, for example, authorising an application to the Court.

Decisions will be recorded on the Panel Referral and Recommendations form and this should be uploaded to the child's MOSAIC record.