

NB: This is the Cafcass National model for April 2008, the terminology, processes and ordering of the Pathway may change slightly following evaluations of the model during this year.

CAFCASS PATHWAY IN PRIVATE LAW PROCEEDINGS

STAGE 1

Early Intervention

Cafcass receives from the court copies of all S8 applications, including the C1 application C1a additional information & the C7 response forms when available.

Cafcass screens all applications for risks for the child or family members. See page 18-20 of the Safeguarding Framework.

Before the First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment (FHDRA),

Cafcass will:

- Meet both parties separately
- Send appropriate information to children
- Child participation where information indicates ability & willingness to be involved
- Meet the child and make relevant enquiries where information raises safeguarding concerns.

Produce a Cafcass Initial Analysis & Recommendation for the FHDRA and when available, a Needs, Wishes & Feelings statement. The summary will outline the case plan and recommend one of five options

Option 1: Further Information is Needed.

The Cafcass Initial Analysis & Recommendation will identify the need for more information, for example a Fact Finding, an adjournment to try out an interim agreement or the gathering of other specialist information such as medical information.

Option 2: No Further Action for Cafcass.

Where there are no identified safeguarding issues as a result of checks and initial interviews the case will be referred back to court with no suggestion of further CAFCASS involvement. The Initial Analysis & Recommendation will be presented to court showing the results of screening checks, and identifying issues for the court to consider (e.g. mediation).

Option 3: Cafcass Referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care.

Where a significant level of risk is identified in pre court work a referral or S120 notification will be made to children's social care. The Initial Analysis & Recommendation will identify the issues in the case, further work may be agreed at the Hearing.

Option 4: Court referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care.

The Cafcass Initial Analysis & Recommendation will identify the issues in the case and suggest they are best resolved through a Section 7 or a 37 report by the Local Authority.

Option 5: Cafcass Casework.

In a small number of cases, further casework intervention with the family, will be recommended with ongoing risk assessment.

FHDRA – Court Hearing

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STAGE 2 Casework

In Court terms this follows the 1st directions FHDRA. In CAF/CASS terms, this follows the early intervention stage. This stage is resource – intensive, so needs to be for a restricted number of cases.

The casework may involve:

- Extended intervention where communication is problematic and conflict is effecting the child's wellbeing – Family Group Conference, coaching for parents on the needs of children, support to child/ren, FAO, Rule 9.5; contact developments; programme for working with most entrenched/implacable cases.
- A specific safety assessment
- My Needs, Wishes and Feelings
- Focused and analytical report (S7 if required).

Involvement of the child at an appropriate level, ensure that the child has the ability to contribute and that the child's views inform the court. When the court requests an update on case work this will be through an Interim Analysis & Recommendation (updated from the Initial Analysis & Recommendation.)

CAFCASS will act as case manager in working with possible referral to mediation, contact centre, perpetrator programmes, child counselling and other community-based programmes.

STAGE 3 Final Court Hearing

Submit the Final Analysis & Recommendation which focuses on:

- The child's views, needs, wishes, feelings
- The analysis
- Plans for the child
- Plans for informing the child of the outcome of proceedings.

STAGE 4 Court Decision

Court Decision from 3 Options

A) In a small number of cases the Court may order further casework from CAF/CASS and the case returns to the beginning of stage 2.

B) Resolution is achieved where it is safe and case conclusion.

C) Cafcass case conclusion, although the court proceedings may continue.

From options B & C ensure that the child, family, professional and court are aware of the opportunity to feedback views through Cafcass feedback mechanisms. Closure and goodbyes.