

# West Yorkshire Pathfinder News

**Go Live Date:**  
**Tuesday 3rd June 2025**

## Welcome to this first edition of the West Yorkshire Pathfinder newsletter.

When Nadine Scaife, the Pathfinder Local Implementation Manager for West Yorkshire, suggested that we have a series of short newsletters from the announcement of our Pathfinder status to the roll out in West Yorkshire in June I agreed and applaud it as an excellent idea.

The intention is not to bombard you with detailed information but to ensure that you have a regular update as to progress and the main ‘headlines’ of rollout until our official launch on 16 May at the LFJB private law conference.

We are actively working with partner agencies to ensure that our outstanding cases are reduced and that we have training and resources in place to ensure a successful implementation.

We are the first multi court site area, and we have historically had a very high number of private law applications. Dealing with the sheer volume of cases across West Yorkshire will be a challenge but it’s one we are ready to face.

I am indebted to the Pathfinder Judicial leads, HHJ Trotter-Jackson and DJ Shepherd for the excellent work they have commenced in bringing cases before our Private Law Progression List. We have already made significant inroads, and I’m pleased to report that we have fewer than 1000 cases ‘on the books’ down from over 1400. There is still a long way to go.

I hope that you will find this information and these newsletters informative and useful.

### HHJ Nancy Hillier Designated Family Judge for West Yorkshire

### Pre-Pathfinder - the importance of reducing the number of open cases

Feedback from the other areas that have piloted Pathfinder has been that it is more difficult for everyone involved if there are significant numbers of pre-pathfinder legacy cases and pathfinder cases open. Everyone has to work to two ways of dealing with Private Law cases. There is therefore a push to reduce the number of open cases that we have now and any that are issued before go live on 3rd June 2025. All agencies are actively involved in reviewing and reducing the number of open cases.

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### WY Pathfinder LIG Key Contacts

**Nadine Scaife**

Local Implementation Manager

**Shameem Ali-Chapman**

Dept. Local Implementation Manager

**HHJ Trotter-Jackson**

Lead Pathfinder Judge

**DJ Shepherd**

Lead District Judge

**Danielle Dunbar**

CAFCASS

**Rebecca Roberts**

WY LFJB

**Safeena Koshar**

Leeds City Council

**TBC**

Bradford Trust

**TBC**

Calderdale Council

**TBC**

Wakefield Council

**TBC**

Kirklees Council

**Sally Clark (Barnes Clark Sol.)**

Mediation

**Nadia Khan**

Support Through Court

**Julia Clough & Jayne Davison**

WY Combined Authority

**Joanne Coen (Ramsdens)**

Solicitor Rep

**Lisa Phillips, PSQB**

Bar Rep

**Davinder Birk, Legal Team Manager**

HMCTS Rep



## **What is Pathfinder?**

Pathfinder aims to improve the court experience and outcomes for children and families involved in private law proceedings. The model does this in a number of ways—by centring voice of the child; by bringing all agencies involved in family justice together in a problem solving approach to resolution; and an enhanced array of support for those who have experienced domestic abuse is provided.

Pathfinder is a key change in culture for all involved. The Harm Panel made a series of recommendations in 2020 following a call for evidence from those with experience of the Family Court. The Harm Panel recommended reform of the Child Arrangements Programme and Pathfinder was designed collaboratively by all family justice stakeholders. So far Pathfinder has been piloted in Dorset, Wales and Birmingham. West Yorkshire is the largest area to test the model, involving multiple court sites and Local Authorities. The change of culture involves everyone working together collaboratively. This change of culture will be key both in the preparation for Pathfinder phase and after go live.

## **Key Changes to the Child Arrangements Programme**

**Child Impact Report** - Instead of a safeguarding letter, FHDRA and Section 7 reports, a CIR is prepared. The voice of the child is heard, Domestic Abuse Services support is triggered alongside meeting with parties and facilitating a multi agency approach in enhancing the risk assessment and use of the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence) Risk Identification

**Case Progression Officers**—help the parties engage and understand the proceedings and ensure the process is effective

**Gatekeeping & Decision hearings**—instead of multiple hearings and FHDRAs

**Problem Solving Approach**—agencies working together to resolve issues and a reduction in the adversarial nature of family court

**Multi agency collaboration**—additional support for victims of domestic abuse

**IDVAs (Independent Domestic Abuse Adviser)**—greater use of local domestic abuse support services and IDVAs meaning victims have a less negative court experience

**Reduced delay and repeat applications**—through the multi agency and problem solving approach to resolution, more sustainable orders are made in a shorter timescale

## **The Pathfinder Local Implementation Manager & Deputy**

A Local Implementation Manager (LIM) and Deputy have been appointed to be the key point of contact between all agencies and the MoJ who are funding the roll out of Pathfinder in WY. The LIM and Deputy will ensure that all agencies deliver on Pathfinder including :

- Liaising with and steering roll out on behalf of MoJ and all agencies
- Ensuring all local partners are prepared for delivery by arranging training events, facilitating communication and supporting relationships, ensuring that essential protocols are in place and all agencies are ready
- Project managing Pathfinder to ensure the Practice Direction and core model are followed
- Establish and organize a Local Implementation Group (and sub groups) which steer delivery, identify and escalate risks and issues to decision makes
- Engagement by establishing effective local relationships to implement Pathfinder
- Supporting the provision of the commissioning of DA Services,



### **Dates for the Diary**

**Wednesdays** -Weekly Local Implementation Group

**16th May** - Launch event, University of Law

**3rd June** - Go live



### **Want to get in touch?**

Please contact the person named from your organisation directly, alternatively—

[wypathfinder@justice.gov.uk](mailto:wypathfinder@justice.gov.uk)



**LIM & Deputy**—the Local Implementation Manager is Nadine Scaife and the Deputy is Shameem Ali-Chapman. Both Nadine and Shameem work for HMCTS, Nadine most recently as a Senior Legal Manager for Family across the NE Circuit and Shameem as Delivery Manager for Family at Leeds County Court. Whilst they both work for HMCTS, their roles cross all agencies involved in the roll out of Pathfinder, ensuring that everyone works together to deliver a successful model in West Yorkshire.

**The Pathfinder Local Implementation Group**—the LIG met for the first time on 22nd January 2025 and involved representatives from the Judiciary, HMCTS, Cafcass, all five Local Authorities, Solicitors, Bar and West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Initial membership was reviewed, Terms of Reference considered and sub groups identified. The LIG will meet weekly. Additional members will be invited including Support through Court, Mediators and the DA provider when commissioned. Sub groups will consider Training needs, protocols for CIR reports and the reduction of live cases.



### **Preparing for Pathfinder - HHJ Trotter-Jackson**

The West Yorkshire judiciary are delighted that the WY DFJ area has been awarded Pathfinder, but there has been a lot of behind the scenes work to bring it about, some of which continues. In summer 2024, Judges Hillier, Greenan, Shepherd and Trotter-Jackson formed an initiative called Private Law Progression Court - PLPC for short. The aim of this initiative was to identify and review elderly private law cases, in the hope of bringing them to resolution or listing them for a final hearing. PLPC works on a three stage process:

**Stage One:** triage, where one of the PLPC judges reviews the identified cases and either lists them for a review, or makes directions to move them along.

**Stage Two:** a PLPC review hearing, at which the issues are clarified and narrowed, judicial indications given to the parties as to the likely outcome were the case to be contested and judicial assistance given to the mediation process. Directions can be made if, for example, a finding of fact is required. The case either resolves or moves to...

**Stage Three:** a final hearing, listed in conjunction with either CAFCASS or the Local Authority to ensure their availability as required, at which outstanding issues are either resolved by agreement or the imposition of an order.

We started PLPC on cases which were over 80 weeks old, which were ready for final hearing. We then moved to those over 52 weeks old, ready for a final hearing, and for our final stage, moved to any case over 52 weeks. We continued to reduce our “starting age” as we dispose of more cases!

89% of the first tranche of PLPC cases were brought into Court. 60% of those were resolved at the conciliation stage, with a further 21% listed for final hearing within a month of the conciliation hearing.

In light of the results from the PLPC model but the obvious problem then arising as to who then heard any final hearings required, Lauren Guiry, Pathfinder Case Progression Officer, has pioneered the Mega -weeks hearing model. Four judges sit concurrently, hearing PLPC cases which are blocklisted between all of them. That means more cases can be listed, those which aren't heard first have time for their own conciliation in the Court waiting areas, and, if one Judge has a high settlement rate, they can take cases off their colleagues. Mega -weeks have enjoyed a similar rate of success to PLPC; the first week brought in 37 cases, of which 28 were brought to conclusion.

Their efficacy has been such that the Mega weeks roll out has been extended from an initial six week trial, to the end of May 2025.

Reducing our backlog of legacy cases is key to the success of Pathfinder: we look forward to continuing to clear the decks going forward, through a combination of the carrot and the stick!





## Useful Links

**Harm Report—Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases**

**Press Release—Pioneering approach in family courts to support domestic abuse victims better - GOV.UK**

**Pathfinder Update—Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases - Annex: Integrated Domestic Abuse Courts**

**PRACTICE DIRECTION 36Z – PILOT SCHEME: PRIVATE LAW REFORM: INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH – Justice UK**

**The private law pathfinder transforming domestic abuse victims' experiences of a previously 'brutal' system - Nuffield Family Justice Observatory**

**Children and young people's experiences of participation in private proceedings in the family courts | GOV.WALES**

**Domestic Abuse Commissioner calls for wide reaching reforms to ensure safety of children in the Family Courts and accelerate government plans - Domestic Abuse Commissioner**

### Coming up in Future WY Pathfinder News

- Training, both joint agency and bespoke for groups of individuals
- Preparation that Cafcass, Local Authorities, Solicitors and Bar are doing now
- Update on the DA Commissioning and IDVA provision
- Update on outstanding cases
- Preparation for Pathfinder

If there is a topic you would like the Newsletter to cover please get in touch: [wypathfinder@justice.gov.uk](mailto:wypathfinder@justice.gov.uk)

