

Family Court Support Service (FCSS)

Role Specification

What does the Family Court Support Service do?

Following cuts to Legal Aid, Norfolk Community Law Service is offering a service to assist clients who are seeking Child Arrangements Orders through the Family Court. Our work involves completing and submitting court forms, attending hearings and running a court desk on Mondays at Norwich Magistrates Court. Our clients are either referred to us from NCLS's Free Legal Advice sessions or when we meet them for the first time at the court desk. We provide general guidance and support during the court process, helping clients to remain calm and focused on what is best for the children.

Volunteer Duties and Responsibilities:

- Providing moral support to Litigants in Person (LIPs), through pre-arranged appointments or at the Monday court desk sessions
- Ensuring conflict of interest checks and data forms are accurately completed
- Helping to prepare clients for court, discussing the court process and their desired outcomes
- Assisting with court paper work and taking notes for clients in court
- Writing detailed and accurate attendance notes to share with the rest of the team

Competencies required:

Good Communication

As you will often have no case history for your clients, you must quickly and sensitively find out their story, establishing the key details that led them to court and what they hope to achieve.

Empathy

Clients are often anxious which can manifest as fear, anger or frustration. By being supportive and calming you will enable them to achieve the best outcome at court.

Flexibility

When emotions are running high you must be able to think on your feet and adapt quickly to new information or changes in decisions.

Maturity

Cases often revolve around difficult situations, and clients may be vulnerable or challenging to work with. You will need to be non-judgemental, using tact and discretion to help your client focus on what is best for their child. You may be party to distressing stories in some cases.

Confidence

You will need to introduce yourself and our service to clients in the court waiting room and be capable of helping your client to assert their wishes with legal professionals and CAFCASS officers prior to court.

Teamwork

Although the work is predominantly working one to one with clients, you will need to work together as part of a small team of volunteers.

Organisation

You need to arrive for appointments promptly and respond to the co-ordinator in a timely fashion. You will be required to attend training sessions.

Professional Manner:

As a member of NCLS we expect you to have a professional manner at all times, treating your clients with respect and understanding court rules and confidentiality.

Commitment:

Volunteers should be able to dedicate at least one day a month to the service, and preferably be available on Mondays. Training for this role takes a substantial period of time so we are looking for long-term commitment.

No prior experience of law is required, full training is given which largely consists of shadowing more experienced volunteers.

For more information please contact:

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