

Involved local authorities:

Surrey



Guildford

DFJ Trailblazer Pilot Area

Key intervention themes:

System governance ✓

Pre-proceedings practice ✓

Improving data ✓

Experience of children and families ✓

Multi-agency collaboration ✓

Baseline information:



58 weeks

Average Section 31 case duration

National average: 44 weeks



4.1

Section 31 care applications per 10,000 children

National average: 9.2

Based on Cafcass statistics for 2023-24

Local challenges and the rationale for change:

- Lack of consistency in PLO oversight and tracking
- In many cases, Short Notice Hearings are requested unnecessarily, which often leads to ineffective CMHs, as the evidence is either not ready or reviewed by then.
- The quality of court evidence is not consistent and drift is not communicated in a timely fashion.
- Lack of consistency in SW and legal advisors negatively impacts relationships with parents & other stakeholders.

Implemented solutions:

LA practice improvement

A Strategic Social Worker will review the current social work practice in pre-proceedings and court work to define and implement an improvement plan.

Improving case progression tracking

The area will align existing social work and legal trackers to create a single version of the truth. The council will work with HMCTS to create a cross-system resource.

Court and ParentAssess training

The area will create bite-sized training sessions to improve pre-proceedings work and court evidence as well as an ASYE court skills course. The area will further invest in ParentAssess training.

Cross-system commitments

Partners across the system commit to addressing process challenges jointly.

