



CAFCASS: CHILDREN SUFFER FINANCIALLY AFTER SEPARATION

Cafcass, the organisation that looks after children's interests in the family courts, has today released a report about how children and young people feel about going through divorce and separation. The report found that children and young people felt that Cafcass' involvement generally helped and in some cases made a difference to their lives. However, many of them worried about their financial situation.

Based on a research event organised by the Cafcass Children's Rights Team in April 2009, the report outlines what young people felt about their experience of going through divorce and separation. The report was researched in collaboration with Professor Adrian James from the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth, University of Sheffield; and evaluated by independent research provider, the Policy Evaluation Group. The report states issues for consideration following each section about how children and young people can be better supported throughout this process.

One young person said, "I felt really involved, what I said mattered and what I wanted happened. If Cafcass had not been involved my future would have been different."

46% of the young people who attended the consultation day explained that there was a worsening financial situation for themselves and the parent they lived with (see Appendix 1). The majority of young people felt that they required financial support. The possibilities of day trips and general activities were also mentioned. 88% of the young people felt that they had a right to decide where they live and who they see after their parents separate (See Appendix 2).

Other key findings:

- Many young people felt that family and friends, particularly grandparents, had an important role to play in providing continuing support. But also expressed the importance of being able to talk to an independent person who they could trust.
- The young people thought that the best way to find out about the needs, wishes and feelings of young people would be simply to ask them.
- Some young people would like to represent themselves in court so that their views cannot be misrepresented.
- Awareness of the full range of services offered by Cafcass was not as good as it could be.
- Areas of support for parents identified by young people included support in talking issues through with their children.
- Some issues in relation to Cafcass' involvement centred on issues of confidentiality.

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive said, "Children and young people whose parents are going through a divorce or separation need to be supported at each stage in the proceedings. This report shows that many of these children are worried about their financial situation and want further support after the proceedings have finished. It is a positive sign that many of the young people felt that they benefitted from Cafcass' involvement but there were also areas mentioned that we could improve on - such as confidentiality. The information that has been gained from this report will help identify ways we can improve support services for children going through this difficult time."

For further information or to request an interview with Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive and Christine Smart, Children's Rights Director please contact Naomi Lawson on 0844 353 3320 in the first instance.

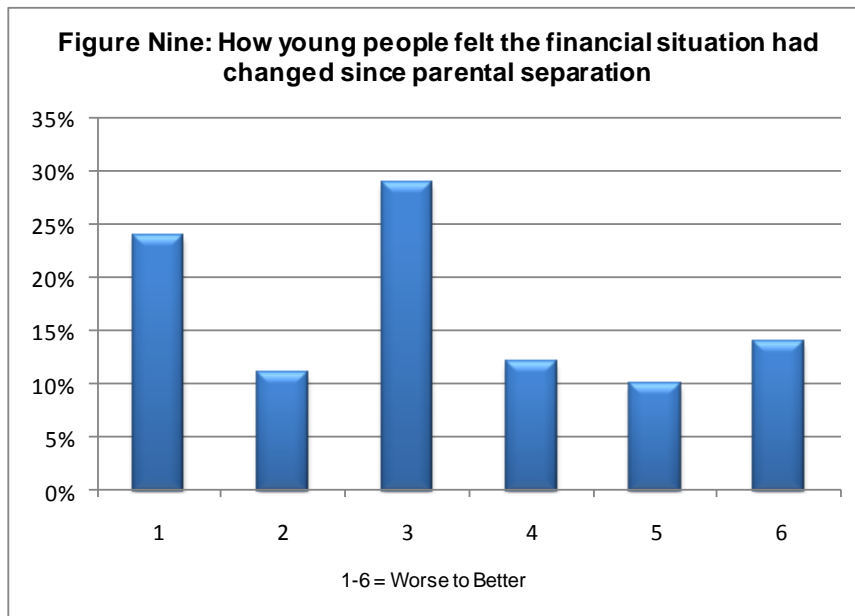
The full report can be accessed from www.cafcass.gov.uk

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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 2008-09 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 2009-11.
- Cafcass' 2008-09 annual report was published on July 16th 2009. All publications can be downloaded from our website www.cafcass.gov.uk
- Child Maintenance Options is an impartial information and support service that helps both parents make informed choices about child maintenance following separation or divorce and is a service provided by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission. Child maintenance can make a significant difference to a child's well-being and the quality of family relationships. Go to www.cmoptions.org for more information.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

