

## Opening Hours

8.30am to 5.30pm - Monday to Friday

## Free Legal Surgery

We hold a free specialist legal surgery every Wednesday from 4.30pm to 5.30pm where we can advise you on any social services involvement. No appointment necessary.

## Out-of-Hours and Home Visits

Home visits and out-of-hours appointments can be arranged where appropriate, but you can always speak to us on our emergency helpline **07785 531 221** which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Our solicitors are members of the Law Society Children Panel and have extensive experience of dealing with children and families involved with social services.



# BROMLEYS

SOLICITORS LLP

T: 0161 330 6821

Out of hours: 07785 531 221

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# Step-by-Step Care Proceedings

Putting your children first



# BROMLEYS

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# BROMLEYS

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# Step-by-Step Care Proceedings

## Step 1

If social services believe that your child is suffering harm then, to ensure his/her safety, they may decide it is necessary to commence care proceedings to protect your child.

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## Step 2

Unless the level of risk requires the court to get involved immediately, care proceedings will only start after all efforts have been explored to keep your child within the family via the Child in Need or Child Protection Plan process.

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## Step 3

If these efforts have failed then each parent will be invited to a Public Law Outline meeting as a final attempt to avoid going to court. A PLO meeting takes place between social services, parents and their solicitors to discuss what must be done to stop social services going to court.

You must contact us immediately if you receive a letter inviting you to a PLO meeting. We can attend the meeting with parents. This will not cost parents anything.

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## Step 4

If everyone agrees, a written agreement will be put in place between the parents and social services which will then be monitored over time.



## Step 5

If parents don't agree to social services' proposals or do not follow the agreement, then social services may ask the court to take your child into care.

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## Step 6

Care proceedings will be issued at a Family Court. The court will appoint a children's guardian on behalf of your child. The guardian's job is to make recommendations to the court and to advise the court of your child's wishes and feelings. The guardian will also appoint a solicitor to represent your child.

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## Step 7

At the first hearing, the court will decide whether your child should live away from the family whilst evidence is gathered to enable it to make a final decision. The court will make this decision after hearing from you, social services and the guardian.

Funding: As a parent in care proceedings, legal representation is free as you are entitled to legal aid. If you receive court papers or find out that care proceedings are going to be started, it is important you contact us straight away so we can make sure you are represented at court and so we can help and advise you through the court proceedings.

## Step 8

The court will then decide what information it needs to decide where your child should live in the long term. This will include assessments of you and your family. Grandparents can also, in certain circumstances, ask to have their views taken into consideration. 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 social worker, parents and guardian, before making a decision.

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## Step 9

The starting point in making a decision is for your child to remain with the family. If this is not possible, the court will look at other options which may include placement with family members, foster care or adoption.

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## Step 10

The court expects a decision to be made in respect of your child within six months of social services going to court and we can help you through every step of this process.

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**BROMLEYS**  
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Clear, concise legal advice