



Cafcass Cymru Expectation Statement

Child Contact Services

Child contact centres are child centred environments that offer safe, friendly and neutral places where separated families can see their children so that relationships can be (re)started and for any contact to be safe and in the child's best interest. Contact centres are a short-term option before considering if and how arrangements can continue outside of the contact centre.

Cafcass Cymru will make a referral to a child contact centre for face-to-face or remote contact and fund this contact where:

- It has been court ordered at a First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment (FHDRA) after consultation with the Family Court Advisor (FCA) or Family Court Social Worker (FCSW) on court duty and agreed with both parties.

or

- Where it is part of a FCA or FCSW court report recommendation and/or where Cafcass Cymru has active and on-going case involvement.

Outside of this, parents, parties and/or legal representatives need to make their own referral direct to a contact centre and cover any funding implications. Any contact referral made by the court without consultation with Cafcass Cymru should be challenged by the area Practice Manager on duty.

Remote contact referrals must only be made if they are assessed and considered suitable for remote supervised contact by an FCA/FCSW. The practitioner must have discussions with both parties and the court (where appropriate) to ensure everyone understands the limitations to the service to be offered, discuss any potential safeguarding issues and give clear feedback to all if they do not think remote contact is safe or appropriate.

How many sessions?

- Any referral to a contact centre should initially be for 3 to 4 (1 hour) sessions at which point progress is reviewed.
- A total of 6 (1 hour) sessions is the maximum per referral.
- There can be flexibility as to the duration of the sessions as long as the total number of hours per referral does not exceed 6. For example, it may be necessary to have 2 hour sessions particularly where a family member lives some distance away. Therefore, the maximum number of sessions for this referral would be 3.

Referrals to Supported Child Contact Centres

- According to the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) "Supported child contact centres are suitable for families when no risk to the child or those around the child, unmanageable by the centre, has been identified during an intake procedure".
- Centres will arrange a pre-contact assessment session to assess any risks to parties.
- Where risk has been identified then a referral to a supervised child contact centre should be considered more appropriate.
- Centres are responsible for notifying the Commissioned Services Team within 10 working days from receipt of referral if they plan to accept the referral.
- Supported child contact centres are not expected to produce a report, and there is no expectation for staff/volunteers from the centre to attend court to give evidence.

- The FCA/FCSW can visit parties at the venue (or alternative venue) for occasional observational visits if/when considered to be in the interests of children and where any health and safety requirements have been adhered to.
- Centres are responsible for directly informing the police/social services of any immediate child protection/safeguarding concerns.
- Centres are responsible for reporting any violent, threatening, abusive or discriminatory behaviour, involving adults or children to Cafcass Cymru within one working day and followed up in writing.
- Centres are responsible for completing and sending the Record of Supported Contact monitoring information to the Commissioned Services Team within 7 days of contact ceasing.

Referrals to Supervised Child Contact Centres

- Centres are responsible for assessing if the referred party is suitable for supervised contact and does not represent a risk to the child, parent or contact centre worker(s).
- Centres are responsible for notifying the Commissioned Services Team within 10 working days from receipt of referral if they plan to accept the referral.
- Centres are required to complete the Cafcass Cymru Record of Observed Contact after each session, the final Record of Observed Contact should be sent within 7 days of contact ceasing.
- The FCA/FCSW can visit parties at the venue (or alternative venue) for occasional observational visits if/when considered to be in the interests of children and where any health and safety requirements have been adhered to. Alternatively, where possible, observation may be via remote means.
- Centres will ensure each session is only attended by parties identified on the Cafcass Cymru referral form, ensuring privacy for their sessions and safeguarding a confidential service.
- Centres are responsible for directly informing the police/social services of any immediate child protection/safeguarding concerns.
- Centres are responsible for reporting any violent, threatening, abusive or discriminatory behaviour, involving adults or children to Cafcass Cymru within one working day and following up in writing.

All contact centres used by Cafcass Cymru are subject to accreditation by the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC).

How is a Cafcass Cymru referral progressed?

- The FCA/FCSW must complete a contact service referral case recording on IRIS.
- All referrals to a child contact centre **must**:
 - State the type of contact that should be undertaken
 - Be supported by a robust risk assessment particularly where there are known current and/or past safeguarding issues – alleged or proven
 - Follow the guidelines on length and number of sessions
 - Outline at which contact centre contact will take place.
- The Cafcass Cymru Commissioned Services Team will arrange for the referral to be sent to the contact centre via secure e-mail and will contact the service users in order to confirm that the referral has been made and to provide details of the contact centre to which they have been referred.
- The child contact centres will notify the Commissioned Services Team to accept the referral within 10 working days from receipt of referral and when contact has concluded in order for the necessary monitoring requirements to be met.

Contact Details

Phone – 0300 062 8855

Email – CafcassCymru.CommissionedServices@gov.wales

