



A decision is made to go into care proceedings

Contents

Who is this document for?	2
1. What does it mean when Children’s Services go into care proceedings?.....	2
2. Why might Children’s Services begin care proceedings?	3
3. How may the child be feeling?	5
4. When happens when Children’s Services begin care proceedings?	5
5. How professionals can support the child and the parent or carer they are living with	8
a) Identify vulnerability, and adapt the Interim Care Plan accordingly	8
b) Supporting the child and family’s emotional needs	10
c) Keeping the child informed and supporting their participation	11
6. Preparing for the first hearing.....	14
7. Where next?	14
References	14

Who is this document for?

This practice guide is principally for social workers in local authority Children's Services who are going into care proceedings for a child¹ who is thought to be being sexually abused or at risk of sexual abuse.

It is also relevant to the police, social workers working for the Children and family court advisory and support service (Cafcass), legal advisors and any other professionals working with the child at this time (in school, for example), to help them understand what is happening and what it means for the child.

If you think that a child is at imminent risk of harm, call the police on 999. If you are worried about a child and think they are at risk of harm, notify the child's local authority 'front door' referral service, even if the child is already open to Children's Services and allocated to a social worker.

1. What does it mean when a decision is made to go into care proceedings?

Making the decision to go into care proceedings (by applying for a Care Order or Supervision Order) is a significant step, including when child sexual abuse is a concern. The aim is to provide the child with protection, stability and support, but it may also create uncertainty and anxiety as the child navigates changes in who they live and spend time with.

Children's Services may apply for a Care Order or Supervision Order, using form C110A, when the threshold for public law proceedings is met under Section 31(2) of the Children Act 1989. This happens if Children's Services are satisfied that:

1. the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, **significant harm**, and
2. this harm will (or may) occur because the care given (or likely to be given) to the child is **not what would be reasonable to expect from a parent**, or because the child is beyond parental control.

To determine whether the legal threshold is met, Children's Services will have used the civil standard of proof – '**on the balance of probabilities**'. This means they can take steps to safeguard the child even if the threshold for criminal proceedings is not met and the police have taken no further action at this time.

Care proceedings begin when Children's Services makes an application to the Family Court. As soon as it receives the application, the court informs the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and a Children's Guardian is appointed. The Children's Guardian is an experienced social worker, appointed by the court as an expert to represent the child's rights and interests and to give the court independent advice about the child's best interests; for more information, see the [Cafcass website](#).

¹ In this document we use the term 'child' to refer to anyone under the age of 18. See [An introduction to the child sexual abuse response pathway](#) for more about terminology.

Children's Services will present evidence to the court to support their view that the legal threshold has been met. Child sexual abuse may be the primary concern, but it may coexist with other forms of significant harm such as neglect, physical abuse or emotional harm. Child sexual abuse concerns may surface at any time before or after an application to the court has been made.

2. Why might Children's Services begin care proceedings?

In situations where there are concerns about child sexual abuse, a decision to begin care proceedings will have been made by Children's Services in any of the following circumstances:

- Concerns relating to child sexual abuse have come to light and [a child protection enquiry is held \(often as part of a joint enquiry\)](#), OR
- Following a period of [pre-proceedings](#), AND/OR
- The child is on a child protection plan and a Legal Gateway Meeting has found that they are **at risk of imminent or immediate harm**, with no safe way for them to remain in their parent(s)' care or within the family network while pre-proceedings take place.
- A referral has been made from private law proceedings, where the court has directed a Section 37 Report because child sexual abuse or other harms have been raised.

The child may have been [formally interviewed by the police and children's social care](#) or participated in a [medical examination](#) in relation to concerns of child sexual abuse.

Where the child is at risk of immediate or imminent harm

Not all care proceedings are planned. Children's Services may conclude that a child is at imminent or immediate risk of child sexual abuse and steps need to be taken to ensure their safety if, for example (but not limited to):

- the child has shared a specific, high-risk detail (e.g. that a person of concern is returning to the home that evening) which shifts the case from a 'monitored risk' to an 'immediate danger', requiring an urgent court application to ensure the child's safety
- the child has undergone a medical assessment which reveals physical indicators of recent sexual abuse, necessitating immediate separation from a person of concern in order to prevent further harm or witness intimidation
- the police or social services have intercepted intelligence (such as digital communications or physical sightings) which indicate that the child is about to be moved to a specific location for the purpose of sexual exploitation or to meet an identified person of concern
- the police have attended the family home and have reasonable cause to suspect a sexual offence has just occurred or a known high-risk person of concern has been found in an unauthorised contact.

In these circumstances, the police and Children's Services (following legal advice) need to be able to act quickly to protect the child and place them in a safe environment. The range of powers available include the following:

- The police may use their **powers of police protection** (PPP) for up to 72 hours, when any officer has reasonable cause to believe that a child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm. The inspector becomes the designated officer and manages the PPP once taken out, but any police officer can use their judgement to determine significant harm.
- Children's Services may seek an **Emergency Protection Order** (EPO), lasting up to eight days, from the court if the child is in imminent harm.
- Alternatively, Children's Services may apply for a short-notice or no-notice **Interim Care Order** (ICO) under Section 38 of the Children Act 1989, placing the child in the temporary care of Children's Services, whilst parental responsibility (PR) remains shared with those who already hold PR.

Police protection powers and an EPO are temporary measures, and Children's Services will need to follow them up with a Legal Gateway Meeting, also known as a Legal Planning Meeting (LPM) and an application for care proceedings before the time limits expire. For details of what the Legal Planning Meeting will consider, and how it should consider the risk to the child on the balance of probabilities, see our guide [Children's Services decide to go into pre-proceedings](#).

To learn more about when a child comes into care where there are concerns of child sexual abuse, [read our guide here](#).

b) Where a Section 37 Report has been directed in private law proceedings

The Family Court may issue a direction under Section 37 of the Children Act 1989 during private law proceedings, if concerns about child sexual abuse or other harms arise that could warrant public law involvement. This assessment tasks Children's Services to decide whether to:

- apply for a Care Order or Supervision Order (meeting the criteria set out in Section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or
- offer targeted and holistic family services under Section 17 for children in need (or Social Services and Well Being Act 2014 part 3 and part 4 in Wales), or
- take other steps to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Children's Services must complete this assessment and file the assessment report with the court, detailing their findings and intentions. The court will often give specific questions which require response.

To learn more about child sexual abuse concerns being raised in private law proceedings, read our guide [Concerns of child sexual abuse are raised at the first hearing and dispute resolution appointment \(FHDRA\)](#).

3. How may the child be feeling?

Care proceedings are necessary to address child sexual abuse and other harms, and they may make the child feel that Children's Services and the courts are prioritising their safety and wellbeing by formally considering whether they can remain safely at home.

Nevertheless, the process can be distressing and confusing for children. The legal system intended to protect them often adds uncertainty, especially when cases begin suddenly or are delayed, significantly disrupting their lives.

Sexual abuse, changes at home *and* care proceedings can severely destabilise a child, adding emotional trauma and eroding their trust in protective adults and systems. Unaware of what care proceedings involve or what outcomes to expect, children often fill this gap with fear and anxiety.

If the child has been placed in interim care

Children who are placed in interim care will have experienced major changes to their lives at short notice, especially if the care proceedings have begun abruptly. They have been separated from their parent(s) or carer(s) and are living in a new home. They may have been separated from their brothers and sisters, other family members, pets, friends and community. They may have had to change schools and extra-curricular activities. They may have had to leave some of their belongings behind. They may experience steps to safeguard them as unfair, a penalty, or loss.

It may feel that their decision to tell someone about the abuse has come at more of a cost to them than to the person who abused them. Or they may be worried that the person who abused them is facing consequences, with possible repercussions for the child too. Actions taken by the authorities may feel out of sync with their reporting of the abuse.

These disruptions amplify the complexity of the child's emotions and feelings of uncertainty, at a time when they are already coping with the impact of sexual abuse and possibly other harms. While they may feel relief about being removed from a harmful situation, they may be worried about their family and what might happen next – especially if there are concurrent criminal proceedings or their siblings have remained in the home. How the child feels about being placed into care will depend on their circumstances, age, understanding, and involvement in decision-making. To learn more about children coming into care and how to support them, read our guide [The child comes into care](#).

4. What happens when Children's Services begin care proceedings?

Once the Legal Planning Meeting (LPM) has concluded with a decision to go into care proceedings, **Children's Services prepare their evidence bundle setting out the evidence of child sexual abuse and any other harms, and file it along with the application.** The evidence bundle should be prepared in accordance with the Public Law Outline (PLO) (as set out in [Practice Direction 12A FPR 2010](#)), and should include the Social Work Statement, Interim Care Plan (see below), Chronology and genogram, as well as supporting evidence.

When preparing the evidence bundle, it's essential to follow evidential procedures. Bear in mind that the Family Court may not 'find facts' related to child sexual abuse if, for example:

- the evidence gathered and presented to the court does not satisfy the legal standard of proof ('on the balance of probabilities')
- there is an over reliance on the child's video recorded interview, uncorroborated by contextual evidence from multi-agency sources
- the video recorded interview does not follow Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) principles, weakening its admissibility and weight.

An application for a Care Order or Supervision order must be and the Children's Services legal representative will complete a **threshold statement** – a document up to two pages long, setting out the reasons why Children's Services thinks the threshold for public law proceedings has been met on the balance of probabilities ([see above](#)). It's important that this statement clearly sets out those reasons and the evidence for them. When drafting this statement, consider the *breadth* of reasons presented too; it may be better if it focuses on fewer, more 'provable' reasons why the child should come into care.

After the application is filed with the court, the process moves quickly – it's important to prepare well where possible, so the judge has everything necessary to make decisions at the case management hearing.

Once the application has been made, all parties must follow the PLO and timelines set out in statutory guidance. For all cases going into care proceedings, the following are important case management steps between when the application is filed (Day 1) and the case management hearing (Days 12–18 of the 26 week timeline):

- Children's Services send the parent(s) a **letter before proceedings**, summarising concerns and outlining their right to legal aid.
- On receiving the application, the court follows the **issue and allocation process** (Gatekeeping) set out in the PLO. It reviews the evidence bundle, allocates a judge, issues the application, makes any necessary directions, and considers the application for an urgent hearing (if requested). Cafcass is informed and a Children's Guardian is appointed.
- Within one day of issuing the application (Day 2) the court will:
 - **timetable** an urgent hearing (if necessary – see below) and the case management hearing (CMH)
 - issue **standard directions** to the parties (in line with Practice Direction 12A); this includes filing a case analysis by the Children's Guardian, the parent(s)' response to the application and evidence, and disclosure of evidence.
- An **advocates meeting** should occur at least two days before the CMH. Legal representatives of Children's Services, the parent(s) and the child meet to review the evidence and the parties' positions, and discuss any necessary assessments (as required by [Part 25 of the Family Procedure Rules](#)). Children's Services and the Children's Guardian should share their opinions beforehand on what further assessment is needed.

- The advocates will draft a **case management order** for the judge, highlight any disputed issues, recommend further assessments, and recommend whether a fact-finding hearing is needed.
- An **urgent hearing** (or contested ICO hearing) will take place if this is necessary to safeguard the child.

[President's Guidance on Allocation and Gatekeeping in respect of Proceedings relating to Children](#) ensures that cases are allocated to the appropriate level of judge. Parties should ensure that a public law case is allocated the appropriate level of judge relevant to the concerns:

Magistrate	District Judge	Circuit Judge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure of a child to inappropriate sexual boundaries • domestic abuse, including coercive control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic abuse, including sexual abuse and strangulation or other behaviours involving injuries, subject to severity • the sexual grooming of a child by a parent or relative • an application for a child to be made a party to the proceedings • a child giving evidence whether the subject of or a party to the proceedings • an application for the instruction of an intermediary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cases where there are concurrent criminal proceedings before the Crown Court which are relevant to the family proceedings • conflicting evidence from more than two expert witnesses • sexual abuse of a child by a parent, relative or third party • child sexual exploitation • honour-based violence • child trafficking

Where child sexual abuse is a concern, you should advocate for the appropriate level of judge to hear the case if it is allocated to a magistrate or lower-level judge.

The guidance also sets out expectations around **judicial continuity**. Given the complexity and sensitivity of child sexual abuse, indeed any case where a child is harmed, the court will ensure judicial continuity as far as possible. This means the same named judge will be allocated throughout proceedings (including the CMH, any fact-finding hearing, the issues resolution hearing and, if there is the need for one, the final hearing). The aim is to improve decision-making by achieving better continuity and a deeper understanding of the child's circumstances. The concerns will be reviewed at the CMH to determine whether the correct level of judge has been allocated. While it is possible for a case to be reallocated to a higher level of judge during proceedings if more complex concerns emerge, this impacts on continuity.

5. How professionals can support the child and the parent or carer they are living with

Much can be done to support the child and their family at this time. The **social worker** has the primary role at this stage, as the Children's Guardian will have only recently been allocated. Children will also benefit from safe adults they know offering support, such as teachers and other involved professionals. It is important for all professionals to ensure that the child and their other family members understand the help and support available to them.

This section covers:

- Identifying vulnerability
- Supporting the child and family's emotional needs
- Keeping the child informed and supporting their participation

a) Identify vulnerability, and adapt the Interim Care Plan accordingly

When Children's Services commence care proceedings, the task of identifying and fully articulating the child's vulnerability becomes paramount, forming the foundation of all subsequent legal and care planning. Children are vulnerable by virtue of their age, and children who have been sexually abused are recognised by the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) principles as vulnerable and intimidated witnesses.

Recognising the child's vulnerability directly informs the central decision of whether the child can safely remain at home with a safety plan in place, or whether they should come into care; it is central to the **Interim Care Plan** which Children's Services must submit to the court as part of their evidence bundle.

The vulnerability and safety of the child's parent(s) or carer(s) caring for the child, is critical to decision making, especially if there are concerns that they have been or are being subjected to domestic abuse, or if they have learning difficulties, mental health issues or substance misuse issues. People who sexually abuse children may exploit these vulnerabilities to gain access and opportunity to abuse the child. A parent's vulnerability may reduce their capacity to ensure safety in the home. The social worker should consider what steps are necessary, proportionate and realistic to ensure the parent(s) are safe, understand the risk, and can protect themselves and the child. Parents with cognitive difficulties may have difficulty fully participating in proceedings, and may need support. Requests can be made to the court that they are considered for special measures to enable them to participate, and information about this can be found here [PART 3A – VULNERABLE PERSONS: PARTICIPATION IN PROCEEDINGS AND GIVING EVIDENCE – Justice UK](#)

A detailed and accurate assessment of vulnerability, will ensure that the Interim Care Plan is legally sound and centred on the child's physical and psychological wellbeing.

Developing the Interim Care Plan requires a delicate balance between immediate safeguarding and the child's long-term emotional wellbeing. When concerns involve child

sexual abuse, the plan must be particularly robust regarding the child's care and safe boundaries. The following points should be considered:

The child's placement needs

- Children who have been sexually abused, alongside other forms of complex trauma, may require care placements that are not just safe but actively therapeutic. The research is clear: placement stability is essential, and any move carries a high risk of re-traumatisation and subsequent behavioural difficulties.
- When considering where the child may be placed if a Care Order is made, adopt a trauma-informed approach to understanding their placement needs, so you can be sure that the proposed environment can meet their complex emotional, developmental and safety needs. (All professionals around the child should adopt the same trauma-informed approach; any observations relevant to the child's placement needs should be communicated to the social worker.)
- If there are concerns about sibling sexual behaviour, reactive sexual behaviour or harmful sexual behaviour by a sibling, the Interim Care Plan must clearly state whether the siblings are placed together or apart, and give the rationale for this (based on a formal sibling assessment). Considerations to siblings remaining together wherever possible should be considered and behaviours managed by the adults caring for them. You can read more about this in our practice guide – [Sibling sexual abuse and behaviour | CSA Centre](#)

To learn more about understanding the child's placement needs, finding the right carer, and considerations for family and friend placements, [see our guide here](#).

Risk management, consideration to sibling sexual behaviour and safeguarding

- **Supervised contact:** Define the parameters of contact with the person of concern and other family members. Consider what safe contact looks like for the child's specific circumstances. Contact where child sexual abuse is a concern should be supervised by professionals trained to recognise grooming behaviours and subtle intimidation and boundary-testing, rather than being supervised by family members alone. 'Looks' and signals may be subtle but powerful to an intimidated child. Clear parameters around the use of technology during the contact, including photographs, must be considered.
- **Environmental safety:** Assess the physical safety of any interim placement. Ensure the foster carers or kinship carers are fully briefed on the specific nature of the concerns without compromising the child's privacy unnecessarily.
- **The 'rule of optimism':** Guard against professional over-optimism. As highlighted in many Serious Case Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and National Reviews, managers should challenge the social worker to evidence why they believe certain protective factors are effective, rather than assuming compliance.

Assessments and the voice of the child

- **Specialist harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) assessment:** Consider the need for an referral to a specialist service if it is deemed the child is demonstrating harmful sexual behaviour, that may fall outside of the social work assessment and targeted intervention.
- **Communication aids:** Use age-appropriate approaches and tools that can capture the child's lived experience. Children who have been sexually abused may struggle with verbalising trauma, particularly when their abuse took place when they were non-verbal; the Interim Care Plan should document how the child's non-verbal cues are being monitored. To learn more about communicating with children who have been sexually abused, [read our guide here](#).
- **Health and forensic needs:** Ensure the interim care plan addresses whether a paediatric health assessment (potentially including a forensic medical examination) is required or has been completed, to identify any untreated physical or mental health needs.

Professional collaboration and legal context

- **Police liaison:** The Interim Care Plan must align with any ongoing criminal investigations. Record whether the child has had an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview, to ensure the care plan does not inadvertently interfere with the criminal justice process.
- **Contingency planning:** Define 'trigger points'. What specific event or information would move the plan from an interim placement to a more permanent search? This prevents 'drift' during the often lengthy legal proceedings.

b) Supporting the child and family's emotional needs

There is a common misconception that the child cannot receive emotional support or therapy during a police investigation, criminal proceedings or family law proceedings. This is not true: you should **refer the child for therapeutic support at the earliest opportunity**. The child's health and wellbeing should always be the determining factor in whether, when and with whom they can receive therapy – and you can help by **reassuring them that what they say in therapy remains with the therapist, unless it *has* to be shared to safeguard them**.

Children may not currently be ready for therapeutic support, and their needs should remain under review. Therapy can be accessed at any point: if they are not ready now, you can revisit this in the future. Be mindful that there can be long waiting lists for therapy, and work with other safe adults to consider how they can support the child too.

To support the child and family's emotional needs effectively, you should consider:

- the child's immediate and long-term care, support and therapeutic needs
- the immediate and long-term care and support needs of other children and vulnerable people in the home, not least because they too may have been sexually abused
- the non-abusing parent(s)' emotional and support needs, including their need for support to understand their child's needs

- The care, support and therapeutic needs of any children in the home who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour.

To learn more about the impact of child sexual abuse and family law proceedings and how you can support the child and their family, see our guides:

- [Supporting the child's emotional health and wellbeing](#)
- [Supporting the child's physical health and wellbeing](#)
- [Supporting the child's relationships with their family and friends](#)
- [Supporting the child's education](#)
- [Supporting parents and carers: A guide for those working with families affected by child sexual abuse](#)

c) Keeping the child informed and supporting their participation

“Help us understand”

Children (and parents) going into proceedings for the first time will usually not understand court processes, professional roles, what decisions the court can make, why these decisions are important, and what to expect. Children and families who have been through proceedings before will have some understanding, but this should not be assumed; they will also have an emotional response, depending on their previous experience.

The social worker and the Children's Guardian both have a responsibility to meet with the child to 'ascertain their wishes and feelings' ([Children Act 1989](#)) **before they submit the social work initial evidence and Interim Care Plan and the guardian's initial case analysis.**

Additionally, they should both take the time to support the child to understand:

- the purpose of care proceedings
- the role of the judge and other professionals
- how the judge will use the information provided to make decisions
- how sensitive information about their abuse will be handled and protected
- what decisions Children's Services is asking the judge to make
- the possible need for further assessments, and how they could be involved at that stage
- what decisions could be made
- how the decisions will be made.

Children are likely to feel anxious and embarrassed about intensely personal information being shared in the court environment between strangers they don't know. Child sexual abuse exists in a culture of secrecy, and having it discussed more openly may be difficult for the child. Take time to reassure them about how the information will be carefully handled, and support parents and carers too, by sharing guides to support conversations with their

children. This is explained in the [Guide for parents and carers on sharing decisions with children in Cafcass England Final.pdf](#)

You may also want to use this opportunity to help them understand what will happen at the case management hearing (CMH). Remember, though, that it is a lot of information for a child to understand, and you may need more than one conversation. See our guidance [When concerns of child sexual abuse are raised at the case management hearing](#).

The [Family Justice Young Peoples Board \(FJYPB\)](#) has prepared a range of resources tailored to children, including:

- a [glossary](#) explaining some of the words and phrases which children and young people may hear during a case in the Family Court
- a [video](#) that explains how Cafcass helps children and young people involved in the Family Court.

The FJYPB has also produced [top tips for professionals](#) working with children and young people in family justice proceedings.

“Help us feel heard and understood”

Children who feel heard and understood during care proceedings report feeling more empowered and more satisfied with the outcomes, regardless of whether decisions are aligned with their preferences.¹

If you are the social worker, you can help the child feel heard and understood by discussing your understanding of their circumstances. Talk to them about:

- your understanding of the evidence
- what the Interim Care Plan says
- why you are recommending this care plan
- how the care plan will keep them safe.

Take the time to ensure you understand:

- what they think should happen
- their understanding of the recommended care plan and what this means for them
- who they want to spend time with, including brothers and sisters and other family members, and who makes them feel unsafe
- any corrections they would like to make to the evidence
- any additional information they would like to add to the evidence
- their views on the care plan and any points of disagreement
- what will help them feel physically and psychologically safe.

Check that they understand, and ask them how they feel about each point. You can help them make decisions by explaining their options. Be mindful that children who have been

sexually abused are intimidated witnesses and may be reluctant to share everything, especially if the person who abused them is still a presence in their life. The evidence available at this stage may be incomplete; you should ensure the child knows they can always add to their account and how to do this. They should also know they can correct adults who misinterpret what they have said or if something is incorrect. They may need 'permission' from you, another adult or another professional to do this.

Ensuring that children are truly heard and understood means building a relationship and actively listening. As the child's social worker, you are likely to have an existing relationship with the child and will see them throughout care proceedings – this means you are well placed to build a trusting relationship.

Check the child's understanding of what you have discussed and ensure you recheck during proceedings. Think about things from the child's perspective: care proceedings are complicated, and the processes are likely to feel slow and may not make sense. **Always ask the child if there is anything else you need to know to help keep them safe.**

After the social worker, the Children's Guardian will make their own independent enquiries and check their understanding; they **hold several important responsibilities before the case management hearing (CMH)**. They thoroughly review Children's Services' evidence to identify risks and gaps. They are expected to see the child alone within 15 days of allocation, to hear their wishes and feelings and relay them to the court at the CMH. They also liaise with social workers and other key professionals, advocate for further assessments where needed, and make recommendations to the court, all with the aim of ensuring that the child's voice is heard and their best interests are represented from the outset.

Ways to support participation

A child's participation in decision-making and care proceedings is crucial because it helps to **counteract the feelings of powerlessness, entrapment, and helplessness** often associated with child sexual abuse. . The social worker and the Children's Guardian both play a key role in supporting the child's participation.

Take the time to discuss with the child:

- anything they would like the judge to know
- how their views will be shared with the court
- how their views will influence what happens
- how they can participate in proceedings – explore their options and what they want
- how they will be informed about what happens during proceedings – you can agree this with them
- whether they want to meet the judge, write a letter to the judge, or visit the court – you can arrange this, or support them in writing a letter.

Check that they understand, and ask them how they feel about each point. You can help them make decisions by explaining their options.

You can also support the child's participation by asking the judge to write a letter to the child, explaining any big decisions that have been made in a hearing.

6. Preparing for the first hearing

Once Children's Services have begun care proceedings, there may be an urgent hearing, if the safety or risk to the child has changed and will deal with emergency matters to avoid delay to the planned timetable or the case may go directly to a case management hearing (CMH).

The CMH is an important procedural step in care proceedings, and it is important that all parties are adequately prepared to avoid unnecessary delay for the child. Arriving at the CMH unprepared can prolong their uncertainty about important decisions in their life, such as who they live and spend time with.

It is essential that you prepare adequately for the case management hearing so the judge can make all the decisions necessary for a safe, just and timely decision.

7. Where next?

- [Where the child comes into care](#)
- [When concerns of child sexual abuse are raised at the case management hearing \(CMH\)](#)
- Or return to this [response pathway summary guide here](#).

References

ⁱ Duncan, M, 'Children's Experiences of Statutory Child Protection Interventions', in Participation in Child Protection (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93824-0_2.