

Children and Young People's information about Family Court



Sometimes Parents or Carers can't agree on things like where you should live, who you should see, how often, and what's best for you. This is very normal, and you need to know that none of it is your fault. Family Court is there to help you and your family through this new experience, so you don't need to be worried or scared.

Questions you might have

We understand that there are some questions you may have, so below we have tried to answer some of these for you.

What is a Family Court?

A Family Court is a place where a judge helps families to make decisions about what's best for children.

Why have I been given this information?

Someone in your family has asked the Family Court for help to make a decision about you and your family. You are an important part of this process, and your voice, what you think, and your feelings are really important. The people who will work with you will take care to get to know you and understand what is happening for you and what you would like to happen.



Who are these people, and how do they help?

During this time, you might receive lots of support from different people. We understand it can all seem confusing. These are the people who help you and your family.

A Judge or Magistrate

A judge or magistrate is the person who makes the decisions about you and your family. They listen very closely to everything said and make a decision that is best for you. They have the final say and will always make sure that your safety is put first. If you would like to meet the judge or magistrate you can ask to do that.

A Family Court Advisor

Family court advisors work for an organisation called Cafcass Cymru. They work with the Family Court and are trained to work with young people like yourself. The family court advisor's job is to tell the court what your view is, and they listen to everything you have to say and will tell the judge what they believe is best for you. They make sure the judge or magistrate hears your views and wishes and will write a report to the court called the **Child Impact Report**. This is a special report written for the court.

A Social Worker

Where families have worked with social workers before, a social worker from the local area might do the report instead of Cafcass Cymru. They will look at what has been happening in your family and make sure that you are safe.



What happens in Court

Writing A Child Impact Report

1

For Family Courts to make good decisions they need to understand what life is like for you and your family.

To help the court understand better, they will ask a family court advisor or social worker to write something called a Child Impact Report. The family court advisor or social worker will speak to your parents or carers. They will usually also arrange to talk to you about your situation. They will spend time getting to know you. They will ask you about your wishes and feelings. Try not to be worried about this, they only want what's best for you. You can ask them as many questions as you like. You can talk to them about how you would like your views to be shared with the court.

2

Court Hearings

A Court Hearing is a meeting held in court with your parents or carers and the judge or magistrates. Before this meeting everyone will have read your Child Impact Report. If you want to, you can also send a letter or draw a picture to the judge telling them what it is you would like to happen. The judge or magistrate might not do exactly what you have asked them to do. That's because they have to listen to everyone involved and try and make decisions about what they think is best for you. But they will always listen to what you have to say and take it seriously.

Things might get sorted out at the first hearing or there might be a few hearings. It might feel like it takes a long time, but it is only to make sure that you are safe and that the court makes the best decision that it can.

3

Final Decision

Once everything has been carefully looked at by the court, a decision will be made. This is written down in something called a court order. The court will decide who should tell you about the decision. If the court asks them to, then your family court advisor or social worker may check in with your family sometime after this order is made to see if you are ok, and everyone is safe.

If your family has been to Family Court before you might notice things have changed a bit. That's because the Family Court is always working hard to listen to children and their families and make things better. If you think something could have been done differently to make things better for you, tell your family court advisor or social worker so the Court can keep getting better for children.



Where can you find support?

We understand that this can be worrying time for you. You deserve to be able to have support at any time and there are lots of people who are there to help you.



A Trusted Adult

There are all sorts of people outside of court who can support you; this could be a teacher, a family member or family friend. They are great to ask questions of and would be there for you if you need help.

Childline

If you need some extra support, you can contact Childline. You can call them about any worry, big or small. They are there for you around the clock and can help in any situation.

Telephone: 0800 1111 Website: www.childline.org.uk

If you live in Wales, there are more sources of support on the [Cafcass Cymru website](#)

Young Minds

Offer information to young people and children about mental health and emotional wellbeing. Need to talk? Find organisations that listen, plus online support.

Telephone: 020 7089 5050 Website: youngminds.org.uk

Don't forget you can also speak to your social worker, family court advisor and family and friends. This can be a really difficult time for you, but you are not alone, and people are there to help you.



This resource has been created by members of the Family Justice Young People's Board and professionals who work with children.