

NON-MOLESTATION ORDER RESPONDENT TOOLKIT Practical Overview (England & Wales) (For organisational guidance only – not legal advice)

What Is a Non-Molestation Order?

A Non-Molestation Order (NMO) is a court order made under the Family Law Act 1996.

It is designed to protect someone (and sometimes children) from:

- Harassment
- Threats or intimidation
- Violence
- Unwanted contact
- Coercive or controlling behaviour

If you are the Respondent, the order is made against you.

Breaching an NMO is a criminal offence and can lead to arrest and criminal conviction.

If You Have Been Served:

- ✓ Read it carefully
- ✓ Check what contact is

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prohibited

- ✓ Check any exclusion zones
- ✓ Note the return hearing date

The order takes effect once served.

Even if you disagree with the allegations, you must comply with the order unless and until it is changed or discharged by the court.

Without Notice (Ex-Parte) Orders

Sometimes orders are made without you being present.

If this happens:

- A return hearing will be listed
- You will have the opportunity to respond if you would like to
- You can file a witness statement

Your Options at the Return Hearing

At the next hearing, you may:

- Agree to the order without admissions
- Contest the allegations
- Seek variation of terms
- Request a full hearing (fact-finding if necessary)

The court will consider evidence from both parties.

Preparing Your Response

If you intend to respond:

- ✓ Prepare a clear and factual witness statement
- ✓ Address specific allegations directly
- ✓ Avoid emotional or accusatory language
- ✓ Provide supporting evidence

where relevant

- ✓ Organise events in chronological order

Important Behaviour Guidance

While proceedings are ongoing:

- Do not contact the applicant if prohibited
- Avoid indirect contact (friends, social media, family)
- Do not post about the case online
- Maintain calm, measured conduct

Key Reminders

- An NMO does not automatically determine child arrangements
- It does not resolve financial matters
- It may impact related family proceedings
- Breach is a criminal matter.