



## REPORT SHOWS CAFCASS HELPING MORE CHILDREN THAN EVER BEFORE

**Cafcass' Annual Report and Accounts 2009-10, which is published today, shows that the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts is helping more vulnerable children than ever before.**

Figures from the report show that Cafcass worked with over 142,000 children during the year – the equivalent of a town with a population the size of Blackpool. It also shows that demand for our services rose significantly with the biggest area of growth being in public law care cases where there was an unprecedented 33% increase, from 6,473 cases in 2008-09 to 8,684 during the reporting period. At the same time, the number of divorce and separation cases rose by over 15%.

Commenting on Cafcass' work throughout the year, Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive said, "Our focus this year has been on ensuring that we are able to provide the best possible service to the rising number of children who have been referred to us. We've made significant progress in improving the speed in which we become involved in a child's case and in increasing our capacity to help more children. By March 2010 our Family Court Advisers were working on over 10,000 care cases – a 20% increase on the numbers they were working on in July 2009<sup>1</sup>. That figure has continued to rise and in June 2010 11,243<sup>2</sup> care cases were fully allocated to our practitioners – testament to the hard work and tremendous commitment of our staff."

He went on to say, "The big increase in care cases we've seen is a direct result of the rising numbers of child protection referrals to local authorities and sharp increases in the numbers of children who are now the subject of child protection plans. Whilst this has put everyone working in child protection and the family courts under pressure, the research we carried out during the year showed that local authorities are taking appropriate actions to keep these children safe. It is positive that so many more children are getting the help and protection they deserve."

At the same time Cafcass has been improving its work on cases where parents are divorcing and separating and cannot agree on arrangements for their children. In keeping with the aims of the Family Justice Review we have been working with our partners in the Judiciary to promote alternatives to court, such as mediation and parenting information programmes, so that parents can be helped to put their children first and make safe arrangements, rather than going through often lengthy and stressful full court proceedings.

Chair of the Cafcass Board, Baroness Valerie Howarth said, "We remind ourselves at every opportunity that each statistic represents an episode in a child's life and usually one that is difficult and sometimes traumatic. Each episode will involve an intervention and that will bring a range of responses from our Family Court Advisers who will be doing their best in extremely complex family circumstances. I pay tribute to our staff for the work that they have done this year to help so many children."

In 2010-11, Cafcass will continue to improve its work through a transformation programme designed to increase our ability to help the rising numbers of children being referred to us. The programme will develop and improve the way in which we work with children and their families and will ensure we have in place the right support for our Family Court Advisers who work with them.

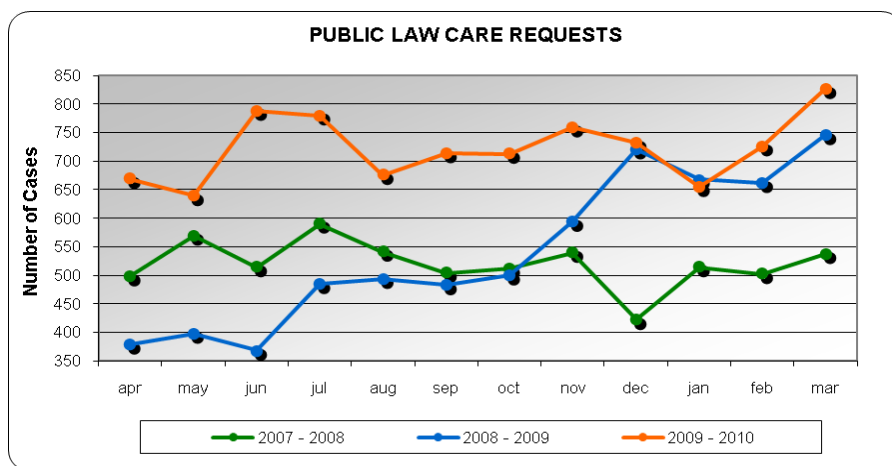
### **For further information please call:**

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<sup>1</sup> The number of care cases allocated to a Children's Guardian rose from 8,747 care cases in July 2009 to 10,518 cases in March 2010 – an increase of 20.2 % (1,771 cases).

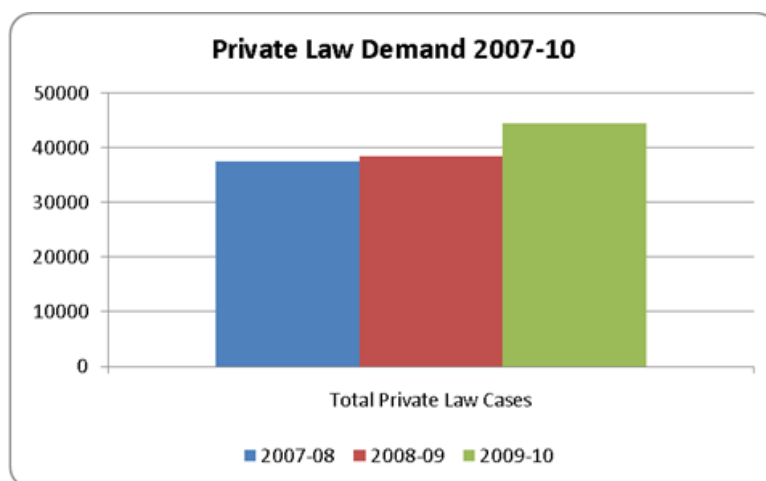
<sup>2</sup> This figure does not include cases allocated on a duty basis.

**Figure 1: Public law care demand 2007-10**



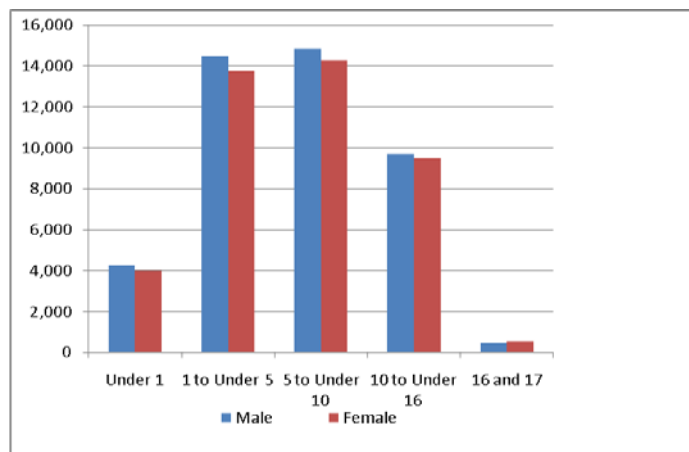
There was a 33.7% increase in public law care requests on 2008-09 figures, from 6,496 cases to 8,684. You can find out more on our website: [http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/publications/care\\_demand\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/publications/care_demand_statistics.aspx)

**Figure 2: Private law demand 2007-10**



There was a 16.2% increase in private law (divorce and separation cases) from 38,501 in 2008-09 to 44,722 this year.

**Figure 3: Children in cases; age and gender profile 2009-10**



## 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. It operates within the law set by Parliament and under the rules and directions of the family courts.
- Cafcass has 90 offices throughout England. These are split into three operational areas – north, central and south.
- Cafcass' role is to work with Children and Families in the family courts. The following are 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.
- Cafcass has a Young People's Board who have experience of our services. They advise us on matters of policy and practice.
- In 2010-11 Cafcass is implementing a transformation programme to improve develop and improve our service so that we are able to respond effectively to the continuing high level of demand for our services. The funding will be used to support delivery of a child-focused, efficient, modern service that enables us to support children in the family courts for the next five years and beyond.

# cafcass in numbers - an overview 2009-10

Figure 1:

