

## CHILD ARRANGEMENTS – PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

*A simple guide to understanding the process  
(For organisational guidance only – not legal advice)*

### What Is a Child Arrangements Order?

A Child Arrangements Order (CAO) is a court order that sets out:

- Where a child lives
- When a child spends time with each parent
- How contact takes place

The court's primary consideration is the child's welfare.

Where possible, parents are encouraged to reach agreement without court.

### How the Process Starts

Child arrangements may begin:

- Through direct agreement

- Through mediation (usually required before court unless exempt)
- By submitting a C100 application to court

After an application is issued:

- Safeguarding checks are carried out
- CAFCASS may become involved
- A hearing date is set

### The Role of CAFCASS & the Welfare Checklist

#### CAFCASS

CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service):

- Carries out safeguarding checks

- May speak with both parents
- May speak with the child (depending on age and circumstances)
- Provides recommendations to the court

Their role is to assist the court in making decisions focused on the child's welfare.

### The Welfare Checklist

When making decisions, the court considers factors known as the Welfare Checklist, including:

- The child's wishes and feelings (depending on age and understanding)
- The child's physical, emotional and educational needs
- The likely effect of changes in circumstances

- The child's age, background and characteristics
- Any risk of harm
- Each parent's ability to meet the child's needs

The child's welfare is the court's paramount consideration.

### Core Hearings for a CAO:

- Mediation (MIAM)
- First Hearing Dispute Resolution (FHDRA)
- Dispute Resolution Appointment (DRA)
- Final Hearing

### Practical Considerations

- Focus on the welfare of your child.
- Aim for an amicable resolution with the other parent.