

## Court reports

### General principles

- Basic information should be included on the front page, including the name of the court and the case number; the name and date of birth of the subject; the type of application; and the author's name and professional address.
- Clarity and concision of language will always help the reader.
- Avoid dense pages of text, and use bullet points.
- Remember who the report is for, and make appropriate adjustments to style and vocabulary.
- Consider the structure and length of the report – there may be guidance to follow.
- Include a chronology of events.
- A genogram may be useful in family cases if there is a complex family make-up.
- Avoid jargon (ask a non-interested person to check this out and you may be surprised by how much jargon slips in!).
- Be non-discriminatory in the language used.
- Distinguish between facts and opinion.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition within the report of material available to the court in other documents.
- Conclusions should flow logically from the body of the report.
- Where more than one option is available to the court, set out and discuss each in turn, and make a realistic recommendation.
- Objectivity is all; avoid over-personalising your report, although it is inevitable that you will be drawing upon your experience.
- Increasingly there are strict timetables for filing of evidence, including reports. Failure to adhere to timetables invites criticism: if unavoidable it is important to seek court approval.

**Source:** (Wilson *et al.* 2008: 205)