

What has Cafcass been asked to do next?

Inspectors have asked Cafcass workers to help children more.

Inspectors have asked Cafcass to make sure that:

- all Cafcass workers work well with children and in a way that helps children
- children are always seen before reports are written and that reports are written in good time
- Cafcass listens more to the views of children.

Cafcass and what it does

Cafcass is the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. Cafcass works with children and young people when the family courts are involved in their lives. Children might meet a worker from Cafcass in two ways:

- When a local council is worried about a child, it might go to court and ask a judge or magistrate to start what are called care proceedings. The judge asks a Cafcass worker to talk to everyone involved. Then they write a report to tell the court whether they think that the council's plans for that child are right. The Cafcass worker must also tell the judge what the child wants to happen. This is called public law.
- When parents have separated and a child is living with one of them, sometimes it is hard for the adults to agree about where the child should live or how often the child should see the parent they aren't living with. The Cafcass worker can be asked to write a report about what they think would be best for the child and what the child wants to happen. This is called private law.

The report that the Cafcass workers write for a court is very important. The judge pays careful attention to what this says.

The full report, *Ofsted's inspection of the experience of Cafcass service users in the family courts in South Yorkshire*, is on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports.

If you would like a version of the leaflets in a different language, or in large print, Braille or audio, please contact enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk, or telephone 08456 404040.

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A survey of Cafcass service users in the family courts in South Yorkshire

A young person's guide



The Ofsted inspectors – and this report

Inspectors work for Ofsted. It is their job to look at how well Cafcass carries out its work. In early 2008, Ofsted asked a number of children, young people and adults in South Yorkshire what they thought of Cafcass. The inspectors followed this up with phone calls and face-to-face discussions. The inspectors also read court reports that Cafcass workers had written for the court, looked at case records and spoke to some people who help those who use the family courts.



What Ofsted looked at for this report

- In 2008 we asked a lot of children, young people and adults in South Yorkshire what they thought of Cafcass.
- We sent everyone a letter, spoke to some on the telephone and met some children face to face.
- We also read the reports that Cafcass workers wrote for the court.

What we found out

This is what most children and young people told inspectors about Cafcass:

- they understood why the Cafcass worker had talked with them
- they had enough time with the Cafcass worker
- the Cafcass worker was easy to talk to
- one child told us the Cafcass worker ‘was really nice to talk to’
- but another child said the Cafcass worker ‘put us on the spot; we don’t know the answers to his questions, we didn’t feel able to say we didn’t know’.

This is what some children and young people told inspectors about Cafcass

- the Cafcass worker listened but did not report what the child said they wanted
- their views had not made a difference to what happened
- they thought that the report was not fair
- they thought that the Cafcass worker had not helped them.

Some other findings

- Some children and young people had not been happy about what the Cafcass worker had done or written, but none had made a direct complaint to Cafcass.
- Inspectors thought that Cafcass sometimes had not listened enough to the views of children.
- Some children and young people said that the Cafcass leaflets were better for younger children. They thought that a DVD would be better. Inspectors thought this was a good idea too.