



Information regarding children, families and separation proceedings in England and Wales

Together for children and families – what you need to know about Cafcass

Information provided by Cafcass

<p>About Cafcass</p>	<p>We independently advise the family court in England about that is safe for children and in their best interests. We work with families when an application has been made to the court to make arrangements for their children. For more information, visit the Cafcass website.</p>
<p>What is Cafcass' role?</p>	<p>Our workers are called Family Court Advisers. They are registered social workers and are experienced in working with children and families.</p> <p>Their most important responsibilities are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard children and to promote their welfare during proceedings. • Give information, advice and support to children and their families. • Help the family court make decisions about children that are in their best interests and in a timescale that meets their needs. • Make sure that you and your children understand what they have considered and thought about in making their recommendations with the family court and to share that with you before they are presented to the court. <p>Your Family Court Adviser will try to answer questions you may have, or to signpost you to further information and resources. They cannot provide legal advice. If English is not your first spoken language and you need information to be translated or an interpreter to speak with us, then let your Family Court Adviser know.</p>
<p>The safety of your child</p>	<p>As part of our duty to safeguard your children and promote their welfare in proceedings, we will check with other organisations, such as the police or local authority children's services, to see if they have any relevant information that might mean that your children are at risk of harm or have been harmed.</p> <p>If information is given to us, your family court adviser will consider it as part of their assessment and advice to the court. Our work with you may only be at the start of the court proceedings unless the court asks us to undertake more work with you and your family.</p>



<p>Keeping your child informed</p>	<p>You may wish to consider how to keep your child informed throughout proceedings. A young person from the Family Justice Young People’s Board¹ describes a positive difference this made to their experience:</p> <p>“My parents informed me from the beginning of their separation which made me feel valued as I was at the centre of their decision-making. I was always updated about what was happening which made me less worried as I didn’t have to fear the unknown. When I became involved in the proceedings it was much easier and I felt confident as I already knew what happened months before.</p> <p>“No matter the outcome, I accepted it much better as I knew that I was involved from the start, and I could understand it. I felt important because I wasn’t just treated as a child but an individual who deserved to know what happens to their future.”</p> <p>The Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB) have put together some top tips to help parents think about matters from their child’s perspective, which may be helpful. To read the FJYPB top tips, visit the Cafcass website.</p> <p>There is lots of useful information for children and young people on our website, including a young person’s guide to court proceedings.</p>
<p>Alternatives to Private law family Proceedings²</p>	<p>Court proceedings may take many months to resolve, and they are not the only option.</p> <p>Family Mediation</p> <p>Before you apply to court you should have attended a Mediation Information and Assessment meeting unless you meet one of the specific exemption criteria. Mediation can be less stressful and far quicker than going to court. You can also use family mediation after you have made an application to the court.</p> <p>The Government has set up a Mediation Voucher Scheme, which provides up to £500 towards the cost of mediation. For further information about eligibility and how to apply, go to GOV.UK.</p> <p>Planning Together for Children</p> <p>The court or your Family Court Adviser may also recommend that you take part in the Planning Together for Children course.</p>

¹ The Family Young Person’s Justice Board is a group of young people aged between seven and 25 years old who either had direct experience of the family justice system or have an interest in children’s rights and the family court. Their aim is to support the work of the Family Justice Board which is to deliver improvements to the family justice system so that it provides the best result for children who come into contact with it.

² Alternatives to proceedings only apply in private law cases. In public law proceedings, once a local authority issues proceedings, only the court has authority to conclude proceedings.



	<p>This course is designed to help parents to understand how to parent together in the best interests of their children. It can support parents to think about how they can work together to agree arrangements for their children. The programme can help parents to make agreements without needing more court hearings. You can find out more and read the Cafcass Family Forum’s Top Tips for parents who are completing the programme on our website.</p>
<p>Cafcass Parenting Plan</p>	<p>A Parenting Plan can help adults think about some of the practical decisions around the care of their children such as communication and dealing with differences, living arrangements, money, religion and faith, education, health care, and emotional well-being. The Parenting Plan also provides information to support communication between parents and listening to your child.</p> <p>Even if you are not able to work on the Parenting Plan together, you can still use the Parenting Plan to help you think about the arrangements you would like for your child which may assist you in court.</p> <p>For more information about the Parenting Plan and other useful resources, visit the Cafcass website.</p>
<p>Further information</p>	<p>Information and Support</p> <p>You can read our welcome page which has all the information you need to know about us and how we work with families, including our privacy notice.</p> <p>Need more help?</p> <p>Visit our website or call us on 0300 456 4000.</p> <p>More information sources can be found on the Cafcass website.</p>

The MOD suggests:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that you have contact details of your Commanding Officer (CO) ready to provide at the earliest possible point. • that you approach your CO to explain that they will be contacted. • that you consider requesting a letter from your CO detailing your work commitments.
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