



A crucial new toolkit for Family Judges

The President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane, has published guidance for Family Judges today (26 February 2025) on when, how and why to write to children in Family Court Proceedings.

The guidance has been developed with the Family Justice Young People's Board and input from children and young people with experience of court proceedings. Research indicates (Stalford and Hollingsworth, 2020) that when children receive communication from a Judge, be it in the form of a letter or judgment, it can help them feel listened to and valued by the Court.

The guidance entitled "**Writing to children - a toolkit for judges**" is aimed at supporting judges in this element of their judicial role and includes practical guidance/ "Top Tips" as to the key things to consider when writing to children with examples of language, tone and format drawn from previous letters judges have written to children.

The guidance acknowledges that a judicial letter can fulfil various useful purposes including:-

- Ensuring a final decision is explained to a child in a way that they can understand
- Enabling a child to be told not only the decision but also the reasons for the decision and how their wishes and experience informed the decision-making process; and
- Ensuring a child receives an accurate report of what the Judge has decided

It is important to remember that judicial letters are only one form of engagement that children can have with court proceedings that concern them. The guidance concludes with a reminder that every child is different and there will be instances in which it will be helpful for a particular child to meet with the Judge in person in addition to or instead of a judicial letter.



If you wish to learn more about the engagement that a child can have with the court proceedings that concern them, please contact a member of our children team.

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