



Children Act 1989

1989 CHAPTER 41

PART IV

CARE AND SUPERVISION

General

32 Period within which application for order under this Part must be disposed of.

- (1) A court [^{F1}in which an application for an order under this Part is proceeding] shall (in the light of any [^{F2}provision in rules of court that is of the kind mentioned in subsection (2)(a) or (b))]—
- (a) draw up a timetable with a view to [^{F3}disposing of the application—
 - (i) without delay, and
 - (ii) in any event within twenty-six weeks beginning with the day on which the application was issued; and]
 - (b) give such directions as it considers appropriate for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that that timetable is adhered to.
- (2) Rules of court may—
- (a) specify periods within which specified steps must be taken in relation to such proceedings; and
 - (b) make other provision with respect to such proceedings for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they are disposed of without delay.
- [^{F4}(3) A court, when drawing up a timetable under subsection (1)(a), must in particular have regard to—
- (a) the impact which the timetable would have on the welfare of the child to whom the application relates; and
 - (b) the impact which the timetable would have on the conduct of the proceedings.

Changes to legislation: Children Act 1989, Section 32 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 21 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (4) A court, when revising a timetable drawn up under subsection (1)(a) or when making any decision which may give rise to a need to revise such a timetable (which does not include a decision under subsection (5)), must in particular have regard to—
- (a) the impact which any revision would have on the welfare of the child to whom the application relates; and
 - (b) the impact which any revision would have on the duration and conduct of the proceedings.
- (5) A court in which an application under this Part is proceeding may extend the period that is for the time being allowed under subsection (1)(a)(ii) in the case of the application, but may do so only if the court considers that the extension is necessary to enable the court to resolve the proceedings justly.
- (6) When deciding whether to grant an extension under subsection (5), a court must in particular have regard to—
- (a) the impact which any ensuing timetable revision would have on the welfare of the child to whom the application relates, and
 - (b) the impact which any ensuing timetable revision would have on the duration and conduct of the proceedings;
- and here “ensuing timetable revision” means any revision, of the timetable under subsection (1)(a) for the proceedings, which the court considers may ensue from the extension.
- (7) When deciding whether to grant an extension under subsection (5), a court is to take account of the following guidance: extensions are not to be granted routinely and are to be seen as requiring specific justification.
- (8) Each separate extension under subsection (5) is to end no more than eight weeks after the later of—
- (a) the end of the period being extended; and
 - (b) the end of the day on which the extension is granted.
- (9) The Lord Chancellor may by regulations amend subsection (1)(a)(ii), or the opening words of subsection (8), for the purpose of varying the period for the time being specified in that provision.
- (10) Rules of court may provide that a court—
- (a) when deciding whether to exercise the power under subsection (5), or
 - (b) when deciding how to exercise that power,
- must, or may or may not, have regard to matters specified in the rules, or must take account of any guidance set out in the rules.]

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 32(1) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Children and Families Act 2014 \(c. 6\), ss. 14\(7\)\(a\), 139\(6\); S.I. 2014/889, art. 4\(c\)](#) (with transitional provisions in [S.I. 2014/1042](#), arts. 3, 4, 6-10)
- F2** Words in s. 32(1) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Children and Families Act 2014 \(c. 6\), ss. 14\(7\)\(b\), 139\(6\); S.I. 2014/889, art. 4\(c\)](#) (with transitional provisions in [S.I. 2014/1042](#), arts. 3, 4, 6-10)
- F3** Words in s. 32(1)(a) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Children and Families Act 2014 \(c. 6\), ss. 14\(2\), 139\(6\); S.I. 2014/889, art. 4\(c\)](#) (with transitional provisions in [S.I. 2014/1042](#), arts. 3, 4, 6-10)
- F4** S. 32(3)-(10) inserted (22.4.2014) by [Children and Families Act 2014 \(c. 6\), ss. 14\(3\), 139\(6\); S.I. 2014/889, art. 4\(c\)](#) (with transitional provisions in [S.I. 2014/1042](#), arts. 3, 4, 6-10)

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Commencement Information

II S. 32 wholly in force at 14.10.1991 see s. 108(2)(3) and S.I. 1991/828, [art. 3\(2\)](#)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 4(1A)(aa) inserted by 2009 c. 24 Sch. 6 para. 21(3)
- s. 4(1C) inserted by 2009 c. 24 Sch. 6 para. 21(4)
- s. 4ZA(2)(aa) inserted by 2009 c. 24 Sch. 6 para. 22(3)
- s. 4ZA(3A) inserted by 2009 c. 24 Sch. 6 para. 22(4)
- s. 8(4)(k) inserted by 2021 c. 17 s. 52(1)
- s. 31A(4A) inserted by 2014 c. 6 s. 15(2)(b)