

PARENTHING WEEKLY

Where a child is really heard

Ireland is building new ways to hear children in family law. Most of it happens at the front door.

27 July to 31 July 2026 | parenthing.ie

The courtroom gets the reform. The child lives at the handover.

Ireland is putting the child's voice at the centre of family justice. A new Children's Court Advocate pilot in Waterford and Clonmel gives children in custody and access cases their own independent advocate, so someone in the room speaks for them. It is a good change, and a long time coming.

But most separated families never reach a courtroom, and the ones that do still spend far more of a child's life at the door on a Tuesday than in any hearing. The place a child learns whether they are heard is not the court. It is the pickup that stays calm, and the message that does not get fired off in temper.

Half

of separated parents said the separation had affected their child's emotional wellbeing, anxiety or behaviour.

Barnardos, survey by Amarach Research of almost 650 parents, published March 2026.

THIS WEEK'S TIP

Read the room before you read the message

The handover nobody notices is the one doing the quiet work. When the other parent's message lands like an attack, read it once as tiredness before you reply. You do not have to agree with it. You get to choose what happens next.

Agree the dull logistics once, in one shared place, so who has the school bag on Friday stops being a weekly argument. Every reply fired to score a point costs something, and it is rarely the adult who pays it.



Your child will not remember who was five minutes late. They will remember whether both homes felt safe.

That is not written into any strategy. It lives in the ordinary week, and it is yours to give.

Small weeks, done calmly, are the whole job

The reforms matter. So does the part no policy can reach: the tone of an ordinary exchange between two homes. A child feels heard long before anyone writes it into a report.

ParenThing gives separated parents one calm, private place for the messages, the calendar and the handovers, so the ordinary weeks take less out of you and the hard ones are a little easier.

Start at parenthing.ie

SOURCES

Barnardos, survey of separated parents by Amarach Research, March 2026. barnardos.ie

Children's Court Advocate pilot, Waterford and Clonmel. Department of Justice, gov.ie

Voice of the Child in private family law, Family Justice Strategy. Department of Justice, gov.ie

