



Victoria Soeder  
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**Your ref: CAF 18-174**  
**Our ref: Gov/CAF 18-174**

Cafcass National Office  
3rd Floor  
21 Bloomsbury Street  
London  
WC1B 3HF

Tel 0300 456 4000

08 January 2019

Dear Ms Soeder,

## **Re: Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your email of 21 December 2018. You made the following requests for information:

1. Are any Cafcass FCA's entitled or afforded special measures to make medical opinions ?

Family Court Advisers FCAs are not entitled or afforded special measures to make medical opinions.

FCAs may report on medical information about a service user obtained from a medical professional and include this information as part of their assessment. All practitioner recommendations are based on their professional judgement of the child's welfare and on their professional assessment of the circumstances as presented to the court, which will include the result of any safeguarding checks with wider agencies.

In all cases, FCA's should evidence their work and be able to show links between their enquiries, their findings, analysis and their recommendations.

2. Is the Cafcass FCA required to work within the limitations, knowledge and boundaries of a "social work role" ?

Cafcass operates within the law set by Parliament and under the rules and directions of the family courts. Our role is to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Give advice to the family courts
- Make provision for children to be represented

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- Provide information, advice and support to children and their families

Cafcass' statutory remit is to safeguard the welfare of the child involved in court proceedings and to advise the court in relation to this. We can only become involved and complete work on a case at the request of the court. Our FCA's are required to work within this statutory remit.

The role of Cafcass is to assess children's needs and write reports or a case analysis to the court recommending how a child's welfare can best be promoted and safeguarded, with reference to the [Welfare Checklist](#). All practitioner advice and recommendations are case specific and are based on their professional judgement of the child's welfare.

Cafcass policies relating to what is expected from Family Court Advisers (including Children's Guardians) in terms of practice can be found on the Cafcass website [policies](#) page.

3. Please supply Cafcass policy that allows the FCA/Manager or CST authority to form medical judgements opinions ?

Cafcass does not have a policy on this matter.

4. Please provide me with a very specific quotes from any Cafcass policy/procedure where any member of Cafcass staff can make specific specialist medical judgements opinions ?

Cafcass does not have a policy on this matter.

5. Is a Social worker within the Cafcass entity qualified to state in writing a medical opinion?

All Cafcass FCAs (which includes those acting as Children's Guardians) are qualified social workers with a Diploma in Social Work (or recognised equivalent) and at least three years post qualifying experience in social work with children and families at risk. Individual FCAs may have other qualifications but this would not be required for the role of an FCA. FCAs are not medically qualified.

FCAs may report on medical information about a service user obtained from a medical professional and include this information as part of their assessment. All practitioner recommendations are based on their professional judgement of the child's welfare and on their professional assessment of the circumstances as presented to the court, which will include the result of any safeguarding checks with wider agencies.

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We hope that you feel your question has been answered effectively. If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review to be undertaken. If you are dissatisfied with the way the internal review is handled or with the final decision made at that review about the information released, you are free to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (<https://ico.org.uk/>):

**Post**

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

**Fax**

01625 524 510

**Tel**

0303 123 1113

**E-mail**

[casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Governance Team  
Cafcass  
[Governance@cafcass.gov.uk](mailto:Governance@cafcass.gov.uk)

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Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive





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Cafcass, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, is a non-departmental body of the Ministry of Justice  
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