

## Press Release

### CAFCASS SEEKS YOUR VIEWS ON NEW COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

**Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, today launches a public consultation on proposals to revise its complaints procedure. The proposed new procedure seeks to empower service users by providing more rights for complainants whose cases need stronger support and more protection for staff unfairly complained about.**

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive says, "The Complaints Procedures are a significant part of the service that Cafcass provides to all of our service users and feedback that we receive during this consultation will play a key role in shaping and implementing our services. Understanding and improving the experience of people who use our services is absolutely vital.. The Complaints Procedures has been designed to continue Cafcass' commitment to openness and quality improvement. We welcome feedback and want to hear from all service users, whether they are children, young people, or adults."

The Complaints Procedure has been revised in line with guidance from the Department for Children School and Families, particularly to contain a stronger independent element.

The main revisions to the Complaints Procedure include a shift from the current four-stage process to a new three-stage process that aims to reduce the time span for responding to complaints.. It emphasises the need for complaints to be resolved locally wherever possible and also proposes a 'Management Review' process, so that the Cafcass management view about how a case has been handled is available to all those reviewing a complaint at the earliest possible stage.

The new framework is scheduled to be implemented in the autumn of 2008, subject to the responses of this consultation process. Any complaints that have previously been dealt with through Cafcass current or previous complaints procedures, will not be entitled to be reopened as a result of these new procedures being implemented.

The revised Complaints Procedures and a form listing 11 questions can be downloaded from [www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

The closing date for responses is Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

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

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#### 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

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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](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

**For further information:**

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