

below is what is expected of CAFCASS Public law practitioners. Not a great deal and missing the positive obligation, expertise, PAS, methodologies, guidance as mandatory e.g well written DoH framework on assessment of children's needs, and has anyone ever seen CAFCASS use forensic approach. Most people's experience is rubber stamping the Local Authority actions. Nothing either on ECtHR case laws....

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED OF CAFCASS 'OFFICERS' IN PUBLIC LAW PROCEEDINGS

- ❑ The roles and responsibilities of child care social workers, and their managers
- ❑ Normal local authority procedures, policies and practices in child care
- ❑ Methods and skills in communicating with children at various stages of development
- ❑ The 'messages from research' from studies of child protection, fostering, adoption and residential care
- ❑ Knowledge of Public Child Care Law, including adoption

SEVEN SPECIFIC AREAS OF APPLIED KNOWLEDGE THAT CAFCASS 'OFFICERS' IN PUBLIC LAW PROCEEDINGS MUST BE COMPETENT TO EXERCISE

1. Forensic matters and critical appraisal of actions by agencies involved

Have the children suffered significant harm?

- If so, is this attributable to the care, or absence of care, by the parents?
- How acute or chronic is the nature of the harm, taking account of the risk to the child/ren?
- Did the local authority provide adequate support for this family in order to try to prevent the need for these proceedings? If not, what should they have offered?
- Did the local authority intervene too early / too late in initiating proceedings?
- Has the local authority practice been ethnically and culturally sensitive?
- Are assessments by the local authority required? If so, when?
- If the children return home during proceedings are order/s necessary?

2. Working with parents

What is the cause of and remedy for the parenting difficulties and harm suffered by the children?

- Have the parents had long-standing difficulties in caring for children?
- Do the parents have the capacity to change, and improve their parenting?
- Is this improvement likely to be within a realistic time-scale (that could meet the children's needs adequately)?
- Is an assessment required of them? If so, who will do it - and how soon?
- Do they want the children to return/remain in their care?
- Is rehabilitation of the children to their parents possible? If so, what support is required?
- Are the parents able to work in partnership with the relevant agencies?

3. Working with extended family members and fostercarers

Are there opportunities for enhancing family support?

- ❑ Have family members had contact with the child/ren?
- ❑ Do they accept or reject the concerns about parental care?
- ❑ What role might they play in safeguarding the children in future?
- ❑ Is an assessment required of them? If so, who will do it - and how soon?
- ❑ Have the fostercarers looked after the children for long? Are they able to play a more long-term role in the children's lives? If not, can they help the children in moving on?
- ❑ Do the current carers/family members want the children to return/remain in their care?
- ❑ Could the family members deal with potential direct conflict with the parents, over issues such as contact?

4. Working with child/ children

What are the needs of each child?

- ❑ What are the child's wishes and feelings about the available alternatives for their future care?
- ❑ To what extent have the original concerns about the children been borne out since the proceedings began?
- ❑ Do the children have a realistic understanding of their current situation? Can that be achieved? If so, by work with whom and for how long ?

5. Placement Issues

What are the possible alternatives for placement?

- ❑ Are they achievable?
- Remain with parent/s?

- Rehabilitation?
 - Extended family placement?
 - Long term fostering? If so, where?
 - Residential care? If so, where?
 - Adoption? If so, where?
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- ❑ Are the children's needs met by their current placement?
 - ❑ What preparation work needs to be done with the child/ren, if they are to move?
 - ❑ Sibling contact issues?
 - ❑ Where should a child in need of substitute family care with special needs, or from an ethnic minority background, be placed?
 - ❑ Does the history and circumstances of a child necessitate their placement in secure accommodation, given the available alternatives?

6. Working at the interface between children and parents: contact arrangements

Who should each child retain contact with?

- ❑ What type and level of contact would be appropriate, between the children and relevant adults, considering the plans for the children? Should contact continue? Would contact threaten the stability of the children's placement?
- ❑ What type and level of contact would be appropriate, between siblings, considering the plans for the children? Should contact continue?
- ❑ If live direct contact cannot be maintained, are the various forms of indirect contact appropriate?

7. Working with the Court: the law and the solicitor for the child/ren

What is legally possible in order to meet the needs of each child?

- ❑ Knowledge of public law issues
- ❑ Awareness of the role of solicitors and the Children Panel
- ❑ Independence of the CAFCASS practitioner's opinion
- ❑ What are the pros and cons of the available legal alternatives?
- ❑ Avoidance of delay: timetabling responsibility