

This Jargon Buster explains some of the words and phrases that you will hear or read whilst your case is in the Court.

This Colour code divides the words into different groups.

Legal Terms	People Involved
Court Decisions	Services
Court Orders and other Documents	

Adjourn - To put off the decision or the hearing until another time.
Advocate - A person, usually an adult, who helps you to speak about what you want.
Appeal - To ask another Court to look at the decision made in your case.
Application - The written request, usually made by Social Services, sent to those at Court asking for an Order.
Barrister - A person who has been trained in the Law. Barristers spend a lot of their time at Court speaking in Court Hearings.
Care Order - If a Care Order is made about a child then the Trust can make decisions about who the child will live with and who the child will see.
Carers - Your parents, or other family members will look after you. Foster carers are people who are chosen by Social Services to look after you.
Child Assessment Order - An Order made by the Court which allows Social Workers to check on a child / young person's wellbeing - when Social Workers have been concerned about the child / young person.
Children Order - A shortened name for the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 -this is the Law which everyone has to follow about your case - it also contains the Law about lots of other things concerning children.
Clerk of the Court - A person who helps the Judge in the running of the Court.

Competent - The word used to explain whether a young person is mature enough to understand what is going on in a case in terms of giving instructions to their Solicitor, receiving information about their case and in choosing to attend Court.

Confidential / Keeping a Confidence - You can tell a Solicitor not to pass on certain information if you want it kept private. Other professionals cannot agree to do this.

Conflict - Disagreement.

Contact - Term used to describe visits to family when child / young person is not living at home, or when a child / young person lives with one parent and visits the other parent.

Contact Order - An Order about seeing or keeping in contact with someone. These Orders are made by the Judge and they allow a child / young person to visit or stay with a person who has asked the Court for permission for visits to take place.

Contested - A case at Court will be contested when the parties, that is the local Health and Social Services Trust, your parents, or you, cannot agree.

Directions Hearing: Directions Hearings are short hearings to decide who has to do what and when so as to be ready for the next full Hearing when everyone attends.

Discharge an Order - End an existing Order. It is also possible to vary (alter) an existing Order.

Duration of Proceedings - The length of time the case is at Court.

Evidence - When people inform the Judge at the Court about what they know of the case.

Expert Evidence - An Expert such as a Doctor may be asked to give evidence on a particular matter.

Family Care Centre - Sometimes known as the County Court, the Family Care Centre is a higher Court than the Family Proceedings Court. Sometimes cases are transferred to the Family Care Centre if they are difficult or due to take a long time.

Family Proceedings Court - Is the name of the Court where your case starts. Many cases are heard all the way through at this Court. Some cases are transferred to higher Courts such as the Family Care Centre or High Court if they are complicated or due to take a long time.

Final Hearing is a last Hearing with everyone present when the Judge or Magistrate make the final decision as to which, if any, order should be made.

Guardian ad Litem - 'The Guardian', is an independent person trained in Social Work who is appointed by the Court to look at your case, find out your wishes and feelings and advise the Court as to what is in your best interests.

Guardian Report - The report written by the Guardian ad Litem for the Court. The Court usually gives it to the Trust and others involved in your case to read.

Hearing - A Court Hearing: The people involved in the case will meet at the Court building at a set time to discuss the issues.

High Court - If cases are really complicated they can be transferred from the Family Proceedings Court and Family Care Centre to the High Court. There is only one High Court in Northern Ireland and it is in Belfast.

Independent - The Guardian is independent of, that is, separate to, all others involved in the Court case. The Judge will make independent decisions.

Instruct / Take Instructions - To tell the Solicitor who is working for you what you want to happen and what you want the Solicitor to do.

Interim Hearing. This is a hearing that takes place before a Final Hearing. Decisions take place which will help the case progress to Final Hearing.

Judge - A legally qualified person who hears the cases in the Family Courts. These are Family Proceedings Courts, Family Care Centres and the High Court.

Looked After - A terms used to refer to children and young people who are in the care of their local Health and Social Care Trust.

No Order - The Judge hearing a case can decide at the Final Hearing that there should not be any Order.

Order - The Judge decides to make an Order which will be from a range of different Orders that can be made under the Children Order (NI) 1995.

Parental Responsibility - The person or people with Parental Responsibility can make decisions about you such as who you will live with and what school you will attend, and can consent to medical treatment on your behalf. The Health and Social Care Trust can get Parental Responsibility for you under a Care Order and share Parental Responsibility with your parents.

Private Law - Cases brought to Court where there is breakdown in family relations affecting children and young people, such as divorce.

Public Law - Cases where others, usually the Health and Social Care Trust (Trust), are concerned about children/young people being at risk of harm. The Trust asks the Court to make a decision about a child/young person's care. The Court may make a Care Order or Supervision Order, or No Order.

Recommendation - The Guardian ad Litem will write a report for those at Court to read. At the end of the report will be recommendations, which are written suggestions, about what should happen. The RM or Judge will make the final decision.

Report - A written statement.

Representation, Legal - This is having someone to legally represent you, to speak for you in the Court. If someone is without legal representation then they do not have a Solicitor to advise and speak for them at Court.

Residence Order - Residence Order can be granted to a named adult stating that the child will live with that adult.

Review - To review your case is to look at the details of your case again.

Secure Accommodation Order - An application for a Secure Accommodation Order is made if there is concern that a young person might harm themselves

or others, or that they are continually running away. The Order will say how long the young person has to stay at the Secure Unit. The Court can make the first Order for no more than three months, and repeat Orders for six months.

Secure Unit - A place where young people stay under a Secure Accommodation Order. They are locked in to stop them running away and being at risk of harm.

Social Worker - A Social Worker is a person who has been trained to know about the welfare of children and families.

Solicitor - A person trained in the Law and who speaks up for you in Court and in meetings to do with your case.

Solicitors Advice - A Solicitor giving legal information and his / her opinions about the case to the client.

Statements - Someone involved in the case can give a Statement about their view. It is usually written down, signed by them and sent to the Court for those involved in the case to read.

Subject to Proceedings - The child or young person named in the application is the subject to the case at the Court.

Supervision Order - An Order made by a Court. The Court gives a Health and Social Care Trust the responsibility to supervise the care of a child or young person even though the young person lives with their parents.

Timetable / Timetabling - Decisions are made at the Court about when Hearings should take place and when those involved have to do things, such as send in reports for others to read. Part of the job of the Guardian ad Litem is to make sure that decisions are made as soon as possible.

Transfer the Case - The case may be transferred to a Court at a different level such as moving the case up to the Family Care Centre or to the High Court, because it is a complex case.

Health and Social Care Trust - The organisation responsible for the Nurses, Doctors and Social Workers in the area where you live.

Trust Care Plan - Social Workers asking the Court to make an Order will write down details of their plans about the child's future which will include who they want the child to live with and who they want the child to see.

Wishes and Feelings - This phrase usually relates to your wishes and feelings in respect of who you want to live with, who you want to see and other wishes. The Guardian ad Litem must record your wishes and feelings in the Guardian Report.

NIGALA would like to thank the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), The Rights of Children Group and Birmingham and Warwick Law School for their permission to adapt their original version of the Power Pack.