

Transparency Implementation Group

The Reporting Pilot: Information Sheet for Parents and Family Members

What is the TIG?

The Transparency Implementation Group (the TIG) is a group set up by the head family judge in England and Wales to help make the family justice system more open. We are running a Reporting Pilot and your case might be included. We have produced this sheet to explain a little about what this means for you.

What is the Reporting Pilot?

The TIG are running a pilot that allows certain reporters to come to hearings and report what they see and hear. Anything that is reported will be anonymised so that you and your family can't be identified.

The pilot is being run in three courts – Cardiff, Leeds and Carlisle. Your case will only be in this pilot if it is being heard in one of these courts.

What is involved?

What happens now?	What will happen under the pilot?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly all information in a family court case is private and cannot be shared. If you do share it, you could go to prison or be fined by a judge. • Journalists and qualified legal bloggers can come into family court hearings but they cannot write about or report on a case without asking the judge. • You cannot talk to journalists or qualified legal bloggers about your case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of sensitive information will still be private. Your family's privacy will be protected. • Journalists and qualified legal bloggers can come into family court hearings, watch the hearing and then report what they see with the permission of the judge. • Journalists and qualified legal bloggers can look at certain documents from the case. • You can talk to a journalists or a qualified legal blogger about your case. • To allow this to happen, a judge will make a 'transparency order', which will contain the rules for reporting that must be followed.

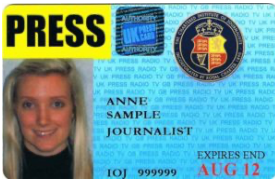
What is a transparency order?

As part of this pilot, you will be sent a 'transparency order'. This contains the rules of what can and cannot be reported. The transparency order allows reporters to report the case, but says that other people must not publish information about it.

What is a reporter?

A reporter is a journalist with a UK Press Card, or a lawyer who is not involved in the case but is authorised to attend hearings just like a journalist (also called a legal blogger).

A UK Press Card is an identification card produced by the UK Press Authority. It looks like this:



A legal blogger will belong to a barristers' chambers or a law firm, or an organisation like a University or charity, and will be able to verify who they are.

What can reporters see from my case?

Reporters will be allowed to see certain basic documents, such as the documents the lawyers produce to help them understand the case (called case outlines, skeleton arguments, or position statements). If a reporter wants to see what is in any other document, they must ask the judge for permission.

What can and can't be reported?

Generally, the transparency order will say that reporters can report the details of your case and case documents, and what has happened at your hearing. The transparency order will give more detail about which people, places, and organisations can be named and which ones must not be named. The judge dealing with your case may adjust the transparency order to make sure it's right for your family.

Reporters **cannot** include:

- the names of any children or family members involved;
- the places that the children live or go to;
- the dates of birth of any children;
- photographs of you or the children.

Sometimes an order will include other things that must not be included in reports, to make sure that your family can't be identified by accident.

The transparency order does not allow you to report or publish anything about the case. This is to make sure that you and the children cannot be identified. Even if there is press coverage of your case, you must not publish about it – including posting on social media - and you must not copy or “like” any media coverage.

If you publish about the case, you could be breaking the law.

Who decides if my case is included in the Reporting Pilot?

The judge will make the final decision about whether your case is included in this pilot or not. If you don't want your case to be reported, you will be able to tell the judge that before they decide, but you cannot opt out without the judge agreeing.

When a judge is deciding, they will think about all the circumstances of the case and balance the things you are worried about with the aim of making the family court's work more open. The judge will then tell you whether they will:

- allow your request, and stop all reporting;
- change the transparency order, so that less information can be reported;
- leave the transparency order in place.

Can I speak to the reporter?

Yes. You can only speak to a reporter who has a Press Card or is an 'authorised lawyer'. If the reporter has already attended a hearing in your case, the judge will have checked this and you can go ahead. If they haven't, you should check, so that you can be sure you aren't breaking the rules. If in doubt, ask to see the journalist's UK Press Card or their qualifications.

You don't have to speak to a reporter unless you want to. It is up to the reporter to make sure that whatever they include in their report is allowed to be published. You are not allowed to share any court documents with a reporter apart from the documents listed above, or where the judge has said it's ok.

How is the pilot being evaluated?

Independent evaluators will be looking at the pilot to see how well it works. As part of this, someone may contact you and ask to speak to you about your experiences.

What if I have any questions?

If you have a lawyer, speak to your lawyer. If you do not have a lawyer, please contact the Court. The transparency order will tell you who the point of contact is for your case.

If you would like to speak to somebody from the TIG, please contact the TIG secretary Jack Harrison by email, pilots@thetig.org.uk. **Please note we cannot talk about your case with you or give you any legal advice.**