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CARE APPLICATIONS CONTINUE AT RECORD LEVELS

Cafcass, the organisation that represents children's interests in the family courts, today releases the figures for care applications seen by Cafcass for the period July to September 2009.

Compared to quarter 2 last year, care demand is up 47.2% (688 cases). June 2009 (784 cases) was the highest care demand figure ever recorded for a single month since Cafcass began collecting this data.

Anthony Douglas, CBE, Cafcass' Chief Executive commented, "The child protection system is dealing with higher referrals at every stage of assessment and service provision. Children's guardians are now working round the clock to meet the needs of these children as best as we can.

Whilst the rise in applications is good news for children who need protection, the child care system as a whole will need to gear up to be able to cope with and support these much higher volumes. Greater complexity of cases is also adding a multiplier effect to the rise in referrals.

Rises in applications to courts directly follows on from recent steep rises in child protection referrals to local authorities. This has been partly caused by some agencies referring lower level concerns in case they make a mistake by under-reacting. Agencies must regain confidence in their own professional judgements and assessments. The UK child protection system remains one of the safest in the world therefore that confidence is justified.

Financial pressures in many agencies mean that resources are being driven into funding children with the highest levels of need and protection. This risks a reduction in the very family support and therapeutic services a much larger group of children and families need to prevent the cycle of neglect recurring."

Please see the enclosed table and graph for more detailed analysis.

For further information 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

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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 operates 21 service areas across England.
- 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 2008-2009 Cafcass promoted the interests of 79,000 children in new cases. This does not factor in the work we do with children and their families in dispute resolution, our support of contact centres or ongoing cases across financial years.
- In 2006 Cafcass established a Young People's Board who have experience of our services. They advise us on matters of policy and practice.
- Cafcass is engaged in a major improvement programme, which is intended to improve quality and consistency of frontline practice during 2009 - 2011.
- Cafcass' new operating priorities were launched internally on August 10th 2009
- Cafcass' 2008-09 annual report was published on July 16th 2009. All publications can be downloaded from our website <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/publications.aspx>

For further information:

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