



CAFCASS COVENTRY TEAM PRAISED FOR SERVICE TO CHILDREN

A specialist child protection team based at Cafcass' National Business Centre in Coventry has been graded 'good' the second highest possible rating in a recent Ofsted inspection.

Based in the organisation's Coventry office, the team is responsible for assessing whether there are any safety concerns for children involved in divorce and separation cases in the family courts. Currently, the team is responsible for reviewing around 45,000 private law applications involving children across England each year.

Liz Elgar, Head of Service for the team said, "Research shows that in about half of the 45,000 cases we work on each year, children are at serious risk – be that from domestic violence, child abuse, parental drug and alcohol substance misuse or neglect. Every case we receive is reviewed within 24 hours by one of our Family Court Advisers who pieces together information from the application form and the checks we undertake with the police and local authority. Where there's significant risk of harm to a child, we can ensure that appropriate action is taken to keep them safe. The work of the centre has helped us to respond much more quickly to vulnerable children, many of whom have been living in deteriorating situations for months, and who urgently need our help."

Ofsted's [review of the centre](#) found that it had "created very significant savings in time and financial resources whilst providing a substantially improved service." It is also home to a police unit which undertakes safety checks on the police national computer. Liz said, "It's vital that agencies work together to keep children safe and having police staff on site makes a huge difference. Before it was taking on average 15 days for a police check, whereas now it takes two days. They're able to provide us with information that, very often, people do not include on their applications – such as the fact that they have serious convictions or are in prison."

Ofsted also reviewed the work of a broader group of staff based in the office who represent children in public law care cases and in longer term divorce and separation cases. The inspectors found that children's cases were allocated quickly, that 'performance on court filings times is good in most cases' and that cases were appropriately risk assessed and monitored. Likewise, they praised the team for ensuring that "children are supported to explore and express their views and feelings in a suitable and relaxed environment, enabling them to both talk about and write down their view to the court."

Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive said, "More and more children are needing our help and I am delighted that they are receiving the improved service that they deserve. The work of staff in reviewing all 45,000 applications a year is a gold standard in social work practice. Moreover, this is the fourth positive inspection result we have received this financial year and shows that, despite the ongoing pressures, we are continuing to improve our practice."

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Notes for Editors:

- The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) represents children in family court cases, making sure that their voices are heard and that the decisions that are made about them are in their best interests.
- Cafcass operates 17 service areas across England. Service area A13 covers Coventry, Warwickshire, Northampton and Cafcass' National Business Centre.
- Cafcass' specialist social workers – called Family Court Advisers – screen around 45,000 divorce and separation cases a year, to ensure that children in these cases are kept safe. That works out at 180 cases a day and around 3,600 cases each month.
- All cases are screened within 24 working hours of receipt and Inter Agency Referrals to Children's Services are made within 2 hours of risk identification.
- The Police National Computer Unit, based at the centre provides safety information on children. This has sped up the process so that on average, we're receiving this information back from the police within 2 days.
- 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 Education and is a non-departmental public body.