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Press Release

CAFCASS AND CORAM IN SOUTH EAST PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, and children's charity, Coram, are pleased to announce an innovative partnership between a government agency and a voluntary organisation.

The partnership will operate in South East England and is designed to promote better outcomes for children whose parents are divorcing or separating and cannot agree on contact or which parent a child should live with. Coram will be supporting Cafcass practitioners in a number of ways. The charity will provide specialist additional consultation in child and adolescent psychiatry and adult psychology.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive says "Cafcass is constantly striving to improve the quality of outcomes particularly for children and young people. We know that our frontline staff will benefit from more supervisory support and that our court reports need to be more analytical with clearer recommendations based on evidence. By working in partnership with Coram we will be harnessing their excellent reputation in the arena of contact - especially in achieving successful sessions with families where there is entrenched discord. This is a unique partnership between a national government agency delivering services in the family justice system and a children's charity."

Dr Carol Homden, Chief Executive of Coram, adds, "*Coram has long pioneered practice to develop Contact services that meet the needs of children. We are proud to partner with CAFCASS on this new approach to supporting Family Court Advisors. Children all too often suffer the consequences of relationship breakdown and parental dispute - this work is vital to making the court process work as well as possible for children and that must be the touchstone of our success.*"

The media are invited to a contract signing at Cafcass' offices in Canterbury on Wednesday 2nd April at 3.30pm. The Chief Executives of Cafcass and Coram (Anthony Douglas CBE and Dr Carol Homden respectively) will be signing the contract.

The Cafcass South East area includes Kent, Sussex and Surrey with offices in Canterbury, Chichester, Chatham, Eastbourne, Guildford and Horsham.

To attend this event please contact Takki Sulaiman on 07778 419218 in the first instance.

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Notes for Editors:

About Cafcass

- 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. We estimate the total number of children we work with a year is 100,000.
- Cafcass recently established a Young People's Board who have experience of our services. They advise us on matters of policy and practice.
- Cafcass' new National Standards are available for download at our new website www.cafcass.gov.uk

About Coram

- This partnership marks a new phase in Coram's work in Contact. While Coram will no longer be taking referrals for the delivery of supervised contact, through this partnership, it will be focusing on the development of professional practice
- The Coram Contact Centre established the benchmark of good practice for over 20 years
- Coram, develops and promotes best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families
- Coram works with 6,000 children, young people and their local families each year, transforming their lives through practical help and support
- Coram services include:
 - Adoption for some of the most vulnerable children
 - The Parents' Centre which provides education, support and training
 - Work with young care leavers and young people at risk
 - Training, education and support into volunteering and employment
- Family support programmes within the community and at Coram's Community Campus in London
 - www.coram.org.uk

For further information:

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