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**Your ref: CAF 15-35**  
**Our ref: Gov/CAF 15-35**

Tel 0300 456 4000

18<sup>th</sup> March 2015

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

Thank you for your email of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2015. Please see below for our responses to your requests for information.

In reply 1.3 you state "National training needs are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the National Improvement Service and in line with corporate priorities. The Health Care Professionals Council will also identify and recommend training for all social workers, which Cafcass will incorporate into its training plans."

Please note that we are only able to respond regarding information held by Cafcass, not the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC), as this is a separate organisation. The HCPC sets social work standards and these sometimes include developments made on research; however there has been no research given to Cafcass by the HCPC on the issues you have enquired about below. Where you have requested information related to the HCPC, we suggest that this is requested from them directly.

In Cafcass's own Operating Framework there are numerous references to 'parental alienation', in relation to the impact of parental behaviour on children.

Please note that there are no references to this in the Cafcass [Operating Framework](#); it is a term more commonly used in the United States than in the United Kingdom, where the term 'implacable hostility' is more common. This is referenced in section 4.19 of the [Operating Framework](#).

Please detail what research has been undertaken by either the NIS or the HCPC in relation to identifying, analysing and understanding the pathology of "parental alienation.

The Cafcass NIS team has not undertaken any research on this issue.

Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair  
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive





Please detail what research, by whom, what, and when, has been disseminated by either the NIS or the HCPC in relation to the identification, analysis and understanding of the pathology of "parental alienation".

The Cafcass NIS team does not use this term, although it makes a 'knowledge bite' available to staff which summarises some research on the issue of 'coached children'. Please find this attached.

Please detail what training has been identified and offered to Cafcass by either the NIS or the HCPC in relation to identifying, analysing and understanding the pathology of "parental alienation".

Cafcass understands and recognises the potential for implacable hostility by an ex-partner and also the potential for the 'alienation' of a child from one parent in high conflict private law cases. Such behaviour may be so severe it becomes emotionally harmful to a child. Cafcass recognises that cases where implacable hostility is a factor are particularly difficult to assess and resolve. The presence of implacable hostility may result in a recommendation by Cafcass for a Section 7 report to be carried out in which the child's wishes and feelings can be assessed or in more complex and often long running cases a Rule 16.4 appointment can be made where a Children's Guardian is appointed to represent the child as a party to the case.

However, training for practitioners does not specifically focus on implacable hostility as an issue, as every case is individual and depends on many factors including, but not limited to, the child's age, personality, stage of development, relationship with the parent, as well as the relationship between parents. All of our training revolves around being child centred, and taking into account risk factors, evidence-based assessments, and diversity issues. All practitioner recommendations are case specific and are based on their professional judgement of the child's welfare.

In the case of any training that has been identified and offered by either the NIS or the HCPC to Cafcass, in relation to identifying, analysing and understanding the pathology of "parental alienation, please detail the nature of this training, also the frequency of this training, and to whom it is offered, and whether it is mandatory or optional.

Please see the response above; Cafcass does not offer training specifically on the issue of implacable hostility.

In relation to the Performance learning and review meetings referenced in section 6.18 of Cafcass's operating framework - please detail the form these PLR's take -

Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair  
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please give an example of any forms or formal framework utilised to assess knowledge, skills and understanding.

Please see attached Cafcass' [Supervision Policy](#) which provides the relevant forms and framework used to assess knowledge and skills.

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  
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**Fax**

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0303 123 1113

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[casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Governance Team

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Baroness Tyler of Enfield Chair  
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive

