



Cafcass: Increase in children entering care system confirmed

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts in England, has released for the first time a full month by month total of care proceedings applications received since 2005.

The statistics, released on our [website](#) on 8th May 2009 (appended), include data from the period April 2005 to March 2009 and covers care proceedings applications made by local authorities where Cafcass has been appointed by the court to represent the interests of children.

It has already been reported that care applications, in the immediate aftermath of the closure of the criminal case into the murder of Baby Peter, had risen sharply. This trend has continued at significant levels and represents a shift in intervention thresholds by local authorities. The figure for March 2009 was the highest monthly figure ever recorded by Cafcass - amounting to an increase of 37.9% compared to March 2008. However when annual totals are compared the figures for 2008-09 are broadly comparable with the previous three years.

Cafcass Chief Executive Anthony Douglas CBE comments, "The increase represent real cases which are nearly always upheld by a family court due to the power and strength of the evidence - there is no evidence that children are being taken into care needlessly. In fact it is our view that more children are now being safeguarded who would otherwise be at risk of neglect or harm.

When we look at longer term trends there are fewer children entering the care system than, for example, in some previous decades. We understand more about the serious difficulties those children have experienced and how much it will take in terms of time and resources to put that right for them.

We are seeing an increase in cases coming to the courts of children already known to local authorities and where chronic neglect is the main feature. There are no easy solutions or guaranteed futures for these children, either back home or in the care system. Each child is not a statistic but a person with complex and long-term needs which the State has a duty of care to meet.

Along with the measures announced yesterday by the Secretary of State all agencies are committed to supporting social workers and other professionals in making the best possible interventions to safeguard vulnerable children."

For more information or an interview with Anthony Douglas please contact Takki Sulaiman on 07778 419218 in the first instance.

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Notes for Editors continues overleaf.../

Notes for Editors:

- In future Cafcass will release updates for each quarter, listed by month, in the third week following month end.
- Published background materials on this topic available from here:-
http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/news/2008/increase_in_care_cases.aspx
- 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 2007-2008 CAF/CASS promoted the interests of 77,134 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 has established a Young People's Board who have experience of our services. They advise us on matters of policy and practice.
- Cafcass' National Standards and other publications including our annual report are available for download at our new website www.cafcass.gov.uk
- For 2009-11 Cafcass is implementing a major practice improvement programme to improve the quality and consistency of frontline practice.
- it was announced on 6th May 2009 that Anthony Douglas CBE has been appointed to the DCSF's expert advisory group on the recommendation of Sir Roger Singleton, who was appointed as the government's chief adviser on the safety of children in March.

For further information:

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