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Your ref: CAF 15-93
Our ref: Gov/CAF 15-93

Tel 0300 456 4000

11 June 2015

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your emails of 14 May 2015. You made the following requests for information:

- 1) Please supply me with a copy of any report analysing the pattern of complaints received by Cafcass since February 2012. I would expect this report to detail numbers, types, learning outcomes etc. and I would also expect this to be collated annually

Please see the attached documents which are listed below; no information for periods prior to this are held:

- Annual Review of Complaints Statistics
 - 2013
 - 2014
- Annual Report of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman investigations
 - 2013/14
 - 2014/15
- Quarterly Head of Service Area updates on action points from complaints
 - October 2014 – March 2015 (please note that identifying reference numbers have been redacted under Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act).

- 2) Does CAFCASS think that 3 corporate learning outcomes from 1331 complaints is acceptable? To me this does not seem to be a learning process

Please note that, as confirmed in our previous response, learning log points are points which are deemed to be those of wider policy implication for the whole organisation, rather than action points which are more commonly used and which relate to points for individual staff (e.g. professional judgement/ policy compliance). These action points are raised with the relevant staff at the time;

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they are also currently reported in quarterly management information summaries for Heads of Service Areas.

There were three national learning points recorded as directly received from the Complaints team. Other learning points may have been logged as a result of complaints information, but received from a different area (e.g. learning points from Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman).

Cafcass has no recorded view or opinion in response to this specific query. However, the following recorded information may be relevant.

The Cafcass Operating Framework states that we must be open to concerns that are raised and respond in a way that prioritises the safeguarding and promotion of children's and young people's welfare. Therefore Cafcass has several methods of ensuring this is carried out.

- Our Complaints and Compliments Policy sets out how parties to cases can complain, which is reviewed annually and takes account of comments Cafcass receives on how to improve services. We provide mechanisms for feedback for service users including feedback forms that are available in offices and via email.
- Cafcass hosts discussions with organisations that represent service users to listen to their views and retain the focus on children in the family justice system. These have included face to face meetings with organisations such as Men's Aid, Families Need Fathers and the Family Law Society.
- Cafcass also hosts an Open Board Meeting twice a year at our National Office, for which stakeholders from across the sector are invited to join us to discuss issues facing children and potential solutions. Individuals are also able to attend, with information about dates and the venue published on our website prior to the event.

Learning from complaints can be cascaded via the Cafcass Board, Corporate Management Team, Operational Management Team or Service Area teams in the following ways:

- Learning points with national significance recorded on the national learning log and cascaded to staff.
- Learning and data analysis incorporated into core training
- Policy development
- Implementation of recommendations
- Feedback to staff
- Dissemination to team / service area
- Learning published on Cafcass Intranet

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- Undertaking research

3) Why does CAF/CASS not record ethnicity of complainants? Are there any plans to do so in the future?

When complaints are made by parties these are linked to service user data already held. The collation of service user diversity data was introduced from 1 May 2015; this will contribute to our continuing aim of enhancing the quality of practice in relation to equality and diversity in the outcomes for children.

4) Does CAF/CASS think that just 29 complaints from the Children out of 1331 that it is supposed to represent is indicative of a complaints procedure that is failing these children? If not, why not?

Cafcass has no recorded view or opinion in response to this specific query. However, the following recorded information may be relevant.

Children and young people still represent a small percentage of complainant service users. Following a recent review by the Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB), Cafcass introduced feedback forms along with a compliments, complaints and feedback factsheet specifically for children and young people to encourage them to express their views. A number of offices have introduced ‘feedback trees’ and other child-friendly means of providing feedback on the work we carried out.

Members of the FJYPB also look at children’s complaints every six months to find ways Cafcass can improve the complaints procedure and feedback to the Operational Management Team. Information about the FJYPB and complaints can be seen the [Cafcass Annual Report](#) (page 17).

5) Does CAF/CASS think that a 9% escalation rate to PHSO is acceptable or is it, as I believe, indicative of a complaints procedure that fails to deal with the issues raised?

Cafcass has no recorded view or opinion on this topic. For more information about PHSO investigations and their outcomes, please see the PHSO 2014/15 Annual Report by Cafcass which shows that a majority of complaints which are escalated to the PHSO are not upheld (a table from this can be seen below).

Period	Final reports received	Upheld	Partly upheld	Not upheld
2014/15 Total	113	1	38	74

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- 6) Please explain how you learn from outcomes when you are no longer classifying complaints as upheld/not upheld. This looks to a layman as an attempt to be less than open.

As stated in our previous response, the procedure was amended so that the focus of the complaints system is now on putting things right for service users while their case is ongoing so that any necessary remedial action can be taken.

Please see our response to question 1 for more information about how Cafcass learns from complaint outcomes. Please see the published Cafcass [Annual Report](#) (pages 18-19) for more information about complaints reporting.

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):

Post

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Wycliffe House, Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

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Yours sincerely,

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