



CHILDREN RECEIVING IMPROVED SERVICE DESPITE RECORD DEMAND

An Ofsted inspection report has praised Cafcass, the court social work service for the quality of its work with vulnerable children in South Yorkshire and Humberside, despite record demand.

Ofsted praised the team, which represents children and young people in family court cases for its 'effective advocacy for children and young people,' and the strength of its risk assessments and recommendations to court which are 'effective in ensuring that children are safeguarded'. Inspectors found that backlogs had been eradicated and that direct work with children and families was 'well-planned and sensitive.'

The South Yorkshire and Humberside team has seen a rapid increase in the numbers of vulnerable children needing help. Care applications in the area have increased by a third over two years with the private law cases increasing by 12% during the same period. Currently all children's cases are allocated, with children receiving the expert help they need.

Hilary Barrett, Head of Service for the area said, "Children have been at the heart of each of the improvements we've made. All of our efforts and all of the changes we've made have been directed at making a positive difference to them. We knew that this had resulted in significant improvements in our work, so I am delighted that this has been externally validated. All aspects of our service were rated either 'good' or 'satisfactory', and Ofsted was confident that our ability to continue to improve was 'good' – a commitment which I know is shared by each member of staff in the area."

[The report](#) is one of a series of recent positive Ofsted inspection results including those in [Tyneside](#), [Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire](#), and [Cheshire and Merseyside](#) and coincides with the latest care application statistics which show that demand for our services remains at record levels. Cafcass received [885 care applications in August](#), the second highest figure ever recorded in a single month in our ten year history, and just shy of the record figure of 894 applications recorded in March. The number of care applications Cafcass has received each calendar month this year has been the highest ever recorded for that month, bar April.

Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive said, "This report, and the others which we have recently received demonstrate the ways in which we have not only been able to provide a more timely service to many more children, but that we have also simultaneously improved our service despite the pressures. It is further evidence of our ability to improve and of the way in which our work is positively impacting on children. It has led to a better, more responsive and child-focused service."

**For further information please contact:
Naomi Lawson, Head of Communications
0844 353 3320 / 07768 796484**

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 19 service areas across England. Service area N6 covers South Yorkshire and Humberside.
- In 2010-11 Cafcass worked over 8,000 children involved in family court cases in South Yorkshire and Humberside.
- The number of public law care cases in South Yorkshire and Humberside has increased by 31.5% in the last two years from 409 cases in 2008-09 to 538 cases in 2010-11.
- The number of private law cases (typically divorce and separation cases) in South Yorkshire and Humberside has increased by 12% in the last two years from 2,298 cases in 2008-09 to 2,603 cases in 2010-11.
- Care application figures published by Cafcass for the first five months of 2011-12 were 8.7% higher than last year's record numbers. Cafcass received [885 care applications in August](#), the second highest figure ever recorded in a single month in our ten year history, and just shy of the record figure of 894 applications recorded in March. The number of care applications Cafcass has received each calendar month this year has been the highest ever recorded for that month, bar April.
- The South Yorkshire and Humberside report can be accessed on the Ofsted website by [clicking here](#).
- 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.