



Dan Jacobs
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Your ref: CAF 17-16
Our ref: Gov/CAF 17-16

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22 March 2017

Dear Mr Jacobs

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email of 24 February 2017. You made the following requests for information:

1. Could you tell me what training is available for case workers to help them understand controlling and coercive type behaviour in personal relationships.

The main training we provide on domestic abuse, including issues of coercive control, is included in our Risk and Harm induction training. This training aims to help ensure practitioners:

- understand Cafcass' legal responsibilities regarding the assessment of risk and harm
- understand the key requirements of Cafcass' [Child Protection Policy](#) and [Operating Framework](#) regarding risk identification and risk assessment.
- understand what [risk assessment tools](#) are available and when to use them
- apply Cafcass' expectations regarding risk identification and risk assessment to case planning, assessment and analysis in public and private law cases.
- be able to use assessment tools correctly and with confidence

Risk and Harm training includes two required eLearning modules to be completed prior to the training day: 'Risk and Harm in Cafcass' and 'Risk and Harm Domestic Abuse eLearning'.

Core training of Legal Context and Court Skills includes information on domestic violence and the law. Cafcass also provides a knowledge bite 'Post Separation Control: impact on a child'. Other relevant extension training includes 'Static & Dynamic Risk Factors'; 'Assessment in DV cases'; and 'Signs of Safety'.

A range of additional training and courses are available to Cafcass staff. These include:

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- *Child Protection and Decision Making*: in depth training over three days in relation to evidence-based assessments, applying a safeguarding assessment and analysis framework and constructing core and specialist assessments for court.
- *16.4 Private Law*: a number of High Conflict Private Law disputes become 16.4 cases where a guardian is appointed to represent a child in proceedings. This course looks at some of these issues.
- *Defensible Decision Making*: explores how to evidence critical decisions in casework
- *Developing Private Law Practice Skills*: all private law staff received this training after the introduction of the Child Arrangement Programme. It explores practitioner intervention skills to support the achievement of safe and child centred arrangements in private law proceedings.
- *Legal Roadshow*: this looks at different family law topics each year
- *Knowledge Bites*: these are short updates in relation to a range of topics with up to date reference lists. These include:
 - *Emotional Harm*: understanding the possible implications of sustained parental conflict on children.
 - *Contact in Private Law Proceedings*: the messages from research and key practice considerations.

2. How many case workers have received training?

All Cafcass practitioners are qualified social workers with at least three years post qualifying experience in social work with children and families at risk. New practice staff are required to complete the following core modules within the first six months of employment:

- Risk and Harm in Cafcass;
- Legal Context and Court Skills;
- Casework Start to Finish;
- Interviewing Skills;
- Introduction to Private Law/Public Law;
- Child Sexual Exploitation.

Therefore all Cafcass practitioners have completed the Risk and Harm in Cafcass training with the exception of new practitioners, who will complete the Risk and Harm in Cafcass training prior to completion of their first six months of employment at Cafcass.

3. How many require training? And when will this be completed?

There are currently 31 practitioners who have yet to complete the Risk and Harm in Cafcass training, which will be completed prior to completion of their first six months of employment, as this is a requirement for all practice staff.

4. What is Cafcass' current policy when dealing with allegations of controlling & coercive behaviour in personal relationships?

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Cafcass does not have a specific policy on the handling of allegations of controlling and coercive behaviour in cases.

Cafcass practitioners are required to assess risk, including that arising from domestic abuse, in two ways: when the court orders a risk assessment as part of a Section 7 report if it feels that there is some risk to any child subject to proceedings; and under [s16A](#) of the Children Act 1989 Cafcass practitioners are under a duty to undertake a risk assessment whenever they have cause to suspect a child subject to proceedings is at current risk of harm and to pass this information to the court. Please see the Cafcass [Operating Framework](#) paragraphs 2.40 – 2.42, 4.19 and our [Child Protection Policy](#) for more information on our assessment of risk.

Practitioners should use appropriate tools, matched to the identified needs in the case, when assessing the impact of domestic abuse, including coercive control. These [tools for evidence informed practice](#) can be found on our website under section B. These include the Assessment of Coercive Control tool, which should be used where the Safe Lives Dash assessment has identified elements of coercive or controlling behaviour.

Cafcass also has a [Domestic Abuse Pathway](#) which can be used to help structure the analysis of cases featuring domestic abuse to ensure systematic review of risk to the child in a complex set of relational/family dynamics where domestic abuse is a feature. The pathway provides the practitioner with a set of structured guidelines which include links to policy, best practice guides and legislation concerning domestic abuse.

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/>):

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Yours sincerely,

Governance Team

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