

Notices and court directions sent out

Once the care proceedings have been issued, each parent should be sent a 'notice' that:

- Confirms the case has been issued
- Gives the court reference number of the case
- Explains when and where the first hearing will take place.

If you are the mother, you will automatically become part of the case ('[a party to proceedings](#)'). This means you will see all of the court papers and will be required to come to court hearings. If you are a father and you have parental responsibility then you will also become a party.

If you are a father but don't have parental responsibility, you should still be told about the case and when the first hearing will take place. You will then be able to get free legal advice and the court can be asked to make you a party to the proceedings. You can find more information about this by reading the [FAQs \(frequently asked questions\) about care proceedings](#). You can also find out helpful information about your rights as a father and parental responsibility on the [Young fathers](#) page.

The court will also make and then send out '[directions](#)'. The first directions are orders that the court makes telling everyone involved with the case what they need to do before the first hearing. These directions will usually:

- Require each parent to prepare a 'response document' briefly explaining what they have to say about the concerns children's services have set out in the application and supporting statement
- Appoint an independent social worker for your child called a 'Children's Guardian' who does not work for children's services. The Guardian will then choose a solicitor for your child. The Children's Guardian will give the court information, check the plan(s) that children's services have made for your child and give the court an opinion about what is best for your child. Together with the solicitor that they have chosen, the Children's Guardian will represent your child during the care proceedings. The Guardian should be the independent voice of your child in court.