

Implementing the Public Law Outline

The Challenges

The *Public Law Outline* will be introduced in April 2008. The new processes will require local authorities to change the way they work with families where there is a prospect of the need to initiate care proceedings.

For local authorities the main changes arise from the expectation that:

- core assessments will have been carried out prior to section 31 applications being made;
- full consideration will have been given to the possibility of the placement of children with relatives and friends;
- a 'Letter before Proceedings' will have been sent to parents; and
- there will be improved preparation of applications

Social workers and managers will need to be equipped to meet this challenge and to comply with the new streamlined processes when in proceedings.

IPM takes the view that the PLO is more than a new process. It requires significant shifts in managerial and professional culture and practice. The introduction of the PLO presents a number of strategic, service delivery and practice challenges for local authorities:

Strategic

- Are policies comprehensive, consistent and responsive enough to deliver sustainable arrangements for children outside of care proceedings?
- Is the authority placed to deliver high levels of assessment activity and family support packages to prepare for care proceedings or to deliver alternative solutions?
- Does the authority need to restructure its approach to budgets and resource allocation?

Services

- Are Children's Services and partner agencies' assessment and care planning services geared to meet the new ways of working?
- What services are needed to support the assessment processes and care plans?
- How will the required formal family meetings be delivered consistently and effectively?

Practice

- Do frontline workers and managers understand the requirements of the new arrangements?

- Are social work teams ready to approach their work in a different way and to take responsibility for finding and delivering solutions?
- What and where are the skills deficits and how will these be met?

Public Law Outline - IPM Training and Development Approach

What is needed?

The PLO will require social workers' management of cases to be more proactive in terms of setting the agenda and structuring the approach. It will require:

- more timely assessments and focused analysis;
- broader and more open engagement with the families;
- partnership approaches to problem solving;
- wider knowledge and appreciation of alternative solutions; and
- better preparation going into proceedings

Managers will need to:

- understand the new priorities and underpinning approaches;
- provide direction and oversight to the local authority's delivery of the PLO;
- ensure that resources are available to support new ways of meeting children's needs for permanence and stability; and
- establish control of the processes and the cross-agency agenda

What can IPM provide?

IPM takes a flexible integrated approach to development and training with the focus on capacity building. It aims to ensure that the work undertaken impacts measurably on changing or improving practice and service delivery. At the core of its methodology is to work with authorities to develop packages of development and training that are based on whole organisation needs.

In preparing for the implementation of the PLO each authority will have identified its particular development and capacity building needs. Children's Services managers and Legal Services lawyers will have already begun work on making the necessary changes to policies and procedures. IPM can support this work and provide:

- reviews of strategic and operational readiness and capacity to deliver the PLO;
- direct work with key managers to establish development and training priorities;
- policy and procedure development;
- training packages to managers and social workers; and
- coaching to individuals and teams

Independent Management Services Ltd

Pen-y-Bryn, Park Terrace, Blackwood, NP12 0PE
01495 227483 / 07855443818 / enquiries@inprom.co.uk