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Your ref: CAF 15-118
Our ref: Gov/CAF 15-118

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2 July 2015

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email of 16 June 2015. You made the following requests for information:

- 1) can you explain what work goes into a section 7 report and how long are family court officers expected to spend on such a report would this mean speaking to family members? and the child's school ? medical professionals If reports were ordered ? if there was a medical issue ? The child pediatrician if reports were ordered? please explain or given the policy data one would follow in such a report.

When ordered to complete a section 7 report by the court, Cafcass practitioners will have regard to the relevant section of the [Operating Framework](#) (4.19-4.24). Cafcass practitioners also use a standard form of report which provides template headings for each subsection. This standard form can be accessed [here](#).

Cafcass practitioners use their professional judgment when considering which evidence will assist them in making recommendations which promote the best interests of the child. Cafcass practitioners have regard to the [Welfare Checklist](#) when making recommendations; these recommendations will differ from case to case as the facts of each case will be different.

- 2) Can we have the same data for an addendum report, if one of the parties does not follow the court orders or the parties solicitors would cafcass be expected to update the court? and who would update the court the cafcass officer or the service manager ? would this be mentioned in the reports or by the service manager? The same apply's for question number 1.

The policies relating to the completion of addendum reports are the same as those referred to in Q1. Paragraph 4.33 of the [Operating Framework](#) deals specifically with the completion of addendum reports.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive





- 3) How does Cafcass regard their conflict of interest policy would an officer of Cafcass be permitted to act in a case if there was a clear conflict of interest ?

Please see the Cafcass [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

- 4) Does Cafcass see an officer of the court who lies as perjury or perverting the course of justice or misleads the court or removes records from the file as a criminal offence? Is this something Cafcass takes seriously or would ignore this if told?

There are criminal offences of perjury and perverting the course of justice. The committing of such offences by an Officer of Cafcass would be treated very seriously.

- 5) Does Cafcass class a parent informing them of an ongoing medical issue as vexatious, or reporting staff that are failing the courts and children in an ongoing case?

Cafcass holds no recorded information in relation to this specific query. However, as responded to in your previous request CAF 948, please see the Cafcass [Operating Framework](#) (sections 8.17 – 8.19) for the circumstances in which it may be necessary for Cafcass to consider limiting communication with a service user.

- 6) Is it a criminal offence to tell a court that checks on partners and other matters and say they have been done, when in fact no checks have been made?

Cafcass holds no recorded information in relation to this specific query.

- 7) Is it the job of the service manager to check their staff who they manager reports and make sure any documents sent to the court are passed to the family welfare officer.

Please see our website for the [job description for Cafcass Service Managers](#) which has previously been provided to you in CAF 15-70. As noted above, please see the Cafcass [Supervision Policy](#) for information on how Cafcass practitioners' work is monitored.

All Cafcass practitioners and managers are qualified social workers and are subject to regular performance review and Quality Assurance. These processes are in place to ensure that the work provided by Cafcass practitioners is of the most use to the parties and the court when making decisions about the future of a child. Section 6 of the [Operating Framework](#) sets out the way in which the work of Cafcass practitioners is supervised by line managers.





Section 2 of the [Case Recording and Retention Policy](#) sets out the way in which documents received by Cafcass will be brought to the attention of the allocated practitioner and saved onto the Electronic Case Management System.

- 8) If one of the service manager goes sick on a case is it the responsibility of the service manager to act until there is a new family welfare officer in place if any issue are reported to cafcass? that are new.

Paragraphs 2.11 – 2.14 of the [Operating Framework](#) deal with the allocation of work by managers to practitioners, including actions to be taken in the event of sickness or other extended absence.

- 9) How long is the average family private law case from start to finish this is from application being received and from the first direction hearing until final hearing if no fact finding hearing is place and a section 7 report is all that is in place. can we have this for the year 2012/2013 and 2013/2014

The table below shows the average duration of cases in which a section 7 report was completed in financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14.

	Average duration of cases in which a section 7 report was filed (shown in calendar weeks)
2012-13	57
2013-14	52

Please note the following points in relation to the data:

- Cases involved are private law cases with one or more section 7 reports filed
- Average duration is based on closed cases where the date of the last hearing is in the financial year noted (April - March). Individual case duration is calculated by calendar days based on the date the case was received and the date of the last hearing before the case was closed. The number is then divided by 7 to find the number of calendar weeks.
- There may be some margin of human error in the data entry. The data sources are:
 - ECMS: ECMS is a live system, continually updated and is subject to change when further updates are made; it was introduced on 11 July 2014.
 - CMS: Prior to July 2014, information is taken from CMS (Case Management System) which was introduced national in 2007-08;





data from CMS is a static snapshot on the day it ceased to be a live database, 11th July 2014.

We hope that you feel your question has been answered effectively. If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review to be undertaken. If you are dissatisfied with the way the internal review is handled or with the final decision made at that review about the information released, you are free to contact the Information Commissioner's office (www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk):

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Yours sincerely,

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Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive

