



CAFCASS TOOLKIT

(For organisational guidance only – not legal advice)

What Is CAFCASS?

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)

is an independent body that works within the family court system to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Their role is to:

- Represent the child's best interests
- Provide information to the court
- Identify safeguarding concerns
- Make recommendations about child arrangements

They are neutral.

When Are CAFCASS Involved?

CAFCASS is typically involved in:

- Child Arrangements applications
- Specific Issue Orders
- Prohibited Steps Orders
- Cases involving allegations or safeguarding concerns

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They are usually involved before or at the First Hearing (FHDRA).

The Safeguarding Process (Before First Hearing)

Before the first hearing, CAFCASS will:

- Contact both parents by phone
- Conduct police and local authority checks
- Identify any safeguarding concerns

They prepare a short Safeguarding Letter for the court outlining:

- Any risks identified
- Welfare concerns
- Initial recommendations

This helps the judge decide the next steps.

Section 7 Report (If Ordered)

If the court requires further investigation, CAFCASS may prepare a **Section 7 Report**.

This may involve:

- Interviews with both parents
- Speaking with the child (if age appropriate)
- Reviewing documents and evidence
- Providing detailed recommendations

The judge considers this report carefully but is not bound by it.

The Welfare Checklist (Children Act 1989)

When making decisions, the court considers:

- The child's wishes and feelings
- Physical, emotional, and educational needs
- The likely effect of changes
- Risk of harm

- Each parent's capability
- Available court powers

CAFCASS recommendations are guided by these principles.

Practical Preparation Tips

If CAFCASS contacts you:

- ✓ Stay calm and child-focused
- ✓ Be factual, clear and organised
- ✓ Avoid criticism or emotional language
- ✓ Prepare key dates and concerns in advance
- ✓ Focus on what arrangement supports your child's welfare

Important Reminder

- CAFCASS do not provide legal advice
- Their duty is to the child
- Their role is safeguarding, not taking sides.