

Young Association of Lawyers for Children
Legal Advice Competition 2025

Terms and conditions

- This competition is open to all students in their third year of undergraduate study and above, postgraduate students, CPE/LPC/BPTC students, recent graduates, paralegals, and anyone currently applying for training contracts or pupillage.
- The winner will receive one year's free membership to the ALC and a work experience programme with solicitors, barristers and a Judge.
- Four runners up will receive one year's free membership to the ALC.
- The format of the competition will be a written problem question.
- All entries must be typed in English and saved as either a word document or a pdf.
- Entries must be sent to admin@alc.org.uk by 5.00pm on **Friday 5 September 2025**. Any entries received after this will not be accepted.
- All entries must comply with the word limit. Any entries which exceed the word limit will not be accepted. Any footnotes should be limited to case citations, sources, and other references and will not count towards the word limit.
- Entrants must submit their own work and entries must not be prepared with the assistance of any artificial intelligence.
- All entries must be sent with a covering email stating (i) the level of study/qualification the entrant has reached and at which educational institution, and (ii) their preferred contact details, (iii) proof of their student status This information will be kept confidential and will not be seen by judges during the judging process.
- Entries will be marked anonymously and given a score based on the following criteria:
 - Application of law to the facts
 - Clear and concise writing
 - Exercise of judgement
- The judging panel will consist of members of the ALC Executive Committee and will be chaired by a Circuit Judge. The decision of the judges is final and binding.
- The shortlist will be announced by the end of September 2025.
- The winner will be announced by mid-October 2025.
- By participating in this competition entrants agree to abide by the terms and conditions. Any failure to comply with these terms may result in disqualification.

Problem Question

You are instructed to represent two boys, K aged 9 and Y aged 3, by their CAFCASS Guardian, who are the subjects of care proceedings brought by the local authority.

The boys are half-brothers; they have the same mother and different fathers. They lived together with their mother until around 9 months ago, when they were removed into foster care.

K has some physical disabilities which require specialist care, and his carers were unable to look after Y as well, so the boys were placed in separate foster placements. Y is healthy and has no additional needs.

The boys have had fortnightly contact with each other, facilitated by their carers meeting up at the park or in a café, and both boys seem to enjoy this, although there has been some squabbling over toys.

The children's mother has issues with drug misuse and has been unable to achieve abstinence. None of the professionals recommend that either of the children return to her care. K's father has not been in his life since he was very small. Y's father had some sporadic contact with him but has only seen him twice during the care proceedings.

The local authority's plan is for K to remain in long term foster care, having contact with his mother six times per year in each school holiday. For Y the plan is for him to be placed for adoption. There is no recommendation for Y to have any face-to-face contact with his parents, but letters can be sent by the parents to/from the adopters once per year.

The local authority does not recommend ongoing face-to-face sibling contact citing concerns that it would reduce the pool of prospective adopters and it would be better for Y to be adopted, than to risk losing an adoptive placement in order to have ongoing contact with K.

The Guardian thinks it would be desirable if sibling contact could take place, but she has asked for your advice on the following:

- 1) Whether she should recommend that the court makes an order for face-to-face sibling contact under s26 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. (400 words)

- 2) The Guardian is considering what level of contact to recommend, whether that is expressed in an order or as a goal for the care plan – she has heard from colleagues that 6 times per year is now the norm and asks for your view about that. (400 words)
- 3) Whether it would be possible to have a s26 order for sibling contact that is flexible, rather than setting out defined arrangements of a specific number of visits per year. (400 words)

You should consider the following authority:

Re S (Placement Order: Contact) [2025] EWCA Civ 823

You may also find these authorities helpful:

Re P (Placement Orders: Parental Consent) [2008] EWCA Civ 535

Re D-S (A Child: Adoption or Fostering) [2024] EWCA Civ 948

Re R (Children) [2024] EWCA Civ 1302