**Terms you may hear – Child Protection at Home-Start Wyre Forest**

**Child Protection Plan (CPP)** A **child protection plan** is drawn up by the local authority. It sets out how the **child** can be kept safe, how things can be made better for the family and what support they will need. A Child Protection Case Conference will lead to a decision whether or not to place the child on aChild Protection Plan.

A Child Protection Case Conference may be held following an investigation under [section 47 Children Act 1989](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/47) (a child protection investigation). The Child Protection Case Conference is designed to enable professionals in the case to assess the relevant information and plan how to safeguard the child and promote his or her welfare.  Child Protection Plans should:

* Assess the likelihood of the child suffering harm and look at ways that the child can be protected
* Decide upon short and long term aims to reduce the likelihood of harm to the child and to protect the child's welfare
* Clarify people's responsibilities and actions to be taken; and
* Outline ways of monitoring and evaluating progress

**Child In Need Plan (CIN**) Children in need are defined in law as children who are aged under 18 and:-

* need local authority services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development
* need local authority services to prevent significant or further harm to health or development
* are disabled.

**Public Law Outline (PLO)**

When a Local Authority is concerned that a child is not being looked after properly or that the child is out of control, they may send the parent or person looking after the child a letter 12before court proceedings or ‘public law outline letter’ (PLO) to arrange a meeting. A PLO letter will be clearly marked with the words ‘Letter before proceedings’.

If the family don’t attend the meeting or cannot agree on the changes to be made, the Local Authority might apply to the court to start care proceedings.

**Care Proceedings**

The council can start ‘care proceedings’ if they’re very worried about a child. They can apply for a ‘care order’ which means the council will have [parental responsibility for the child](https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities) and can determine where the child can live.

They can apply for a ‘placement order’ as well if they believe that the child should be adopted. This allows the council to place the child with suitable adopters.

***Interim care orders***

At the start of care proceedings, the council asks the family court to make a temporary court order, called an ‘interim care order’.

If the court agrees, the council can take the child into care on a temporary basis. This can be for up to 8 weeks at first.

*Looking at the case*

It can take up to 26 weeks for a court to decide what should happen to the child. Some complex cases can take longer.

During this time a social worker, an officer from the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and other people will be trying to understand the reasons why the child may be at risk. They will also look at what can be done to keep them safe.

***Going to court***

Once all the information has been gathered, there will be a court hearing. The judge will look at the reports, and listen to everyone involved in the case, including:

* the child
* the parents
* solicitors representing parents and children
* the council social worker
* the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) officer

The child will go back home if the judge decides that they’re safe. If not, the council will find them a new home. That may be with:

* other members of their family
* friends
* a new family
* a children’s home
* a foster carer

***What Cafcass does***

In care proceedings, a Children’s Guardian from Cafcass represents the rights and interests of the child. They spend time getting to know the child and their family before the hearing.

The Children’s Guardian:

* appoints a solicitor for the child
* advises the court about what needs to be done before it can make a decision
* tells the court what they think would be best for the child – including the child’s wishes and feelings

The Children’s Guardian will usually spend time with the child and their family. They’ll tell the court if they haven’t seen the child before they write their report. They may also talk to other people who know the family, like teachers, social workers and health visitors.