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**THIS EXPLANATORY NOTE SHOULD BE SHOWN TO THE LITIGANT IN PERSON BEFORE THEY ATTEND THEIR CLINIC APPOINTMENT**

The Exeter Family Court Clinic

EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR PERSONS WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

**You must read this document in full**.

It explains how the Exeter Family Law Clinic (“the Clinic”) operates, what you can expect from the Clinic and what you must provide in order to access the Scheme. You may wish to keep this document to help with your records.

As part of this Clinic, lawyers who are qualified barristers or solicitors (“volunteers”) will provide information and guidance on may be able to make an assessment of the merits of your application for permission to appeal. In appropriate instances they may be able to draft a supplementary skeleton argument to support your application. If an oral hearing for permission to appeal is ordered by the court then the volunteer may be able to represent you in that hearing too.

The Scheme is designed for those unable to afford to pay for legal representation. It is coordinated by Advocate and works alongside CASS+, a charity based in Devon and Cornwall. There is no financial means test carried out to access support through the Scheme, however, Advocate reserves the right to carry out financial assessment if necessary.

Please also note that the Clinic cannot assist vexatious litigants or those currently under a civil restraint order. You should also not apply for this scheme if Advocate or your local pro bono charity have already assessed your case as “wholly without merit”.

If you need assistance understanding the information in this Explanatory Note please contact Advocate at southwestprobono@weareadvocate.org.uk or CASS+ in person at ECCC or at exeter@cassplus.org.

**Any documents and correspondence for this scheme should be sent to southwestprobono****@weareadvocate.org.uk*****.***

**Overview of using the Scheme**

 **What does the Clinic do?**
The Clinic is a one-off, appointment only service for Litigants in Person involved in **current private law family court proceedings (disputes between family members about arrangements for children)** and **Family Law Act proceedings (non-molestation and occupation orders)**.

The volunteer barrister or solicitor can offer limited guidance and advice about your case. The type of guidance they offer will depend on the stage of your case:

1. **If proceedings have not yet been commenced:**

A volunteer may be able to provide guidance in relation to identifying forms or legal documents, explaining the nature of a claim, explaining the process of issuing a claim, explaining the timeline and legal process and guiding you as to how to access further legal assistance.

1. **If there is a live case before the Exeter Family Law Court:**

A volunteer’s guidance will vary depending on the nature of the case
 and any upcoming hearings, but may include guidance in relation to
 preparation for any upcoming hearings, assist with preparing
 documentation and explaining the legal process and timeline.

**What does the Clinic not do?**

The Clinic is a **one-off**, appointment only service and does not provide ongoing legal support. Once the volunteer has concluded their appointment with you, and provided you with a Concluding Letter by email, then that is the end of their work.

As such, the Clinic does not provide ongoing advice about your case and we are not involved in the management of your case. How you manage your case is down to you.

The Clinic is separate and independent of the Exeter Combined Courts and so we do not have overall control of the progress of your case.

**How to access the Clinic**

**Contacting Advocate or CASS+**

You are able to request an in-person appointment with the Clinic via Advocate at southwestprobono@weareadvocate.org.uk. Once you have requested an appointment, you will be sent either a Booking Form to complete and return, or a link to an online Booking Form, where you will be able to select a suitable clinic date and time to attend.

You will be asked to provide the following information:

* Contact details
* The type of case you have (whether it is in relation to Private Family Law, Non-Molestation Orders or Occupation Orders)
* A brief summary of your case and the type of assistance you are seeking
* Details of any upcoming deadlines or hearings
* Whether or not you need to bring anybody to assist at your appointment

If you do not provide this information, then we cannot progress your request for an appointment with the Clinic.

The Clinic appointments take place on the **last Friday of each month**. If you are successful in securing an appointment with the Clinic, you will be given an appointment date and time. Each appointment lasts for **40 minutes only.**

**Exeter Family Law Clinic Timeline**

❶. The Litigant makes a request to southwestprobono@weareadvocate.org.uk.

❷. A caseworker at Advocate will send the Litigant the Booking Form.

❸. The Litigant should complete the Booking Form as soon as possible.

❺. No later than 1 week before the appointment date, the Litigant should arrange to meet with CASS+ on in the Exeter Combined Court Centre. CASS+ will help the Litigant to organise papers and prepare list of questions. Appointments can be made via email at exeter@cassplus.org.

❻. On the day of their Clinic appointment, litigants should attend the Exeter Combined Court Centre, and will be directed to the appropriate room.

❼. The Litigant’s Clinic appointment will last 40 minutes.

❽. Following the appointment, the Litigant will be provided with a Concluding Letter by the volunteer, summarising the assistance provided on the day. This will be provided via email. A copy will also be provided to Advocate.

❾. Assistance through the Clinic concludes.

**What happens at the end of your Clinic appointment?**Within 48 hours of your Clinic appointment, the volunteer will draft a Concluding Letter for you. This will summarise the work that they have completed for you and what you should do next. If you require further advice or representation then you should contact Advocate. Your Concluding Letter will contain further information about applying for ongoing support through barristers volunteering through Advocate.

If you have any comments, concerns or complaints about the Scheme please write to the Chief Executive of Advocate at Advocate at International Dispute Resolution Centre, 1 Paternoster Lane, London, EC4M 7BQ.

**Frequently asked questions**

**Q. Can I bring someone to my appointment?**

**A.** You are able to bring someone to your appointment with you if you feel you need additional support. To ensure that your appointment is not impacted, we do ask that this is limited to one other person and that you make us aware of this when booking your appointment. If you do require more than one person to attend, please let us know who needs to attend and for what reason.

**Q. What if I have a Court Appointed Intermediary?**

**A.** If you have a live case in the Family Court and have a Court-appointed intermediary, you will fist need to let the Clinic know in your Booking Form. As the Clinic is separate to the ECCC and the judiciary, however, the intermediary will not be available to support you or assist during their Clinic appointment.

**Q. Will anyone help me to prepare for my Clinic appointment?**

**A.** We encourage everybody who is seeking assistance through the Clinic to arrange an additional appointment with CASS+ prior to your clinic appointment. During this appointment with CASS+ they will aim to assist you with preparing your documents and preparing a list of questions to ask the volunteer on the day of your Clinic appointment. Instead, CASS+ will arrange for one of their volunteers to attend the appointment with you and answer any follow up questions you may have.

**Q. Can I get further support after my Clinic appointment?**

**A.** If, following your Clinic appointment, you require further support you may be directed by the volunteer to contact Advocate. Depending on the circumstances of your case, Advocate may be able to seek a volunteer barrister to assist with further advice, drafting or representation at an upcoming hearing. Details of how to apply to Advocate can be found at <https://weareadvocate.org.uk/apply-for-help.html>. If you have any questions about the process, or require a paper copy of the application form, please email southwestprobono@weareadvocate.org.uk.

**Q. How will those involved in the Clinic process my personal data?**

**A.** Details of this are provided in the Data Protection Notice.

**Q. What do I do if I want to raise a complaint about my Clinic appointment?**

**A.** If you have any comments, concerns or complaints about the Scheme please write to the Chief Executive of Advocate at Advocate at International Dispute Resolution Centre, 1 Paternoster Lane, London, EC4M 7BQ.

**Any further questions and correspondence for this scheme should be sent to** **southwestprobono@weareadvocate.org.uk** **marked *‘Exeter Family Law Clinic’.***