



Guide to legal costs

Family Law Children cases

Legal costs are hard to predict with accuracy. There are lots of variables, such as the complexity of issues, the seniority of lawyer instructed, the personalities of the parties, and the stage at which everything is resolved or determined. To help you understand what might be payable, here is a simplified explanation of the standard court process (when an application is made for the court's help in determining the living arrangements of children), followed by a summary of the average range of costs for each stage.



FHDRA

The 'First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment' is the first court hearing. At this hearing the Court - either a Judge or magistrates - will look to establish the range of issues in dispute and see whether these can be narrowed. The Court will encourage the parties to reach agreement on interim arrangements, and determine these where they cannot be agreed. The Court will consider whether Cafcass (the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) will have an ongoing role in the case, and whether any expert evidence is needed from, for example, a Child psychologist or an Independent Social Worker, or scientific evidence as to DNA or drugs and alcohol testing might be necessary.

DRA

This second hearing or 'Dispute Resolution Appointment' is effectively court led mediation and if your case hasn't already settled by this stage, it's a very good opportunity to reach an agreement. By the time this hearing takes place we should have the initial evidence presented as to each party's case, and the reports from any experts instructed. Most importantly, we will also have worked with you (and your barrister if one is instructed) to put together a comprehensive proposal for settlement. We should also have received your former partner's proposal. Issues are narrowed and everyone works hard to broker an agreement that's acceptable to both parties.

Fact-find

Where a case involves significant dispute as to historic behaviour or events, most particularly in relation to allegations of domestic abuse, the Court may set down a separate 'fact-finding' hearing, to consider and assess those allegations. In particular the court will be tasked with assessing whether, on the balance of probabilities, particular events happened or did not happen. Such hearings are not needed in every case. In preparation for the hearing detailed statements are prepared by each party as to what each says happened.

Trial

In the rare case that you still haven't reached an agreement following the DRA, a final hearing/trial is listed by the court. Both you and your former partner will most likely have to speak at the hearing and answer questions from each other's barristers. Any experts that have prepared reports during the proceedings may also have to speak to the court and be questioned by the barristers. Due to constraints on court availability, and because a trial could take several days, the timing of the trial could be 4-6 months after the DRA. In preparation for the trial, we will likely have prepared and exchanged with your former partner a 'narrative statement' setting out your case in detail, and explaining why the court should make the orders that you are requesting. We'll have met with your barrister to help them prepare.

Estimated costs in contested proceedings



The estimated costs listed below show our fees, and examples of the types of third-party costs that may need to be incurred (also called 'disbursements'). We have broken the costs down into four stages, so that each stage includes all work up to and including the particular court hearing. All costs listed are exclusive of VAT. Costs at the lower end of the scale represent those cases that are managed by junior solicitors in the team (supervised as required) and involving straightforward disputes so no expert fees are incurred. Costs at the high end of the scale generally involve more complex issues, such as jurisdiction, expert reports and the instruction of a senior barrister; these cases are managed by senior solicitors in the team, assisted by junior solicitors where appropriate. Please note that the below estimates do not include discrete applications that may prove necessary and would therefore incur additional charges.

FHDRA

Hedges Law	£5,000 - £20,000
Barrister (dependent on seniority)	£1,000 - £5,000

DRA

Hedges Law	£5,000 - £20,000
Barrister	£1,500 - £4,500
Expert Report -DNA, drugs, alcohol testing	*£1,000 - £2,500
Expert Report - Psychologist or Independent Social Worker	*£1,500 - £4,000
Expert Report - foreign lawyer advising on law overseas	*£1,000 - £2,500

Fact-find

Hedges Law	£5,000 - £15,000
Barrister	£2,000 - £7,500

TRIAL

Hedges Law	£8,000 - £25,000
Barrister	£5,000 - £20,000
Expert fees to attend the hearing (per expert)	*£500 - £1,500

SUBTOTALS OF ESTIMATED COSTS

FHDRA	£6,000 - £25,000
DRA	£6,500 - £33,000
Fact-find	£7,000 - £22,000
Trial	£13,000 - £46,500

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: **£32,500 - £126,500**

*These disbursements are excluded from the lower estimate and included at the top rate in the higher estimate

Estimated costs of non-court matters



The estimated costs listed below show our fees, where there are no Court proceedings. Many parents are able to reach agreement as to arrangements for their children without the need for Court proceedings. As above, all of these estimated costs are exclusive of VAT.

PARENTING AGREEMENTS

To include putting together and exchanging with your former partner a simple parenting agreement, without the need to attend court.

Hedges Law

£2,000 - £10,000

MEDIATION SUPPORT

Advising you and providing legal support in the background while you and your former partner seek to resolve matters through mediation.

Hedges Law

£1,000 - £5,000
