



## National Psychology Service - guidance

The Cafcass Psychology Service supports Family Court Advisers (FCAs) by providing access to a consultation with a psychologist. Psychologists can offer reflection on the long-term psychological impact of different options that the FCA is considering as part of their assessment, tailored depending on a child's emotional and developmental stage. This form of specialist support does not constitute an expert assessment, or any direction being given to the FCA. It is intended as a reflective consultation from a psychological perspective.

The Administration of Justice Act 1960 prohibits what happens in court being shared with anyone not party to proceedings, even if that information is anonymised. Confidential information about the proceedings, beyond the nature of the dispute and the fact that the child is in proceedings, **must not be shared with the psychologist**. The Act does not prohibit sharing the nature of the dispute in general but information relating to the proceedings must not be disclosed during the consultation with a psychologist. This includes reference to evidence before the court, information contained within court documents such as reports or witness statements, or any other matters raised during the course of a court hearing before the Judge.

Parents and children should be told, in the course of writing reports, that a psychologist was consulted and that this informed an FCA's own analysis and thinking about what advice to give to the family court.

Requests to access the service must be submitted via a referral form that must first be approved by the FCA's line manager. Consultations can be booked for both private and public law cases. Consultations may also be booked for non-specific case discussions, such as practice development or training.

### Referral form guidance

Referral forms for case related consultations must be authorised by Service Managers to ensure that the case is appropriate to bring to a consultation. An appropriate case might include complex risk factors, for example in r16.4 proceedings or in determining whether to recommend an expert assessment.

Please be clear and succinct; include a brief summary of the key issues and challenges you wish to discuss. The form should be returned at least three days in advance of the consultation slot so that the psychologist can review it ahead of the consultation. Short notice referrals may be accepted if a slot is available, or a cancellation arises. For non-case specific consultations, please complete a referral form and enter N/A for case specific questions.

The psychologists will not have access to the Cafcass child record, they will only have the information contained in your referral.

Please do not include any identifying information about the family on the referral form or share such information during the consultation.

Referral forms that contain identifying information will be rejected and will need to be resubmitted.