



Highlighting Lessons from Audit of cases exceeding 26 weeks

An audit of cases from the Avon and Glos. LFJB area that had exceeded 26 weeks between March and May 2019 was completed. A total of 33 audits were returned from all LAs and the key factors responsible for delay were examined to see if any trends could be identified. Audits were completed by social workers, team managers, legal advisers and Carcass. The audit identified that many of the factors that had created delays were predictable and avoidable. The following points were identified as common themes across the cases.

<p>1. Local Authorities need to ensure they have robust pre-proceedings processes in place</p>	<p>Pre-proceedings process can only be effective if key issues are clearly identified at the outset. Tenacious efforts throughout the process to identify and engage with all family members, particularly paternal families is required.</p>
<p>2. Parallel planning is essential</p>	<p>Even the most 'watertight' care plan can unravel at the last minute, so lack of parallel planning is a false economy.</p>
<p>3. Effective timetabling that is monitored effectively</p>	<p>The solicitor for the child is the guardian of the timetable and must have a firm grip on case management. When problems arise that might have an impact on the timetable an early hearing to re-timetable will avoid accumulative delay. Often social workers don't know dates for getting Agency Decision Maker decisions at first hearing so timetabling an IRH too close to the 26 week point can create problems in the final weeks.</p>
<p>Current LFJB performance against Family Justice Board KPM's</p> <p>Average duration of S31 care or supervision cases in weeks Jan – March 2019 31.7 up from 26.3 in previous quarter. Proportion of S31 care or supervision cases which are completed within 26 weeks 49% down from 52.5% in previous quarter.</p> <p>Being mindful of these common avoidable factors could contribute to a reversal in these trends.</p>	