

DFJ Guidance on the attendance of social workers and CAFCASS officers at Court
Public Law: August 2025

1. This guidance mirrors that which was practically in place prior to August 2025.
2. The judiciary is alive to the pressures on all professionals working within our local family justice system. It is recognised that many organisations are under resourced and overburdened, creating strain upon the efficient running of cases before the Court.
3. Although what follows is not the preference of the judiciary, it has been agreed on the basis that the difficulties being experienced by many are real. However, the local judiciary continue to ask social workers and Guardians to attend all hearings, if they are at all able to do so. In our experience, when issues arise at Court the role of the social worker/Guardian in assisting both the parties and the Court is invaluable. It also provides an opportunity for busy professionals to “touch base” with the parents and family members involved in the proceedings.
4. Whilst it is open to any social worker or CAFCASS officer to make an application, video link attendance will be the exception rather than the rule.

CAFCASS

5. CAFCASS officers will be excused attendance at all hearings except for the Issues Resolution Hearing and Final Hearing, so long as:
 - a) In respect of the case management hearing, an initial report has been filed.
 - b) In any event, full instructions have been provided to their advocate, and they are contactable by telephone should instructions need to be taken.
6. When a CAFCASS officer is due to attend a hearing, the expectation is that they will do so in person.

SOCIAL WORKERS

7. Social worker attendance will be excused at directions hearings, unless there is an objection from any party, communicated to the other parties no later than 4:00 PM the day before the scheduled hearing.
8. Local authority advocates **must** be fully instructed by the social work team for any such hearing and must be contactable for any further instructions to be taken on the day.
9. Social workers **must** attend the first CMH, IRH, any fact finding hearing and final hearing. The expectation is that they will do so in person.
10. Specific variation to this guidance may be sought from the hearing judge, who may insist on attendance dependent upon the issues in the case.
11. If there has been a failure to file a statement required by the court, or otherwise comply with directions previously made, the social worker must attend to explain that failure.