

# Transforming Support Through Court

Our strategy

April 2021 - March 2026



**SUPPORT  
THROUGH  
COURT**



# Court has never been more challenging for vulnerable people

Cuts to legal aid, increased court fees and closure of information services have created advice deserts and left people going through court feeling bewildered and alone. More people seeking justice are facing the court system as litigants in person without guidance and support. We estimate that, in 2019, more than half a million people were unrepresented in court. In Family Courts, for example, in the majority of cases at least one party has no access to legal representation in matters relating to separation and divorce, financial arrangements or contact with their children. It can be deeply unfair when one side does have a lawyer whilst the other does not.

*'In the family courts there is a worrying rise in the number of litigants in person – people who do not have a lawyer to represent them. These cases often involve children or family disputes and can be distressing for all involved.'*

*I. Stephanie Boyce, President of the Law Society*



The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the administration of justice has been dramatic, including court closures and restrictions on access, with much of the process moving online. As we emerge from the pandemic, there will be no return to pre-Covid patterns of working practices.

Looking ahead, courts will begin to address backlogs, and a flurry of cases are likely to arise from family breakdown, domestic abuse, housing, employment, and money claims caused by the effects of the pandemic.

*'You have kept me going throughout a very difficult period of my life, this has been very stressful and frightening and without your support I would not have had the strength to contest this. Everyone I have spoken to has been fantastic.'*

*- Client, Nottingham*

# Empowering more people going through court

We'll continue to be there for the most vulnerable people facing Civil and Family Courts alone in England and Wales, doing our bit to ensure they can best represent themselves. We're working towards a fairer system, where no one need face court alone. Our 500+ volunteers will continue to provide emotional support and practical guidance, operating in courts across the country and via our National Helpline.

**Over the next five years we aim to double the number of clients we support.**

In order to make our vision of doubling the number of people we work with a reality, we'll make huge changes in how we operate. We'll use technology to connect with more people, in more places, more cost effectively. We'll invest in recruiting and training more volunteers to empower people navigating the court process.

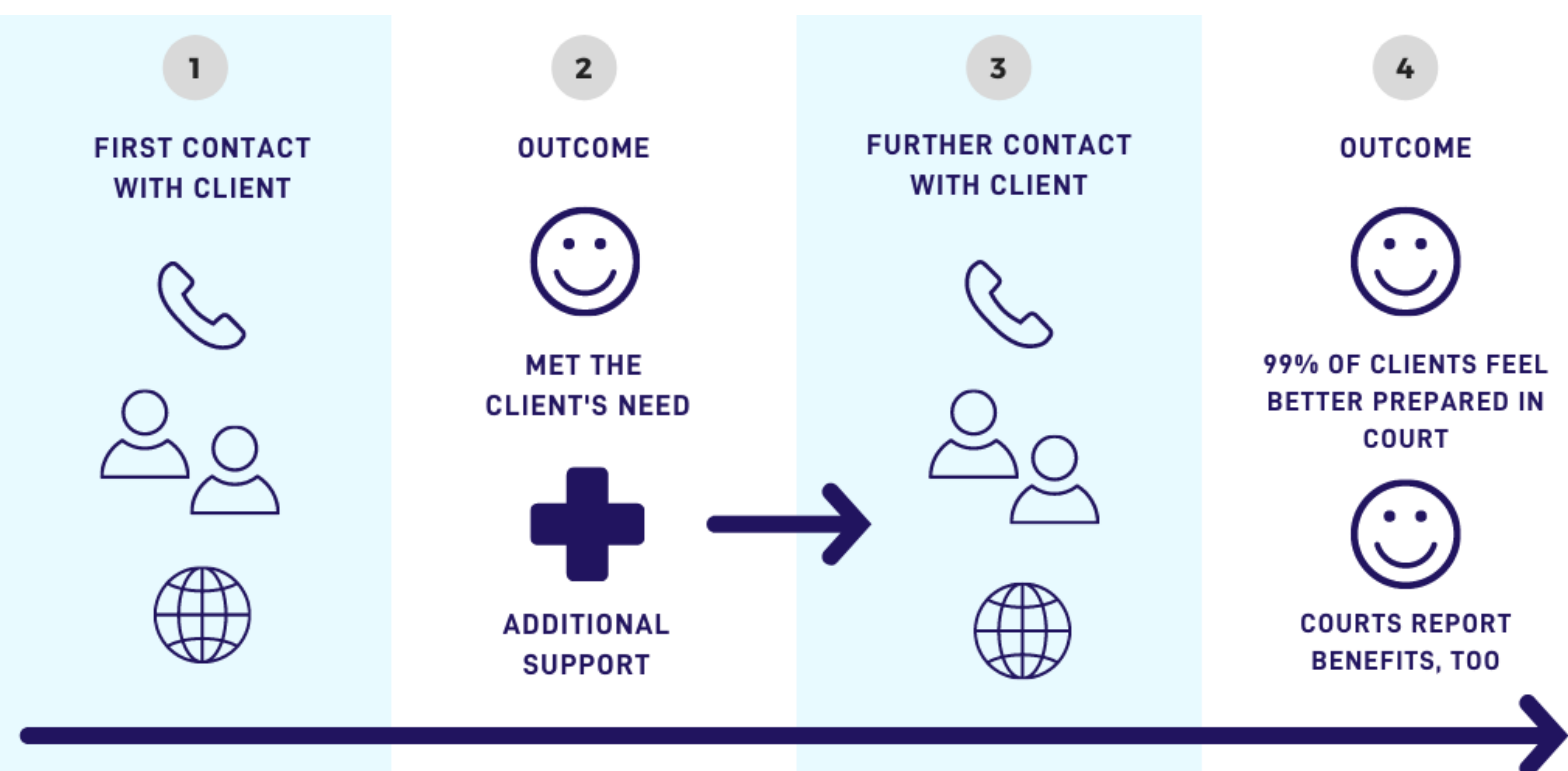
Learning lessons from the pandemic, we'll strengthen our National Helpline. In addition, we'll launch a new service, offering video calls and remote support, meeting clients' needs in the ways they find most comfortable. We'll continue delivering a high standard of support, however people contact us.

*'Thank you so much for helping me. I just couldn't understand how to complete the form the mediator had sent me to return to court and it was making me very anxious. It all seems clearer now. I feel much better knowing I can call you again to get help in trying to see my children again.'*  
- Client, National Helpline



# Our new online service

Soon we'll have an online service channel seamlessly supporting clients who may or may not live near an existing office. Anyone facing court anywhere in England or Wales will have access to us. We'll offer help by phone, video and e-mail for people who can't attend in person. Our team of volunteers will guide clients by video call, work together on online forms and attend remote hearings with clients. We'll make particular efforts to address the needs of vulnerable or digitally excluded people who may find it difficult to access and use remote systems.



## The journey ahead

We're excited to grow, but aware that we won't get there without adapting our existing ways of working. We are committed to developing our systems and improving our tech so that we can increase access to more clients. We'll invest in our teams, training and developing our volunteers. We'll also work harder to evaluate outcomes so we can maximise our impact. Of course, none of this would be possible without our wonderful supporters and, with your help, we'll work to extend our reach, so that more people than ever have someone to turn to when representing themselves in court.

**Do get in touch for more information about Support Through Court:**

Visit: [www.supportthroughcourt.org](http://www.supportthroughcourt.org)  
Email: [enquiries@supportthroughcourt.org](mailto:enquiries@supportthroughcourt.org)  
Charity number: 1090781