

Ofsted's inspection of Cafcass: West Yorkshire

Cafcass West Yorkshire service area provides services to children and families in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.

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Introduction

1. Ofsted carried out the inspection of service provision by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) in the West Yorkshire service area in the week commencing 8 October 2012.
2. Cafcass is a national organisation delivering services to children, families and the courts from 17 service areas across England. The Head of Service is the senior manager in each service area and is accountable to the National Service Director. The National Service Director is directly accountable to the Cafcass Chief Executive.
3. The Cafcass West Yorkshire service area provides services to children and families across the local authority areas of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. The National Service Director has had oversight of the area since July 2012 and the Head of Service has been in post since November 2011. The Head of Service also leads the Cafcass service area covering South Yorkshire and Humberside.
4. The professional staff who provide the social work service to children and families subject to private and public law proceedings are organised in locality teams in Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield. Three operational service managers plus one enhanced service manager (who also oversees South Yorkshire and Humberside) manage service delivery, supported by 59.05 full time equivalent (fte) family court advisers, including enhanced practitioners, one enhanced office manager (who also oversees South Yorkshire and Humberside) and 14 fte administrators.
5. During the fieldwork, inspectors examined an extensive range of documentation and held meetings or telephone conversations with stakeholders, the judiciary, local authorities and interest groups. Interviews were held with the Cafcass Chief Executive, the Head of Service, service managers, family court advisers and administrative staff. Inspectors evaluated private and public law reports, schedule 2 letters and case files. The views of Cafcass adult and child service users were surveyed at a time before the inspection; six responses were received. Inspectors observed Cafcass practice with service users, including children and young people.

Overall effectiveness

Grade 3 (adequate)

6. The overall effectiveness of the Cafcass West Yorkshire service area is adequate. Sustained, concerted effort by a new management team over the last year has had a positive impact on a service that was disorganised and dysfunctional. The service is now being managed effectively and well-targeted activity, based on a good understanding of the needs of the service, has resulted in clear improvements both within the service and with external partners. Almost all services are being delivered to minimum standards, and some aspects of performance are at a good level.
 7. A highly experienced Head of Service and a number of experienced managers form the core of the management team, and have brought much needed leadership and stability to the service area. The findings of internal 'healthchecks' and local audits have provided a good understanding of weaknesses in performance and subsequently have been effective in promoting improvement over time. Resources have been refocused effectively to ensure that the service is fit for purpose, and safeguarding of children has been, and remains, a priority. Teams have been reshaped and additional family court adviser posts created to increase capacity. Improvement funding has been appropriately used to cover the costs of agency staff until permanent staff are in place.
 8. Considerable effort has been spent on developing partnerships with key stakeholders and commissioned services. This has resulted in a growing confidence in the service and positive impact such as the development of the private law protocol between the courts and Cafcass. Partnerships with local community groups, such as those that represent faith groups and parents in private law, are underdeveloped.
 9. Improvements to filing times and to allocation of work are resulting in a more efficient service to children and young people and their families. However, current practice in the work to first hearing means that parents are engaged late in the process, which is disadvantageous for children and parents, and inefficient for practitioners.
 10. The quality of service provision is adequate overall, but case planning and recording are inadequate, and equality and diversity issues are not well considered within reports. Management oversight and guidance are improving, but further attention is required to ensure that practitioners have a good understanding of proportionate working, and to ensure that the work undertaken is sufficiently child focused.
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Capacity for improvement

Grade 2 (good)

11. Capacity for improvement is good. Managers have achieved significant improvements in almost all aspects of service provision over the last year, from a very low base. An improvement board, chaired by the Cafcass Chief Executive and involving a senior member of the judiciary, has been effective in providing the momentum that was required to turn around a failing service. The Head of Service has developed an effective management team with a shared vision and agreed priorities for improvement. The vision and the business plan have been shared with practitioners, so that all staff are aware of what is required. Priorities for improvement are clear and are based on sound evaluation. Change has been implemented effectively and sensitively, to enable constructive working relationships and increase motivation. This has resulted in service users receiving a more efficient and effective service.
12. Effective business systems have been introduced to ensure that cases are well managed, such as allocation systems and weekly monitoring of reports due for filing. Value for money has been improved through improved purchasing and monitoring processes, and through more effective deployment of staff.
13. Appropriate action has been taken to secure and develop the workforce, with the appointment of high quality staff, and active recruitment to fill the remaining posts. Quality assurance and performance management systems are increasingly effective in securing improvement, and managers are aware of what is yet to be achieved.
14. The investment in partnership working with the judiciary, local authorities, Local Safeguarding Children Boards and commissioned services has been effective, with good examples of improved attendance and contribution to safeguarding boards, and this has raised the profile of children within the private law system. Although there has been some engagement with young people in evaluating the office environments, there is little evidence to show that the service area is undertaking work to determine service user satisfaction. This is recognised as a national issue and is being addressed at that level.

Areas for improvement

15. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for children and young people in Cafcass West Yorkshire, the service area should take the following action.

Within three months

- Ensure that case work and reports are clearly focused on the needs of the child, and that the potential impact on the child of the recommendations made is fully considered in the report.
- Improve the quality and consistency of schedule 2 letters and ensure that parents are contacted earlier in the process so that their views can be included in the letter, and so that they receive the letter well before the hearing.
- Ensure that practitioners have a clear and shared understanding of proportionate working, so that they consistently provide an efficient and effective service.
- Improve the quality of case planning to ensure that case plans are timely and comprehensive, and are based on thorough needs assessment and analysis.
- Ensure that case recording is accurate and timely and provides a clear and succinct account of case activity.
- Ensure that the impact of all relevant equality and diversity issues is included in case planning, assessment and direct work with children, young people and their families.
- Ensure that management oversight is robust, is effective in quality assuring practice and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of proportionate working, and is clearly recorded on case files.

Within six months

- Develop relationships with local community groups, such as faith groups and those that represent parents, to ensure that good feedback mechanisms are in place, and that feedback can be used to improve service delivery to children and young people.
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Meeting the needs of service users

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 2 (good)

16. Ambition and prioritisation are good. Following a considerable period of instability and underperformance in the Cafcass service area, decisive action was taken at a national level to address the significant shortfalls in practice. In November 2011, an experienced Head of Service and other senior staff with proven track records for improvement were deployed to the area to turn around performance. As a result, a comprehensive improvement plan was developed, supported by and accountable to a high level improvement board, which was chaired by the Cafcass Chief Executive and included a local senior member of the judiciary. This strategy has resulted in a range of substantial improvements across the service from a very low base, with more still to be achieved to embed consistency of practice. Significant changes to structures and systems have been made, aimed at ensuring sustainability of improvement, and lines of accountability are clear. Safeguarding children was properly seen as a key priority and this is now firmly embedded across the service area and is clearly understood by staff at all levels. The area now consistently meets all of its key performance indicators. Data collection systems have been reviewed and the new systems have been established to ensure that key information is accurate and readily available to managers to help drive improvement. The use of resources has been reviewed and reconfigured to ensure that they enable effective service delivery. Initially, agency staff were contracted to assist with handling the high volume of work, but their numbers are now reducing as staff are deployed more effectively and permanent staff are being appointed. Good business processes ensure that cases are swiftly allocated.
17. The considerable changes within the service area have been managed effectively and sensitively by managers. As a result, staff have an increasing degree of confidence in the Head of Service and the management team. Changes have been well supported by work with the Cafcass National Improvement Service and human resources business partners to ensure that staff develop the appropriate skills to deliver an effective service.
18. High priority has appropriately been given to improving relationships with key stakeholders including commissioned services, and this has resulted in more effective working and involvement in new developments, for example in fast-tracking discharges of care orders for children in one local authority who are placed with parents. Managers have worked hard to ensure that the service area works effectively within national guidance and performance management systems are used well as effective tools for improvement. However, the

concept of proportionate working¹ to ensure that resources are used to maximum effect is not fully understood across all levels of staff. Managers recognise that equality and diversity issues are not yet addressed within the service area in a systematic way to ensure that the specific needs of children and families are addressed effectively within the family justice system.

Performance management

Grade 3 (adequate)

19. Performance management is adequate. The service area has made improvements in consistently meeting key performance indicators, which are now at a good level. The timely allocation of public and private law work has significantly improved over the last six months and effective action is being taken by managers to ensure that current cases are closed appropriately and in a timely manner. Accurate and timely performance and financial information is accessible to and is routinely used by managers to monitor the effectiveness of service provision and to inform service development. Area-wide audits, known as healthchecks, undertaken by the National Improvement Service, demonstrate significant improvement in systems over a short period of time. The initial healthcheck in October 2011 found serious systemic weaknesses such as poor business processes, unreliable data and poor workload management. Effective action has been taken by managers to systematically tackle the significant performance issues through specific and measurable action plans, both across the area, and with more local targeting where required. This has raised performance to an adequate level in most aspects, and further developments are planned. An effective closure programme is in place for the several hundred private law cases that were open but were found by managers to require no further action. Complaints are analysed to inform service development, and have resulted, for example, in improvements to the case allocation system.

20. Performance management of staff is now more effective. Appropriate measures have been taken to tackle performance issues through the proportionate use of action plans and through monitoring and formal human resources procedures. All staff now receive quarterly supervision and additionally have ready access to managers and enhanced practitioners when required. Management oversight of cases is improving, with more evidence of this in recent casework. Some case auditing is undertaken by managers and enhanced practitioners; this has resulted in improved work in individual cases and has also identified issues for development within teams. However, this is not yet sufficiently effective in achieving consistently good enough practice across the workforce.

1. See glossary re proportionate working

Workforce development

Grade 3 (adequate)

21. Workforce development is adequate. A workforce plan is in place to address the long term recruitment issues in the area and to recruit a competent workforce. Teams have been reshaped across the area to match capacity to demand. A number of family court advisers have been recruited recently, and a current recruitment campaign is underway. Locally based recruitment drives are supplementing national initiatives, as it is recognised that the ethnic composition of staff within the service area does not reflect the community that it serves. Most teams are now composed mainly of permanent staff, which is improving workforce stability. However, the early intervention team is still heavily dependent on temporary staff and this has had a detrimental impact on the quality of service that it provides.
22. Performance issues are managed effectively and, where concerns about competence or capability are highlighted, they are managed in a proportionate manner to obtain the best outcomes for the service and the individual. Effective and sensitive steps have been taken to address high levels of sickness absence in the area, and levels are reducing.
23. The introduction of a number of enhanced practitioner roles across the teams has provided career development opportunities for experienced practitioners. An effective training plan is in place to ensure that staff are equipped with the appropriate skills to undertake their roles effectively. Induction arrangements are comprehensive and supported by local and national training and mentoring. A new national training programme is about to commence to support newly appointed enhanced practitioners to develop their management and supervision skills. Internal training is commissioned from the National Improvement Service, including on a one to one basis, to meet the specific business needs of the area, and Cafcass national training courses are also available to staff.

Partnerships

Grade 2 (good)

24. Arrangements for working with key stakeholders, relevant agencies and commissioned services are good. The Head of Service and the service area management team have worked hard in the last year to develop and sustain partnership working. Partnership working with the judiciary is strong and is based on open and constructive relationships. This has enabled significant service improvements, for example, in the development of the joint protocol for the private law programme and in the timeliness of court reports.

25. Appropriate priority is given by local managers to establishing and maintaining effective partnership working with local authorities. This has resulted in good information sharing and effective application of protocols regarding the allocation of cases in private law. Local authorities report that Cafcass makes appropriate referrals regarding children and young people who may be at risk of significant harm, and they also report constructive relationships at an operational level; any issues that arise in joint working are dealt with promptly with a professional problem-solving approach. Effective examples of pro-active partnership working were seen such as work to reduce the duration of public law proceedings. Cafcass engagement with the five Local Safeguarding Children Boards within its area is strengthening and this is promoting better information sharing.
26. Local services commissioned by Cafcass report positive relationships and joint working with good two way communication and appropriate access to Cafcass managers. This results in services being flexible and responsive to changing needs. However, relationships with other stakeholders such as local community groups that represent parents in private law are not well established and very little work has been undertaken with other community and voluntary groups who may be able to promote the work of Cafcass or provide informed feedback on its effectiveness.

Value for money

Grade 3 (adequate)

27. Value for money is adequate. Recent improvements to financial planning and oversight have resulted in effective deployment of resources based on local priorities. The Cafcass service area has a stable budget and is predicting a small underspend in the current financial year. Cost effective ways of employing staff are being used to drive efficiencies through offering fixed term contracts as an alternative to using self-employed contractors and agency staff. Historic issues regarding the slow throughput of cases in the area have resulted in high unit costs for service delivery, although these are now improving. Workload weighting is being used increasingly effectively to ensure effective caseload management.
28. Commissioned services and Contact Activity Directions² such as for separated parents' information programmes and domestic violence perpetrator programmes are used well to ensure that families are supported to resolve issues without recourse to unnecessary involvement with Cafcass. As a result, almost all reports that are ordered by the courts are appropriate and have a

² See glossary re Contact Activity Directions

clear welfare or safeguarding concern. Cases are allocated promptly but some families still wait for too long for their applications to be resolved.

29. Private law work to first hearing is not sufficiently effective in showing value for money. Schedule 2 letters are not consistently completed in a timely manner to enable courts to proceed without delay. Some cases are delayed through awaiting responses to checks that are not relevant to the progress of the case. In most of the cases seen by inspectors, the failure to make contact with both parties prior to the court date created delays at court and loss of productive court time.
30. The implementation of electronic case files began in November 2011, although some case files are still in hard copy, which hinders easy access to case records by managers and staff. Managers are aware of this and plans are in place to complete the roll-out of electronic files.

Safeguarding

Grade 3 (adequate)

31. The contribution of the service area to safeguarding children and young people is adequate. During the inspection no children were found to have been left at immediate risk of significant harm as a result of action or inaction by Cafcass staff. Cases are now allocated promptly, which contributes to reducing delay in children having their safeguarding needs identified and assessed. Safeguarding checks are consistently undertaken on new cases and timely referrals are made to children's social care services in almost all cases when required. The current management team has reviewed the backlog of open cases where work had been completed to ensure that any safeguarding issues were identified before closing the case, and referrals were made to children's social care services when necessary. The service area has systems in place to monitor and track the outcomes of referrals to local authorities if it is believed that children are at risk of significant harm, although in a small number of cases the records were not fully up to date. This was rectified during the inspection.
32. Appropriate processes are in place to ensure safe recruitment. Criminal Records Bureau checks are updated every three years, and records are maintained to ensure that practitioners maintain their registration as social workers. Premises used to see children, young people and adults are safe overall.
33. In most cases workers and managers have a sound understanding of child protection issues, including the potential impact of domestic abuse, and managers take action to address any shortfalls in practice in this area. However, there is no local engagement with multi-agency risk assessment

conferences, either with regard to open cases, or in relation to joint training, and this has the potential to limit the understanding of the impact of this activity in combating domestic abuse.

34. Engagement with the work of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) is improving and one board noted that as a result, board members have a greater understanding of risks to children and young people in private law proceedings. Cafcass staff attendance at LSCB training events is low and therefore opportunities are missed to update safeguarding skills and knowledge within a multi-agency context. Similarly, processes for learning from relevant local and national serious case reviews are not fully embedded and so it is not clear how these are impacting on improving the individual practice of workers and managers.

Evaluation

Grade 2 (good)

35. Evaluation is good. Self-evaluation by the service area provides a realistic analysis of strengths and weaknesses in service provision. Internal health checks undertaken in the area in October 2011 and May 2012 robustly and accurately identify strengths and significant areas for development. These, together with strategic plans, clearly identify the progress that needs to be made and the actions required to improve outcomes for children and young people. Steady progress is being made on these priorities.
36. Managers have a clear understanding of those areas of the service and practice that require development and demonstrate commitment to securing and sustaining improvements, for example in the quality of early intervention activity. To inform their self-evaluation managers make good use of audits and other performance information to routinely monitor and analyse whether progress is being sustained, and are alert to issues that may impact negatively on improvement.
37. Members of the Cafcass Young People's Board have very recently undertaken inspections of the three offices, producing highly perceptive and constructive reports and recommendations on the quality of the environment.
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Quality of provision

Service responsiveness

Grade 3 (adequate)

38. Service responsiveness is adequate. Effective action has been taken to reduce avoidable delays in allocation, intervention and reporting on cases. As a result, allocations in both public and private law cases are now timely. A backlog of private law cases that required closure has been significantly reduced, although there is more to be achieved, and the throughput of cases is higher than the national average. Cases are being systematically and safely closed and practitioner caseloads, overall, are manageable.
39. Effective systems are in place to ensure that reports are now filed by the agreed date. The percentage of extensions in private law, which was at a high level, has reduced significantly, and is now just above the national average. Filing times for private law reports for the area have been reduced by agreement with the judiciary from 20 weeks in November 2011 to 14 weeks currently, with a target for 12 weeks by April 2013.
40. Improved systems are in place for the handling of applications and the writing of schedule 2 letters, as part of the work to first hearing undertaken by the area-wide early intervention team. However, the practice of not contacting parties until the police and local authority safeguarding checks have been received limits the opportunities to speak to parties before the hearing, resulting in too many letters with incomplete information. In some cases, the absence of information from the police or the local authority has resulted in inappropriate requests for adjournment, when it is clear that there is sufficient information to merit a recommendation for a section 7 report.

Case planning and recording

Grade 4 (inadequate)

41. Case planning and recording are inadequate. The quality of case plans is too variable. Most case plans outline the key issues in the case although actions are not clearly identified and plans are inconsistently reviewed and updated. Few case plans are robustly scrutinised by managers and there is no clarity about how proportionate intervention should be applied. Many plans seen by inspectors were not clearly dated and so it was unclear whether they provided evidence of planning or were completed at the end of a piece of work.
42. The majority of case files seen by inspectors had sufficient recording to show the progress of the case and the work undertaken by the practitioner. However, in too many cases there were gaps in recording, and records did not always sufficiently cross reference to important activities in the progression of

the case. Records did not routinely evidence when and how reports and recommendations were shared with parents and/or children. Recording of management oversight on case files is limited.

43. Staff were well prepared and had plans in place for the practice observed by inspectors, and while case planning documents were not shared with service users, most of the practitioners observed gave a verbal overview to service users of the actions planned.

Assessment, intervention and direct work with children

Grade 3 (adequate)

44. Assessment, intervention and direct work with children are adequate. In most observations of practice by inspectors, practitioners demonstrated appropriate skills to engage parents, gathered relevant assessment information and challenged appropriately on specific and relevant issues. Good attention was paid to ensuring service users' confidentiality, and meetings were held in appropriate venues.
45. In all cases seen by inspectors, safeguarding concerns were appropriately identified. Most assessments show a suitable response to changing circumstances, although in some cases this is inappropriately reactive rather than well planned. In most cases appropriate conclusions are reached about whether or not the welfare of children is in question. In public law work the contribution and added value of Children's Guardians in scrutinising and challenging local authority assessments and care plans are not consistently apparent.
46. While some files show evidence of direct work with children and young people, assessments are too often adult focused. Inspectors saw too many examples where the child was not seen and when they were seen, their circumstances, the impact of any recommendations and their wishes and feelings were not always robustly explored. This led to recommendations being made that did not sufficiently assess the full impact upon the child. Practitioners do not consistently analyse whether contact is in the best interests of the child, and examples were seen of indirect contact being recommended without exploration with the child of the impact that this may have on them.
47. The consideration of equality and diversity issues is limited. Many assessments record information with regard to a child's ethnicity, language, religion and disability. However, this information and its impact upon the child is insufficiently assessed and analysed. Managers are aware that more work is required to improve the quality and consistency of assessments.
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48. Whilst there is a widely held view by Cafcass, and partner agencies, that requests for reports by relevant experts are reducing, there is yet to be system-wide analysis of the call for expert reports.

Reporting and recommendations to the court

Grade 3 (adequate)

49. Reporting and recommendations to the court are adequate. Safeguarding issues are consistently and appropriately reported to the court. The majority of reports seen by inspectors were of, at least, adequate quality, but the variation in quality remains too wide. The quality assurance processes recently established are yet to have an impact in sufficiently improving the quality of all reports. Most reports make appropriate recommendations which follow logically from the assessment, although in some reports the relevance of information is not made clear. Reports seen by inspectors demonstrate that the 'no order' principle is taken into account when making recommendations. Reports are not routinely shared with parents or children prior to filing with the court, although most reports seen by inspectors clearly articulated parents' expressed views. Members of the judiciary are mostly positive about the quality of the reports presented by Cafcass practitioners, and believe that family court advisers add significant value to court proceedings.
50. The majority of schedule 2 letters seen by inspectors are of adequate quality and reach conclusions based on the evidence, although again, the variation in quality remains too wide. Some schedule 2 letters are inconclusive, contain information which is not subsequently made relevant, and fail to make recommendations due to the fact that family court advisers have not spoken to all of the parties. In a small number of schedule 2 letters some recommendations stray unhelpfully into areas beyond the report remit and show evidence of disproportionality.
51. Systems have been streamlined to enable the practitioners who write the schedule 2 letters to present them at court themselves; this also provides better consistency for families. However, the current practice of filing the letters with the court at 2:00pm on the day before the hearing and sharing the letters with parents at court limits the parents' ability to assimilate information.

Definitions

Inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Inadequate

Contact Activity Directions

A Contact Activity Direction is a direction under section 11A of the Children Act 1989, inserted by the Children and Adoption Act 2006, requiring an individual who is a party to the case, and where there is a dispute over contact, to take part in an activity that promotes contact with the child. This may include counselling or guidance, such as via a separated parents' information programme or a domestic violence perpetrator programme.

'No order principle'

Children Act 1989 section 1(5) is known as the 'no order principle'.³ It states: 'Where a court is considering whether or not to make one or more orders under this Act with respect to a child, it shall not make the order or any of the orders unless it considers that doing so would be better for the child than making no order at all.' The 'no order principle' is consistent with two of the philosophies underlying the Children Act 1989: that there should be minimum state intervention in family life and that parents should exercise and be encouraged to exercise responsibility for their children'.

Principle of 'no delay'

Section 1(2) of the Children Act 1989 sets out the general principle that any delay in determining the question about a child's upbringing 'is likely to prejudice the welfare of the child'. This means that any unnecessary delay should be avoided.

Private and public law

Family law is that area of the law which regulates and deals with family and domestic relations, including, but not limited to, marriage, civil and domestic partnerships and the welfare of children. Where these matters are dealt with by courts, they are known as family proceedings. The person or body that brings the issue to court is known as the applicant and the person or body opposing the application is known as the respondent. In general terms applicants and respondents are known as parties to the proceedings.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1989/ukpga_19890041_en_2#pt1-l1g1

Private law is that part of the family law where the state does not normally need to be involved. Private law proceedings involving Cafcass are usually about situations where parents have separated and they cannot agree where a child should live or with whom they should have contact. The law that established Cafcass states that it should only become involved in family proceedings where the welfare of the child is, or may be, in question.

Private law cases are dealt with through what is known as The Private Law Programme. This is designed to provide a framework for the consistent national approach to the resolution of issues in private law proceedings. It is designed to assist parties to reach safe agreements where possible, to provide a forum in which to find the best way to resolve issues in each individual case and to promote outcomes that are sustainable, that are in the best interests of children and that take account of their perspectives.

Public law is that part of the family law which deals with relationships between parents, or those with a parental role, where the state does need to be involved to ensure that a child does not suffer significant harm. Court proceedings are usually initiated by a local authority applying for a care or supervision order. This may result in the child being looked after by the local authority under a care order. Adoption-related applications are also normally public law proceedings.

Public law cases are dealt with through the Public Law Outline. This is a system aimed to control delay in family court public law proceedings. It was introduced across England and Wales in April 2009, with new Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities.

Proportionate working

The Cafcass Operating Framework 2012 external version 1.2 sets out the case management principles which underpin proportionate working: 1. Be clear about the 'necessary' work only Cafcass can do. The Operating Framework is a 'sufficiency' framework. 2. Never duplicate the work of others. If someone is not managing the case within the court process as they should be, seek the direction of the court to ensure the work is done rather than us doing it, which can mask the underlying case management problem. 3. Play our part in 'making cases smaller', to 'deepen the court's understanding of how best to help a child within the shortest possible timescale, assisting active judicial case management'. 4. Effectively target our interventions to add the maximum possible value to positive outcomes for children. 5. Intervene strategically in cases, especially at pivotal points. We do not have the resources to do more than this, but doing this well can add great value. 6. Help to bring cases to the earliest possible conclusion on behalf of the child.

Schedule 2 letters

A schedule 2 letter is provided to courts by Cafcass for first directions hearings in private law proceedings. The letter informs the court about whether there are any risk factors to children known at that stage in proceedings which the court should

consider before deciding next steps. The duty on Cafcass to make risk assessments is set out in section 16A of the Children Act 1989.

Record of main findings

Cafcass service area A5 West Yorkshire:	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate
Capacity for improvement	Good
Meeting the needs of service users	
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Performance management	Adequate
Workforce development	Adequate
Partnerships	Good
Value for money	Adequate
Safeguarding	Adequate
Evaluation	Good
Quality of provision	
Service responsiveness	Adequate
Case planning and recording	Inadequate
Assessment, intervention and direct work with children	Adequate
Reporting and recommendations to the court	Adequate