

Press Release

ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS ACCEPTED

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, today publishes a report examining the issue of accountability for Cafcass.

Commissioned by Cafcass Chief Executive Anthony Douglas the report recommends ways of improving the complex set of accountabilities experienced by Cafcass staff. The report, which was written by District Judge Nik Goudie, Cafcass Head of Safeguarding Elizabeth Hall and former Director of Children's Services Jane Held, makes fifteen recommendations all of which have been accepted by the Cafcass Board.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive says, "I was really pleased with the quality of the report which sets out clearly the complex set of accountabilities experienced by all who work for Cafcass. We were fortunate in being able to secure the services of a highly experienced review panel and I thank them for their work.

Clear lines of accountability and improved services for the children and families who use our services are closely linked. This is no semantic exercise and in accepting all fifteen recommendations I am committing Cafcass to a programme of work to make accountability throughout Cafcass crystal clear. This will make an indirect yet still highly valuable contribution to improved outcomes for the children and families we serve."

To view the recommendations see the executive summary or the full report attached.

To speak to Anthony Douglas contact Takki Sulaiman on 07778 419218 in the first instance.

- ends -

Notes for Editors:

- The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) was formed as a new service for England and Wales on 1 April 2001 as part of the Government's commitment to supporting families and children. It brought together the services previously provided by the Family Court Welfare Service, the Guardian ad Litem Services and the Children's divisions of the Official Solicitor's Office.
- Cafcass has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children and young people are put first in family proceedings, that their voices are heard, the decisions made about them by courts are in their best interests and that they and their families are supported throughout the process. We operate within the law set by Parliament and under the rules and directions of the family courts.
- Cafcass' role is to work with children and families in the family courts. The following list provides some examples of the types of cases we work with:-
 - Adoption (public law)
 - Care Orders (public law)
 - Emergency Protection Orders (public law)
 - Residency and contact following divorce and separation (private law)
- Cafcass is sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and is a non-departmental public body.

Accountability Review

Tuesday 1st July 2008

- For the year 2006-2007 CAFCASS promoted the interests of 80,536 children. This does not factor in the work we do with children and their families in dispute resolution and our support of contact centres.
- Cafcass recently established a Young People's Board who have experience of our services. They advise us on matters of policy and practice.
- Cafcass is engaged in a major improvement programme, which is intended to improve quality and consistency of frontline practice during 2008 - 2009.
- Cafcass' new National Standards are available for download at our new website www.cafcass.gov.uk

For further information:

Head of Communications – Takki Sulaiman: 0207 510 7036 or 07778 419218