

Glossary - What Things Mean

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.

Using this colour key you can see what section each term is from.

Services	Types of Contact
People Involved	Types of Court Report
Court Decisions	Law

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 - A type of 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. It allows them to start a new family.

Application - This is how a person asks the **Family Court** to help them.

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

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) - This is an organisation which works with children and young people and their families and then advises the **Family Court** on what it considers to be in 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 descriptions).

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 Arrangements Order - When people can't agree on where a child might live or who they should see, the **Family Court** might be asked to decide. The **judge** will look at what is best for the child or young person and make a decision setting out what people must do. This replaces what used to be called **contact** and **residence** or custody which you may have heard about.

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.

Child Contact Centre - This is a safe place where children and young people can see a parent who they do not live with. Usually, this allows for **direct contact**, **supervised contact** or **supported contact**.

Contact Order - These orders allow a child or young person to visit, stay or have contact with the person who has applied to court. (Instead of making this order, the **Family Court** will now make a **Child Arrangements Order**.)

Direct Contact - When a child or young person can spend time with and/or have staying contact with someone that they do not live with.

Domestic Violence Perpetrators Programme (DVPP) - A course that helps adults who have been violent towards another person learn how to control their anger.

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**.

Family Court - This is where important decisions are made about children, young people and their families. It is different to criminal courts where people go when they might have done something wrong. Decisions in the Family Court are made by **Judges** or **Magistrates** when people can't agree about what is best for a child or young person.

Family Court Advisor (FCA) - Sometimes the **Family Court** may ask a family court advisor to meet with a child or young people 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 view to the court about what is best for the child. FCAs do not need to meet all children and young people because sometimes families can agree themselves on what is best.

Family Group Conference - All of the important people in a child's life get together to check that they are safe. It means that everyone knows what is happening and keeps them safe.

Final Order - This is the last order made by the **Family Court**. The court expects all the people named in the order to keep to it and do as it says and can punish adults if they don't.

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 foster children living with them, in which case you would all live in the same house together.

Guardian's Report - The **Family Court** will ask the **Children's Guardian** to write a report to help it make decisions about a child or young person. The report will include information on their wishes and feelings and 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 and any other individuals such as experts.

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

Indirect Contact - A child or young person can use forms of contact such as letters, cards or gifts and is often used to re-introduce a child to someone that they have not seen for some time.

Interim Care Order - This means that the **local authority** makes decisions about a child rather than their own parents for the short term, before the **Family Court** makes a final order. The child will get a **social worker** to make the decisions day-to-day.

Issues Resolution Hearing (IRH) - This is a special hearing where the **Family Court** decides which issues need to be sorted out and hears arguments about which is a true version of events.

Judge - Sometimes families have problems which they might find too hard to sort out by themselves. A judge works in a **Family Court**, listens to everybody and then decides what is best for the child or young person involved in the case. They have the final say and will make the decision about that 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 are there to advice.

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 volunteer to make decisions that affect families, children and young people. 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, they go to another person to help them sort it out (a mediator). The mediator talks to all and tries to help them find an outcome that they are all happy with. This means that they don't have to go to the **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 toward them.

Parental Responsibility - Parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, and responsibilities that a parent has to a child or young person. A person or the people with parental responsibility can make decisions about a child such as who they will live with and what school they will attend.

Private Law - These cases are brought to the **Family Court** by private individuals, generally in connection with divorce or a parents' separation. The Family Court may make a **Child Arrangements Order**, **Prohibited Steps Order** or a **Specific Issues Order** or no order at all.

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 type is where one parent is stopped from moving abroad with the child or young person.

Public Law - Public law cases are brought to the **Family Court** by **local authorities** where they are worried 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.

Residence Order - This order decide who the child is to live with, can give **parental responsibility** to any adult who does not have it and will last until the young person is 16. (Instead of making this order, the **Family Court** will now make a **Child Arrangements Order**.)

Safeguarding Letter - This is a letter that a **Cafcass Worker** will write and send to the **Family Court**. They will speak to the parties (usually the parents) and ask about the child or young person's safety and any worries that they might have.

Schedule 2 Letter/Report - This is the old name for the new **Safeguarding Letter**, sent by the **Cafcass Worker** to the **Family Court**.

Section 37 Report - The **Family Court** orders the **local authority** to produce this report into the child's circumstances when they are worried about the wellbeing of the child and it seems to the court that the right thing to do may be for a **Care Order** or **Supervision Order** to be made.

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 a child or young person and send a report to the court.

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

Solicitor - Legally trained people who provide advice to people going through the **Family Courts** and can speak for them in court.

Special Guardianship Order - This **Family Court** order allows another person to become a child's 'special guardian'. It is for children who cannot live with their birth parents and gives **parental responsibility** to the special guardian so that they can make decisions alone about the child's life.

Specific Issue Order - This order is made by the **Family Court**, when there is an important issue to be resolved but parents can't agree on it. For example: which school a child should go to.

Supervised Contact - This is a type of **direct contact** which requires a supervisor to make sure that the child is safe with the other person. This may be done in a **contact centre**.

Supervision Order - A supervision order makes the **local authority** take responsibility for advising, assisting and befriending a young person and ensuring that the child or young person is kept safe in the care of their parents.

Supported Contact - This is **direct contact** which gives some support from a **child contact centre** worker to the adults so that they can meet the needs of their child(ren).