

CAFCASS ANNOUNCES BUDGET INCREASE FOR STAFF TRAINING AND THE LAUNCH OF INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, has announced a 70% increase in the staff-training budget to £2 million for 2008/09.

This 70 percent increase on last year's staff training budget is in line with Cafcass' commitment to staff development. In addition Cafcass have launched Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) to help boost learning and training opportunities for staff.

Under the new appraisal and performance development system, £250 will be allocated per employee for tailored training needs. The ILAs will enable individuals to identify areas of professional development with the support of management and offer a wide range of prospects including training, individual coaching or mentoring, e-learning and conferences.

Cafcass have allocated £10k for each Head of Service to go towards local collective learning and development opportunities, which is vital in allowing us to respond to local learning needs.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive says, "Doubling the KLPD budget – trebling if you include Individual Learning Accounts – shows how committed we are to continuous professional development, regardless of rank, regardless of function. Every member of staff will now have their own ILA. This will help with practice and performance improvement and with individual development. Training in Cafcass is well thought of by participants and resourcing it in this way will lead to huge indirect benefits for the people who use our services'

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 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

Monday 19th May 2008
Immediate release

- 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.
- 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

For further information:

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