



Children's Safeguarding and Family Help

Care Pathways Panel - the child's journey
Terms of reference and processes

Care Pathways Panel

1 Description and purpose of Panel

- The Care Pathways Panel is a multi-agency forum that makes decisions and provides decisions on cases presented where a request is made for a child to become looked after or where pre proceedings or care proceedings under the Public Law Outline are being considered.
- The Panel aims to facilitate good outcomes for children by making recommendations to social workers on the most suitable interventions and care plans for a child. Bringing a child into care is a last resort and all options should have been considered before presentation.
- The Panel provides a forum for case discussion and access to specialist knowledge to inform decision-making that is timely, transparent and ensures consistency of approach and fair application of thresholds.
- The Care Pathways Panel is a relational space providing high support and high challenge to social work practitioners in order to make the best decisions for children.

2 Framework of decision-making

Panel decisions will be based on the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount; where possible, and as far as it is consistent with their welfare, children should be brought up in their families and should only be looked when there is no other option to keep the child safe.
- Decisions on children's future care are made in a timely manner that avoids drift and delay.
- Social workers will work in partnership with children and their families.
- Pre-proceedings steps are used as an opportunity to work in partnership with parents to address parenting issues so that care proceedings can be avoided and children can remain living at home. Care proceedings under the Public Law Outline are only pursued where it can clearly be demonstrated that this is the best option for safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare and achieving permanence in a timeframe that is right for them.

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- All looked after children should have a permanence plan for a stable upbringing throughout their childhood.

3 Panel membership

- Panel membership is taken from a wide range of children's services in order to ensure the availability of expertise needed to consider the complex needs of the children who are referred and to promote joint decision-making and integrated service planning for their future care.
- Membership of the Panel is:
 - Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Help (Chair)
 - Children's Quality Assurance Head of Service (Vice chair)
 - Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service manager
 - Service Manager – Legal proceedings and case progression
 - Family, Friends and Fostering service manager
 - Head of the Virtual School
 - Representative from CAMHS
 - Representative from Education
 - Resources service manager or deputy
 - Head of Service - Corporate Parenting
 - Head of Service - CIN
- There will also be opportunities for additional panel members based on a rolling programme of professional development for that member.
- The panel agenda may dictate that panel membership is increased to include specialist roles from other agencies. If the case is open to more than one service, for example the Youth Justice Service, practitioners working on the case should be invited to join the panel by the presenting team.
- The Panel will meet weekly on Monday and Panel business will be coordinated by the Business Support Service.

4 Eligibility

Panel will consider and make decisions on the following cases:

- All cases where a legal planning meeting has been held and Legal Services has advised that the threshold for entering the PLO pre-proceedings steps or issuing care

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proceedings has been reached, and cases where emergency care proceedings have been initiated.

- Cases where a young person aged 16 or 17 has become looked after or is at risk of becoming looked after due to homelessness.
- Cases of young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers and who come into Camden's care.
- Cases where a child experiences a second placement breakdown and any subsequent breakdown after that.

5 Referral to Panel

Social workers and team managers should ensure that their service manager is aware that the case is being presented to the Panel. Appendix 1 shows a flowchart of actions and recording to be made on MOSAIC.

- ***For cases where a legal planning meeting has been held*** the LPM should have the outcome to present the case to the Panel and the social worker should task the MOSAIC form to the Business Support Officer and email it to them in advance of the Panel (see below).

Please refer to the pre-proceedings policy for details on Legal Planning Meetings (LPM). [plo-and-pre-proceedings-policy.pdf \(camden.gov.uk\)](https://www.camden.gov.uk/plo-and-pre-proceedings-policy.pdf)

- ***For cases going to Panel where a legal planning meeting has not been held***, the social worker should complete *the social work assessment/proposed plan* section of the *Care Pathways referral and panel recommendations* form and pass this to the manager, service manager and Head of Service for authorisation. The referral form will then be passed to the Business support officer in advance of the Panel (see below).

6 Documents for panel

- For all cases, a referral form (see above for details) and an up to date chronology must be made available for the panel meeting.
- Where a case is being presented following placement breakdown, the minutes of the disruption meeting should also be made available.

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- For cases involving UASC, the referral should provide a short statement of the current situation and the screening assessment should also be provided and this will function as the chronology.

All documents must be lodged with the responsible Business Support Officer by **12pm on Thursday prior to the following Monday panel**. The panel template will be sent out to team managers on Tuesday to record cases to be presented to panel and if the documents are not received in time, the **Business Support Officer will notify the relevant Head of Service** who will decide if the case can go forward to be heard at the panel.

7 Preparing for panel

- Social workers and their managers are expected to attend Panel (wherever possible this should be in person) to present the case and should prepare thoroughly in order to make the best use of time and ensure that all relevant information about the case and the child's needs is made available to the Panel to inform decision-making. Social workers should ensure that they have gathered the views and wishes of the child beforehand so that their voice can be heard.
- Panel members will endeavour to consider in advance what specific questions need to be asked in relation to each case so that they have a full understanding of the child's needs and how these can be best met when making decisions on care.

8 Panel outcomes

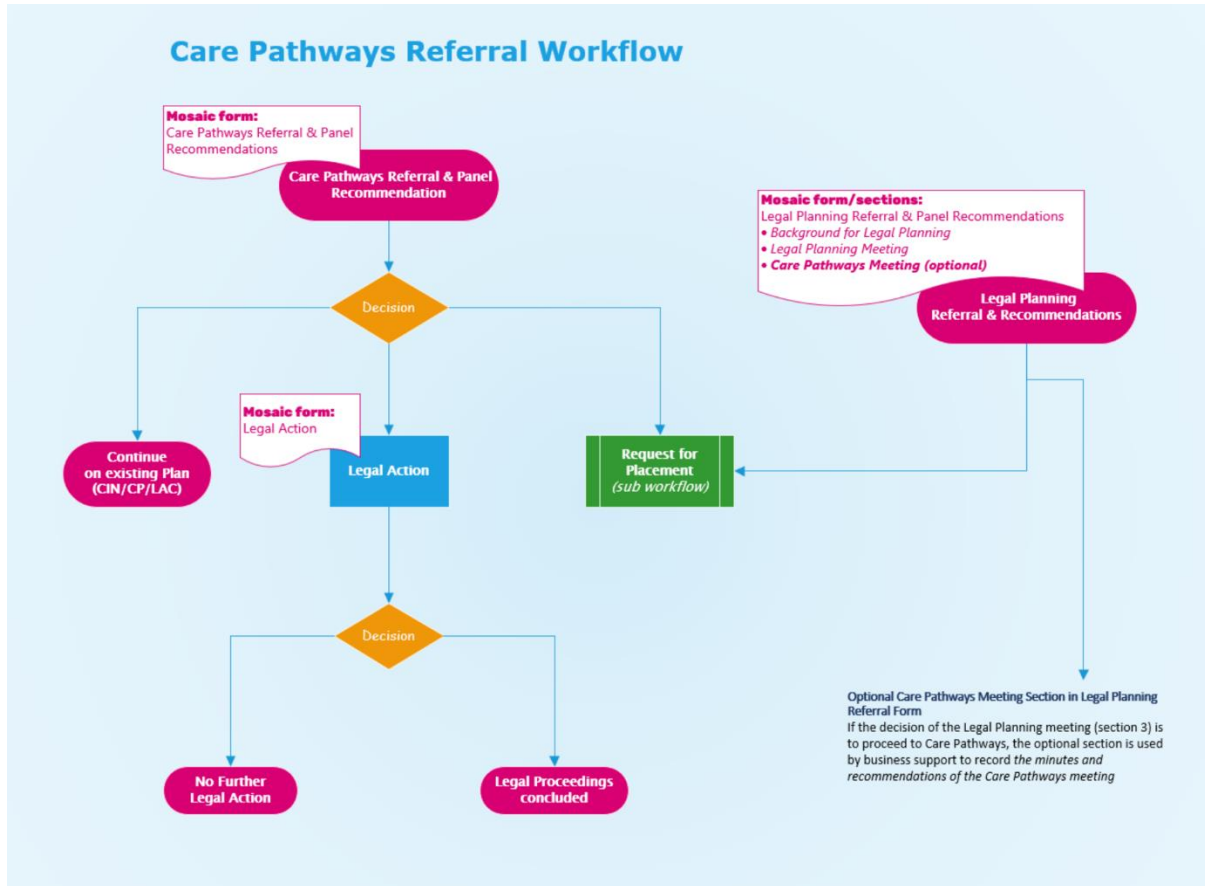
- Outcomes of the Panel will be recorded on the *Care Pathways referral and panel recommendations* by the Business Support Officer and sent to the chair of the Panel who will review and finalise within 48 hours.
- If the decision is to instigate pre-proceedings procedures under the PLO, social workers should follow the procedures and expectations regarding timing set out in the care proceedings policy available at: [plo-and-pre-proceedings-policy.pdf](#)

9 Review

The terms of reference and processes set out in this document will be reviewed annually by all partner agencies involved and a report on the evidence of the impact of the Panel on positive outcomes for the children and young people referred will be presented to departmental senior management team.

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Appendix 1: Care Pathways Referral MOSAIC Workflow



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Appendix 2: Care pathways panel flowchart

