



CHILD ARRANGEMENTS GUIDE



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Child Arrangements

WHERE TO START

When a relationship breaks down, parents will need to consider what the most appropriate arrangements are going to be for any children, such as where and with which parent they are going to live and what time they are to spend with the other parent.

It is encouraged that these arrangements are made by agreement between the parents. There will need to be flexibility as children's needs will change as they get older and there will be occasions, such as attending family events, when the arrangements will need to change.

Agreement can be reached in a number of ways such as between the parents, via mediation or with the assistance of a solicitor.

Where it has not been possible to agree the arrangements for the children then either parent can apply to the court.

The Process

APPLICATION AND CAFCASS

The person making the application is known as the Applicant. The applicant will send their application to the court. The court will issue the application and send notification to the other party, who is known as the respondent.

The application will be sent by the court to CAFCASS for them to prepare a safeguarding letter before the first hearing takes place.

A CAFCASS officer will speak to both parents and do a background check with the police and children services before completing their safeguarding letter and sending it to the parents and the court.

The Process

FIRST HEARING

The first hearing is known as the First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment or FHDRA.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider CAFCASS's safeguarding letter and narrow the issues.

Within the safeguarding letter CAFCASS will have advised the court of any further relevant information that should be obtained before a decision can be safely made.

The further information sought will be dependent upon the circumstances but can range from Alcohol/Drug Testing, attendance at a course and a further report being prepared by CAFCASS to determine appropriate arrangements for the children.

The Process

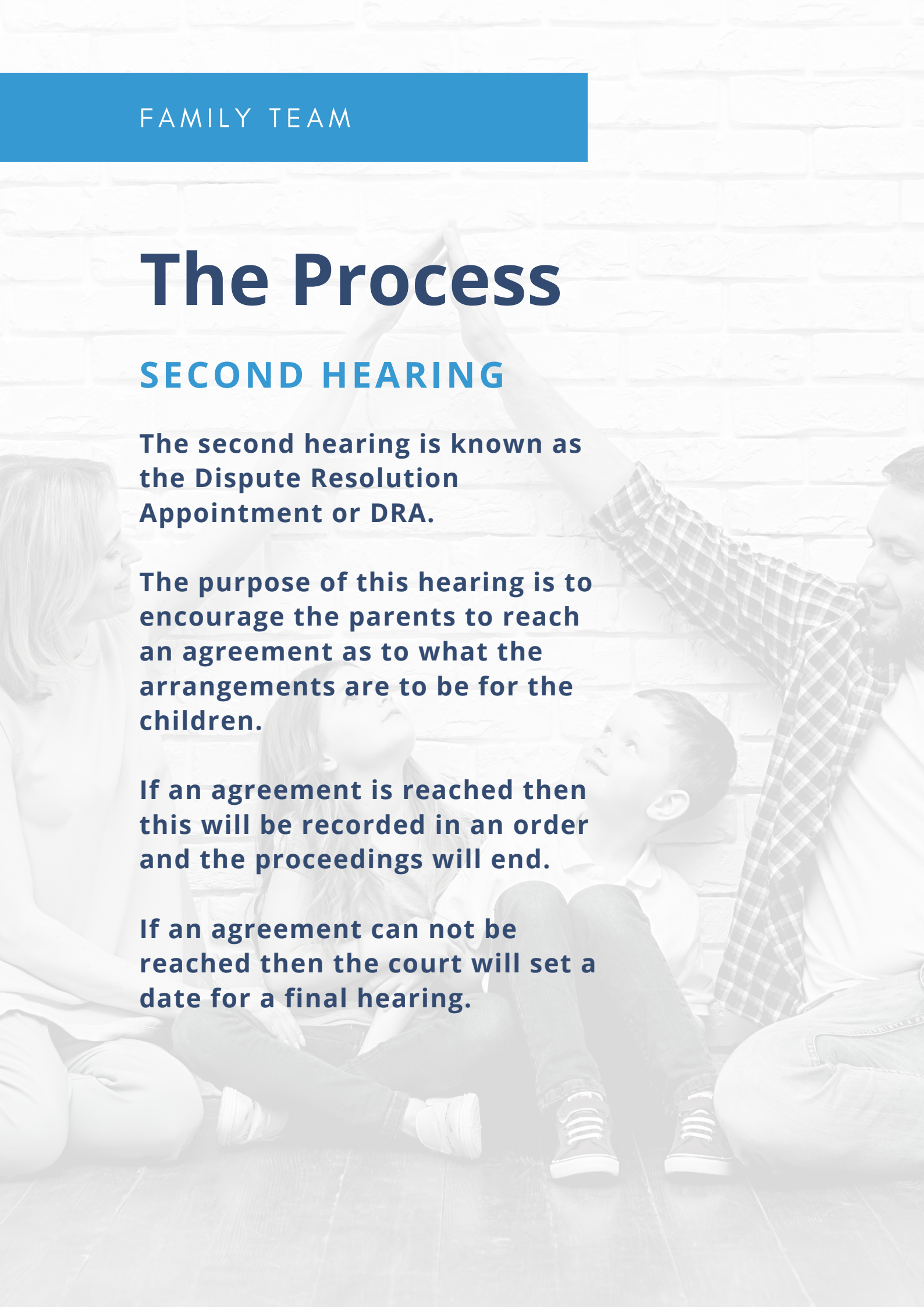
SECOND HEARING

The second hearing is known as the Dispute Resolution Appointment or DRA.

The purpose of this hearing is to encourage the parents to reach an agreement as to what the arrangements are to be for the children.

If an agreement is reached then this will be recorded in an order and the proceedings will end.

If an agreement can not be reached then the court will set a date for a final hearing.



The Process

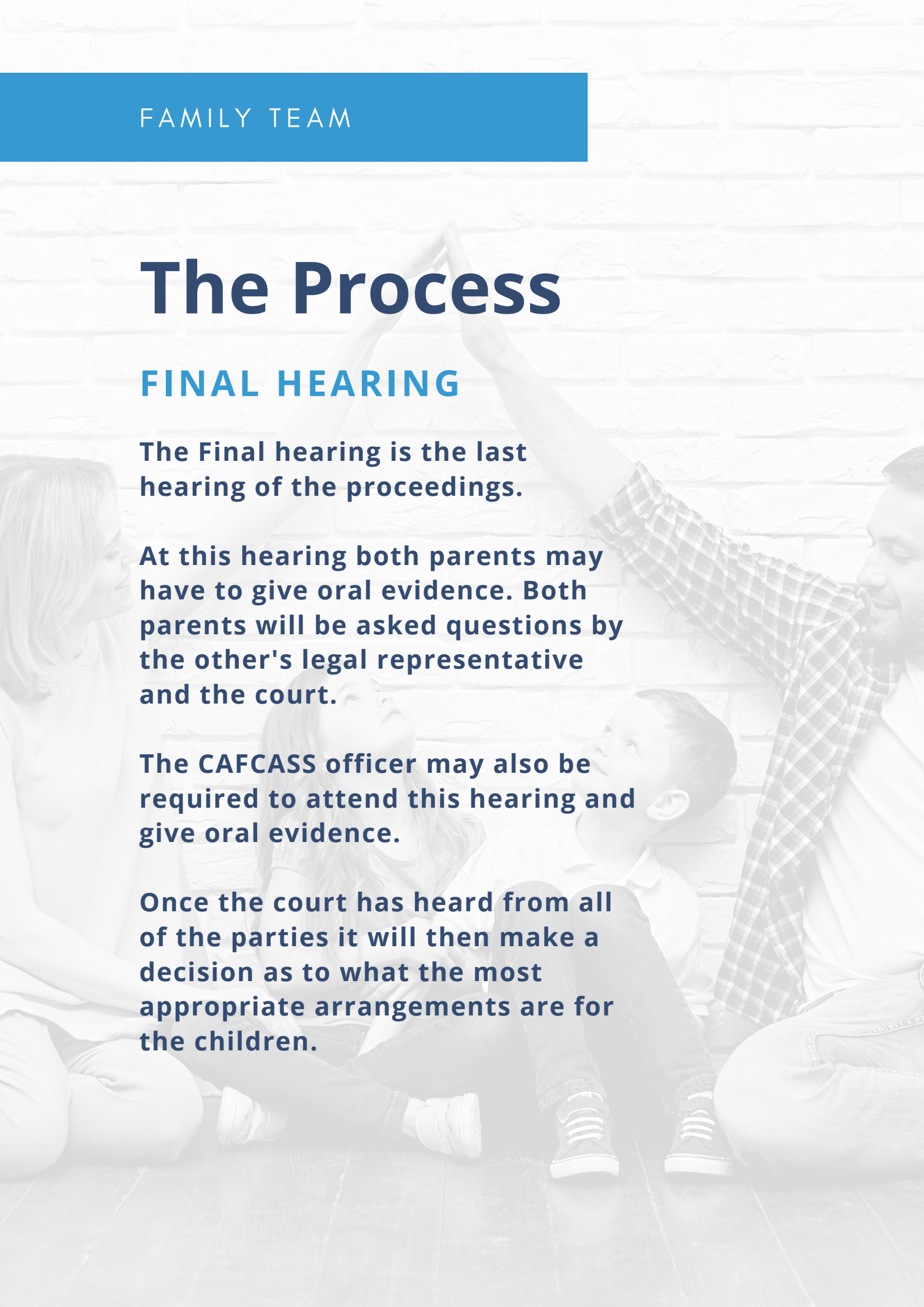
FINAL HEARING

The Final hearing is the last hearing of the proceedings.

At this hearing both parents may have to give oral evidence. Both parents will be asked questions by the other's legal representative and the court.

The CAFCASS officer may also be required to attend this hearing and give oral evidence.

Once the court has heard from all of the parties it will then make a decision as to what the most appropriate arrangements are for the children.





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