

Press Release



Immediate Release: Monday 14 July 2008

NEW OFFICE PAVES WAY FOR BETTER SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, has opened a specially designed office in St.Austell to provide improved opportunities for interviewing families, family mediation and contact across Cornwall.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive says, "We work with children in the family courts. Whether their parents are divorcing or separating or a child is going through care proceedings - it is a stressful time for all involved. So I am really pleased that we have been able to relocate our offices to a more accessible part of the county following a consultation review with the children and families we work with. The new St.Austell office will provide an environment better suited to delivering modern family services and opportunities for children and families to maintain contact. The project has been brought to fruition through the work of many colleagues and I would like to give special mention to Andrew Dawe and Miranda Smith, who worked tirelessly to make it happen."

As a result of this review instead of having one main Cafcass office based in Truro Cafcass will have five bases from where families have their needs assessed and services provided. The locations are Truro, St.Austell, Bodmin, Pool with Penzance possibly coming online soon - with Bodmin, Pool and Penzance being new partnerships with voluntary sector organisations in Cornwall.

The new development in St.Austell provides quality facilities for interviewing children and families as well as improved accommodation and security for staff. The multi-purpose building is designed for modern ways of working, and includes areas for contact and managing dispute resolution. Facilities include three interviewing rooms plus a family room and were designed with input from the Cafcass Young People's Board.

One young person said, "We, the Cafcass Young People's Board, were involved with designing the interior and the layout of the building. One of our favourite parts is the fish tank on the reception desk."

Head of Service, Peter Mitchell said, " Over the last year we worked with 808 children across Cornwall. The new Cafcass office in St.Austell is evidence of our commitment to improving the experience children and families have of using our services. As a modern public service we are keen to cut down on journey times for people who need our services.

We will also use our extra locations to work with even more local partners to increase the range of family services available at weekends."

--ends --

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

For further information:

Head of Communications – Takki Sulaiman: 0207 510 7036 or 07778 419218