



TOP TIPS

For working with Children and Young People

The FJYPB have devised 10 top tips for family court advisors working with children and young people in the family courts to encourage best practice.

1

- The child or young person should be consulted about the timing and venue of any meetings held with them.

2

- Every child or young person should have sufficient time to build a relationship with the Cafcass worker involved in their case.

3

- The child or young person should feel that their needs, wishes and feelings have been listened to, valued and respected.

4

- Children and young people should be offered the opportunity to express their wishes and feeling using effective and age appropriate tools and resources that best meet their needs.

5

- Every child or young person should have clear contact details for their Cafcass worker including office address, telephone number and email address.

6

- Every child or young person should have the opportunity through the Cafcass worker of submitting their views directly to the judge in writing.

7

- Children and young people should be kept informed about the court proceedings in an age appropriate manner.

8

- For Cafcass workers to give consideration to the sibling relationship (inclusive of step and half siblings whom the child may or may not reside with).

9

- Do not use jargon – make language clear, understandable and age appropriate and use methods of communication that children and young people are used to.

10

- Every child or young person should have the opportunity to give feedback on family justice services.

TOP TIPS

For keeping children and young people informed and keeping them at the centre of their case

By choosing the best method for keeping in touch with the children and young people you work with and by asking children and young people how they would like to be kept informed you are treating them with respect.

Keeping children and young people engaged and informed is a way of ensuring their voice is heard.

Dependent on the child or young person's age, circumstances and/or understanding this may be done directly or through a safe parent/carer. Consider whether the carer/parent's permission is required. At all times the impact on the child or young person should be considered.

1

- Ask children and young people directly how they would like to be kept informed. You can:
 - Give the child or young person your email address;
 - Share your telephone number to call or use text messages or Whats App to keep in touch;
 - Write them a short letter and include a stamp addressed envelope to enable them to write back.

2

- Give all children and young people a clear timeline of your involvement. This can be via a letter or in person and should explain:
 - Your role, when you will be seeing them and how long for;
 - The role of other professionals who may be involved;
 - When you will write your report and when the hearing date/s are.

3

- Speak to them after they have spent time with the other parent, rather than, or as well as, ringing the parent for feedback.

4

- If you are recommending something contrary to their wishes and feelings speak to them about why this is or write to them. Judges are increasingly doing this via letters or meetings which makes the child or young person feel more involved in their case.

5

- Send the child or young person a photo of yourself before you meet the child or young person– this can be really helpful for all children and young people, particularly children who on the Autistic spectrum.

6

- At the end of involvement or after your meeting write to say thank you, summarise what was said and wish them well and goodbye. Consider the use of a later life letter in public law cases.

7

- Sign post children and young people to relevant information and support services as appropriate, especially at the end of involvement

8

- Have a picture of the child in your mind – ask parents to show you a photo at the FHDRA or during the s.7 assessment .If the child or young person does not want to share a picture of themselves, find out something unique about the child or something that they like to remind practitioners of the child's individuality.

9

- Give all children and young people the opportunity to feedback. Ensure you share a copy of the children's feedback form during or at the end of their case.

TOP TIPS

For working with children and young people pre-proceedings.



The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) are a group of over 50 children and young people aged between seven and 25 years old who live across England and Wales. All of our members have either had direct experience of the family justice system or have an interest in children's rights and the family courts. You can find out more about the FJYPB at www.cafcass/fjypb

The FJYPB have devised these top tips for professional who work with and support children and young people in pre-proceedings work.

1

- Communicate with me in ways it is easy for me to understand. Do not use jargon and check that I understand the language and words you are using. Be fun and creative.

2

- Work with me in an open and honest way. Keep me informed and involved. Explain to me what is happening and about the process as it moves along. Tell me what the options are for what may happen to me and the timescales.

3

- Ask me when and where I would like to meet with you. Please don't assume that my school is the best place. Also please let me know in advance about the meeting. Don't rush your time with me. Being nice and acting like you really care will make a big difference to me.

4

- Be prepared when you meet with me. Make sure you read my file and understand what I have shared before. I don't want to repeat myself everytime, but do ask me if I want to share anything new or if anything has changed.

5

- Involve me in meetings. If I am too young to attend all or be part of the meeting ask me to write or draw something that can be shared at the meeting. If I am not able to join a meeting explain to me why not.

6

- Explain to me the role of everyone involved with me and how they can help me and my family.

7

- My brothers and sisters are important to me, but it is important that you speak with all of us together and seperately as we may have different wishes and experiences and may need a different plan.

8

- Give me a voice and listen to what I say. Value and respect my views, wishes and feelings. Don't judge me. Keep an open mind and try to understand me.

9

- I want to be safe and 'feel' safe.



TOP TIPS

For working with children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse

The FJYPB have devised some top tips for professionals working with children and young who have experience of and been affected domestic abuse.

1

- Make sure that the child knows that it is **not their fault** and they are **not responsible** for the protection of others.

2

- Focus on the child's experience, not just that of their parents.

3

- Ask the child if they feel safe and if not, what will make them feel safe.

4

- Children may not have seen a specific incident, but they may have heard it or have been exposed to the after effects. Remember this can be just as terrifying for a child.

5

- Recognise that many children and young people will be very worried and scared about the parent who is the victim of domestic violence and may want to protect them. This could mean putting themselves in harm's way.

6

- Realise that children may be able to recognise the warning signs before abuse happens and they may need advice as to how to assess support at this point rather than after an incident has taken place.

7

- Understand that some children may not recognise a parent's (perpetrator's) actions as abusive and they may want to protect them.

8

- Just because a child does not permanently live in the situation does not mean that they are not exposed to domestic abuse or affected by it. Understand that the impact on the child may have a long-term affect.

9

- Be aware that the way parents act in front of a professional is not always the same as how they are at home with the child.

10

- Be aware that some children and young people may be embarrassed about what is happening or what has happened.

11

- Understand that certain cultures may be less likely to speak out about domestic violence.

12

- Let the child fully express their emotions, including what they think, feel and want to happen.

13

- Explain to the child the different types of abuse and talk about what a healthy relationship should be like.

14

- Encourage the child or young person to get support, make them aware of the services available to them and help them access the support. Each child needs to know whom they can contact if they feel scared.

15

- Think about any other children and young people who are in a new relationship with the violent parent (e.g. step-children).

16

- Young people could be experiencing abuse within their own personal relationships, not just in their family.

17

- Do not assume that a child will fully understand what confidentially means, make sure they know what information is confidential and what you will need to share and with whom. Also consider what is the impact likely to be on the child as a result of you sharing the information.

TOP TIPS

for professionals when working with brothers and sisters

A sibling or 'brother and/or sister' relationship is likely to last longer than any other relationship in our lives. This does not matter if the relationship is between full brother and/or sister, half brother and/or sister, step brother and/or sister, or foster brother and/or sister. When this relationship is disrupted, or not maintained, the impact on brother and/or sister groups can be considerable.

The FJYPB have developed some top tips for professionals when working with brothers and/or sister groups.

1

- Stop using the word 'sibling'. Use brother, sister or the word that the child is familiar with.

2

- Ask the child or young person whom they consider their brother(s) and/or sister(s) to be.

3

Listen to the voice of each child individually. Children within the same family may have a different view.

4

Make your decision based on what you think would be best for each individual child.

5

Professionals need to see brother and/or sister relationships as being as important as a parent or grandparent relationship, whether it be full brother and/or sister, half-brother and/or sister, step brother and/or sister or foster brother and/or sister.

6

Give children in the same family the choice to speak to you separately.

7

Not all brothers and sisters may want to be seen at the same place. If you have to see them all in one session find a place that is acceptable and comfortable for all.

8

If appropriate, it is important to keep brothers and/or sisters together or to maintain a good level of contact during family breakdown.

9

Encourage parents to give consideration to the brother and/or sister relationship when completing the Parenting Plan and encourage them to make provision for siblings to share contact.

10

Professionals should give consideration to the brother and/or sister relationship when preparing reports.

11

Remember that a child or young person may not always have a healthy or safe relationship with their brother or sister. Consider both individual and combined needs.

12

Consider the relationships for children and young people with brother(s) and/or sister(s) who are not involved in the court proceedings and the potential impact upon these relationships of the decisions made by the court.

13

Explain what the impact of the decision made will have not only on the children who are subject to the proceedings, but on all of their brothers and sisters too – what will happen going forward?