



One Minute Guide

About the Pre-CMH Meeting Pilot

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What is a Pre-CMH Meeting?

The Pre-CMH Meeting is an early conversation between the children's guardian and the social worker, prior to the Case Management Hearing (CMH). The assumption is that an early conversation will provide the opportunity to share information and improve understanding about the family in the case. It is anticipated that this will enable a more effective Case Management Hearing and reduce delay. The Department for Education (DfE) Terms of Reference set out how the Pre-CMH Meeting must look in each pilot site, however, during the pilot participants will think together about how to tailor the meeting to the local context.

About the Pre-CMH Meeting Pilot

During the pilot we are scoping how an early conversation between the social worker and children's guardian during a Pre-CMH Meeting works in practice. The assumption is that an early conversation social worker and guardian will provide an opportunity to share information and improve understanding about the family in the case. It is anticipated that this will enable a more effective Case Management Hearing and reduce delay.

What are the intended outcomes?

The Pre-CMH Meeting Pilot is part of broader Department for Education (DfE) initiative to reduce unnecessary delay in care proceedings. Research in Practice has been selected as the DfE delivery partners and will support pilot sites with local delivery.

By piloting the Pre-CMH Meeting between the children's guardian and social worker we are aiming to influence:

- the number of expert assessments requested
- the number of hearing days in a case
- the overall length of proceedings, and changes in order.

Why is this important?

The family justice system has too many delays and backlogs. The national average to complete care proceedings for children is 45 weeks (as of February 2023).

- It is important that we reduce delays and bring the average duration of care proceedings closer to the 26-week statutory requirement.
- We plan to achieve this by creating efficiencies within the system that ensure that all parties arrive at court better prepared and enable quicker decisions.
- We want to do this so that timely decisions are made for children and they are in the right placement for their specific needs.

Government and family justice leaders have worked closely together to better understand and address the drivers of delay in the system. A number of priority areas have been identified to improve timeliness, including piloting an earlier conversation between the Cafcass children's guardian and the local authority.

What will happen if the Pilot is successful?

The pilot will run from September 2023 until December 2023 when it will be decided if the pilot will end or be extended. If the Pre-CMH meeting proves to be useful and supports a reduction in delay it will be introduced nationally. Steps will also be taken to amend the Public Law Outline and the Working Together to Safeguard Children framework to incorporate the process.

Quick Links

[Pre-proceedings and family justice hub | Research in Practice](#)
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