



HM Courts  
& Tribunals  
Service



## Important information for families about how family courts will work during coronavirus (Covid19)

**Message from our judges:** You've been sent this guidance because we've looked at your application and think it's about **how to manage your child arrangements during the coronavirus pandemic**. We understand this is a worrying time for lots of parents. We've worked with Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) and Cafcass Cymru in Wales, to create guidance to help support you during this difficult time. This includes important information you need to know about how your case will be managed.

**Important Note:** *Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the courts are experiencing significant delays. It is likely that your wait time for a First Hearing is **over 12 weeks**.*

**The law on coronavirus restrictions** states that no person may leave the place where they are living without reasonable excuse. It is a reasonable excuse, however, for children and parents who do not live in the same household to continue arrangements for contact.

Whether and when children move between households is subject to the [Government's separate guidance](#) on what to do if an individual or household is isolating, or if it is necessary to shield a person who is extremely vulnerable on medical grounds.

There is advice about staying safe and reducing the spread of infection which is issued and updated by [Public Health England](#) and [Public Health Wales](#).

### **Our advice to parents on how to manage arrangements during the pandemic:**

- We encourage parents and carers to deal with these difficult situations by **talking with each other about your worries, and any safe, sensible solutions that work for you all**. Many people are worried about coronavirus and even if some parents think it's safe for contact to take place the other parent may have a genuine reason for concern.

Please click to view the following websites: [Public Health England](#), [Public Health Wales](#), [Cafcass](#), [Cafcass Cymru](#), [Co-Parent Hub](#).

- If you decide that your child should not move between households, we **advise that you make other arrangements** so that children can keep in contact with their care network. FaceTime, WhatsApp, [Skype](#), [Zoom](#) or phone, could be used (but we feel video is better). **Shorter, more frequent contact, to catch-up with what your child has done that day, might be easier for children rather than a long conversation.**
- Cafcass has developed a website called [Co-Parent Hub](#), which has lots of information that you can access to help support you to manage arrangements for your child during the coronavirus pandemic.

## Next steps with your application

1. **A Cafcass or Cafcass Cymru officer will contact you by phone to discuss this application** and any concerns you may have. They will do safeguarding checks with the police and local authorities and identify any risks in your case, and help you consider options for agreeing matters without the court's help if that could settle things more quickly and safely for you and your child(ren).
2. **Before this call**, it might be a good idea to speak to the other parent or carer about what you think is safe for your child, both families and both households. **If you have concerns** about a risk of harm to your child, for example from domestic abuse or for any other reason, or there are court orders in place that prevent contact, we do not think you should contact each other directly. If you have immediate concerns about the safety of yourself or a child you should contact your local authority or, the police if it's an emergency.
3. **If you think you can sort out arrangements without the court's help** you may decide to withdraw your application. A judge must agree with the decision; please let your Cafcass or Cafcass Cymru Officer know if you want to think about withdrawing your application.
4. If you don't think that you can agree arrangements for your child without the Court's help, or you have concerns about risk which prevent you being able to agree, the court will write to you with the next steps.

Please click to view the following websites: [Public Health England](#), [Public Health Wales](#), [Cafcass](#), [Cafcass Cymru](#), [Co-Parent Hub](#)