



Your ref: CAF 15-139
Our ref: Gov/CAF 15-139

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17 August 2015

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your letter dated 17 July 2015 which was received by our Customer Services Team on 27 July 2015. They forwarded this request to us as it contained the following requests for Cafcass information:

May I also request a copy of Cafcass policies in relation to what questions can/ can't be asked of 10+12 year old children and any policies in relation to shared care arrangements (i.e any that refer to or oppose shared care being 50/50 when there are no safeguarding issues).

Please see below for our response.

Cafcass does not have any policy on interviewing children or the amount of time a parent should spend with a child. However in line with government policy, Cafcass supports contact with both parents where it is safe to do so and in the child's best interests.

Set out below is a relevant extract of the Cafcass [Operating Framework](#) detailing our work with children; it refers to two pages on our website which can be found at the following links:

- Our [tools](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/leaflets-resources/policies-and-templates-for-secs/forms,-templates-and-tools.aspx#tools) for evidence informed practice: <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/leaflets-resources/policies-and-templates-for-secs/forms,-templates-and-tools.aspx#tools>
- The [Needs, Wishes and Feelings guidance booklet](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/leaflets-resources/our-work-with-children.aspx), which is used to help children communicate complex feelings: <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/leaflets-resources/our-work-with-children.aspx>

Working with children and young people

Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive





1.16 All Cafcass staff aim to support the child to the best of their ability from the beginning to the end of the case. We are unequivocally for the child and what concerns them. We are clearly focused on how we can improve the situation for them, which they are in through no fault of their own.

1.17 In all public law and private law cases that go beyond the First Hearing, practitioners need to communicate effectively with children to understand their wishes and feelings, to set these out before the court and, informed by them, to offer an evidence-informed view about what steps will most effectively safeguard and promote children's welfare (UNCRC, Articles 3 and 12). We also work with parents through the various court processes and suggest ways in which they can meet their children's needs and play appropriate roles in their children's lives – whether or not they have day-to-day care of their children.

1.18 A key part of our work is to enable the appropriate involvement of children in the court proceedings that are about them. Subject to their age and level of understanding, this involves ensuring that children are aware of the proceedings and have the opportunity to participate in them or otherwise contribute to them (UNCRC, Article 12). This may include supporting and facilitating children to see the judge in their case. Our work with parents, during the course of proceedings, is focused in part on enabling them to think about and take account of their children's perspectives and needs, which can often help cases to be resolved and conflict to be reduced. Positively engaging children in their own cases can lead to higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, which promotes resilience when growing up with continuing emotional or psychological conflict (UNCRC, Article 12).

1.19 In our work with individual children, it is important that we understand the child's timescale and the child's timeline, particularly the child's less visible emotional and psychological timeline.

1.20 Practitioners work with children in various ways, including:

- Sensitively discussing their situation, and helping children to express themselves. For many children, this will be the first time they have been supported to articulate their daily lived experience. To do this, practitioners identify locations and ways in which children can feel secure enough to communicate their feelings. Practitioners may also use the Cafcass Needs, Wishes and Feelings guidance booklet, play materials or interactive software, to help a child to put complex feelings into a commonly understood language.*
- Ensuring that children's wishes and feelings – their unique voice – are reflected in case analyses and court reports, together with advice about the weight that should be attached to them by the court. This recognises that children's expressed views may not always reflect the best way in which their safety and welfare can be promoted by the court.*





- *Practitioners help children to write letters to judges or magistrates, as well as seeing them, when children wish to.*
- *Practitioners observe children together with their parents, in order to assess parenting skills or relationships (and also take into account children's feelings about being observed). Various tools are available to practitioners to use when working with children and adults, to support evidence-informed analysis.*

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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