

## Waiting for the family court to make a decision



"I was kind of anxious to know what was going to happen [because] we weren't put at ease like we will get what we wanted"

*Young person, North Wales*

- Children and young people could feel anxious and stressed while they waited for the court to make a decision.
- Parents who had been through a different court process before said that the new court process felt quicker.
- Some parents wanted a Family Court Advisor or court worker to contact them after the court made a decision so they could say if the decision was working or not.

"I was really scared that I wouldn't be able to see my sisters ever again... [I] was going through a lot, and I got so much anxiety and stress from it. It felt like it took a long time"

*Young person, North Wales*



## How will this help other people who go to family court in the future?

These are the things we think are important - our recommendations:



### Share more information

Give children, young people, and parents more information about what will happen next.



### Make sure that children and young people's voices are heard

Let children and young people decide where to meet with a Family Court Advisor or social worker. Listen to what they want when making decisions - where this is safe and possible.



### Offer more support

Make sure that children, young people, and parents get enough support and are kept safe. This is especially important when they are finding things difficult.



### Make decisions quickly

Keep the court process as quick as possible to help families feel less anxious and stressed. Let children know what is happening while they are waiting.

Thank you to all the children, young people, and families who took part in this evaluation.

If you would like more information about the project, please contact Dr Charlotte Barlow, [c.barlow@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.barlow@leeds.ac.uk) or [connectcentre@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:connectcentre@uclan.ac.uk)

## Improving the Family Courts



### What was the research about?

The family courts in Dorset and North Wales wanted to improve the experiences of families.

A research project asked people what it was like to have a court make a decision about their family.

We spoke to 39 parents and carers (25 mothers, 13 fathers and 1 grandparent) and 9 children and young people (aged 6 and above) from Dorset & North Wales. Here's what we found out.



## Getting information about the family court



"They kept saying 'we don't know how it's going to happen'... so we weren't really sure what was happening. So we weren't really at ease"

*Young person  
North Wales*

"I felt really sad because I didn't hear anything from [FCA] afterwards. And then I felt really lost and confused"

*Young person  
Dorset*

- People told us they wanted more information about the family court.
- Children and young people wanted to know when and where they would talk to a Family Court Advisor or social worker before this happened, and what would happen after they spoke to the worker.



**Cafcass/Cafcass Cymru Family Court Advisors** make sure that children and young people's voice are heard in court and that decisions are taken in their best interests.



**Social workers** are there to help families to keep children and young people safe.

## Listening to children and young people

- Most children and young people felt that their voices were heard. They were pleased to be spoken to by Family Court Advisors or social workers, and they were happy with where the meetings took place. However, some children and young people wanted to be able to choose where these meetings happened.
- Many children and young people felt nervous about speaking with Family Court Advisors or social workers. But the Family Court Advisors or social workers made them feel comfortable and listened to them.
- Most children and young people felt happy with what the court decided.
- Sometimes children and young people felt that their views were not listened to when the court made their decision, which could make them feel sad'.

"Because like the Cafcass people, they were hearing us out. We were getting a chance for our voices to be heard"

*Young person  
North Wales*



"Me and [sibling] ...mentioned to [Cafcass worker] that I wanted to choose if I go or not...I don't think they really took that into account, and they didn't really listen to us"

*Young person  
Dorset*

"[Cafcass Cymru worker] brought me toys to play with, which I liked and made me feel better"

*Young person  
North Wales*

## Getting support while waiting for the family court to make a decision



- Going through the family court was difficult for some families, especially those who had a lot of other problems at home.
- Children, young people, and parents who had a difficult time sometimes needed extra support. Most people felt that they got enough support, but some would have liked a bit more.

"I had an advocate who was really lovely to be fair. She was the only one who really listened to be. She gave me support for a bit but then it fizzled out"

*Young person,  
Dorset*