

Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) quick guide to Cafcass' Together Practice Framework

What is Together?

Cafcass' relationship-based practice framework is called Together with children and families (or Together).



Together applies to the work of every individual in Cafcass, no matter their role or function. It is especially relevant to anyone working with children and families and is a key element within the Practice Pillar of Cafcass' Strategic Plan 2020-23.

Together is made up of values, how these values work in practice, the tools to use to incorporate these values in our work and the impact this will have on the children and families we serve. This is illustrated in the image to the right.

Together is built around our Cafcass values and must therefore be at the heart of the work we do across the organisation. This framework encourages us to be pro-active and to look for the strengths in ourselves and others, to build positive relationships with our colleagues, our partners and with the children and families that we work with.

Our values	In practice	The difference this makes	Practice Framework
<p>Always looking for the strengths and risks</p>	<p>Through our relationships, we make balanced decisions</p>	<p>Our reports and our records are fair and balanced, showing the strengths and difficulties for families and how these affect the children</p>	<p>Reflective and group supervision</p>
<p>Believing in respectful relationships</p>	<p>We listen and act with care and understanding</p>	<p>When we work with children and each other, they and we feel respected and valued</p>	<p>Appreciative Inquiry</p>
<p>Decision making is clear and reasoned</p>	<p>We work with risk and uncertainty to create better and safer outcomes for children</p>	<p>Children and families know and understand what has happened at the end of their proceedings</p>	<p>Assessment and Case Planning</p>
<p>Holding children and families at the heart of our practice</p>	<p>We promote the safety and welfare of children</p>	<p>Children and families feel they are understood and that their views and experiences have been heard</p>	<p>Family Story Boards</p>
<p>Wanting to know more about you and what is important in your life</p>	<p>We respect, value and respond to the uniqueness and diversity of each child, family and colleague</p>	<p>Children and families feel that their individual circumstances, needs and personal characteristics have been recognised</p>	<p>Introductory letters and reporting to court</p>

The FJYPB want professionals to use the values in Together to work with children and young people in the following ways:

1

Keep us up to date with what is going on:

It is really important to us that we understand what is happening and that you explain things to us. Being a part of court proceedings can be confusing and overwhelming, so it's really important that we have ways of checking back in with you. It's important to keep us updated by talking to us, but it's also helpful to have letters and something written down because they are things that we can refer back to in order to remind ourselves.

Knowing information sooner may be hard, but this allows us to begin processing the information we are receiving.

2

Be clear and honest with me about your recommendations and write what I say in your report to court:

Help us to understand why you have made the decisions or recommendations that you have. You might be the only independent person in my life and you have a unique position in being able to give me an honest and unbiased view, whilst being kind and respectful. Unless you give a clear explanation I might never receive this. Assume we don't get told anything!

Refrain from using jargon and acronyms – use simple language that is easy for us to understand.

3

Don't pretend you know something when you don't:

Tell us you don't know and go and ask and check things out. We can tell or we find out when you don't know and we lose trust in what you are telling us.

4

Ask us what we want to be called and how we want to be referred to:

Ask me how to pronounce my name and how to spell it correctly. Also ask me about my pronouns and how I refer to my family members and relationships. This goes for my brothers and sisters too.

5

Ask me how I would like to communicate with you:

Be flexible in your approach – one size doesn't fit all. Be creative to meet my needs – use videos or audio files if I have additional needs linked to hearing or seeing. Try to understand whether English is my first language or whether I might need documents or conversations translated for me to better understand them. I might be bilingual, but that doesn't mean that my preference is to speak in English.



6

Don't talk about us as a "case":

We have a name and your paperwork is OUR file – not just the "child's file". Think about what you're doing and who you are doing it for. Don't see cases as numbers; there are children and families behind every letter, email, diary appointment and file.

7

Try to talk about our uniqueness even when we are not there:

In your correspondence with other professionals talk about me using my name and about how I am unique, this will allow practitioners who may not directly work with me to know who I really am.

8

Remember I may want to read my file in the future:

Be respectful in your records about me and about the people that are in my family and with whom I have relationships with. Think about the language that you use and try not to use jargon. Have a look at our website regularly where we publish our "Mind Your Language" updates: <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/family-justice-young-peoples-board/glossary-and-word-busting/>

9

If you talk about us in supervision or group supervision then please record these discussions:

If we want to better understand the decisions that have been made for us this will help us. It is important to record who was there and how this supervision was beneficial for deciding what was in our best interests. We may be disappointed if we find out that these group/peer supervisions took place about our lives, but no one told us about them and they weren't recorded.

You can make the judgement about whether you want to tell us that the supervision is taking place at the time. We don't always need to know.

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Make sure this reaches professionals in early stages of their careers:

We want students, apprentices and trainees to know how to work "together" in our best interests from the start of their careers. This will shape their practice going forward.

