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**Your ref: CAF 15-135**  
**Our ref: Gov/CAF 15-135**

Tel 0300 456 4000

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## **Re: Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your email of 21 July 2015. You made the following requests for information:

### 1. [How do you assess domestic violence in families which you have contact with?](#)

In cases of divorce or separation, we assess the case for any safety issues, and report these to the court at the first hearing. This could include any reported incidents or allegations of domestic violence. Further information can be found in the 'Work to First Hearing' section of the [Operating Framework](#).

Cafcass practitioners are required to assess risk, including that arising from domestic violence, in two ways: when the court orders a risk assessment as part of a Section 7 report if it feels that there is some risk to any child subject to proceedings; and under [s16A](#) of the Children Act 1989 Cafcass practitioners are under a duty to undertake a risk assessment whenever they have cause to suspect a child subject to proceedings is at current risk of harm and to pass this information to the court.

Please see the Cafcass [Operating Framework](#) paragraphs 2.40 – 2.42; for more information please also see our [Child Protection Policy](#).

Practitioners should use appropriate tools, matched to the identified needs in the case, when assessing the impact of domestic abuse. These [tools for evidence informed practice](#) can be found on our website under section B. Relevant tools include:

- Domestic violence – what we need to know (for use in interview to establish the nature, how recent, frequency and duration of domestic violence)
- SafeLives DASH Guidance and SafeLives DASH Tool (for use in interview if domestic violence is current to establish if referral to MARAC is required)

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- Barnados Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix (for use post interview to analyse the level of risk / need and protective / vulnerability factors; includes Faith and Culture Safeguarding checklist)
- Safe Contact Indicator (for use during of post interview to analyse whether contact is safe / in child's best interests)
- Tool for assessing whether Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme is appropriate

2. Do you use standardised tools for doing this? And if so what are these?

Yes, please see the response to question 1.

3. What domestic abuse training is received by your workers? Please provide information on training provider, content and duration.

The main training we provide on domestic abuse is included in our in-house Risk and Harm induction training which is a one day 'classroom' event preceded by an e-learning module of 2 – 4 hours duration. Please find attached: Risk and Harm Induction Training Handout, and Risk and Harm Presentation - slides which reference domestic abuse are 13, 17, 32-42, 48-51 and 57. Please note any names used in case studies have been created for the training and do not refer to specific individuals.

This training aims to help ensure practitioners:

- understand Cafcass' legal responsibilities regarding the assessment of risk and harm
- understand the key requirements of Cafcass' Child Protection Policy and Operating Framework regarding risk identification and risk assessment.
- understand what risk assessment tools are available and when to use them
- apply Cafcass' expectations regarding risk identification and risk assessment to case planning, assessment and analysis in public and private law cases.
- be able to use assessment tools correctly and with confidence

4. Do you use the only evidence based risk assessment, DASH when working with domestic abuse?

As noted in response to question 1, Cafcass practitioners can use the Safe Lives DASH risk checklist and guidance if domestic violence is current to establish if referral to MARAC is required. Cafcass practitioners may choose to use the





Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix in conjunction with the other tools referenced above to inform their recommendations in any particular case.

5. If so, what is the percentage of your court social workers who have received training in this?

Cafcass does not hold this information as training provided in relation to risk assessment and domestic violence has varied over the years and previous versions may not have included this specifically. Social work training equips practitioners to use standard assessment tools, and all Cafcass practitioners are qualified social workers with at least three years post qualifying experience in social work with children and families at risk.

The current mandatory induction training module Risk and Harm, referenced in response to question 3, involves training on the use of the tool and all Cafcass practitioners complete this within 12 months of joining the organisation.

6. If not, what is the reason for this?

N/A

7. Do your assessment processes take into account the categories of emotional, psychological, physical, financial and sexual abuse or that of particularly typologies of domestic abuse, such as situational couple violence and intimate terrorism

Assessment processes can be seen in the tools and training set out in responses to previous questions; the Risk and Harm module references different categories of domestic abuse.

Cafcass' assessment processes are focused on recommending how the child's welfare can be best promoted and safeguarded, with reference to the [Welfare Checklist](#) and the child's ascertainable wishes and feelings.

8. Please would it be possible to see any templates you use when assessing or reporting on domestic abuse

All assessment [tools for evidence informed practice](#) can be found on our website under section B. Forms and templates can also be found on this page; reporting could include referral letters or a [section 7 report](#).

9. What is the percentage of your court social workers who have received training in domestic abuse since the Serious Crime Bill, including Clause 76 regarding the





offence of "Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship" achieved Royal Assent on 3 March 2015.

The Risk and Harm training is offered new staff joining our organisation, who are required to complete it within 12 months of joining the organisation. 76 practitioners have completed this since March 2015, which represents 6% of Cafcass practitioners currently employed. 30 staff are due to complete this training in the future, and the remainder have previously completed training in risk assessment and domestic violence.

All practitioners are kept up to date with legislative changes through bulletins.

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](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)):

**Post**

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
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SK9 5AF

**Fax**

01625 524 510

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0303 123 1113

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Yours sincerely,

Governance Team

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Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive

