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Introduction to Section 32 and Section 47 Reports in Family Law

When families go through difficult times, such as separation or disputes over parenting arrangements, the court's primary focus is always the best interests of the children involved. To help the court make informed decisions, professionals may be asked to prepare specific reports under family law provisions. Two common types of reports are **Section 32 Reports** and **Section 47 Reports**. Below is an overview of what these reports are and how they support the process.

Section 32 Report - is prepared under the **Guardianship of Infants Act 1964** (as amended). It provides the court with a professional assessment of the child's wishes, views, and overall welfare. The report is typically written by a **Guardian ad Litem** or another suitably qualified professional.

The focus of a Section 32 Report is:

- To listen to the child and understand their thoughts and feelings.
- To communicate the child's voice to the court in an impartial and professional manner.
- To help the court make decisions that prioritize the child's best interests.

While the child's views are important, the court may not always follow them exactly, especially if there are concerns about safety or other welfare issues.

Section 47 Report - is prepared under the **Family Law Act 1995** and the **Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996**. This report takes a broader view, focusing on the family situation. It is typically requested when there are complex issues regarding custody, access, or other matters impacting the welfare of the child/ren.

The focus of a Section 47 Report is:

- To assess the child's welfare, safety, and overall needs.
- To evaluate the parenting capacity of each parent.
- To make recommendations to the court about what arrangements are in the best interest of the child, such as living arrangements or access schedules.

The professional preparing the report will often meet with both parents, the child (if appropriate), and possibly other relevant individuals, such as teachers or caregivers. They may also review documents or records to ensure a comprehensive assessment.

Why These Reports Are Important

Both Section 32 and Section 47 Reports aim to provide the court with an independent, unbiased view to guide its decisions. They help ensure that decisions are based on factual, well-informed assessments of the child's needs and family circumstances.

If you are involved in a case where such a report is being prepared, it's essential to cooperate fully with the professional involved and to focus on the best interests of the child throughout the process.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, feel free to ask your legal representative or the professional preparing the report.