

YOUR GUARDIAN AD LITEM

Having your
voice heard

Helping decide
what is best
for you

Your feelings
are important


Barnardos

My name is

**and the court has appointed me as your
Guardian ad Litem.**

**I hope that this booklet will help you
understand why I have been appointed
and what we can do together.**

You can contact me on

WHAT IS A GUARDIAN AD LITEM?

Sometimes when adults can't agree on what is best for children and young people, a judge is asked to decide. A judge can ask a Guardian ad Litem to help by finding out what the children and young people involved want to say.

It is always a judge who decides if a Guardian ad Litem will be involved in a case.

A Guardian ad Litem writes a report for the judge. This report describes the wishes, feelings and interests of the child/young person. It will also make recommendations about the best way of helping each child/young person.

The Guardian ad Litem's court report will also be read by the parents of the child or young person and by the social worker involved with the family.

YOUR GUARDIAN AD LITEM

I am your Guardian ad Litem

I have been asked by the judge to meet with you, to listen to you and then to tell the judge what you think, what you feel and what you would like.

I will also tell the judge what I think about what is happening.

I will write a report for the judge. We can chat about what might be in that report. When I go to court I will give a copy of my report to your parents and to your social worker.

If there is something on your mind that you do not want to tell me / do not want others to know, you might want to speak to a counsellor in total confidence. We can discuss this if you like.

I work with Barnardos and I hope this booklet will help you to understand the work I will try to do with you.

MEETING WITH YOU

I will arrange to meet with you. Hopefully, I can get to know you and find out about the things you like.

- I will explain to you exactly what I do and can try to answer any questions you might have about my role
- Your feelings are very important and we can talk about these if you like
- If you have a special wish you might want to talk to me about it
- There will have been many important events that happened in your life before we met and some of these could have had a big effect on you. If you like, we can talk about these
- I can talk to you about what happens in court



I will also listen to other people who know you well. You might tell me who these people are.

FEELINGS

Sometimes we talk about our feelings and sometimes we keep them hidden. All feelings are okay.

I will listen to you if you want to talk about how you are feeling. There are lots of feelings words in this Word Search. Can you find them?

GYTWJOAPSACY
 FRUSTRATEDON
 GFODSWOSNTNO
 DWGEUHWDTDFA
 NDFIOANGRYUF
 ANORLP **SAD** LSR
 ATSRAPOPNEEA
 ERDOEYDRINDI
 SATWJOAPROUD
 YEEXCITEDLOG

FIND YOUR FEELINGS

ANGRY
 HAPPY
 CONFUSED
 LONELY
 SAD

WORRIED
 FRUSTRATED
 EXCITED
 JEALOUS
 PROUD
 AFRAID



LISTENING TO YOU

I will listen to you and take your wishes seriously.

I will always try to be honest with you and to help you with any worries you may have.

Everybody has things that they wish for...



Write or Draw your wish here:

IMPORTANT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE

There will have been many important events that happened in your life before we met.

Some of these could have had a big effect on you.

If you like, we can talk about these.

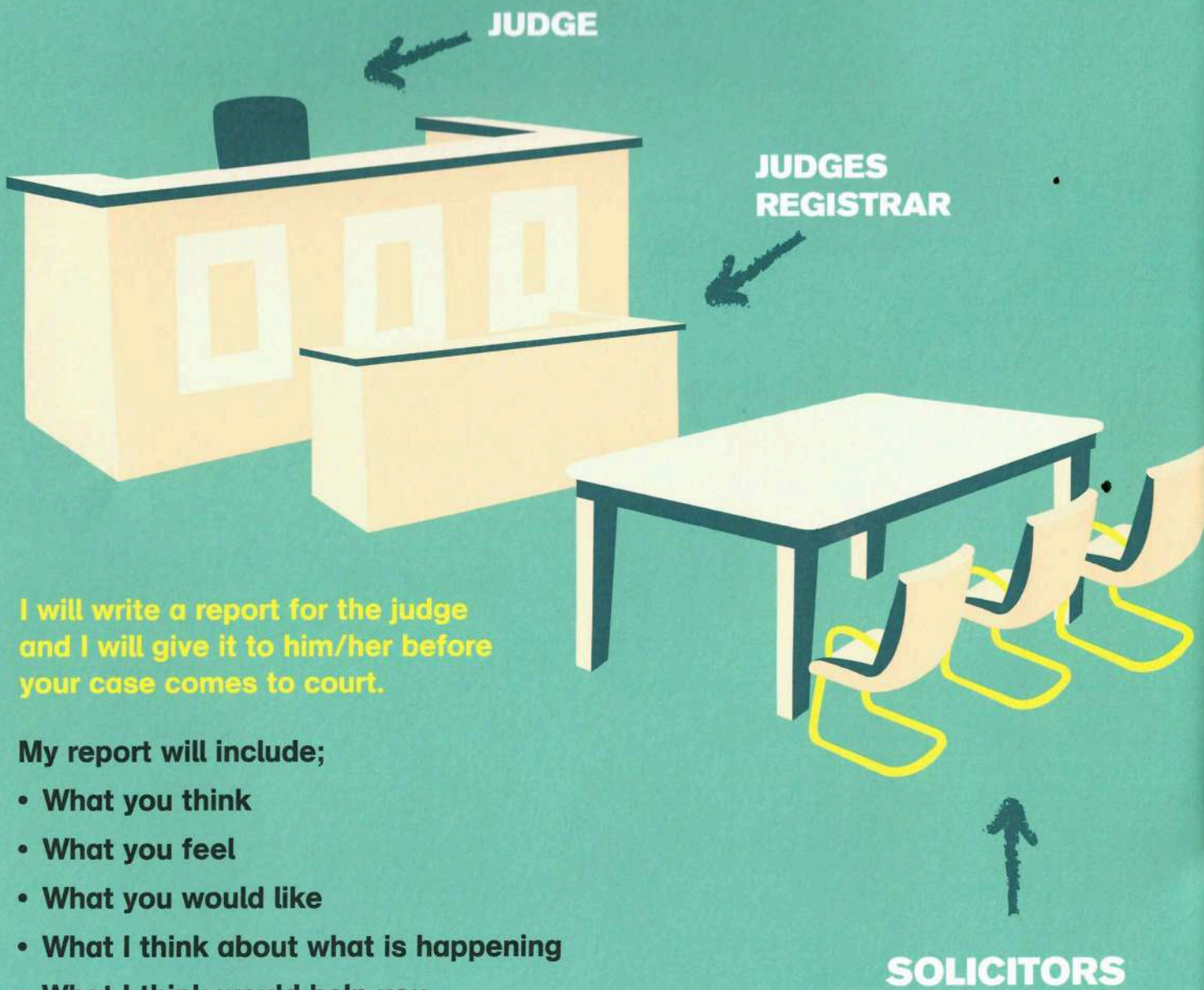


WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU THINK THE JUDGE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

Draw it or write it below.



WHAT HAPPENS IN COURT



I will write a report for the judge and I will give it to him/her before your case comes to court.

My report will include;

- What you think
- What you feel
- What you would like
- What I think about what is happening
- What I think would help you

As well as listening to me, the judge will hear what some other people think. We can talk about who these people are.

Your social worker will also have a report for the judge. I will read this report and your parents and social worker will read my report.

Sometimes the judge asks us to come back to court a few times before making a final decision about what should happen.

When the judge has made a final decision I will meet with you and talk it through with you. We can talk about what the decision means for your future.

This may be the end of my work with you. However, sometimes the judge may want to hear how you are getting on and may ask me to visit you again.



RECORDS AND FILES

At Barnardos we keep a file for every child and young person who has a Guardian ad Litem. This file holds information about you – like your name, address, date of birth, phone number, family.



Your file will also have notes on the work we do together, including what you did and what you talked about. I will usually write something for your file after we meet. This will help me to think about the best way to help you.

A copy of the report I write for court will be kept on your file.

Your file will be locked away safely in a filing cabinet.

TELLING US WHAT YOU THINK

I want to make sure my work with you is helpful. You might like to let me know if there were things we did that you found were helpful or if there were things you were not happy about.



do you have any suggestions?

do you have any complaints?

is there anything you would change?

How often will you visit me?

This is different with different people. We can decide together when we meet.

What is the difference between my social worker and my Guardian ad Litem?

Your social worker is responsible for your care arrangements and for working with your family; your Guardian ad Litem is responsible for representing your views and your interests.

Who will read the report you write?

The report will be given to the judge. A copy will be given to your parents and to your social worker.

Can I come to court?

I can ask the judge if you can come to court.

My case is in court – does this mean I am in trouble?

No, you are not in trouble. The case is in court because the judge has been asked to decide what is best for you.

How long will you be working with me?

I will stay working with you for as long as the judge keeps me involved.

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU
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Kian, age 9

Leah, age 5

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Jamie, age 9

Pamela, age 11

Dwayne, age 10

Aaron, age 8

Lisa, age 12

Nathan, age 10

Edel, age 11

Nadia, age 8

**Barnardos
Christchurch Square
Dublin 8**

T: 01 453 0355

E: info@barnardos.ie

W: www.barnardos.ie

Registered Charity 6015

Design: Zinc