



Victoria Soeder  
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**Your ref: CAF 19-037**  
**Our ref: Gov/CAF 19-037**

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

Tel 0300 456 4000

18 February 2019

Dear Ms Soeder

**Re: Freedom of Information Request**

Thank you for your email of 25 January 2019. You made the following requests for information:

You state "Cafcass does not have a Specific definition for unmanaged mental health issues but expect our practitioners to understand the general meaning to mean issues are not being addressed or treated with medical intervention or support which are having a negative impact on the individual and their capacity to provide attuned and consistent care to the child children"

1. Given that 'there is no definition for the phrase 'unmanaged mental health' and Cafcass do not have a specific definition where have a Cafcass obtained this information from?

The general understanding of the term 'unmanaged' is applied in our expectation of practitioners to understand the general meaning of unmanaged mental health issues.

2. Based on what specific information does Cafcass "expect" their practitioners to understand the general meaning when in fact there is no definitive medical meaning?

We would expect our FCAs to understand the concept of unmanaged mental health issues in context of the [Children that Resist Post Separation Contact guide](#) in which it appears. The guide states that a possible characteristic that may be present when a child is resisting contact with their parents is 'the other parent has unmanaged mental health issues / substance and/or alcohol misuse issues / personality disorder or other factor that impact on their capacity to provide attuned and consistent care.' We expect our practitioners to understand this to mean issues are not being addressed or treated with medical intervention or support and are having a negative impact on the

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individual and their capacity to provide attuned and consistent care to the child/children

3. When referring to mental health Cafcass should be reminded it is medical therefore in what training or resource does it state that Practitioners are “expected” to understand ? Where is the evidence base here?

Cafcass does not provide in-house training for our practitioners which focuses exclusively on mental health. The topic is briefly taught within our Risk and Harm induction course. This training is given in order to teach our practitioners about risk and harm issues in relation to their role in family court proceedings, and there are no recognised qualifications obtained as a result. In the Risk and Harm induction training the impact of domestic violence on children’s mental is explored, such as post-traumatic stress, neuro-biological changes, and depression; practitioners are referred to research in the area; and consideration is given to mental health issues of parents and the fact that children whose parents have mental health issues are at increased risk of developing this themselves.

Cafcass staff have access to resources and new research via our in-house library service to assist practitioners when working with parents. This includes resource lists on specific topics which list the resources available to staff from the Cafcass library on these topics, and Cafcass has several resource lists on mental health.

3. Which ‘source’ has the author of this freedom of information request taken the definition of unmanaged mental health provided to me in the response from ? Please supply this information. If this explanation provided is a construction of head of Legal please state it is your personal construction ?

Cafcass does not have a specific definition for unmanaged mental health. We would expect staff to understand the general meaning of the term ‘unmanaged’.

4. Does Cafcass confuse ‘unmanaged mental health’ which in psychiatric or medical parlance is not a definition perhaps with ‘undiagnosed mental health which has different meaning ?

This is not a Freedom of Information request.

5. It’s somewhat disconcerting that “unmanaged mental health” is contained within a ‘child impact assessment framework” where decisions FCA’s Cafcass ‘expect to make’ have in real terms an impact upon a child/families life.

This is not a Freedom of Information request.

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On 25 January 2018, you made further requests for information:

1. Have any of Cafcass staff raised concerns/complaints/ enquiries as to the containment of 'unmanaged mental health' within the Child impact assessment framework" and Cafcass' expectations placed on the FCA ?

No Cafcass staff have raised any concerns or complaints or enquiries in regards to the phrase 'unmanaged mental health' being contained within the Child impact assessment framework" and in regards to Cafcass' expectations placed on the FCA.

2. Cafcass appear to hold negative views about mental health and the above shows there can be alternative possible explanations that are positive. Has any member of staff within the Cafcass entity raised concerns about the negative connotations your explanation of unmanaged mental health or concerns about how draconian views such as you provide may be derogatory, insulting slurs and may have a damaging effect if FCA's are 'expected' to follow your 'narrow explanation' you have supplied.

No Cafcass staff have raised any concerns regards to any negative connotations of Cafcass explanation of unmanaged mental health.

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

Edward Timpson CBE Chair  
Anthony Douglas CBE Chief Executive





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

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Cafcass, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, is a non-departmental body of the Ministry of Justice  
Cafcass National Office, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3HF