

I'm representing myself!

Guidance for people representing themselves in the West Yorkshire Family Court



IMPORTANT – KEEP THIS DOCUMENT UNTIL THE END OF YOUR COURT CASE

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The Purpose of this guide

Lots of people represent themselves in the family court. These notes are intended as a brief introduction to the way the court works and how you can get the best from your involvement with it. They are mainly about Child Arrangements cases but may be useful to you if you are involved in a different type of case.

They are not a substitute for legal advice.

Family Court

The Family Court in West Yorkshire hears all kinds of cases to do with children and families. This guide is to help people who don't have a lawyer.

Family cases include injunctions where people want personal protection from someone they say has hurt or threatened them, divorce and civil partnership breakdown and disputes, and cases dealing with children brought by family members or by a local authority.

Disputes about children.

The Child Arrangements Programme (the 'CAP') helps people who cannot agree about where children should live or who they should spend time with.

If you want advice on resolving disputes about children please read leaflet CB7 from the link here:

<http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/media/168195/cb7-eng.pdf>

You should also get general information on separation issues before starting court proceedings here:

www.sortingoutseparation.org.uk

We hope you will be able to sort things out yourselves. If you can't, the next step when parents/families are unable to agree, is mediation.

An appointment with family mediation **must** be made before any court application can be started.

Mediation - What is mediation?

Mediation helps you to find ways to communicate with each other as separated parents and looks at the issues before, during and after court proceedings.

The mediator is neutral and will not take sides. They look to help you reach an agreement yourselves without needing to have a judge make a decision for you. Lots of people think mediation won't work for them – but it often does! For further information about mediation look here:

www.gov.uk/familymediation

Do I have to go to mediation?

Not in all cases. In cases involving disputes about children though it is a legal requirement. The information here is about those kinds of cases.

Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting (MIAM)

You must attend a MIAM before your application to the court about a children dispute is processed.

The MIAM does not take long and will give you an assessment of your situation and whether further mediation could help to solve your problem. It is not a mediation session – that may come later if you agree that mediation is a way forward.

Your nearest Family Mediation Service can be found on the Government website here:

www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

How much will it cost?

Mediation is free if you would qualify for Legal Aid. To see if you qualify you can call the Community Legal Advice direct on 0845 345 4345 or visit this website:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid>

If not, you may have to pay. Different mediation practices charge different rates, usually by the hour.

What if my partner will not go for mediation?

If you are the applicant, then you **must** attend a MIAM. After that, mediation can only work if you both agree that it should be tried.

What if my position is urgent?

Mediation services are usually able to see clients quickly and the MIAM does not take long.

However, you do not have to delay an application to the Court to go to a MIAM if the position is very urgent.

If my position is not urgent can I still issue an application without attending a MIAM?

No unless an exemption applies. For further information about exemptions, look at Annex A.

The CAP

This new programme is involved when you make an application under the Children Act 1989 (as amended under the Children and Families Act 2014). It replaces cases which used to be called “residence” or “contact”

The Child Arrangements Programme applies where a dispute arises between separated parents or families about arrangements concerning children.

A '**Child Arrangements Order**' decides:

- where your child lives;
- when your child spends time with each parent;
- when and what other types of contact, like phone calls, take place.

A '**Specific Issue Order**' is used to look at a specific question about how the child is being brought up, eg:

- what school they go to;
- if they should have a religious education;
- changes of name;
- holidays.

You can also apply for a '**prohibited steps order**' to stop the other parent from making a decision about the child's upbringing.

If you are a child's parent, or the child has lived with you for a long time, you can usually make your application without permission.

If you are a grandparent or a step-parent, or someone with no blood relationship, then you may have to apply for permission to make the application.

Applications

You can ask the court to deal with a number of issues at the same time.

All applications begin by filling in forms. It is important to do so carefully and fully. Full names have to be used, and be correctly spelt. Dates of birth need to be accurate so background checks can be done once the application is made. You may need help with this – see below the reference to the PSU and other agencies who may be able to help.

The application which starts the proceedings is called a C100. Your C100 application will **NOT** proceed unless essential information is supplied. The checklist on pages 21 to 22 will need to be completed before the application is submitted. Every question in pages 1 to 14 of this form should be completed, or stated that information is not available.

Telephone numbers are important so that easy contact can be made when needed.

It is important to state what your relationship is to the child, for example you may be the paternal grandmother, a maternal aunt, or possibly a step-parent or step-grandparent with no blood relationship at all.

Read the notes that come with the form, and follow the advice.

You can apply to the court for an order by completing form C100 and paying a court fee. You can watch a video on making an application at:

www.bit.ly/guides_for_separating_parents

You can collect the forms from your local court or download them by visiting the website:

<http://www.gov.uk>

Where do I send my completed application? (Refer to Annex C)

You can email or post your completed application direct to the Designated Family Centre (DFC). In West Yorkshire the DFC is Leeds. Or you can go to Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield or Wakefield (see Annex C on page 15 -16 for full contact details for all court sites); or

You may visit your court of choice either during counter opening hours (10.00 to 14.00) or by appointment to have your application checked and issued.

Outside the counter opening hours you may visit the court and post your application in the "drop box" which is opened daily.

To find your nearest court visit the website:

<https://courtribunalfinder.service.gov.uk/>

Urgent applications

For an application to be treated as urgent there are some things you will need to show. These can usually only be made in an emergency situation where the court needs to make an order there and then. You will be seen by a judge as soon as possible if this is the case. A request for an urgent hearing must be supported by evidence that it is necessary.

Injunctions

If you are asking the court for an Injunction (an order preventing something happening) you can ask the court to hear you on the same day. You will have to complete the application and usually are required to have a statement setting out exactly why you need an urgent order and why it should be made without telling the other party first of all. You will have to wait for a judge to be available for you to make your application.

Care Cases

Parents of children or their carers will usually be made parties by the court if the local authority applies to the court for an order. If you are not made a party but want to be involved in the care of a child who is the subject of proceedings you may want to apply to be made a party. The important thing is to let everyone know that you would like to be involved, especially the social worker and the solicitor acting for the child or the Children's Guardian. Care and supervision applications are dealt with in a short timeframe so DON'T WAIT if you think that you would like to be involved. You may need to ask permission to bring an application or to be made a party. If you are a party to proceedings brought by a local authority you may be entitled to financial help. If you are representing yourself the other advocates will include you in discussions and you will be allowed into court to tell the judge how you would like to be involved.

How do I pay the court fee?

You can normally pay by debit or credit card, cash, postal order or a cheque (made payable to 'HM Courts & Tribunals Service' unless stated otherwise).

Do I have to pay a court fee?

You may be able to get help with court fees if you are on benefits or on a low income by applying for a **fee remission**. To find out more please see leaflet **EX160A** which you can collect from your local court or you can find on the website: <http://www.gov.uk>

What happens once I have made my application?

When you make an application the court will refer to you as the Applicant. The other party will be called the Respondent.

As you are representing yourself you will be called a Litigant in Person.

CAP cases

Your case will be usually be considered for the first time by a judge or magistrates about 4-6 weeks after the court has received your application. A copy of your application will be sent to the **Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)**. They are asked by the court to give the Judge advice, information and recommendations to make a safe decision about each child.

Before the first hearing you are requested to attend 45 minutes before your hearing to speak to a CAFCASS officer about matters that concern you and any issues relating to people who come into contact with your child/children e.g. new partners, grandparents.

To find out more about CAFCASS you can visit their website at:

<http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

Injunctions

Your application will be heard that day if you can show it is urgent. Otherwise the case will be listed in a few days.

Service

Any order made by the court must be served, i.e. given to, each party to the proceedings. This needs to be done as soon as possible. Many orders are sent out by the court to all the parties. Some orders such as injunctions need to be served personally on the person who is being made subject to an injunction. You should talk to the judge about how you intend to arrange service of the order. Service can be achieved in a number of ways including by the court bailiff or a private process server. You would normally pay a fee for serving any order unless the judge orders the bailiff to serve the papers.

Care cases

If you are made a Respondent to care proceedings there will usually be three hearings to attend. The first is the Case Management Hearing where the court will give directions about statements and reports which are needed to determine the issues. The second is the Issues Resolution Hearing where the court will ensure that as many issues as possible are sorted out about the arrangements for the child and the case may be concluded. The third possible hearing is a final hearing where the parties still can't agree what is best for the child and the judge will make the decision about future arrangements.

Communicating with the Court

For reasons of their impartiality, judges and magistrates are not able to enter into correspondence with parties and are not able to give you legal advice. Similarly court staff cannot give legal advice. All communications have to be addressed to the court at the address at the bottom of all court orders. If any correspondence is sent to the court, copies will be sent to the other party and to Cafcass.

Am I allowed to bring someone with me to the hearing for support?

Yes, of course. That person may just be someone who comes and waits outside or you might ask for them to come into court with you.

Someone who comes into the hearing with you to help you (rather than just sit next to you for support) is often called a "**McKenzie Friend**". You will need to ask the judge about having a McKenzie friend with you at the beginning of the case. The McKenzie friend can help you with the papers and making sure that you have support but they don't speak for you.

For more information about McKenzie friends and the practice guidance notes visit the website:

<http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/guidance/index/mckenzie-friends>

Friends or relatives who come to court with you will normally have to wait outside the courtroom, unless the judge or magistrates agree that they can come in.

Do not bring any children as there are no facilities for them at court and they cannot go into the courtroom. Staff cannot look after them for you.

Personal Support Unit (PSU)

PSU is an independent charity that supports people representing themselves in family court proceedings. The service is provided by a team of trained volunteers.

How can the PSU help?

- Offer emotional support and practical information about what happens in court
- Assist with completion of paperwork
- Help you to think clearly before, during and after your hearing
- Accompany you in court, take brief notes and debrief afterwards
- Provide a safe and quiet place to sit before and after court
- Refer you to other bodies for specialist help

What the PSU cannot do

- Give legal advice
- Speak in court
- Do anything for you without being present

This charity offers a free impartial service which is independent from the court and totally confidential.

How do I contact PSU?

- You can telephone 0113 3062764
- You can visit their office based at Leeds Combined Court Centre, 1 Oxford Row, Leeds LS1 3BG. Opening hours 9:30am to 4:30pm
- You can e-mail leeds@thepsu.org.uk
- You can visit the website at <http://www.thepsu.org.uk/>

Will my case be heard at the appointed time?

We will try to hear your case at the appointed time. If there are emergency cases to hear there may be a short delay. Court staff will keep you informed of any delays. It helps to come in good time for your appointment so there is time for discussions.

Make sure you do not have any other commitments, which put you under pressure to leave early e.g. to pick up children from school or nursery. The court day usually ends at 4:00 pm.

Do I have to go to every hearing?

Yes. If you are a party to the application then you have to attend whether you are the Applicant, the Respondent, Mother, Father or Grandmother.

If you don't go, the process may be delayed. If you are the Applicant and don't attend, your application may be dismissed, possibly at the first hearing.

If you are the Respondent and don't attend, orders may be made that you may not agree with but with which you will have to comply.

What happens at a first CAP hearing?

The Court will consider at the first hearing:

- If the Applicant has attended mediation (MIAM) or if an exemption applies
- If not whether the proceedings ought to be adjourned for the Applicant to attend a MIAM with or without the Respondent
- Whether the Respondent ought to attend a MIAM either jointly with the Applicant or alone.

At the first hearing, a Judge or Magistrates' Legal Adviser will ask everybody about the case. They will work out:

- what you can agree
- what you can't agree
- whether your children are at risk in any way

They will also encourage you to try to reach an agreement at this hearing as to arrangements between you and the other party. For further advice and information about representing yourself in court, visit the website:

<http://barcouncil.org.uk/instructing-a-barrister/representing-yourself-in-court/>

To find out what to expect at a first hearing, visit the YouTube video:

www.bit.ly/guides_for_separating_parents

What if I can't reach an agreement at the first court hearing?

If you don't make an agreement at the first appointment, the Court will set a timetable for what happens next. The next hearing is called a **Dispute Resolutions Appointment (DRA)**

Sometimes, you will be asked to try again to reach an agreement either with a mediator or a CAFCASS officer.

You may be ordered to attend a '**Separated Parenting Information Programme**'. This involves attending two meetings for a total of four hours with other parents (but your ex-partner will not be at the same sessions as you). SPIPS have been really successful at helping people reach agreements about the future arrangements for their children.

The Court might also ask a CAFCASS officer to write a report on the case or social services if they are involved with your family. The court may also consider if a fact finding hearing is necessary.

If your case cannot be agreed at the Dispute Resolution Appointment (DRA) the judge or magistrates may decide further evidence is required. They might ask you to file a statement setting out information about the important issues in the case. There is some further information about statements below.

A final hearing date will be given. You may be asked to prepare a court bundle. This is a file of papers for the final hearing.

Guidance on "preparing a court bundle" will be sent to you with the order for the final hearing.

To find out what to expect at a final hearing, visit the YouTube video:

www.bit.ly/guides_for_separating_parents

If you reach an agreement at any stage, this will usually bring the process to an end, provided the judge or magistrates approve your agreement.

What do I call the judge?

If the judge is a Circuit Judge you call them "Your Honour".

If the judge is a District Judge you call them "sir", "madam" or "Judge".

If magistrates are hearing the case call them "sir" or "madam". Court staff on the day of your hearing will be able to advise you which is correct for the particular judge hearing your case. Don't be afraid to ask!

Warning about Confidentiality

All the papers in your court proceedings are confidential and private to you and the other parties and must be kept in a safe place. You are allowed to discuss the papers with a close family member or friend if you need to do that for support, advice or assistance, but the discussions have to remain confidential between you and the person you discuss it with.

The documents must not be given or shown to any person other than the parties to the case or a legal adviser. If you want to show the documents to someone else and are unsure you may ask the legal adviser or the judge. Don't forget to ask first as you may be in contempt of court if you show a document to someone you shouldn't. Recent research has shown that most children want their private lives to remain private.

You should NEVER discuss these matters on Facebook or other social media. There is a risk you could do something which is a contempt of court

Court Orders

You will receive a court order after every hearing.

The order will tell you what has been agreed and what you need to do next. It will confirm the date, time and place of the next hearing if there is one.

You must keep all court orders safe as you may need to refer to them in the future

Statements

The court may tell you to prepare a statement of your evidence which will need to be sent to the court and anyone else involved in the case including CAFCASS.

Surely I can just tell the court what happened?

No. Statements are necessary to help both the court and the parties.

The Court needs to know, **in advance** of the hearing, what the issues still are. Reading the statements helps the Judge or Magistrates to understand the important issues quickly.

This will enable you to prepare your case properly and will prevent you being surprised by the evidence and what the parties or any witnesses being called may say at the hearing.

The date by which your statement must be prepared and sent to everybody will be decided by the Judge or the Magistrates and will be stated in a court order. You must stick to that date and let the court know if there is a reason why you can't make the statement by that date – for example if you have been taken ill and are in hospital or a close family member has died.

Preparation of the Statement (Refer to Annex D)

Preparing the statement is important and should be done carefully. The following guidance might help you in setting it out:

- The statement should be prepared on A4 sized paper, written on one side only, and preferably printed or typed.
- It should begin with the name of the case and the case number;
- You should state your full name and address.
- The statement should consist of numbered paragraphs set out in numbered pages.
- There should be some order to your statement, in which you deal with:
 - the background history of you, the other party and the children.
 - the problem you want the court to resolve.
 - your approach to the problem.
 - your thoughts about what should happen in the future.
- Be careful about what you say. It is important not to be abusive about other people. Try to concentrate on the future rather than the past, unless the court has asked for your version of what happened at a particular time.
- Try to keep your statement as short as you can. Don't repeat yourself. Try reading the statement out loud – does it say what you want to say?
- Every statement should end with a "statement of truth" with the wording "I make this statement believing it to be true and knowing that it will be placed before the court and used in evidence". This is added at the end of the statement followed by your signature and date. Is what you have put true?

What do I do with it after I have written it?

You need enough copies of every statement you prepare, as you will need to send this to all parties as well as the court, CAFCASS and local authority. The court can help with the address to send it to or you can ask the CAFCASS officer or the social worker. Special arrangements can be made if you are not allowed to know where the other party lives.

Annex A – MIAMs exclusions

A person considering making an application to the court in relevant family proceedings is not expected to attend a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting before doing so if any of the following circumstances applies

1. The mediator is satisfied that mediation is not suitable because another party to the dispute is unwilling to attend a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting and consider mediation.
2. The mediator determines that the case is not suitable for a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting.
3. A mediator has made a determination within the previous four months that the case is not suitable for a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting or for mediation.
4. Any party has, to the applicant's knowledge, made an allegation of domestic violence against another party and this has resulted in a police investigation or the issuing of civil proceedings for the protection of any party within the last 12 months.
5. The parties are in agreement and there is no dispute to mediate.
6. The whereabouts of the other party are unknown to the applicant.
7. The prospective application is for an order in relevant family proceedings which are already in existence and are continuing.
8. The prospective application is to be made without notice to the other party.
9. The prospective application is urgent, meaning:
 - a. there is a risk to the life, liberty or physical safety of the applicant or his or her family or his or her home; or
 - b. any delay caused by attending a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting would cause a risk of significant harm to a child, a significant risk of a miscarriage of justice, unreasonable hardship to the applicant or irretrievable problems in dealing with the dispute (such as an Irretrievable loss of significant evidence).
10. There is current local authority children's services involvement as a result of child protection concerns in respect of any child who would be the subject of the prospective application.
11. A child would be a party to the prospective application by virtue of Rule 12.3(1).
12. The applicant (or the applicant's legal representative) contacts three mediators within 15 miles of the applicant's home and none is able to conduct a Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting within 15 working days of the date of contact.

The detailed procedure relating to the MIAM requirement and MIAM exemptions and attendance is set out in Part 3 of the Family Procedure Rules and in supporting Practice Direction 3A (judicial guidance). These are available online at:

www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/family/practice_directions/pd_part_03a

Annex B

Alternatives to Court

Collaborative Law

The collaborative family law process is a way of dealing with family disputes. Each person appoints their own lawyer but instead of conducting negotiations between you and your partner by letter or phone you meet together to work things out face to face.

Each of you will have your solicitor by your side throughout the entire process and therefore you will benefit from legal advice as you go. The aim of collaborative law is to resolve family disputes without going to court.

Further information can be obtained from the Resolution website at www.resolution.org.uk

Arbitration

Arbitration provides an alternative to Court. The couple will appoint an arbitrator to make a decision that will be final and binding between the parties, on any financial and property disputes arising from family relationships. The same arbitrator will deal with all stages of the case from start to finish.

They are not a Judge and will not arbitrate in a Courtroom. They will be knowledgeable about family issues of the kind the Court normally deals with and may well be a solicitor.

Further information can be obtained from the website of the Institute of Family Law Arbitrators www.ifla.org.uk

Annex C West Yorkshire Courts

Family Court at Leeds – Designated Family Court

1 Oxford Row
Leeds
LS1 3BG

Telephone: 0113 306 2501

LeedsSFCPrivateLaw@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Family Court at Bradford (by appointment only)

Bradford Law Courts
Exchange Square
Drake Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD1 1JA

Telephone: 01274 843563

BradfordSFCPrivateLaw@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Family Court at Halifax

Prescott Street
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX1 2JJ

Telephone: 01422 344700

HalifaxSFCPrivateLaw@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Family Court at Huddersfield

Queensgate House
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 2RR

Telephone: 01484 421043

HuddersfieldSFCPrivateLaw@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Family Court at Wakefield

Wakefield Civil and Family Justice Hearing Centre
1 Mulberry Way
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF1 2QN

Telephone: 01924 207 903

WakefieldSFCPrivateLaw@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Annex D: Example Statement

In the Family Court at

Case number _____

Between:

John Smith

Applicant .

and

Mary Smith

Respondent .

Statement of John Smith

I, John Smith of (address) wish to say as follows:

1. I am the Applicant/Respondent in this case. My date of birth is _____.
2. The background to the application is [giving details of when you met, the nature of your relationship, how and when the children came, and how and when you separated]
3. After our separation, we made the following arrangements... [setting out what you agreed and how that changed after separation]
4. There were problems in these arrangements as follows... [setting out details of how the arrangements worked, what problems occurred, listing any incidents that you consider important in order of time when they occurred and if possible giving approximate dates. Try to be as factual as you can]
5. (If you are the Applicant) I made this application because.... [setting out the reasons why you made the application]
6. (If you are the Respondent) I did not agree with the application because.... [setting out the reasons why you could not agree with the application]
7. My present circumstances are as follows... setting out details of current relationships, employment and accommodation...
8. The other party has made allegations against me. I want to respond to these as follows:... [setting out your response to each of the allegations made.]
9. I also wish to deal with the following matters... [setting out any additional matters which you wish to comment on, particularly if the court has asked you to deal with specific items, like, for example, a particular problem within your family, or a problem with alcohol or drugs]
10. The order I wish the court to make is as follows.... [setting out what you want the court to do]

The statement should always end with:

"I make this statement believing it to be true and knowing that it will be placed before the Court and used in evidence "

Signature _____ ***Date:*** _____

Commonly Used Terms

Applicant - A person who starts legal proceedings or makes an application for separation, divorce or concerning children.

Respondent - A person against whom the application is made

CAFCASS - The **Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service** is the government organisation whose purpose is to assist the court in children's cases. CAFCASS may assign a court welfare officer to investigate and report on the children, their wishes and feelings and the ability of the various adults to provide for them. This report will go to the judge and will be an important part of the case.

Child Arrangement order - Living with (CAL) – this determines with whom and where a child should live. They can be made to one parent or jointly, to both. They can be made to other persons including a grandparent. These use to be called "Custody or Residence Orders".

Child Arrangement order - Spending Time with (CAST) - this deals with the time a child is allowed to visit and stay with the person named in the order, usually the other parent. These use to be called "Access or Contact Orders". Spending time with orders may be made for other significant adults in a child's life, such as grandparents.

Prohibited Steps Order - Prevents someone from taking certain actions in relation to children, (for example removing a child or children from the UK) without permission from the court.

Specific Issue Order - When parents are unable to agree about a certain parenting issue, then an application can be made to the court to resolve that one issue. It might, for example, cover where a child goes to school, or whether his name should be changed to match others in the family.

Parental Responsibility - Covers all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that go with being a parent. It means that you have a duty to care for and protect a child and that you have a right to make decisions regarding that child's future, such as choosing his or her school.

Mothers and married fathers have parental responsibility automatically.

Unmarried fathers have parental responsibility if the child was born after 1st December 2003 and are named on the child's birth certificate.

If the child was born before 1 December 2003 an unmarried father will have to have a court order or permission from the mother to have parental responsibility.

Annex F

General Links

Information for separating parents

sortingoutseparation.org.uk

For advice on separation: the form 'CB7':

<http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/media/168195/cb7-eng.pdf>

Mediation

To find the nearest privately or publicly funded mediation service including a MIAM:

www.familymediationhelpline.co.uk

www.gov.uk/familymediation

General information about family mediation is available from the Family Mediation Council website at:

www.familymediationcouncil.org.uk

To find the nearest publicly funded mediation service you can use the find legal advisor or family mediator justice website at the following link:

<http://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/>

To view a video on understanding mediation:

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=va59Ksk6XZQ>

General Advice

www.advicenow.org.uk;

<http://www.rcjadvise.org.uk/>

Sorting out arrangements for children, the use of post-separation mediation, and/or going to court:

www.advicenow.org.uk/advicenow-guides/family/sorting-out-arrangements-for-your-children/

www.theparentconnection.org.uk/

Applications and Hearings

To download the application C100:

<http://www.gov.uk>

To view videos on completing the application and what to expect at a hearing:

www.bit.ly/guides_for_separating_parents

To find your nearest court:

<https://courtribunalfinder.service.gov.uk/>

For guidance on representing yourself at court, including a list of commonly used terms that you may come across:

<http://barcouncil.org.uk/instructing-a-barrister/representing-yourself-in-court/>

Cafcass – Children and Family Advisory Service and Support

<http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/>

Contact Centres

For advice about Contact Centres, which are neutral places where children of separated families can enjoy contact with their non-resident parents and sometimes other family members, in a comfortable and safe environment; and information about where they are:

www.naccc.org.uk

Separating Parenting Information Programme

<http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/about-cafcass/commissioned-services-and-contact-activities/spip.aspx>

Support at a hearing

McKenzie Friend:

<http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/guidance/index/mckenzie-friends>

Personal Support Unit - PSU

<http://www.thepsu.org.uk/>

Judicial guidance that sets out the approach of the courts to deciding child arrangements is available online at:

www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/family/practice_directions/pd_part_12b

Annex G

Legal Advice

The **court** can advise you on court procedures but **cannot provide legal advice** as court staff are not legally trained.

You can contact Community Legal Advice on 0345 3454345 (select option 1) or visit the web-site:

<http://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice>

The Citizen Advice Bureau may be able to offer help. You can contact them on 0844 848 7970 or visit the web-site:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

You may be able to get advice from a solicitor in your area. You can search for a solicitor by visiting:

<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/find-a-solicitor/>

Resolution (family law solicitors):

www.resolution.org.uk

<http://www.lawcentres.org.uk/>

For advice about finding using a family law barrister:

www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-the-bar/find-a-barrister/

and for arrangements for using a barrister directly:

www.barcouncil.org.uk/instructing-a-barrister/public-access/

To find the nearest publicly funded service visit the website at the following link:

<http://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid>

For advice on funding of dispute resolution services and representation:

www.legalservices.gov.uk

Parties may find out if they are likely to be eligible for legal aid at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid>

For advice on funding of dispute resolution services and representation:

www.legalservices.gov.uk