



Cafcass Family Forum top tips: for Children's Guardians working with parents in public law proceedings.

The Family Forum is a group of parents, carers and extended family members who have had direct experience of private law or public law proceedings. Cafcass established this group in September 2021 to listen to adults with experience of proceedings and to use their feedback to improve its work. These Top Tips are based on the experiences of Family Forum members, who offer advice based on their experience of working with a Children's Guardian and what they consider to be best practice.

1

My family is unique and special. Take the time to get to know my child/ren and demonstrate a good understanding of my family, their culture, experiences and needs. It is especially important that you understand what is important for my child/ren.

2

Keep me updated and talk to me about what is happening. I might not understand what has been written about me and my children. Take the time to help me to understand. Explain to me your thinking even if you think we will disagree, as this will help me to understand your decision making.

3

I may have an additional need which might not be obvious. Use clear language and avoid professional jargon. Ask me often if I have understood what you have said and what will happen next. Remember that I am probably frightened and definitely worried about being separated from my child/ren.

4

Ask me who are the important people in mine and my child's life. They may be able to provide me or my child with support and protection.

5

If adoption is in my child's best interest, please help me to understand why this recommendation is being made because it is a forever decision and it is going to change their life and my life forever. Take the time it takes to help me to understand.

6

I may have difficulties with accessing information shared online. Please check with me on how I want information shared e.g. post, email or telephone contact.

7

I may want to give feedback at different stages throughout the court proceedings. Please provide me with details on how I can give feedback at each stage and tell me what you will do with it and how it will be used.

8

Mistakes do happen. Please treat me with respect and admit when mistakes have been made. Use your authority with care and remember always what is at stake in family court proceedings. My parental responsibility is mine and it is important even if you are worried about the safety of my children, to respect that I am their parent.

9

I want to work with you but I will be worried about what may happen to my child/ren. Please take the time to build a relationship with me. If I feel that I can trust you, we will have a better working relationship, even if I find the recommendations difficult and frightening.