

CLIENT GUIDE 008

Family Court: What to Expect

A practical guide to preparing for and attending a Family Court hearing in England and Wales

This guide is designed to reduce uncertainty by explaining common stages of a Family Court hearing. It is general information, not legal advice, and court directions in your own case always take priority.

1. What the Family Court does

The Family Court deals with a range of family matters, including arrangements for children, protective orders and financial issues following relationship breakdown. The procedure and type of hearing will depend on the application and the circumstances of the case.

2. Before your hearing

Read every court order carefully and note the hearing date, time, format and any deadlines. Complete and file documents required by the court on time. If the hearing is remote, check the joining instructions and your equipment in advance.

- ☐ Check the latest court order and hearing details.
- ☐ Put deadlines in your diary.
- ☐ Prepare the documents you have been directed to provide.
- ☐ Arrange childcare and travel where needed.
- ☐ Tell the court in advance about accessibility, language or other reasonable-adjustment needs.

3. Common types of hearing

Different cases use different hearings. Some are mainly for case management and directions; others consider evidence or make final decisions. Do not assume that every hearing will decide the whole case. Your notice or order should identify the purpose of the hearing.

4. Who you may meet

Depending on the case, you may encounter a judge or magistrates, court staff, legal representatives, Cafcass or Cafcass Cymru personnel, interpreters, support workers or other professionals. Their involvement varies according to the proceedings.

5. What to bring

- ☐ Your hearing notice and recent court orders.
- ☐ A well-organised copy of documents you are permitted or required to use.
- ☐ A short chronology of important dates.
- ☐ A list of the main points and questions you need to raise.
- ☐ Notebook, pen and any essential medication.
- ☐ Identification if requested by the court.

6. At court

Arrive in good time and follow court staff instructions. Dress neatly, switch your phone to silent and remain respectful. Address the judge or magistrates as directed. Do not interrupt another person; make a note of any point you wish to answer and wait for your opportunity to speak.

7. Giving information or evidence

Be truthful, concise and focused on the issues the court needs to decide. If you do not understand a question, say so. Do not guess. Where children are involved, keep the focus on their welfare rather than adult conflict.

8. Safety, domestic abuse and vulnerability

Tell the court as early as possible if you have safety concerns or need special arrangements. Courts can consider measures intended to support participation and safety. If you have an existing protective order or relevant safety information, keep an accessible copy with your papers.

9. Possible outcomes

The court may make an order, give directions for further evidence, list another hearing, encourage appropriate dispute resolution, adjourn the case or make other case-management decisions. Make sure you understand what you must do next and by when.

10. After the hearing

- ☐ Obtain or retain a copy of the order when available.
- ☐ Read every direction carefully.
- ☐ Record all new deadlines immediately.
- ☐ Keep evidence of documents filed or served.
- ☐ Seek clarification or appropriate advice promptly if you do not understand the order.

11. How Kellsarr Family Practice can help

Within its professional scope, Kellsarr Family Practice can help you organise information, understand procedural documents, prepare for appointments and hearings, maintain a chronology and action plan, and signpost or refer you for regulated legal advice or representation where required.

Family Court preparation checklist

Task	Completed	Notes
Read hearing notice/order	☐	
Check filing deadlines	☐	
Prepare court papers	☐	
Prepare chronology	☐	
List key points/questions	☐	
Confirm travel/remote access	☐	
Request adjustments if needed	☐	
Plan next steps after hearing	☐	

Important disclaimer

This publication provides general information about Family Court preparation in England and Wales. It does not constitute legal advice or representation. Court procedures and individual cases vary, and any order or direction made in your own proceedings takes priority. Seek advice from an appropriately authorised legal professional where your circumstances require legal advice or representation.