

Appendix.
Journey Maps

Jasmine's Journey Map



My name is Jasmine. I had two children go through court proceedings, a six year old daughter and a four year old son. I was a care leaver as a child. I have ADHD. I volunteer with PAUSE and Cafcass Family Forum.

My key message: "There needs to be a radical change in the system. To change the way young mothers are treated particularly with special needs. We must to treat people with kindness."

<u>\$</u>	PRE-PROCEEDINGS	PRE-PROCEEDINGS FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER CASE MANAGEMENT HEARINGS ISSUES RESOLUTION HEARING		FINAL HEARING	
What usually happens at this stage	 The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals. 	 A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required. 	 A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans. 	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.	
My journey	I became pregnant as a teenager whilst I was in a family foster placement. The local authority was concerned for my mental health and started court proceedings. At that time, I was living with my daughter's biological father and his family. This was an overwhelming and intense experience, especially as our relationship started to deteriorate. Following an incident involving my daughter's father and the police, the local authority had arranged for my daughter and I to move to a mother and baby unit. I was all packed and ready to go but at the last minute, I was told not to go anymore. This was such a stressful and confusing time, especially because of my ADHD and my adverse reactions to last-minute changes.	During this time, I had a series of parent assessments, weekly drug tests and was visiting my baby at a contact centre. I was living in a B&B that was 45 mins away from the contact centre. My social worker was unsupportive, didn't explain things to me properly and failed to recommend any helpful services. Also, I felt the Cafcass guardian was too narrow minded, with an outdated view of what a parent should be like. She disliked how supposedly loud I was, even though my daughter loves my bubbly personality.	I went to court four times, each time forced to sit with my baby's father and his family. This was an incredibly uncomfortable and intimidating experience. No one explained what to expect or what would happen next. My solicitor was uncommunicative, and there seemed to be a huge disconnect between what they told me privately and what they said in court. The panel of judges included both men and women. However, given my background, I get triggered by men differently than by women, but no provisions were put in place to support me through this. I didn't express this to my solicitor at the time because I was unaware of my rights.	proceedings, I believed I was going to get my baby back. It was a huge shock when despite having done everything asked of me I dight get her back. I had literally done	
F	Frustrated, helpless	Judged, emotional	Overwhelmed	Tired, defeated	
Emotions	⊗	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		
Quotes	"If I had been given the right support and the rights things, at the right time, things would have been different."	"She [social worker] didn't understand that I had just turned 18. My daughter and I both have needs, she wasn't just her social worker."	"They take your kids off you and then tell you, you need to go and attend these courses but you don't get your kids back after attending the courses anyway. So why are you attending them?"	"If PAUSE had got involved during my pregnancy, my daughter probably wouldn't have been taken off me."	
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors	Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Cafcass guardian	Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Cafcass guardian	Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Cafcass guardian	
Timeline	October 2017 - December 2017 (10 weeks)	December 2017 - January 2018 (5 weeks)	January 2018 - March 2018 (8 weeks)	March 2018 - May 2018 (8 weeks)	
Pain points	 There was a lack of support. No information was shared with me. No provisions for my ADHD. 	The Cafcass guardian was judgemental. I had lots of parent assessments.	My solicitor was uncommunicative. I had no support whilst in the courtroom.	I had no support post the final hearing. I was given no indication that I would lose my child.	
Positives					



Claire's Journey Map



My name is Claire. I am 35 years old and I live in Greater London. I have been sober for several years and have successfully graduated from the PAUSE program. I have a wonderful son, whom I see regularly.

My key message: "I think it is all about support and just rethinking the ethos. It is about keeping families together right, so why can't we work with families and support them to get to a better place?"

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What usually happens at this stage	 The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals. 	 A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required. 	 A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans. 	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.	
My journey	I was hospitalised in 2019 and asked to sign a Section 20. I was not given the time to process what that meant especially as no one had explained the long-term impact of one. Until my first hearing in November 2020, I relied on Google to understand what was happening and what I could do to get better. No professional reached out to me or gave me any information, even when I asked repeatedly. I was in this state of limbo for nearly a year.	I was only given two weeks notice before my first hearing. No one explained the process to me - I was simply told that it was lockdown and no courts were available. During the hearings, I felt judged and belittled. The local authority even said, 'you cannot keep using the death of your mother as an excuse.' The court hearings were a horrible experience and I felt very lonely.	In April 2021, I met my PAUSE practitioner. She prepared me for what to expect and for the first time, I felt like I had a voice. PAUSE had become my lifeline. The proceedings dragged on, but I kept going, even though I had to visit my son at a contact centre. The hearings felt like a losing battle, and I felt what was being said didn't reflect who I was or the progress I had made.	Even after PAUSE's support ended, I felt more confident to represent myself at the final hearing regardless of the outcome. My practitioner had invested a lot in me, helping me stand on my own two feet. I felt more informed, prepared and self-assured. There was a real difference compared to 2019. At the end of the hearing, my social worker apologised, and for the first time, I felt a sense of closure. After the final hearing, I was still visiting my son at a contact centre. This period of limbo continued as the final judgement was only passed eight months later.	
Emotions	Frustrated, helpless	Judged, lonely	Angry	Neutral 💬	
Quotes	"It was frustrating for me but what hurt more was that it was frustrating for my son, because of the constant limbo."	"No one contacted me or responded to me and I thought to myself, am I no longer worthy because I am not a parent anymore?"	"To be very honest, I felt angry. I am very precise with that word [anger], because I don't like to carry that emotion."	"After the order was passed, she [social worker] came in and apologised, and she said, I failed you and I failed your son."	
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionals	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsPAUSE practitioner	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionals	
Timeline	December 2019 – November 2020 (51 weeks)	November 2020 - April 2021 (20 weeks)	26 April 2021 - October 2022 (78 weeks)	October 2022* *Judgement only reached in March 2023 because Judge was on long- term sick leave.	
Pain points	Lack of information or explanation. Extremely long waiting time.	No support from social worker. I felt judged and belittled.	 Extremely long waiting time. No acknowledgement of my progress. 	Even after final hearing, judgement was only reached eight months later.	
Positives			I met my PAUSE practitioner.	My social worker apologised to me.	



Ava's Journey Map



My name is Ava. I live in Birmingham and I have a seven year old son. I volunteer with the Cafcass Family Forum and have graduated from the PAUSE program.

My key message: "Throughout these things, it is important to speak with the families. To get everyone together and communicate. Just involve the families in the process because this is about families and this is about the child."

§	PRE-PROCEEDINGS	FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER CASE MANAGEMENT HEARINGS	ISSUES RESOLUTION HEARING	FINAL HEARING	
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My journey	I was visited by a health care professional. At the time, I was dealing with an abusive ex-partner and experiencing domestic violence. The health visitor informed the local authorities and the police about my situation. My baby was only ten weeks old. On a Friday at 5pm, I was notified of our first court hearing, which was scheduled for the following Tuesday. On such short notice, I was left with no time to find a solicitor and travelling far with a new born baby was impossible. I was frantically googling for more information and was left feeling incredibly confused and overwhelmed.	After the first court hearing, I was relocated to a mother and baby unit. It was a four-hour drive from my home town and far away from any friends and family. I had only an hour to pack and prepare for the move. I ended up staying in this mother and baby unit for 16 months, which was a ridiculously long time, especially since my baby has autism and significant speech and sound disorders. He struggled to sleep well in the unit and often had night terrors. Throughout this period, I had court meetings every other month but they were frequently rescheduled at the last-minute and there were constant delays. During this time, I also attended various parenting courses. Most of these were recommended by family centres but they were not forced on me, as they understood I had a lot on my plate.	Throughout this process, my son had a wonderful Cafcass guardian who was very supportive and knew how to cater to his specific needs. She would often get down on the ground to speak to him so he could feel more comfortable. However, my experience with social workers was mixed. Over this period, I had five different social workers – some were great, they understood my son needed routine and structure and would give us enough notice before meetings or let us know of any changes. Others unfortunately would show up at my door unannounced, not knowing my son's name or even on one case, falsely accuse me of falling drug tests. What they don't understand is that it is really detrimental to your case when accusations get thrown around like that.	The final court hearing was scary. You are in this big courtroom, and you don't know who to turn to because it is full of so many people. I was grateful I still ended up with my son, but the five-year process completely disrupted our lives. I am incredibly thankful I get to take him to school, something I feared would people happen and seeing him their means the world to me.	
	✓ Helpless, confused	Overwhelmed, lonely	Frustrated	Mixed emotions	
Emotions	8		765	<u></u>	
Quotes	"It's really difficult to remember things, but I just remember feeling so left in limbo and not knowing what's going on." "It was just too long, it could have been done in the first year. In the end, we were left with all this trauma."	"We were in the same room together with these random families and it was just like, we can't keep doing this." There is no communication between anyone. It's just lots of change and people can't understand why I am getting frustrated. Suddenly, on that day, we need to have a meeting or go to court. Like that's not convenient especially when my son relies heavily on routine."	"I had a social worker who was brilliant and suddenly, I had a new one and no one had told me anything about it." You are having to re-explain yourself all the time, they don't seem to read the entire case file and they just sort of vaguely understand your situation." "Having the right social workers was amazing, and it just changed my whole view on social care altogether. I was like, no, they are just here to help and support you through things."	social workers because I know obviously they get a lot of complaints and I was like I want to commend them for the good work they do because they really understood us, and that we were making a change."	
Stakeholders	 Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors Health advisor Police 	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionalsCafcass guardian	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsCafcass guardian	 Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Cafcass guardian 	
Timeline	May 2018 - July 2018 (8 weeks)	July 2018 - August 2020 (104 weeks)	August 2020 - September 2022 (104 weeks)	September 2022 - October 2023 (52 weeks)	
Pain points	No information was provided. I was given short notices.	I was in two mother and baby units for excessive amounts of time. Frequent delays and last-minute rescheduling. Zero provisions for my son's autism.	Several different social workers throughout process. The process was far too long.	The process was too long.	
Positives		I was not forced to go to parent assessments.	My son had a great Cafcass guardian.	The judge ruled my son and I could stay together.	





My name is Dahlia. I am 26 years old and I live in Chester. My daughter is 8 years old. I was a care leaver and I have Juvenile Arthritis. I regularly volunteer with Cafcass Family Forum.

My key message: "I would say to help and support young parents, even if they say they don't need it."

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What usually happens at this stage	 The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals. 	 A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required. 	A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans.	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.
My journey	I was 17 years old when I fell pregnant with my daughter. At the time, I was living in foster care. After giving birth, I spent a week in hospital before moving to a mother and baby foster placement. I spent about a year there even though I was told it would only be for 13 weeks. I didn't get to meet the foster family beforehand because it all happened so quickly. The court proceedings started due to concerns about my mental health. Throughout this period, I had a social worker until I was 18, and she explained everything to me. We didn't always get along, but she did her job really well. We had a good relationship over the five or six years she supported me and I wish that support had continued beyond my 18th birthday.	upcoming court sessions. My solicitor always made sure I had the right letters and completed everything before each court date. Seeing the same judge a few times was comforting. It was nice to have a familiar face, and on a couple of occasions, the judge even spoke to me directly. She said that 'I was doing a great job and should be proud of myself.' This meant a lot to me especially because before my first court hearing. I thought the judge would be a really scarp server and was reging to tell me that I am doing everything wrong and that I	The biggest issue with court was that the locations were scattered all over England. My juvenile arthritis made all the travelling extremely challenging. I explained to my solicitor that I was struggling with the travel but was told nothing could be done and was due to the availability of the courts. My solicitor helped me plan the most efficient public transport routes, but it was still difficult to get on and off trains and use the stairs because lifts were not always available. There was a great Cafcass guardian who truly understood me and listened to me. She didn't put me down or patronise me or judge me. I felt comfortable talking with her and could honestly discuss things like how much I was spending on baby milk. She really built a bond with me, in fact, she introduced herself just before the court proceedings started which was something I hadn't experienced with any other social worker or professional.	had just lost my child and she didn't offer any comforting words, there were no 'how are you' or 'get home safe'. I didn't get along with my social worker, she never took me seriously as my daughter's mother. Leading up to the final hearing, I was particularly scared and stressed. The hearing lasted three days and I felt so deflated afterwards – I was on fight or flight for most of it. There was nothing to support or help you after it – I felt so physically and mentally drained. The ending was very rushed, and I wasn't expecting things to be passed off so quickly. I guess the only good thing from the two and a half years was that I was with my daughter right till the very end. After the final hearing, the
Emotions	✓ Uncomfortable, scared	Supported	Frustrated	Drained, deflated
EITIOUOIIS	⊗	7	₩ <u></u>	
Quotes	"I was very scared of the unknown and what was to come next. I had only just given birth and was very hormonal, none of my feelings were taken into consideration."	had only just given birth and was very hormonal, forced to go to regular parenting assessments because it		"It taking 2.5 years was really frustrating, just not knowing which way the courts would decide and also those were the most important years of my daughter's life. And for myself too, I was going from a teenager to a young adult and then to a mother, and it was all happening during a time I had so much stress from the courts."
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors			Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Cafcass guardian
Timeline	February 2015 – April 2015 (8 weeks)	April 2015 - May 2016 (52 weeks)	May 2016 – June 2017 (52 weeks)	June 2017 - September 2017 (10 weeks)
Pain points	I was not introduced to my foster family beforehand. I stopped having a social worker after I turned 18.	I had several different unnecessary assessments. The process took too long.	No accommodations were made for my juvenile arthritis. My court sessions were far away.	My social worker was not supportive. The process took too long.
Positives		The judge was nice to me.The process was clear and easy to understand.	My Cafcass guardian was supportive.	I got to see my daughter till the very end.



Sylvia's Journey Map



My name is Sylvia. I am 31 years old and live in Telford. I have two daughters and a seven year old son. I am both a PAUSE graduate and a volunteer for the Cafcass Family Forum.

My key message: "I don't want to feel judged or seen as the person I used to be. I want social workers to actually listen, to help and support the parents as well as kids."

8	PRE-PROCEEDINGS	FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER CASE MANAGEMENT HEARINGS	ISSUES RESOLUTION HEARING	FINAL HEARING	
What usually happens at this stage	The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals.	 A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required. 	A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans.	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.	
My journey	Immediately after giving birth, I was asked to sign a Section 20 without any time to rest or even think about the decision. Following my hospital stay, I was relocated to a mother and baby unit. I was moved far away from everyone and everything I knew. I stayed there for almost six months and felt suffocated from the isolation and constant surveillance.	Throughout the nine-month period, I had two very different permanent social workers. I spoke to my first social worker pretty regularly, about two to three times a week. I felt comfortable with her, like I could be honest, and I knew she was there to help. There was a month-long gap between my first and second permanent social worker, during which I had multiple duty workers. I barely saw my second social worker, she would reschedule our meetings at the mother and baby unit, cancel at the last minute or not turn up at all. That meant I often didn't know the dates and times of various parent assessments that were necessary for court. Fortunately, my solicitor was supportive and good at her job. She always gave me the right information needed for court, and I saw her in person at least once a week.	The main delays were caused by social services not getting information in on time. On seven different occasions, I was told the day before that court hearings were postponed because social services did not submit their evidence by the deadline. Whilst I understand awareness of wider family history and background is important, it wasn't relevant to my son's case. I wasn't treated as the person I am today, instead, they kept bringing up details from my previous care proceedings with my daughters. This felt unfair because I was a different person when I had my girls. I was only 17 and had just lost my dad, as well as being pregnant — I am not that person anymore. In court, the psychologist claimed that the trauma from my alcoholic dad was still affecting me today even though that just wasn't true.	The final hearing was pushed forward because the head of the mother and baby unit followed up on it and was shocked at how long we had been there. The final hearing took place in two separate meeting rooms. This made the process more frustrating especially as no one explained to me why it was being done this way. I felt the judge did not stand up for me because they let others speak over me. It was however nice to have my solicitor there, she was very supportive and it made a huge difference for me.	
	Stressed, confused	Ignored, lonely	Misunderstood, judged	Tired	
Emotions	⊗	<u>R</u>	<i>₩</i>		
Quotes	"I felt like I was pushed into a corner, and I had no choice but to agree to everything that was being said." "I had literally just given birth!"	"I was frustrated that I wasn't able to contact the social worker when I needed to." "It would have meant a lot to know that the social workers cared about what I had to say and listened to me. I mean everybody says that social services are there to keep families together."	"Where were the social services when I needed them as a child? Nowhere to be seen." "It was torment because I had my son for now but there was the looming possibility that they would take him away."	"The whole experience was horrible, there's just no other way to describe what I was put through." "I finally left the mother and baby unit after six whole months."	
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors Key professionals such as social workers and doctors Key professionals		 Local authorities Judge Solicitors Key professionals Psychologist 	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionals	
Timeline	March 2017 - April 2017 (4 weeks)	April 2017 - June 2017 (12 weeks)	June 2017 - September 2017 (12 weeks)	September 2017 - December 2017 (16 weeks)	
Pain points	I was forced to sign the Section 20. I was forced to sign the Section 20. I wasn't given any information about important parent assessments. My social worker often cancelled our meetings.		There were constant delays. I was being judged and treated like the person I used to be.	The final hearing took place in two separate meeting rooms.	
Positives	I had a supportive solicitor.			My court hearing got pushed forward.	



Charlotte's Journey Map



My name is Charlotte. I am 27 years old and I live with my four year old daughter. I have been sober for several years and I volunteer with the Cafcass Family Forum.

My key message: "I would say everyone needs to be trauma-informed. I don't think anyone should be involved in care proceedings, whether it be a social worker, Cafcass guardian or judge that does not have a clear understanding of mental health, trauma and their impacts."

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My journey	I rushed my daughter to the hospital after she had suffered injuries inflicted by my ex-partner. There, I was immediately asked to sign a Section 20. The long-term implications were not explained to me; I was simply told it was a 'voluntary rehoming' and that my baby would return home within a matter of weeks. I was also threatened with, 'If you don't sign, then I will have to take you to court. And she could be placed with somebody that is not in your family.' I was devastated and yet still forced to sign life-altering legal documents; I was not in the right frame of mind to be making any decisions about the welfare of my child. After signing the Section 20, I was arrested and spent 24 hours in a cell. There was little support or information about the process, I felt completely lost and was all over the place. There was no clear timeline of what to expect and what was coming next, I kind of felt like I was just thrown in the deep end.	I was no longer allowed to be alone with my daughter. This was a huge transition from co-sleeping, constant contact and breastfeeding to having only supervised visits. I was forced to undergo a series of interviews, parent assessments and investigations. Throughout the entire proceedings, I had five different social workers and several duty care workers. One social worker in particular was especially harsh as she accused me of being a liar and said, 'once an addict, always an addict.' I had unannounced visits regularly, I felt like I was being watched under a microscope. It was a never-ending stream of assessments. They were relentless, intense and overwhelming. My paperwork was being passed through various social workers, each having to relearn my case and often missing vital parts of information. Meanwhile, the birth father, despite having only completed one hair strand test was now involved in the court proceedings and even granted unsupervised contact every other weekend. Even though, I had a raised concerns about his cocaine use and excessive alcohol abuse.	The Cafcass guardian was the only consistent and supportive professional I had during the entire court proceedings. She played a crucial part in my diagnosis of BPD and took the time to truly understand my situation. She was the only professional to come and observe my bond with my daughter for herself. During a court session, they were discussing the possibility of adoption and in that moment, I felt like I couldn't breathe. She recognised my distress and used her professional judgement to remove me from the courtroom. I did not receive that level of support from anybody other than her, her support was unparalleled. I had a three-day court hearing with the same judge. I felt that she was evil and not trauma-informed at all. Despite being 60 days clean at the time, there was no acknowledgement of the difficulty of maintaining my sobriety during the stressful court proceedings. The Cafcass guardian recommended that I receive dialectical behavioural therapy because it would be a waste of resources. The entire courtroom experience was traumatic, it felt like a character assassination. I was made to feel like the worst human being on the entire planet.	The final hearing was surprisingly quick — I was in and out in no time. This left me feeling so confused, especially since the judge was smilling at me. Being in the same courtroom as my ex-partner was intimidating and I hated the experience. There were no provisions put in place to protect or support me during this time. I was kind of glad we got it out of the way, but I would have liked it to be done more slowly, because I wanted to cause my baby girl as little emotional pain as possible. The transition from the final hearing to having her back home took only a month — it was rapid. Now that I have my daughter back with me, there has been little to no involvement or support from social services to help with the transition. My daughter had grown attached to her grandmother and moving back home proved difficult. She even displayed aggressive behaviours such as biting and punching. All you hear throughout the process is that social services are prioritising the interests and well-being of your baby, but they are clearly not. My daughter's emotional and mental well-being was damaged, whilst it's not beyond repair, the delayed court proceedings have caused more harm than necessary.	
Emotions	⊘ Confused	Devastated, traumatised	Judged, frustrated	Lost	
	×			~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~	
	"There needs to be more understanding of legal documents. A lot of	"I went completely insane, I was on the verge of being sectioned, I was trying to end my life every other day. I had gone down paths, I never ever	"Charge really sold and cally a real assessment and assessment for what	.,	
Quotes	people like myself can be fear mongered into signing pieces of paper. Not really understanding what its for, and just being scared of the authorities and the power that they have." "I was in complete devastation that my partner at the time could do this to her. I was trying to piece together everything that had happened, and understand what had gone on."	thought that I would go down and it just catapulted my mental health to a catastrophic level." "My whole life had just been turned upside down, the least you could do is give me some consistency rather than a revolving door of social workers." "I am not sure that social workers really understand the severity of the line of work that they are in."	"She was really cold and calluous, zero empathy and compassion for what I had been through and where I had come from." "I didn't feel like I mattered as a human being at all, I was just left to rot." "It was only through getting myself help that I sat in the courtroom clean. I didn't even get help with rehab, I got absolutely nothing. It was the worst few years I ever experienced. I feel for anyone that has to go through that, I really do."	"If my daughter had been moved back home to me within those 26 weeks, like they said, we wouldn't have issues that we have around her behaviour and bonding, not knowing who her primary carer is and the stress she has to endure by moving halfway up the country and changing nurseries and leaving her friends that she still talks about now, like there is a lot of harm caused by extended court proceedings."	
Quotes Stakeholders	people like myself can be fear mongered into signing pieces of paper. Not really understanding what its for, and just being scared of the authorities and the power that they have." "I was in complete devastation that my partner at the time could do this to her. I was trying to piece together everything that had	thought that I would go down and it just catapulted my mental health to a catastrophic level." "My whole life had just been turned upside down, the least you could do is give me some consistency rather than a revolving door of social workers." "I am not sure that social workers really understand the severity of the	I had been through and where I had come from." "I didn't feel like I mattered as a human being at all, I was just left to rot." "It was only through getting myself help that I sat in the courtroom clean. I didn't even get help with rehab, I got absolutely nothing. It was the worst few years I ever experienced. I feel for anyone that has to go through that,	like they said, we wouldn't have issues that we have around her behaviour and bonding, not knowing who her primary carer is and the stress she has to endure by moving halfway up the country and changing nurseries and leaving her friends that she still talks about now, like there is a lot of harm caused by	
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Hannah's Journey Map



My name is Hannah. I am 28 years old and I live in West Sussex*. I was a care leaver as a child. I have dyslexia and I am a proud PAUSE graduate. I had three children go through court proceedings, two sons aged 5 and 6 and a baby daughter.

My key message: "I think the support a parent should get throughout care proceedings is just someone to be their friend, to sit with them and not to judge."

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	PRE-PROCEEDINGS	FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER MANAGEMENT HEARINGS	ISSUES RESOLUTION H	HEARING FINAL HEARING
What usually happens at this stage	 The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals. 	A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required.	A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans.	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.
My journey	Three of my children had to go through court proceedings. It started around the time my youngest child was born, the local authority had let me know they may take me to court. I had two meetings with the local authority to determine if my case would indeed go to court. The local authority filed a psychological assessment during our second meeting. During this period, I had zero communication with my social worker. The process of finding a court date was frustratingly slow because the local authority failed to submit their paperwork by the deadline.	I was given just two weeks notice before the first hearing. At no point was anything explained to me or did anyone give me any information. During the court process, no accommodations were made for my dyslexia. My social worker seemed to favour the biological father. At this point, both my sons were living with their father for seven months as I had to stay in the hospital with my baby as she was born premature.	The court hearing with my two older children was the first time the process was explained to me properly. The judge took the effort to explain everything in detail and although, I did not want to enter the courtroom that day, the judge convinced me I should – they were actually quite supportive about it. Inside the courtroom, the barrister handling the case for my older children emphasised the need for me to get therapy and that my dyslexia should be taken into account. However, no actionable steps were taken to implement her suggestions.	The final hearing for my two sons was a different experience altogether, I was scared and unprepared. Being in a courtroom made me feel incredibly small. In the end, it was ruled that they would have long-term foster carers and I was granted four visits per year.
Emotions	Confused	Judged, isolated	Frustrated	Supported
Quotes	"I did not know what I had done wrong, it was so frustrating because they always tell you social services are supposed to keep families together. But I was just ignored."	"I found the social workers prejudiced because they were siding with the father, to me at that moment, I felt judged by them." "I am dyslexic. It takes me a long time to process it all and I needed somebody to talk through things and ask questions so I could understand."	"Why should I trust the local authorities, when they failed me as a child and are now trying to take away my children?" "They kept not trying to understand my situation."	"The proceedings were a lot less scary because I was not on my own. I did not feel isolated." "I felt more at ease in the courtroom because I had my PAUSE practitioner, she was there to comfort me, support me and reassure me."
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers, phycologist and doctors	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionals	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professinals	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionalsPAUSE practitioner
Timeline	February 2017 - April 2017 (8 weeks)	April 2017 - August 2017 (12 weeks)	August 2017 - November 2017 (16 weeks)	November 2017 - January 2018 (16 weeks)
Pain points	 Unnecessary delays due to local authority not meeting deadlines. No contact with social workers. 	No accommodations were made for my dyslexia. No consideration of my wider circumstances.	The recommendations of my barrister were not considered.	The process took far too long. Lack of support.
Positives			The judge was supportive.	I met my PAUSE practitioner.



Vanessa's Journey Map



My name is Vanessa. I am 38 years old and I live in Stockport. I have been sober for five years and I am a graduate of the PAUSE program. My little girl was a newborn when proceedings started.

My key message: "I would say the key message is to treat the parents as human beings, no matter what it says on paper just wait till you meet the real person. Let the person show you they have changed and what to do better."

To mothers: "You never heal, you never forget but it does get better. You still think about your child or children but each day gets easier."

8	PRE-PROCEEDINGS	FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER CASE MANAGEMENT HEARINGS ISSUES RESOLUTION HEARING		FINAL HEARING	
What usually happens at this stage	The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals.	A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required.	A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans.	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.	
My journey	My court proceedings were during COVID. Everything was online but I didn't own a phone or a laptop. The local authority tried to keep in touch by sending letters or calling my hostel repeatedly. This whole situation was confusing and left me feeling disorientated. I was still expected to complete online parenting courses or attend sessions with Better Lives. However, without a laptop and with Better Lives staff not showing up, these expectations were impossible to meet. My social worker didn't respond to any of my solicitor's attempts to explain all this. She would often remind me, 'I am your daughter's social worker, not yours.'	I was finally given a phone, but I did not know how to use Zoom. This was an alien concept. I was granted supervised contact with my daughter at a centre, but the place was far from child-friendly, it almost looked like an office. I was only given three weeks notice before my first court hearing and only told via text message. The first two court hearings were over Zoom in my solicitor's office. This experience felt surreal. I struggled to understand much of what was being said, but thankfully, my solicitor was there to explain everything. Throughout this time, I was doing routine strand tests.	The court hearings faced numerous delays because the biological father, who was recently released from prison was fighting for custody. His refusal to complete hair strand tests and various assessments meant the court hearings were repeatedly postponed. This part was the most challenging for me because as the process went on, I grew closer to my daughter. The inevitable final hearing loomed over us for ten months. There is, however, one small act of kindness I won't forget. A staff member at the contact centre took the time to compile photos of my daughter and me. This meant so much to me.	and being in the court room for the first time was scary. After the final hearing, my social worker said I could no longer phone her. I was given the chance to say goodbye to my daughter, as the court ruled she was to be adopted. I was introduced to my PAUSE practitioner shortly after the court proceedings ended. It was like an angel had come into my life. She was so lovely and for the first time, I felt as if someone was truly listening to me. It felt incredible to experience that because all through court	
Emotions	Confused	Judged, isolated	Mixed emotions, frustrated	Lost	
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Quotes	"Even though I was feeling horrible at the time, in a way, I was sort of lucky because my solicitor went above and beyond her job. She was actually like some kind of counsellor."	"Not one positive thing was said about me even though I was trying my best and was sober for a couple months before the first court date." "It is like they expect you to change overnight, it is ridiculous."	"It was absolute torture because as the process was dragging on, I was becoming more attached to my daughter. She even started calling me mum." "I had a feeling I wasn't getting her back so making it this long felt like a punishment."	"I felt so small when I was in the courtroom, like this tiny, little mouse in this big, huge room." "If it wasn't for PAUSE my story, could have been different, I could have gone back to drinking." "It was really nice to just have someone sort of make me feel like a human again."	
Stakeholders	Local authorities Key professionals such as social workers and doctors	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionals	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professinals	Local authoritiesJudgeSolicitorsKey professionalsPAUSE practitioner	
Timeline	June 2020 - November 2020 (24 weeks)	November 2020 - October 2021 (52 weeks)	October 2021 - July 2022 (40 weeks)	July 2022 - September 2022 (8 weeks)	
Pain points	No acknowledgement of my circumstances. Limited contact with my social worker.	There were many unrealistic demands. The language used in proceedings was not accessible. The process was far too long.	My growing attachment to my daughter was not considered. The father's involvement in the court process was not managed closely. The process took too long.	The social worker was dismissive and unhelpful. The judge did not even make eye contact with me.	
Positives	l had a great solicitor.	I was bonding with my daughter.		I met my PAUSE practitioner.	



Sarah's Journey Map

			₩ PRE-PROCEEDINGS	CASE MANAGEMENT HEARINGS	*ISSUES RESOLUTION HEARING	FINAL HEARING
		WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS AT THIS STAGE	 The local authority gathers information to decide whether to make a care application. This involves a child and parent(s) meeting with multiple professionals. 	 A first hearing is held, where the court makes plans for how decisions are going to be made for the child and what information is needed. More hearings may be required. 	 A special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and listens to people's views about the child's safety and future plans. 	The judge will listen to all the evidence and make a final decision.
		MY JOURNEY	I had to go to meetings with my mum and lots of other grown-ups. These meetings seemed really important and were a bit scary. Sometimes, my grandparents came with us.	My mum went to court meetings without us but nothing ever happened. I felt worried because no one would give us any proper answers. At this point, I was staying with my grandparents and we only saw our mum with our Cafcass guardian.	We had lots of meetings with lots of different people. They would ask us questions about our mum, what our home was like and our friends. Our guardian told us that it would all be over soon but that we would probably be staying with our grandparents.	We had to go to the last court meeting. I felt super nervous because it was an important day and also our first time meeting the judge. She wasn't as scary as I had thought she would be. I felt so relieved that it went okay in the end.
	MY BIO	QUOTES	"I was asked lots of questions, but it was all too much and no one was actually listening to me. I was told I was too young to understand."	"Things were really dragging on at this point and I was beginning to get frustrated."	"We were told we were going to court in two weeks and had no time to actually consider what that meant for us but at least it would finally be over soon."	"I am glad I don't have to go to lots of meetings anymore but I still don't know how I feel living with my grandparents."
My name is Sarah I have a big siste	My name is Sarah and I am nine years old. I have a big sister named Grace who is fourteen years old.	EXPERIENCE/ EMOTIONS	Confused, overwhelmed	Irritated	Tired	Mixed emotions
	We used to live with our mum in Middlesborough, but now we live our grandparents.	IMPACT	I missed lots of days of school. I didn't see my friends for a while.	I found supervised contact with my mum unfamiliar and weird. This made it difficult for us to connect.	I was beginning to feel anxious all the time even outside of meetings.	 Grace and I started arguing a lot. Moving in with my grandparents was a huge transition.
	I get to see my mum four times a year, which makes me really happy!	STAKEHOLDERS	 Local authorities Family members key professionals including social workers and experts 	Local authoritiesFamily membersSolicitorsJudgeCafcass guardian	Local authoritiesFamily membersSolicitorsJudgeCafcass guardian	Local authoritiesFamily membersSolicitorsJudgeCafcass guardian
		TIMELINE	March 2022-June 2022 (16 weeks)	July 2022-December 2022 (24 weeks)	January 2023-May 2023 26 (20 weeks)	June 2023-September 2023 (16 weeks)
		PAIN POINTS	I was given no information.Everything happened suddenly.	No one was assuring us everything would be okay. I could only see my mum with supervision.	I knew meetings were happening but no one would tell me what was said or the outcome.	The final hearing felt abrupt and I wasn't given time to process the decision.
		POSITIVES	My social workers made me feel safe.	I met my Cafcass guardian.	My Cafcass guardian was reassuring.	It was decided I could see my mum four times a year.

FIRST HEARING AND FURTHER

