

CSSIW Inspection of

CAFCASS Cymru



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Overview

**Judgements: Overall effectiveness: Good
Capacity to improve: Good**

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) inspected the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service in Wales (CAFCASS Cymru) between the 18th and 29th November 2013. Inspectors evaluated CAFCASS CYMRU in accordance with the CSSIW Evaluation Schedule adapted with kind permission of Ofsted, and the findings are presented according to the Ofsted judgement grid:

Outstanding	The service provided is well above the minimum requirements and makes a demonstrable contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people.
Good	The service provided is consistently above the minimum requirements and contributes to improving outcomes for most children and young people.
Satisfactory	The service provided meets minimum requirements and contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people.
Inadequate	Minimum requirements are not met by the service and it makes little or no contribution to improved outcomes for children.

During the fieldwork, inspectors held meetings with stakeholders, advocacy providers, the judiciary, local authorities and with interest groups such as Welsh Women's Aid and Families Need Fathers (Both Parents Matter). Interviews were held with members of staff, including the CAFCASS Cymru chief executive, the executive director, family court advisers, practice managers, heads of operations, central support staff and business support staff. Interviews were also held with the children and young people, parents and carers whose files were examined. Inspectors also examined an extensive range of documentation and management information. Inspectors evaluated private and public law reports, case files, complaints records and supervision records.

CAFCASS Cymru has undergone a transformational improvement since the last inspection, three years ago. There has been a major restructure of the entire organisation to improve management oversight, and staff accountability. The quality of service that the organisation provides has improved from satisfactory to good, and the leadership and management of the organisation has improved from inadequate to good. Key improvements are evident in direct work with children and families, assessments of children who have witnessed domestic abuse, and direct work with disabled children. Significant improvements are evident in the management of complaints, performance management and quality assurance. The organisation now

gathers systematic feedback from service users and utilises the information to affect service improvements. The leadership of change has been exceptional in the organisation with aspects of change management that serve as exemplars for other social care organisations. The most marked improvement is in the relationships with key stakeholders. CAFCASS Cymru is now a well regarded organisation that exerts an important influence on the social care sector and family justice system in Wales.

There is room for further improvement in the areas of case planning and recording; and equality and diversity. The participation of children and young people in planning services has yet to be developed. The extent of change within CAFCASS Cymru and the changes dictated by the family justice reform programme have been considerable. Despite the high level of confidence in the leadership of the organisation experienced by practice managers and support staff, there is some evidence that family court advisers need further work to accommodate the cultural change required of them. About fifty percent of those interviewed reported feeling negative about the changes and having low confidence in the leadership. The new structure appears to work well. The practice managers' role is pivotal within this new structure and is still being refined. The leadership needs to ensure that the role develops to provide the required management oversight in an empowering way. The senior leadership has developed values for the organisation in consultation with staff and stakeholders, but these have yet to be consistently embedded across the organisation.

CAFCASS Cymru faces major challenges in the near future, with the continuing austerity in public services, a projected increase in demand and changes to both public and private law. The key strategic direction and vision for the organisation has been clearly articulated by the leadership, and there is evident management capacity to realise all the plans. This means that CAFCASS Cymru has a good capacity to improve in the future.

Recommendations:

- Develop and implement a children's participation strategy.
- Manage the cultural change with family court advisers and improve their confidence in the leadership.
- Embed the values of the organisation with all the staff in all aspects of activity.
- Implement supervision contracts with clear expectations for supervisors and those supervised.
- Update equality and diversity training for all staff.

1. Quality of provision

Case planning and recording

- 1.1 Case planning and recording is satisfactory. Inspectors looked at case plans and case records on CAFCASS Cymru files. The quality of case records, and whether effective and timely corrective action is taken to ensure the quality of records and plans is satisfactory was examined. Case recording should be evaluative and effectively chronicle the decision making on a case. Case plans should specify the key issues in the case, the steps to address those issues, the outcomes to be achieved and how these will be reviewed. Inspectors queried whether case plans are comprehensive and based on thorough needs assessment and analysis, and whether they are implemented effectively, monitored and evaluated. Inspectors also checked whether case planning is shared with children and young people and adults.
- 1.2 All files seen had case plans and case records on file. Templates have been developed for use when case planning and recording and there is a clear policy in place. The family court advisers were clear about the purpose of case recording and there was evidence of case recording that was reflective and analytical. There was also evidence that case recording was used effectively to hold family court advisers to account for their decisions. Discussions held with practice managers were recorded on about twenty per cent of case files seen by inspectors. Family Court Advisers used their case plans to explain their intentions to the children and their families. Children and young people, and their families, told us that they were clearer about the process of their case than they had been in the past, and this helps to make a difficult time a little easier. More recent work has better case recording and case planning, evidencing a clear trajectory of improvement in this area over time.
- 1.3 There are still improvements yet to be fully achieved. On more than half the files seen, inspectors saw case records that take the form of an aide memoire for the family court adviser rather than a structured account of the enquiry. There was also evidence of some resistance amongst a very small number of family court advisers to keeping case records and being held accountable. However, the most substantial improvements required are in case planning. Family court advisers reported that the new case planning template introduced with revised interim Public Law Outline is very process and task oriented and does not in any way assist the Family court adviser to produce an outcome focussed plan, inspectors observed that the template is more of a project plan to ensure timeliness targets are met. In one example, the template was used to record the work the family court adviser had

done rather than what she was going to do. Whilst the template allows for workers to outline their proposed journey, in its current format the time focused targets give the impression that process is more important than the outcome. Heads of operations were clear that there were still improvements required in case planning, and have a clear idea of how these improvements will be achieved. CAFCASS Cymru needs to ensure that the purpose of case planning is clearly understood, and that the process does not become more important than the quality and usefulness of the case plan.

Assessment and report writing

- 1.4 Assessment and report writing is good. Inspectors investigated the quality of assessment and report writing in public law cases, private law cases and adoption cases. When conducting assessments, the decision making processes and criteria used to make recommendations to courts should be transparent to children and young people and adults. The Inspectors looked at how well key issues such as safeguarding, domestic abuse and attachment were assessed and the effectiveness of actions taken by family court advisers. The quality of assessments was examined to check whether they are undertaken through an externally validated effective framework and whether they result in a comprehensive understanding of the individual needs of children and young people. Inspectors examined the value added to local authority assessments and care plans to see if it is consistently and demonstrably significant. Inspectors examined the quality of the reports written, whether recommendations are determined by a robust, evidenced and comprehensive assessment, and flow from the content of the reports. Inspectors looked specifically at the assessment of domestic violence issues in private law cases.
- 1.5 There has been a clear momentum of improvement in this area over the last three years. On files where there has been long term involvement with the family it was very interesting to observe the progress made in report writing. Early reports were much too narrative and lacked analysis; however more recent reports were well written, concise, focussed on the welfare of the child and contained all the relevant information and explained well the assessment instruments that were used. CAFCASS Cymru has developed a Child and Adolescent Welfare Assessment Checklist (CAWAC) to assess the impact of inter-parental conflict upon a child. This has resulted in demonstrably improved decision making and outcomes for children. Inspectors examined files that had assessments using CAWAC in cases where domestic abuse is alleged, and there was clear evidence that practitioners are able to better assess, through evidence based means, the psychological and social risk of individual children being subject to inter-parental conflict. CAFCASS Cymru has successfully implemented an action plan for all practitioners to be accredited to use CAWAC. Reports for public law cases seen were also very focused and already moving towards future direction of the service under the

new Public law outline. Specifically, the evidence from the reports revealed family court advisers acting as change agents rather than rival social workers. There was clearly challenge to some restrictive attitudes in local authorities, in addition to challenging delay and vacillation. Although there was frequently no specific mention of the Human Rights Act, the vast majority of reports contained a good analysis of the children's rights to private family lives and prompt court proceedings. The families who spoke to inspectors noted their overall satisfaction with the assessment process. They were clear about the process of assessment that had been done with them, and they acknowledged the fairness of the approach, even if they could not always agree with the final recommendations.

- 1.6 CAFCASS Cymru has plans to improve assessment and report writing even further. At the time of the inspection, the organisation had just introduced a full spectrum of assessment resources for use by the family court advisers in a variety of the circumstances faced by children, young people and their families. There is a clear implementation and training plan, and all heads of operation are clear about the progress they expect to achieve, and the improvements in assessment and reports they expect to see when the resources are implemented. CAFCASS Cymru is also endeavouring to ensure that all relevant information is covered in the first reports to reduce the requirement for addendums. Local authority heads of children's service reported noting significant improvements in the quality of reports by family court advisers. However, family court advisers could improve their assessments of children's education needs, and in particular, take these into account before analysing placement options. Some concern was also expressed about the tendency to advocate for therapeutic placements that could be a long distance from the child's home authority. Judges have noted the improvements in the assessment of impact of conflict upon the child. However, they emphasised that family court advisers need to be more confident in their knowledge of the theories and professional research that underlies any assessment instrument. This will become increasingly important as the number of litigants in person increases, and people challenge the relevance of assessment tools to their family circumstances.

Intervention and direct work with children

- 1.7 Intervention and direct work with children is good with some outstanding features. Inspectors assessed whether intervention with children and young people and adults is purposeful, planned, time limited and focussed on improving outcomes for children. They also analysed whether the majority of children and young people and adults are supported well at key points of transition and that practitioners advocated effectively on behalf of children young people and their families. Case files were examined to determine whether appropriate

experts are identified where necessary. Inspectors enquired whether children, young people and adults felt that they were signposted effectively by CAF/CASS Cymru where required and that their views have been listened to and their participation in intervention has been respected as equal partners. The skills of practitioners in working with children and the quality of their direct work were scrutinised. The inspection contained a specific focus on engagement with disabled children.

- 1.8 A variety of resources are used by family court advisers to communicate with children and help them to understand the situation and evaluate for themselves the impact of parental conflict. Inspectors saw examples of innovative work to help re-establish relationships between parents and children. Practitioners are evidently highly skilled and committed to good quality intervention and direct work with children. In a number of the cases that were seen by inspectors, the family court adviser had worked well in tolerating the challenges and difficulties presented by resistant parents, to keep them involved in the process and help them to focus on the wellbeing of their children. Inspectors also saw examples of innovative interventions with looked after children to advocate on their behalf with both local authorities and the court. There was evidence of clear engagement with disabled children in all the cases seen. Foster carers spoken to reported that they felt family court advisers were very sensitive to the needs of disabled children. There were examples of outstanding work to communicate with children suffering from significant communication impairments, in partnership with parents and other professionals already known to the children. The improvements in direct work with disabled children provide an excellent example of CAF/CASS Cymru using the resources already available within the organisation to affect improvements. They have developed a directory of resources of all the people in the organisation who possess various communication and professional skills for working with disabled children, and an intranet page with information on signposting advice. They are developing a team advisor role on disabled children, who will develop links with other local professionals who work with disabled children to ensure effective engagement with the children.
- 1.9 Further improvements could be sought in improving the family court advisers skills in engaging directly with very young children. An observational tool could be developed to assist practitioners to observe their reactions in order to gauge their wishes and feelings. With increased consistency to ensure that all family court advisors engage families to the same standard, this would be an outstanding area of service provision.

Complaints

- 1.10 CAFCASS Cymru's handling of complaints is good. The inspectors investigated responses by CAFCASS Cymru to complaints from service users to see if they are timely and whether members of staff undertaking any parts of the complaints procedure are trained to do so. CAFCASS Cymru policy and procedures for complaints were examined to determine if they were fit for purpose and well implemented. Inspectors queried whether the majority of service users and key stakeholders know how to make suggestions, compliments and complaints, and whether, where necessary, children and young people and adults receive assistance in making a complaint including access to advocacy. Inspectors also examined whether the majority of children and young people and adults are satisfied with the way their complaint was handled. Inspectors looked at how the analysis of complaints is used by CAFCASS Cymru to inform service development, and checked to ensure that safeguarding is identified effectively in complaints and appropriate action is taken.
- 1.11 The timeliness of dealing with complaints is good across the organisation, and the organisation provides consistent complaints training for all heads of operation and practice managers. There is a clear, effective and well implemented complaints policy in place that appropriately defines those matters which can be dealt with under that policy. Children, young people and their families reported that they are clear about the process of complaints and the timescales that they can expect their complaints to be dealt with. CAFCASS Cymru undertook a complete review of the complaints process, and has now got a new more effective process in place. There is a good structure and system for managing complaints and ensuring they are dealt with in a timely manner, characterised by good communication between central team and local area. Practice managers investigate complaints and provide feedback and learning to the relevant family court adviser. They then provide a report to the complainant. Inspectors scrutinised a number of these reports and concluded that the reports are written sensitively. The executive director is directly involved in the complaints management system and ensures support for the family court advisers who are the subjects of complaints. All complaints seen had been well managed and arrived at resolutions. The learning from complaints is collated and reviewed by the leadership of the organisation, and disseminated to staff and there is a section on complaints in the annual report. An audit and quality assurance process is applied to the complaints process and this helps to identify ongoing improvements in the process and handling of complaints.
- 1.12 The complaints handling system could be streamlined further to avoid delay. In particular, some delay caused by awaiting formal replies to proposed resolutions from complainants, could be avoided. Family court advisors told inspectors they would like more clarity and consistency about when cases subject to a complaint will be reallocated. Practice managers identified improvements required to ensure that the complaints team are more consistent in identifying what

is and what is not a complaint in line with the CAFCASS Cymru complaints procedure

2. Leadership and management

Ambition and prioritisation

- 2.1 The ambition and prioritisation of the CAFCASS Cymru leadership is good with outstanding features. Inspectors analysed the quality of leadership provided by the managers in CAFCASS Cymru, and its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's primary duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The organisational structure was assessed to determine whether it is sufficient to deliver the CAFCASS Cymru strategy effectively. Management information was scrutinised to determine whether resource deficits are understood and risk assessed, and resource allocation reflects priorities and supports the delivery of statutory responsibilities. Service plans were studied to establish whether they are linked effectively to the mission, vision, values and ethics of CAFCASS Cymru and are based on a risk assessed business plan. Inspectors examined strategies, policies and procedures to see if they support practice and comply with statutory requirements and guidance. Inspectors also checked whether policies and plans are supported by current, realistic and deliverable implementation plans.
- 2.2 CAFCASS Cymru management provides strong, visible leadership to affect improvement in outcomes for children and young people. There is a clear vision and prioritisation of resources, and strategies, policies and procedures effectively support practice and comply with statutory requirements and guidance. Service planning is focussed on improving outcomes for children and young people with evidence of positive impact. Ambitious and realistic targets are set and almost all are met. There is a sustained upward trend in performance evident over the last three years. Commissioning is well established using the Welsh Government commissioning procedures and there is evidence that services are commissioned that contribute to improved outcomes for the majority of children and young people.
- 2.3 In the last three years the leadership has affected a restructure of the organisation that has provided effective management oversight of service delivery while accomplishing substantial efficiency savings. This has involved reducing the number of regional offices; creating the heads of operations and practice managers roles, and streamlining the numbers and functions of the central support team. The overall net result is a leaner, more effective organisation. There is a clearly expressed strategic plan that is well implemented and there is evidence of thorough evaluation of progress that leads to changes in the strategic direction as required. CAFCASS Cymru has also implemented an outstanding lean systems review that has resulted in demonstrably more effective processes and procedures for enabling the core business. In addition, the management of these changes has been exemplary, in the areas of planning, risk management and timely implementation of

change. As a result of a comprehensive development programme there has been a demonstrable improvement in the confidence of the leadership team. Practice managers and support staff from across the organisation glowed with enthusiasm and motivation for their work, and expressed high levels of confidence in the leadership of the organisation.

- 2.4 Highly competent, ambitious and determined CAFCASS Cymru leadership champions the needs of children and young people with key stakeholders across Wales and affects improved performance in partner agencies. Information sharing protocols are well established and there is clear evidence of regular, open and appropriate exchange. The CAFCASS Cymru advisory committee is composed of key partners from the voluntary sector, including the children's commissioner's office. The leadership use this committee effectively to ensure that the organisation is accountable to its key stakeholders. The advisory committee also reported a marked increase in confidence in the leadership to improve services and respond appropriately to risks as they emerge. Local authorities and the judiciary report that effective engagement with CAFCASS Cymru has resulted in innovative developments to improve services for children and young people.
- 2.5 The leadership team acknowledge that they are on an improvement journey that is not yet complete. In order to sustain the improvements that have been achieved the next steps on the journey need to include strategies to ensure that all staff groups within the organisation are effectively engaged in the new vision. There is some evidence that family court advisers need further work to accommodate the cultural change required of them. About fifty per cent of those interviewed reported feeling negative about the changes and having low confidence in the leadership. They reported feeling insecure as a result of the impact of so much change. The staff engagement survey for 2013 showed that sixty percent of the staff who answered the survey gave positive replies to the staff engagement questions. Evidence from local authority stakeholders also suggests that some of the aspects of the new vision and strategic direction have yet to translate fully into changes in the practice of frontline practitioners. Inspectors concluded that the role of the practice managers will need to be refined over time. The collation and dissemination of good practice examples to all staff to encourage improvement would also help CAFCASS Cymru to become an outstanding organisation.

Quality and Performance management

- 2.6 Quality and performance management is outstanding. Inspectors looked at whether CAFCASS Cymru had a quality assurance framework that would adequately ensure quality of outcomes for service users and the quality of management information and management information systems. They examined the impact of CAFCASS Cymru's

performance management framework on the equity of service delivery to the different groups of service users around the country.

- 2.7 The quality assurance processes in the organisation are well established and effectively implemented. The organisation uses a process of reviewing reports before they are submitted to court, that they call 'gate keeping'. There is a valid and responsive system of gate keeping reports before they are submitted to courts that includes peer review as well as management oversight. The system is responsive because it is flexible enough to meet the needs of the organisation at any given time. The reports are gate kept according to the areas of work or practitioners that require improvement, or in response to new policies and procedures. Practice managers and heads of operation have also conducted thematic audits on particular practice areas, such as safeguarding, to identify good practice and areas for improvement. Consequently, there is evidence of improvements in the quality of practice as a direct result of quality assurance activity.
- 2.8 CAF/CASS Cymru has substantially improved the collection and analysis of performance information. Effective and innovative use is made of the information for internal evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and to improve service performance. Information is extracted from the case management system to reveal patterns and trends in the data. The data is discussed at national and regional level. Heads of operations were able to demonstrate to inspectors how the data helped them to focus their resources to reduce delays and remove backlogs in case allocation. Caseloads are now more manageable and even across the organisation. There was clear evidence that information is now cascading down to practitioners, and helping to inform discussions about caseload management, and individual performance. Management information is used very effectively to deliver continuous improvement and to sustain high quality services across nearly all aspects of service. Particularly outstanding is the use of management information to manage demand upon the services of CAF/CASS Cymru, and improve the performance of partner organisations. Inspectors saw examples of CAF/CASS Cymru leadership using its internal performance data effectively with local authorities and the courts to affect improvements in services across the family justice system.
- 2.9 At the time of the inspection, CAF/CASS Cymru had developed an eighteen month quality assurance plan, and was about to implement it. In order to move towards a more comprehensive system of quality management, quality of practice should be discussed more consistently in supervision. Quality assurance might be improved by the development of quality standards that focus on the quality of the professional work done. Family court advisers and practice managers reported occasionally being overwhelmed with forms. It is important that quality assurance activity is not reduced exclusively to form filling. It will be important for the CAF/CASS Cymru leadership to emphasise that quality management is about the quality of the social work done with the child

and their family and not solely the quality of the processes followed, in order to sustain the outstanding work done in this area.

Workforce development

- 2.10 Workforce development is good. Inspectors examined documents and interviewed staff to ascertain whether CAFCASS Cymru delivers clear standards for the performance and conduct expected of staff. Inspectors analysed recruitment and retention planning to see if it ensures a suitable and competent workforce is established, and that there is an effective system for ensuring checks, including criminal record checks are carried out fully. Inspectors also checked that recruitment processes comply with recognised standards, are managed well and are carried out by suitably qualified persons. The workforce strategy and learning and development programme were examined for their suitability to enable staff to acquire the skills to safeguard and improve outcomes for children and young people. Supervision notes were read to check for professional challenge and effective support to frontline staff, and Inspectors ascertained whether all staff have their work performance monitored effectively using an organisational agreed framework.
- 2.11 The management of CAFCASS Cymru have undertaken appropriate human resource reviews to tackle staffing issues and improve the quality of the workforce. Recruitment and retention planning ensures a suitable and competent workforce is continuously maintained. The leadership has made effective use of the expertise available within the Welsh Government's Human Resource department to ensure safe recruitment. The chief executive recently gained permission to conduct a major recruitment exercise for permanent support staff. The exercise resulted in the appointment of nineteen permanent members of staff with a further twelve on reserve for the next twelve months. This was followed by a comprehensive induction programme. The business support function is now fully staffed and operating effectively. Most other positions within the organisation are filled, and posts that are vacant are usually filled in good time. An effective workforce strategy is in place that includes taking remedial action proportionate to risk to ensure safe practice and improve staff performance. There is a comprehensive staff development and training plan. Family court advisers have benefitted from joint training on evidence based practice with local authority social workers. In addition there is in place a development programme for Practice Managers and a planned development programme for Business Support Managers. There is an effective supervision policy in place and supervision is carried out in a timely manner. Inspectors saw evidence of good quality supervision on record and evidence of good quality professional challenge. Family court advisers reported that they valued the case discussions that they have with practice managers in supervision, and that these have had a positive effect upon their practice.

2.12 Family court advisers identified a number of areas of improvement within workforce management, particularly in supervision. They reported that practice managers styles and functions differ and can be inconsistent, and some feel “micromanaged”. They explained that feedback can sometimes be given in a way that leaves them feeling disempowered. Inspectors concluded that the organisation needs to improve the processes around the giving and receiving of feedback, whether from peers or supervisors; to ensure it is always done appropriately. The development of a supervision contract that clarifies the expectations from staff and managers would serve to ensure empowering feedback. Family court advisers also identified workload pressures and gave some examples of working excessive overtime. They felt unclear whether managers were always aware of the amount of work required to conduct assessments and prepare reports. Supervision and practice advice that serves to focus the activities of family court advisers would help to improve the situation. Finally, inspectors noted the importance of ensuring that practice managers and family court advisers have the time and space for ongoing professional development and keep up to date with research and technical developments in the field.

User engagement equality and diversity

2.13 User engagement; and equality and diversity are satisfactory. Inspectors examined the range of opportunities available to children and young people and their families to contribute to the service design and development within CAFCASS Cymru. They looked for evidence that the views of children and young people have made a difference to improving service provision, and that the majority of service users were satisfied with the service they received. The inspectors examined whether CAFCASS Cymru takes effective action to ensure the promotion of equality and diversity across all its functions and activities. Inspectors scrutinised the organisation’s diversity and equality strategy, policies and procedures to decide if they are appropriate and are implemented effectively by CAFCASS Cymru. In order to ensure equity of service delivery to all social groups in Wales, all services must be available through the medium of Welsh upon request; all services must be delivered with regard to the rural/urban diversity of the local community; children and young people and adults should feel that CAFCASS Cymru treated them with dignity and respect; and that their needs are understood in the context of their culture, religion and identity.

2.14 CAFCASS Cymru has made substantial improvements in engaging with children and young people about the services they receive. Engagement with family members has similarly improved. There is a good standard of accommodation, playrooms and resources for engaging with children and families available in regional offices. The organisation has developed a children's pack and an adult introduction pack that contain forms for gathering systematic user feedback. The returns are still fairly low, but this is to be expected given the amount of time the system has been in place. The returns will improve if the family

court advisers are consistent in encouraging children, young people and families to contribute their views when they first meet them. The feedback is systematically analysed and shared with the senior management team and with staff across the organisation. The views of children and young people are reflected in the organisations strategic plan and annual report, and there is a children's version of strategic plan. CAFCASS Cymru does not yet have children participating in key areas of service planning, however they have employed a participation manager who will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the participation plan. The collation of equality monitoring information is satisfactory, and the planning and management of strategic equality and diversity issues is also satisfactory. There is evidence that the organisation provides accessible services across Wales. Services are delivered in the Welsh language where requested. There is also sufficient access to translators and services providing ethnic minority languages, and service users can request information in languages other than English and large print. However, most service information is only available in print. Formats for people with literacy difficulties are underdeveloped.

- 2.15 Most of the files and court reports seen by inspectors demonstrate satisfactory practice in relation to equality and diversity. However, careful consideration to the relevance of race, culture or gender in the context of family breakdown was not always evident. The assessment of the diversity needs of the service users needs to improve, as does staff training in this area. Many staff did not have a full appreciation or understanding of developments in the field of equality and diversity, demonstrating that their knowledge needs updating. Family court advisors need to ensure that they are challenging prejudicial assumptions appropriately and being careful not to perpetuate stereotypes

Safeguarding

- 2.16 The contribution of CAFCASS Cymru to safeguarding children and young people is good. The Inspectors examined the effectiveness of safeguarding children and young people, across all CAFCASS Cymru's functions. In all cases examined by inspectors they checked whether safeguarding needs are assessed effectively and effective intervention is taken to ensure that children and young people are safe. Inspectors spoke to local authorities and other safeguarding agencies to ascertain whether CAFCASS Cymru contributes to the work of local safeguarding children boards, to address safeguarding needs of children and young people; and whether there are robust, operational policies for dealing with allegations against members of staff. Inspectors sought assurance that CAFCASS Cymru premises and other locations used by CAFCASS Cymru are safe for children, young people and adults and that the majority of children and young people report feeling safe as a result of the CAFCASS Cymru service.

- 2.17 There is an evidently clearer focus on safeguarding in reports, especially with regard to the impact of domestic abuse and parental conflict on children. All staff are aware of their responsibilities and fully conversant with the All Wales Child Protection procedures. All staff received an update in their child protection training as appropriate. Referrals are appropriately made to the local authority and a record is kept. The process for referral tracking is good across the organisation and the monitoring and recording of outcomes is also good. Similarly, there is good dissemination of learning from serious case reviews. Themes and patterns are analysed and disseminated through regional meetings, and discussed in team meetings. The process employed by the organisation to manage workloads provides a good approach to safeguarding children and young people. CAF/CASS Cymru premises and other locations used by CAF/CASS Cymru are safe for children, young people and adults; and inspectors saw evidence of good risk assessments on premises such as contact centres. All adult service users spoken to felt that the safety of their children was ensured throughout the process of the engagement with CAF/CASS Cymru and that their own safety was ensured during the process. All children and young people spoken to reported feeling safe while engaging with CAF/CASS Cymru.
- 2.18 Judges and magistrates reported that the standard of safeguarding was good overall; however they noted improvements required in the timeliness of safeguarding reports for court. CAF/CASS Cymru has recently restructured its arrangements for conducting safeguarding checks and preparing safeguarding reports for court, and this should lead to improvements in timeliness. Local authority stakeholders confirmed that there are effective safeguarding protocols in place between them and CAF/CASS Cymru. However, they expressed some concern at CAF/CASS Cymru's withdrawal from a permanent place on the safeguarding boards. As the arrangements of safeguarding boards change in the next few years, the leadership of the organisation will doubtless review the best way that the organisation can continue to cooperate with its partners to ensure that children and young people are appropriately safeguarded.

Appendix one

Acknowledgements.

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CSSIW would like to thank the children and young people, and their families; the staff and managers of CAFCASS Cymru for all their help and cooperation with this inspection.

Definitions

Private and public law

Family law is that area of the law which regulates and deals with family and domestic relations including, but not limited to, marriage, civil and domestic partnerships and the welfare of children. Where these matters are dealt with by courts, they are known as family proceedings. The person or body that brings the issue to court is known as the applicant and the person or body opposing the application is known as the respondent. In general terms applicants and respondents are known as parties to the proceedings.

Private law is that part of the family law where the state does not normally need to be involved. Private law proceedings involving CAFCASS Cymru are usually about situations where parents have separated and they cannot agree where a child should live or with whom they should have contact. The law that established CAFCASS Cymru states that it should only become involved in family proceedings where the welfare of the child is, or may be, in question.

Public law is that part of the family law which deals with relationships between parents, or those with a parental role, where the state does need to be involved to ensure that a child does not suffer significant harm. Court proceedings are usually initiated by a local authority applying for a care or supervision order. This may result in the child being looked after by the local authority under a care order. Adoption-related applications are also normally public law proceedings.