

Outcomes of care proceedings: interview guide

- Interviewees should have been sent an information and consent form, and signed it/ returned an email agreeing. They should also have had the link to the Family Law Week article summarising key findings from the statistical analysis so far:
<http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed176048>
- With the recorder running, clarify/confirm that they know the interview is being recorded, they understand the aims of the project and about confidentiality/anonymity, and agree to take part. Also confirm that they agree their anonymised transcript will be stored in a data archive and may be available to other authorised researchers.
- **The interviewee**
 - Clarify interviewee’s current job title, length of time in post, main responsibilities; also overall experience, relevant previous posts.
 - Were they in this post pre-PLO, or can they comment on changes in this LA since S1 (2009-10) because of other posts/experience?
 - *NB If the interviewee does not have knowledge of the S1 situation in this LA, please adapt questions: how far back can they comment, and have they noticed any changes since then? Do they detect any changes taking place at the moment? If they have recently come from another LA, are the arrangements what they would expect?*
 - Clarify what their role is specifically regarding care proceedings (e.g. does their team hold cases going through care proceedings, or only before, or afterwards? Do they directly manage swrs doing care procs, do they ever appear in court? Do they have an overseeing/advisory role – if so, what?)

Subject area and questions	Interviewees
<p>Prevention and pre-proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think the main priorities are in your LA now, to prevent cases going into care proceedings? • What services/support do you offer to prevent cases going into care proceedings? How long have these been in place? What is your experience of them, how well do you think they work? • Do you have an ‘edge of care’ panel? How does that work? • How many cases go through the formal pre-proceedings process? Have there been any changes to how this works? What is your experience of it, how well do you think it is working now? • What use do you make of independent experts to assess cases before proceedings? Views about this? • Are you making more/different use of s20? Do you think that is likely to change? • Are you making more/different use of kinship care, thinking for the moment outside care proceedings? Who are prospective kinship carers assessed by (i.e. a specialist team, independent swrs)? Do you support 	<p>Principal swr, senior manager, Family support/CP team managers, LA lawyer</p>

<p>kinship carers to make private law applications rather than use care proceedings? Do you use FGCs, at what stage?</p> <p><i>NB If the interviewee does not have knowledge of the S1 situation in this LA please use alternative/variant questions as above.</i></p>	
<p>Proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the first sample (2009-10), do you think there have been any changes in the type of cases on which the LA is taking care proceedings? Has the nature of care proceedings population changed? Do you detect any changes taking place at the moment? <p><i>NB If the interviewee does not have knowledge of the S1 situation in this LA please use alternative/variant questions as above.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees will be asked to comment on individual features in their LA, and any changes since first study – for example, the proportion of cases being heard by magistrates has fallen in all LAs, but there is considerable variation between our six authorities. Topics to be explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duration of proceedings ○ Cases completing at IRH ○ Assessments, experts – of parents, children, kin [ie kinship care assessments to be discussed here as well as in the pre-proceedings section] ○ Views about usage, availability and quality of independent experts – court readiness (or not) to use them? ○ Areas of agreement/disagreement with Cafcass/guardians ○ Mags or judges? Judicial continuity? • Thinking more generally, how would you describe relations between this LA and the courts? What are your experiences? 	<p>Principal swr, senior manager, Family support/CP team managers (if they do procs), LA lawyer</p>
<p>Court orders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewees will be asked to comment on the individual features in their LA, and any changes since first study – for example, all LAs have a substantially higher use of SGOs in Sample 2 compared to Sample 1, except LA5, where it has gone down. How have these changes come about, and how are they supported? Topics to be explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proportion of CO+PO ○ Proportion of CO ○ Proportion of SO only, SO+CAO ○ Proportion of SGO and SGO+SO • What sense does the interviewee make of changes in his/her LA – are they the intentional result of changes in LA policy? If so, when and how did they come about? If not, why have they come about? 	<p>Principal swr, senior manager, Family support/CP team managers (if they do procs), LA lawyer</p>
<p>Post-proceedings</p>	<p>Principal swr,</p>

(It will be necessary to find out where certain types of work 'sit' – eg support for kinship carers – there may be a specialist SGO team, but do they take all kinship cases, what do they do, how do they link with family support teams, fostering?)

senior manager,
LAC team managers,
IROs, adoption/
fostering managers,
SG/ kinship
managers

General

- What are the main challenges for the LAC/ foster care/ adoption/ kinship care/ family support* (as appro to interviewee) system in your area at the moment?
- Have these changed in the last few years? If so, what are the main ones? What has your LA being doing about them? What has been good and not so good?
- Do you think that the 26 week limit for care proceedings has made a difference to the work you do/your team does? If so, in what ways?
- Have other initiatives or changes made a significant difference to your work? What, in what ways?

Children in care (As appro to interviewee)

- For IROs and LAC team managers: what sort of issues are you most likely to have disagreements about with each other? Can you give an example? Has this changed over time?
- *If it hasn't come up already:* do you have any problems in getting sufficient / suitable foster and residential placements? If so, what sort of issues, and what actions are you taking to address them?
- What services do you have available to support foster and residential placements? How well do these work?

Parental care/kinship care (As appro to interviewee)

- Implications of increased use of SGO? What are the arrangements for ongoing support for SGO carers? Ask about SGOs who live out of the LA area.
- What services and support do children and families get when they are on supervision orders? Would these children be on CiN plans, might they be on CP plans? Does being on a SO ensure more services than if not?
- Implications of increased use of SO? (for those LAs where this applies): e.g. is the higher proportion of cases ending with an SO leading to any reconsideration of the use of care proceedings? Are care proceedings needed if there is only a SO at the end? What is the process for deciding whether to seek an extension of a SO? Do children remain on CiN plans after the end of SO or are cases closed? Who decides?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do children living with parents/kinship carers get support for as long as they need it? What sort of services? Who decides when services are withdrawn? <p><i>Adoption (As appro to interviewee)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the LA use fostering for adoption? If so, how well does this work, if not what are reasons? • Implications of decline in adoption: Do you perceive courts to be more reluctant to make placement orders? What has the LA done about this? Have there been more cases where courts allow the parents to oppose the adoption order? What has the LA done about this? • Are children with POs being placed more quickly, or not? Have there been many cases where you have had to apply for revocation of POs? What reasons for them? • Are there any issues with matching / getting the right placements for children for adoption? Any concerns about breakdown of adoption placements before an adoption order is made? 	
<p>Administrative data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs are required to collect a great deal of data for LAC and CiN returns to DfE. Do you have any views about the usefulness of that data? • Do you make use of any it within the local authority for reviewing and planning services? • What about adoption statistics? There have been repeated national policies to increase the number of children who are adopted and reduce the time that it takes. How do you think these affect your LA? • What about using the data for staff development, helping them to understand patterns of services/outcomes? 	<p>Principal swr, senior manager, other managers if/as relevant</p>