

## **Child Record Transfer Policy**

*Cafcass policies are designed to safeguard children, families, staff, and the reputation of Cafcass. They derive from legislation and from what we learn from practice quality audits, significant incidents and learning reviews, feedback, and complaints. They set out what must be done. They are public documents against which we can be held accountable. If they are not adhered to, we can be subject to challenge through complaints, the Parliamentary & Health Services Ombudsman, Social Work England, or even a Judicial Review. A decision not to adhere to a policy must be supported by a compelling rationale and endorsed by a manager. Policies are, therefore, subject to monitoring for compliance, with fair and reasonable consequences for non-compliance. Key policies that are new or updated are subject to attestation<sup>1</sup> by all staff or groups of staff where appropriate.*

### **What is this policy for?**

- This policy sets out when and how children's cases are transferred between teams, practitioners and the jurisdictions of England and Wales. This may occur due to the court directing Cafcass to complete longer-term work in private law requiring transfer to the appropriate team local to the where the child lives, where a practitioner leaves the organisation or is off work on a long-term basis, or where a child moves to a different locality, for example.

### **Who does it apply to?**

- This policy applies to practice managers allocating work or agreeing transfer arrangements. Practitioners need to be aware of this policy and alert managers to changes in circumstances that may require a child's case to be transferred. An example of this may be where a practitioner identifies a conflict of interest due to knowing or previously working with the child/family.

### **Why this is important for children and families?**

- When a child's case needs to be transferred to another practitioner or team, this must be done in a timely way to minimise delay to children and families.
- It is important that we communicate any changes in allocation to the family and recognise any impact this may have for them.
- Effective transfer helps to ensure a consistent service for children and families even if the team or practitioner change.

## **1.0 Principles**

- 1.1 The overriding principle when considering transfer within Cafcass is that the transfer is in the best interests of the child, including minimising delay to proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> Cafcass process requiring its employees to confirm they have read, understood, and will act in accordance with a policy.

## **2.0 Private law**

- 2.1 All private law applications are received and screened by the Central Intake Team. The practitioner then transfers the application to the Work to First Hearing (WTFH) responsible for servicing the court which has issued the application. No further transfers take place before the first hearing, save for rare occasions when a conflict of interest is identified. Please refer to the conflict-of-interest policy on the [Cafcass policy page](#).
- 2.2 When there is further work for Cafcass after the first hearing, the work will be transferred from WTFH to the Long-Term Private Law Team in the area where the child lives. The relevant WTFH service manager or assistant service manager will complete this transfer within two working days.
- 2.3 If the transfer may put either party or the child at increased risk, there must be a discussion between the referring and receiving managers to reach an agreement about the most appropriate service area to complete the work. This may include allocating the work to a self-employed contractor. This includes consideration of families with confidential addresses.
- 2.4 All families with confidential addresses should be discussed with the relevant service manager before transfer.
- 2.5 If there are exceptional circumstances in which service managers disagree about transfers, they should refer the issue to the Head of Practice and/or Assistant Director.
- 2.6 If the work is transferring from private law to public law, the record will need to be closed on ChildFirst and a new public law record opened, with the papers being copied to the new file.

## **3.0 Public law**

- 3.1 If it is necessary to change the children's guardian, agreement should be sought from the court. The overriding factor to consider will be whether the change of guardian is in the child's best interest and necessary to support the court timescales.
- 3.2 A conversation needs to happen between service managers, if there is a change of team, before transfer to ensure the appropriate steps are taken.

## **4.0 Change of practitioner**

- 4.1 When a practitioner goes on long-term leave, of any nature, or a child's proceedings are transferred into a long-term team, work will be held by a local service manager or assistant service manager who will triage and reallocate the children's cases where there is an immediate need. The remaining children's cases will be held by a manager in the relevant team including an allocations manager or post assessment hub (or Allocation Hub for areas subject to 'Prioritisation'), until allocated/re-allocated or returned to the practitioner following their absence. This will be categorised as a 'duty' allocation. Children and families must be kept informed about absences or any changes in allocation and must be contacted if their case is held on duty for more than 10 days (5 days in areas in 'Prioritisation'). They must be made aware of whom to contact if they need to.

- 4.2 If an assistant service manager is to complete work on proceedings following a practitioner leaving or being unavailable to complete that work, then this needs to be a lead allocation and hence reflected in their caseload. Local managers must complete a monthly review of those children awaiting substantive allocation and held on 'duty' in line with the Standard Operating Procedures, which can be found on the internal website.
- 4.3 Work allocated to managers is reported in the balanced scorecard so that the volume of work held by managers is monitored.
- 4.4 Information regarding re-allocation of cases due to feedback and concerns can be found in the [management support, supervision and oversight policy](#), which outlines the circumstances where, due to feedback from children, parties or others, it may be in the child's best interests, and/or in the interests of the practitioner, to re-allocate the case.

## 5.0 Transfers between jurisdictions

- 5.1 Work to first hearing should be completed by Cafcass if the child lives in England and Cafcass Cymru if the child lives in Wales, regardless of which court issued the application. If an application is received by the wrong service or the child moves during proceedings, it can be transferred between Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru without a court order. The [Case Transfer Protocol between Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru](#) must be followed to ensure delay and disruption is minimised.
- 5.2 For all other transfers between jurisdictions, please refer to the legal topics work with an international element.

<b>Owned by</b>	Assistant Director (Performance and Quality Assurance)
<b>Approved by</b>	Corporate Management Team
<b>Approved on</b>	26/08/2025
<b>Implemented</b>	16/09/2025
<b>Version</b>	1.1 – (October 2022) reviewed for FJYPB busted words; added a sentence in 'why this is important for children and families' to reflect the importance of communicating reallocations to families. 1.2 - Key changes relate to language and style, expectations for communicating with families regarding allocation (or delay in allocation), and the Pathfinder model used in some parts of the country. 1.3 – (August 2025) small changes in terms of formatting and updating language. Removed reference to Pathfinder as awaiting government decision on further roll out.
<b>Amended</b>	August 2025
<b>Next review</b>	August 2028