

Immediate Release: Friday 12th February
2010

CAFCASS: NAPO CLAIMS ARE BASELESS

Cafcass, the organisation that represents children's interests in the family courts, is making good progress in tackling the unprecedented increase in both care applications and private law disputes between parents over contact and residence.

Claims made by Napo that Cafcass is in crisis are not based on fact and are in danger of undermining the good work being done by frontline Cafcass practitioners across England to manage the huge increase in case work. Staff turnover is one of the lowest in the sector and half of those leaving have retired.

Anthony Douglas, CBE, Cafcass' Chief Executive commented, "Cafcass is facing an unprecedented increase in demand for its services for vulnerable children and families. That much is accepted by all those working in the family justice system. Blaming one part of the system misses the point that demand is at an all time high. The President of the Family Court Division introduced a new way of working so that Cafcass could work on more cases and focus on those children and families most in need of support.

We operate a triaging system whereby we guarantee an initial safeguarding analysis for all children rather than providing a premium service for a smaller number of children. All public bodies have to use taxpayer resources wisely and as our figures show our efforts to tackle the increase in cases are yielding results."

Cafcass has just signed a workload agreement with our trade union partners so we are naturally disappointed that Napo are unhappy with so many areas that were the subject of those negotiations.

The Napo press release uses incorrect figures and some figures have been taken out of context. Our analysis is set out below:-

1. **Staff turnover:** Staff turnover for frontline practitioners (FCAs) is one of the lowest in the children's social care sector and for the 12 months to December 2009 stood at 11.6%. 48% of our staff are over 50 and half the number leaving Cafcass last year were in fact retiring from service. Many choose to continue working for Cafcass as bank staff.
2. **National Office staff and spend:** We have centralized to save money and avoid duplication. A number of functions, which were previously run from local offices and came under their budgets have been brought within the aegis of National Office. We have also invested in areas such as our IT function, with numbers of staff here rising from 3 to 13 to support the implementation of a modern IT infrastructure which will allow us to operate as a modern social care organisation and received funding from DCSF to create a Partnerships team. Both IT and HR functions have increased in size but they are both still below benchmark data when compared to other government agencies and departments as measured by Cipfa. Data available on request. The projected NO staff spend in 2009-10 will be

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£10,055,160, this figure includes temporary staff which is £811,670 – a reduction on last year.

3. Reduction in delays in allocating cases and increase in cases:

The President's Interim Guidance was introduced in July 2009. The figures below indicate the impact of the guidance on Cafcass' work to reduce workloads.

Public law

At the end of July 2009 there were 877 unallocated care cases. At the end of January 2010 this figure reduced to 486 cases and shows a 44.6 per cent decrease in unallocated care cases.

Private law

At the end of July 2009 there were 2,043 unallocated private law cases. This number reduced to 925 at the end of January 2010 and indicates a 54.7 per cent decrease in unallocated private law cases.

Duty allocated care cases

At the end of July 2009 there were 381 duty allocated care cases and this increased to 779 at the end of January 2010.

The figures below show a the number of public and private law cases Cafcass received during January to December 2009 compared to the same period the previous year.

Public Law

During the period of January to December 2009 Cafcass received 8,542 public law care cases, an increase of 43.0% or 2,570 cases, when compared to the 5,972 public law care cases received in 2008.

During the period of January to December 2009 Cafcass received 12,039 total public law cases, an increase of 16.6% or 1,994 cases, when compared to the 10,045 total public law cases received in 2008.

Private Law

During the period of January to December 2009 Cafcass received 43,697 private law cases, an increase of 17.9% or 6,645 cases, when compared to the 37,052 private law cases received in 2008.

4. **Sickness absence:** From November to December 40 FCAs were absent due to stress which equates to just under 3.5% of our practitioner workforce.
5. **Agency staff:** Agency spend has indeed increased as Cafcass has sought to manage the increase in demand by employing staff to manage the increase in cases. The number of unallocated cases would be higher were we not to employ agency staff many of whom are highly experienced practitioners.

Please see this [link](#) for more detailed analysis of the rise in care statistics. The research reviewing post Baby Peter s31 levels is available [here](#).

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 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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