

Advice for parents on new child arrangements and enforcement applications due to Covid-19

We know this is a very difficult time for families, especially where there are disagreements about child arrangements during the Covid 19 restrictions. The Government has agreed that courts can make some temporary changes to their usual processes to help you get the support you need as quickly as possible. Cafcass is working closely with the courts to support this.

Please note that processes may vary between courts in different regions as judges will decide which temporary changes will work best for families in their area.

When the court receives your child arrangements application, they will decide whether or not it relates only to the current pandemic. For example, you may have previously agreed contact arrangements with your ex-partner without going to court, but now disagree about how to continue with your usual arrangements while following the 'Stay at home' rules.

We advise that children should maintain their usual routine of spending time with each of their parents unless there are justified medical/ self-isolation issues (or guidance issued by the Government in future that affects your ability to leave the house).

In some areas, if the court decides the application is related specifically to Covid-19 restrictions, you may receive [this letter](#) which tells you what will happen next. Your Family Court Adviser will contact you to listen to your concerns and complete their usual safeguarding checks. However, if they agree that the issues are solely related to the pandemic, they will work with you to come to a suitable arrangement as it may be several months before your court hearing can take place.

We recognise that these circumstances are very challenging for families. If you and the other party agree that you can make arrangements safely and in the best interests of your child, you will be given the option to withdraw your application at this stage and may be eligible for a refund of the court fee.

If you decide to withdraw your application, Cafcass will inform the court in the safeguarding letter we send to the court as part of our usual process. The judge will then decide if they agree with your decision. You also have the right to challenge the court's decision by writing to the court.

If you don't think that you can agree arrangements for your child without the court's help, or you have concerns about risks which prevent you being able to agree, the court will write to you with the next steps.