

Family assistance orders

Sometimes, at the end of a case, the court may decide that a family needs extra support in the form of a Family Assistance Order (FAO). This is a short-term court order which can last for up to 12 months. It is designed to give families extra help after the case has finished.

FAOs can be made at the end of different kinds of cases including those to do with arrangements for where children live and who they should see. They are only recommended where the JFCAS officer believes that an FAO will help a child and their family, and if all the adults named in the order agree to it.

What will happen

If the court has made an FAO in your case, it will ask a JFCAS officer (or sometimes it may be a Children's Services social worker) to help your family for a set time. But because an FAO needs everyone's help to make it work, all the adults named in your FAO will be asked to agree to the order before it is made. If everyone agrees to it, the JFCAS officer will write to all the adults named in the order and arrange for you all to meet to discuss what should happen next. At the meeting the JFCAS officer will help you to draw up a detailed plan setting out what the goals of the FAO are and will outline the tasks that you will all be expected to carry out to make it work. Everyone will be given a copy of the plan.

The kind of help and support we will provide will depend on your case but it might include the following:

- Helping your family and helping them to improve a particular aspect of your parenting, such as helping you to make joint decisions about your child.
- Helping you to work together to meet your child's needs, and helping your child to adjust to any changes to their life.
- Helping you to maintain your child's most important relationships within their extended family networks (such as staying in contact with aunts and uncles and grandparents).
- Helping your family in contact arrangements, either by supervising contact or helping to arrange safe contact.
- Working directly with your child to help them adjust to any contact arrangements and get the most out of the time they spend with members of their family.
- Providing advice to your family if your child displays any behavioural problems after contact.

At the end of the order

At the end of the order, the JFCAS officer will usually arrange a final meeting with your family to review what you have achieved and may, if the court has asked for it, report back to the court. They will probably talk to you about any ongoing issues that still need to be dealt with and how you might solve them. They may even refer you to another organisation that may be able to help you, such as a contact centre or an organisation that offers parenting classes.