



Sometimes it can be confusing when we hear words and phrases that we do not understand. Here are a few of the more commonly used terms and words that you might hear about during your family court case and what they mean.

Adjournment A decision made by the Family Court to hold the court hearing at another time because things are not ready, or people need more time to do something.

Adoption Order made by the **family court** which transfers **parental responsibility** to new adoptive parents and means that a child or young person is no longer legally the child of their birth parents.

Barrister A legally trained person who advises people going through the **family court** and speaks for them in court hearings.

Cafcass (Children and family court advisory support service) This is an organisation which works with children, young people and their families. They advise the **family court** on what it considers to be the best interests of each and every child.

Cafcass Worker Depending on what the **family court** have ordered Cafcass to do, the Cafcass worker can be named one of two things: a **family court advisor** or a **children's guardian** (for more detail look for their description).

CAMHS Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services are the NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

Care Order An order made by the **family court** when the **local authority** can prove that a child or young person living in their area is not being looked after properly.

Case Management Conference This is a hearing where the major issues for a child or young person are talked about and the **judge** sets out how the **family court** case is going to proceed.

Child Arrangement Order When people can't agree on where a child might live with or who they should spend time with. A **judge** or **magistrates** will review all the evidence and make a decision on what is best for the child and set out what everyone must do.

Child Contact Centre This is a safe place where children and young people can see a parent or family member who they do not live with.

Children's Guardian Sometimes when the problems within a family are really difficult then the **family court** will ask for a children's guardian to help them. The children's guardian is an independent person who is there to keep the court focused on what is best for the child or young person. They will also appoint a **solicitor** to act for the young person in court.

Contact / Time spent with this can be direct contact – talking on the phone, skype, or spending time with a person. Indirect contact is often letters, cards or emails from a person to the child.

Coercive Control is the control of another person's behaviour by using force of threats, or by using fear. It is part of domestic abuse and can be punishable by law.

C100 / Court Application This is how a person asks the **family court** to help them.

DVPP Domestic Violence Perpetrators Programme A course that helps adults learn how to control their anger when they have been violent towards another person.



Expert Witness is a person who has provided a professional opinion e.g. a **psychologist** by conducting assessment of a person. They provide evidence in court about their opinion.

Family Court This is where important decisions are made about children, young people and their families. Decision in the family court are made by **judges** or **magistrates**.

Family Court Advisor (FCA) Sometimes the **family court** may ask a family court advisor to meet with a child or young person to talk about their **wishes and feelings** and to make sure the **family court** hears what they have to say. The FCA also gives their views to the court about what is best for the child. FCA's do not need to meet all children and young people because sometimes families can agree themselves on what is best.

Foster Carer People who give a home to children and young people who need a safe place to live. They may have children of their own, or other children that they foster may live with them.

Final Hearing is when the **judge** or **magistrates** consider all the evidence and make a **final order**.

First Hearing and Dispute & Resolution Appointment (FHDRA) is the first court hearing after an **application** has been made to the **family court**. The **judge** will look at the issues between the parties (usually parents) at an early stage and see if it possible to reach an agreement.

Family Assistance Order An order which the **family court** can make to provide short term (usually six months) support to a family who agree to it. This can be from a **Cafcass worker** or a **social worker** from the **local authority**.

Final Order This is the last order made by the **family court**. The court expects all the people named in the order to stick to it and do as it says, it can also punish people if they don't.

Family Group Conference All of the important people in a child's life are brought together to check that the child is safe. It means that everyone knows what is happening and they make a plan to keep the child safe.

Guardian's Report The **family court** will ask the **children's guardian** to write a report to help make decisions about a child or young person. The report will include information on their **wishes and feelings** a recommendation from the **children's guardian** on what they think is best for the child. The report will also include information from the other people involved such as the parents or social worker.

HMCTS (Her Majesty's Court & Tribunals Service) is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) IRO's help to make sure the best decisions are being made for a child or young person being looked after by the **local authority**. Their main focus is to make sure that the care planning process for each child or young person is meeting their needs and to ensure that their **wishes and feelings** given full consideration.

Interim Care Order This means that the **local authority** makes decisions about a child or young person rather than their own parents for a short time, before the **family court** makes a **final order**. The child will have a **social worker** to make safe decisions about the child's day-to-day life.

Issues Resolution Hearing (IRH) This is a special hearing where the **family court** decides which issues need to be sorted out and which issues to hear arguments about.

Judge Sometimes families have problems that they might find hard to sort out themselves. A judge works in a **family court**, listens to everybody involved in the case and then decides what is best for the child or young person. They have the final say and will make safe decisions about the child or young person's life.

Legal Advisor A legally qualified person who helps **magistrates** in the **family court** apply the law. They do not play any part in the decision-making process, but they are there to advise.

Legal Aid can help for people who can't afford to pay for legal advice, **mediation** or representation in court by a **solicitor** or **barrister**. Not everyone can have legal aid and people need to apply and check if they can.

Letter to the Judge is a letter written by a child or young person to the **judge** or **magistrates** in **family court** that expresses how they feel and what they would like to happen in their family.

Litigant in Person is a party (usually a parent) who is representing themselves in court and not being supported by a **solicitor** or **barrister**.

Local Authority (also known as **Children's Social Care** or **Social Services**) This organisation is responsible for making sure all children and young people in their local area are kept safe by the people who care for them.

Magistrate This person is a member of the community who volunteers to make decisions that affect families, children and young people. They have to undertake some training and they sit on the court bench with two other magistrates. They are similar to a **judge** but are not legally qualified, they are advised on the law by their **legal advisor**.

Mediation When people can't agree on important things, they might go to another person known as a mediator. The mediator talks to all the adults/ parents? and tries to help them find an outcome that they are all happy with. This may mean that the people then don't have to go to **family court**.

Non-Molestation Order This is a type of order the **family court** uses to keep adults, children and young people safe from someone who has been violent towards them.

Parental Alienation manipulation of a child or young person, by saying or doing things that lead them to dislike one parent over another.

Parenting Plan is a written plan worked out and agreed between parents after they have separated. It covers the practical issues of their child's life such as when they spend time with each parent.

Parental Responsibility Means all the rights, duties and responsibilities that a parent has for a child or young person. A person with parental responsibility can make decision about a child such as what school they go to and agree to any medical treatment they may need.

Police The **family court** may request that the parties (usually parents and sometimes other people involved in the family) have a police check done. This is when the police look through their database to see if a person is known to them.

Public Law These cases are brought to the **family court** by **local authorities** when there are worries that a child or young person is not being looked after safely. The **family court** may make a **Care Order**, a **Supervision Order** or no order at all.

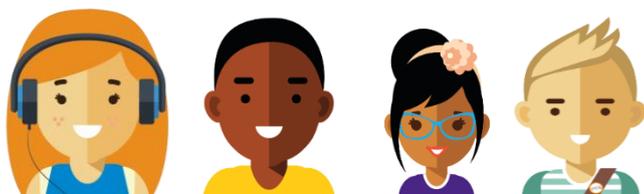
Private Law These cases are brought to the **family court** usually by a parent, generally in connection with spending time or living with their child/ren. The **family court** may make a **Child Arrangements Order**, **Prohibited Steps Order** or a **Specific Issue Order**.

Prohibited Steps Order A parent can be prevented by the **family court** from doing something the other parent does not want them to do. The most common example is where one parent is stopping the other from moving to another country with their child.

Review Hearing Following the making of a **final order** the **family court** may wish to leave the case open for a number of months to check that the plan made in the **final order** is working and the child or young person is safe and being care as expected in the **final order**.

Safeguarding Checks are carried out to protect children and young people from harm. Harm can be described as a child or young person at risk or neglect or abuse. Usually **Cafcass** will contact the **local authority** and the **police** to see if they know or supported the child or young person and the people that care for them such as their parents.

Safeguarding Letter This is a letter that a **Cafcass worker** will write and send to the **family court** at the **FHDRA hearing**. They will speak to the parties (usually parents) and ask about their child safety and any worries they may have.



Section 7 Report This report is ordered by the **family court** and makes either **Cafcass** or the **local authority** investigate all the circumstances of the family, often including the **wishes and feelings** of the child or young person.

Section 37 Report The **family court** orders the **local authority** to produce this report that looks at the child or young person's current circumstances. It sets out any worries about the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.

Social Worker These specially trained people help to make sure children and young people are safe and cared for properly. They will work with families to help make it possible for children to stay safely with them. If the **family court** decides that is not possible, they will help to make sure there is somewhere else that is safe where the child or young person can live.

Solicitor Legally trained people who provide advice to people going through **family courts** and can speak on their behalf in court.

Special Guardianship Order allows another person to become a child's 'special guardian'. It is for a child or young person who cannot live with their birth parents and gives **parental responsibility** to the special guardian so that they can make decision about the child's life.

Specific Issue Order is made when there is an important issue to be resolved but parents can't agree. For example, which school their child should go to.

SPIP (Separated Parents Information Programme) is a course which helps separated parents understand how to make good decisions about their child without arguing about it.

Supervised Contact is a type of **direct contact** which requires a supervisor to make sure that a child or young person is safe when spending time with another person (usually a parent). This may take place at a **contact centre**.

Supervision Order makes the **local authority** take responsibility for advising, assisting and befriending a child or young person and ensuring that they are being kept safe in the care of the parent(s).

Supported Contact is a type of **direct contact** that usually takes place in a **contact centre** alongside other families and is supported by **contact centre** staff.

Video Link in **family court** can be used when children or **vulnerable witnesses** need to give evidence in court, but it may not be suitable for them to sit in court. The video link is usually in a separate and specially set up room in the court. Sometimes people can attend a different court in another area and video link into the court hearing.

Vulnerable Witness is a person who is being asked to give evidence in court and may be vulnerable to being intimidated in court by the other party (usually another parent who has been violent toward them) or they may struggle in court due to having challenging learning or mental health difficulties.

The Welfare Checklist is important to the **family court** when they are considering arrangements for a child or young person particularly when a child or young person is being considered for **adoption**. The welfare checklist is a tool used by professionals including the Judge to consider whether all the child's needs are being met.

Wishes and Feelings is the most important evidence in the **family court** because the **judge** or **magistrates** need to understand what a child or young person wishes, wants and needs to happen in their family. They also need to understand how a child or young person is feeling about their current situation and how they would feel if certain life changing decisions are made for them.



This glossary of terms has been produced by the Family Justice Young People's Board. To contact us you can email at fjypb@cafcass.gov.uk