

Press Release



Immediate Release: Thursday 16th October

BEST PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING SEPARATED FAMILIES CONFERENCE

Anthony Douglas CBE, Cafcass Chief Executive, is speaking today at a conference entitled 'Best Practice in Supporting Separated Families Conference' which is being held in London with contributions from the new Child Maintenance Commissioner Stephen Geraghty and the Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP.

Anthony Douglas said, "Family life in the UK is in transition: between relationships, between countries - in fact transition is the new norm. Services like therapeutic mediation, child counselling, family group conferencing and parenting information classes, can help parents and children to move on together - rather than parents moving on and children being left emotionally stranded. Contact is not the booby prize to be handed out at the courtroom door in a War of the Roses battle. Good contact relationships are as important to children as their residence relationship."

The conference also saw the launch of a report revealing the emotional cost of parental separation. This has an impact on school performance and researchers also found children whose mum and dad split are more likely to struggle to find happiness in their own lives. See <http://www.separatedfamilies.info/professionals/happiness-hopes-and-wellbeing-survey> for more details on the study.

Karen Woodall, Director for The Centre for Separated Families, which commissioned the 'Happiness, hopes and wellbeing' study of 1,000 children under the age of 15 said:

"We recognise that there are many situations where one parent is left alone to provide everything that children need, however, we also recognise that the children who do best after family separation are those that have a strong and positive input from both parents. Both parents need to identify their children's needs and work out the best way to contribute to providing for them."

The Centre for Separated Families helps parents to build cooperative relationships so that they can help their children to adjust to the change.

- 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.
- For the year 2006-2007 CAF/CASS 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.
- In 2006 Cafcass 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.
- The full report can be downloaded from our website www.cafcass.gov.uk
- The Centre for Separated Families is a national charity working with and on behalf of families experiencing divorce and separation. The Centre offers information, support and advice to mothers and fathers, whatever their parenting status, and has a range of innovative education programmes to support cooperative parenting.

Conference website: <http://www.puttingchildrenfirst.info/>

For further information:

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