



## Managing Non-Case Information

### Greater Transparency & Good Practice Guidance

This guidance relates to all non-case related information that is written by Cafcass staff, including emails to colleagues, minutes of meetings, notes etc.

On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, the Prime Minister launched an agenda for 'setting government data free in modern Britain'. Following the announcement a letter was sent to all government departments heralding the release of government data to the public. Click [here](#) for a link to the Prime Minister's letter.

Cafcass staff must be aware of the implications of the Government's commitment to transparency. Minutes of meetings that have only been internal previously, may now be made public, as may emails<sup>1</sup> and other internal communications that would previously only have been circulated to staff.

Good written records are vital if the public and stakeholders are to understand Cafcass' work. All records, including emails and minutes of meetings, should be business-like, written in plain English and avoid jargon.

#### **The following is a simple guide to good practice on managing information:**

##### 1. Recognise and understand all types of information

Cafcass has an [Information Assurance Policy](#) which contains –

- a schedule outlining the corporate records processed by Cafcass,
- retention schedules showing how long data needs to be held, and
- the various protective markings assigned to different types of data.

The **personal data** of individuals can be accessed via the Data Protection Act. The Freedom of Information Act allows members of the public to access a wide array of **non personal data** which Cafcass processes.

##### 2. Understand the legal issues and execute duty of care responsibilities

It is essential that all staff record information in a professional and responsible manner, knowing that whatever they write is likely to be seen by people outside Cafcass and quite possibly by the public at large. This includes case files, policy advice, meeting minutes, personnel notes, some legal documents, emails, photographs, digital data, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 5 of the IA policy contains guidance on how to manage e-mails.

## 10 Essential Rules to Follow

1. Always remember that everything you write in your job is a formal, professional record that you are making on behalf of the organisation.
2. Always differentiate between matters of fact and opinion. Do not express opinions that you are not prepared to defend, or which you can not substantiate.
3. Always re-read whatever you have written before you finish. This applies to everything you write, including emails, notes to colleagues and minutes.
4. Always ask yourself
  - whether you have recorded it in the best and most professional way, and
  - what will it look like in a year's time when someone else reads it? Have you covered all the salient points clearly and professionally?
5. Always delete drafts as soon as the final version of a document has been produced.
6. Never use exclamation marks or other informalities when you write.
7. Never keep out-dated or irrelevant information.
8. Never include irrelevant information.
9. Never express opinions in areas which you are not qualified.
10. And finally ... if in doubt, discuss with your line manager or the IA & Data Handling Officer.