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Immediate Release



## CAFCASS BIRMINGHAM AND BLACK COUNTRY OFSTED REPORT RELEASED

Cafcass, the organisation that represents children's interests in the family courts, notes the report from Ofsted into the Birmingham and Black Country Service area which is one of three pilot inspections – which uses a completely new methodology. The report acknowledges significant steps have been taken to improve the local service and that the direction of travel is right. The report says:

"The key building blocks for achieving change are in place. The recent record of progress is a good indicator of capacity to deliver further improvement."

Whilst being judged inadequate overall, the service was found to be satisfactory in safeguarding, leadership, capacity for improvement, partnerships, performance management and complaints. This is the fifth report since inspection transferred to Ofsted and the second using the pilot inspection methodology. Recent reports, including this one, are beginning to show the results of our improvement programme. Indeed the S1 inspection published in January found our service in the Bristol, Gloucestershire, Avon and Wiltshire area to be adequate.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass' Chief Executive commented, "I am pleased that the intensive improvements we are making to our services in Birmingham and the Black Country have been acknowledged. It will take eighteen months more to improve consistently across the country as we are changing fundamental working practices and that takes time."

Cafcass is currently in the process of implementing a performance management tool called Quality for Children. The tool helps managers assess and support staff in a more effective way, leading to a better all round service for the children and young people with whom we work. Alongside our Service Managers, a national network of Quality Improvement Managers has also been put in place to help to develop all aspects of our social work practice. We are also developing a new assessment model to provide a clearer evidence base for the professional judgements made by Cafcass staff.

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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 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 2007-08 Cafcass 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 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 2008-09 Cafcass is implementing a major practice improvement programme to improve the quality and consistency of frontline practice.*

**For further information:**

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