

West Yorkshire Pathfinder News

Go Live Date:
Tuesday 3rd June 2025

What's new

Since the last newsletter that was issued early February we have seen the official press release of Pathfinder for West Yorkshire. The link to the gov.uk announcement from the MoJ and Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede can be found at the back of this newsletter.

I am very pleased to confirm that Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede has agreed to attend the West Yorkshire LFJB Private Law Conference on 16th May 2025 to officially launch Pathfinder in West Yorkshire ahead of the go live on Tuesday 3rd June 2025. Lord Ponsonby is a firm supporter of Pathfinder and he is very much looking to attending. More details on this Conference and how to secure a place to follow.

Local Implementation Group (LIG) meetings have been taking place regularly and various sub groups have now started looking at specific areas of the process that small groups of stakeholders need to work together to agree.

In West Yorkshire we have the benefit of not being the first area to go live with Pathfinder so a number of the LIG members have been linking up with colleagues in Birmingham and Wales recently. West Yorkshire Judiciary and HMCTS leads have visited Birmingham to meet with Judges and HMCTS staff to learn about the best practice from there and observe listing and second gatekeeping processes. Shameem and I have also visited Swansea to observe the Mid and West Wales Pathfinder Induction Event and this will help formulate plans for the West Yorkshire Partnership Event on 21st and 22nd May 2025. Local Authority colleagues have linked up with their Birmingham counterparts and Solicitors and Barristers from West Yorkshire also met to discuss the issues encountered in Birmingham by the Solicitors and Barristers there, to learn about what they did and what they would do differently if they had chance again.

Newsflash: the venue for the WY Private Law Pathfinder Partnership Days on 21st and 22nd May 2025 has been identified as Hilton Leeds City. More detail on this event overleaf. Booking arrangements to follow.

Nadine Scaife
Local Implementation Manager for WY Pathfinder

Case Progression Officers—HMCTS

A key role in the Pathfinder process is the Case Progression Officer (CPO). The CPO will be the point of contact at the Court and will monitor the progress of the case, track compliance with directions ensuring that applications are ready for judicial review and decision. Importantly the CPO will make contact with the parties after issue of the application to explain the court process and the importance of engaging with Cafcass/Local Authority Report Writer, remind them of key dates and to check that the application has been received by them. The CPO will work with an interpreter if that is needed.

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 Pathfinder Judge

Danielle Dunbar

Cafcass

Rebecca Roberts

WY LFJB Chair

Safeena Koshar

Leeds City Council

Ruth Shedlow

Bradford Council/Trust

Frances Armstrong

Calderdale Council

Eleanor Troke/Pam Lall

Wakefield Council

Rob Fordyce

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



Preparing for Pathfinder—training and awareness

The 21st and 22nd May have been set aside for the WY Private Law Pathfinder Partnership Event. Due to the number of delegates this is the same event repeated so if attending you should attend on one day only. This event will supplement any formal internal training on Pathfinder and what it means to you and your organisation. It is a Partnership event because all organisations that will be involved in delivering Pathfinder will be invited.

It is intended to bring the Pathfinder model to life through examples and experience of those who have already implemented it at each stage of the Pathfinder process including understanding child participation, case progression and gatekeeping, information gathering and child impact reports, the role domestic abuse agencies, problem solving approaches and trauma informed practice.

The Partnership Event will take place at Hilton Leeds City. There will be limited places and they will be shared so that each stakeholder group is represented. More on this and the booking processes to follow.

If you are unsure of the training planned within your organisation please make contact with a WY Pathfinder LIG key contact to find out more.

Local Implementation Group & Sub Group Activity

The weekly LIG meetings have been taking place regularly, keeping everyone update on actions required and progress taken. Membership of the LIG has been amended now that stakeholders understand what is needed. A number of sub groups/meetings to cover discrete points have now been planned. These include:

Training—planning and co-ordinating the training that each stakeholder is delivering internally as well as joint awareness events such as the Partnership Event outlined above, the formal launch as well as considering what other awareness activity is needed.

Child Impact Reports—agreeing format of the CIR, filing processes and responsibilities. This includes looking at Police Disclosure and the processes around that.

Judiciary, Cafcass & HMCTS - combined with the Judicially led Private Law Progression Lists, looking at best practice, identifying and resolving any issues

Private Law Progression Lists— Judicially led reviews of cases to achieve a problem solving approach to resolving them. Ensuring the mega weeks that are taking place each week from now until June are fully listed and as effective as possible.

Domestic Abuse and IDVA Commissioning— ensuring that the grant for DA and IDVA services are in place. This has involved representatives from West Yorkshire Combined Authority, HMCTS and Cafcass. When the DA provider is in place they will join the Local Implementation Group and engage with the roll out of Pathfinder.

Data Evaluation & Governance - agreeing data collection, identifying co-dependencies and risks to ensure we are ready for go live on the 3rd June 2025.



Dates for the Diary

Wednesdays -Weekly LIG

16th May - Launch event,
University of Law

21st May OR 22nd May—
WY Private Law Pathfinder
Partnership Event
(one day repeated)
Venue—Leeds City Hilton

3rd June - Go live

Want to get in touch?



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

wypathfinder@justice.gov.uk



Cafcass Activity

Local practice leads in West Yorkshire continue to work alongside the Cafcass Pathfinder Project Team as we prepare to go live on 3rd June. We have established our training plans for practice and business services colleagues and have defined our local team structure for delivering the work. We are currently undertaking a baseline audit of our work in the region which will contribute to us being able to measure the impact of Pathfinder, not only around the strength of our assessment of domestic abuse, but on outcomes for children and families and on their experiences. As readiness activity progresses, we continue to hold the objectives of the Pathfinder model at the heart of our conversations:



In contrast with Birmingham and Dorset, implementation of the Pathfinder model in West Yorkshire will test our Family Court Advisers' capacity to hold both private and public law work safely and effectively. Each practitioner will be working with existing families under the Child Arrangements Programme until that work concludes, while also adapting to working in a different way with families under Pathfinder as new work is allocated. They will do so while also navigating the demands of their public law work. We therefore need to understand what a safe workload looks and feels like for practitioners. Our focus on recruitment continues to ensure that our resources meet requirements so that we may do our best for children and families.

We remain committed to our culture of learning and improvement so that what we learn from our activity in Birmingham and Dorset continues to improve our practice. We know from our experience across Birmingham and Dorset that working collaboratively with our partners is critical to success. Each cog in the wheel serves a purpose and these links strengthen our ability to respond to issues swiftly and proactively. Our relationships with Domestic Abuse Service Providers, HMCTS Case Progression Officers and our colleagues in Children's Social Care will contribute to children and families having a more positive experience in their proceedings and will ensure that decisions made for children and young people are right for them and safe.

Cafcass colleagues in West Yorkshire continue to engage positively with our planning and preparation as this shift in momentum unfolds in the lead up to going live on 3rd June.

Danielle Dunbar

Head of Practice Lead

Pathfinder Project Team, Cafcass

HMCTS & Judicial Training

Plans are being made for training for Judiciary, Magistrates and Legal Advisers so that at the key stages of Pathfinder the training and support will have been delivered in readiness.



Child Arrangements Programme v Pathfinder—what's the difference?

On issue of proceedings under CAP initial gatekeeping takes place where the application is considered. A safeguarding letter is directed to be filed in 17 working days, usually by Cafcass but sometimes by the Local Authority depending on their involvement with the family. Upon receipt of the safeguarding letter a second gatekeeping hearing is held in the absence of the parties. After the gatekeeping hearing, CAP allows for a FHDRA (First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment) to be listed, the ordering of a further welfare report under either S.7 or S.37, a listing for a DRA (Dispute Resolution Appointment), if appropriate a Finding of Fact Hearing and a Final Hearing.

On issue of proceedings under Pathfinder, the application will be reviewed by a CPO for completeness and then considered by a Legal Adviser at first gatekeeping (GK1) who makes directions for the filing of a CIR (Child Impact Report) by Cafcass or the Local Authority. The CIR will be filed between 6 to 8 weeks. There is no further s.7 or s.37 welfare report under Pathfinder as all in depth issues, conversations with the child (where appropriate) parties and other key agencies involved are explored and included at this earlier stage. The CIR is considered by a District Judge and a Legal Adviser together where either a Final Order is made or the case is allocated to the appropriate level of judiciary and listed for an in court Decision Hearing or Final Hearing.

The expectation under Pathfinder is that there will be front loading of the information, including:

- the child's views (where deemed appropriate by the professionals),
- more support, including IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors), for families and children who have been involved in Domestic Abuse,
- less intervention by multiple agencies,
- fewer hearings and a more sustained order as a result; and
- less re-traumatisation for those who have been involved in domestic abuse as they will not need to repeat their stories with each agency.

Davinder Birk
Legal Team Manager
HMCTS



West Yorkshire launch of

Pathfinder— [Thou-](#)

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Coming up in Future WY Pathfinder News

- What is a problem solving approach?
- Focus on DA Services and IDVA provision
- Safeguarding Letters v CIRs
- Training, both joint agency and bespoke for groups of individuals
- Preparation that Cafcass, Local Authorities, Solicitors and Bar are doing now
- Update on outstanding cases, private law progression lists and mega weeks
- Preparation for Pathfinder

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

