McKenzie Friends in Court

Published on: 2026-10-09

A McKenzie Friend can support you in court, but they do not automatically become your representative.

Having been through family court myself, I know how much there is to manage. You are trying to follow what is being said, find the right document and explain your position, all while dealing with the emotional weight of the proceedings.

> Having someone beside you can make that feel more manageable, but before bringing a McKenzie Friend, understand their role and agree what support you need.

What is a McKenzie Friend?

A McKenzie Friend is someone who assists a person representing themselves. You remain a litigant in person, responsible for conducting your case. Official Judiciary guidance says they may provide moral support, take notes, help with case papers and quietly offer advice about the case.

> That practical help can be valuable. Someone taking notes allows you to concentrate on listening. Someone familiar with your papers can help you locate a document without a stressful search through several folders.

Can they speak for you?

A McKenzie Friend has no automatic right to address the court, question witnesses or conduct litigation. They cannot ordinarily act as your agent or sign court documents for you. The court can grant additional rights in particular circumstances, but permission is considered individually. Permission to speak does not automatically include permission to conduct litigation.

> Do not arrive expecting your supporter to take over. Discuss beforehand how you will work together, including how they can quietly flag a point or help you find information.

Does the court need to know?

Tell the judge as early as possible that you want assistance and identify your proposed

McKenzie Friend

. The guidance says they should provide a short statement of relevant experience, their lack of interest in the case and their understanding of confidentiality. The court can restrict or refuse assistance where appropriate.

> Preparing this information beforehand gives you one less thing to worry about on the hearing day.

Get your papers organised first

My advice is to make your documents easy for both of you to navigate. Keep the latest court order accessible, record hearing details and deadlines. Arrange papers clearly and prepare a short list of the points you need to raise. Talk through the purpose of the hearing together. What does the court need to decide? Which documents help explain your position? What questions do you need answered?

> Support works best when you both understand the task.

Support and legal representation are different

Being a McKenzie Friend does not itself make someone a regulated legal representative. Do not assume they have the qualifications or professional protections associated with an authorised solicitor or barrister.

> Ask about experience, fees and the limits of their service. Where you need advice about legal options or complex issues, consider speaking to a solicitor.

Sources checked on 09 October 2026:

- Judiciary guidance
- Guidance from the President's Office- McKenzie Friends
- Practice guidance for McKenzie Friends
- Official practice-guidance PDF
- Divorcify's litigants-in-person guide