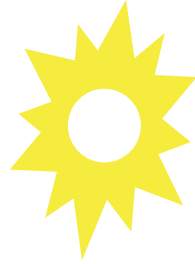




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Cafcass Cymru Practice Framework Putting Children First



Introduction

Cafcass Cymru's focus and drive is on children and young people, keeping them safe through their journey in the family justice system and working to achieve the best outcome possible.

This Practice Framework provides an evidence-based structure to help us achieve our aspiration to ensure children's voices are at the heart of everything we do and where skills, knowledge, and good practice is shared. It provides us with a set of values and gives a common language to communicate across our teams and a shared vision for children and families who are involved in family justice in Wales. This Framework sets out the culture of practice in Cafcass Cymru, one which embraces and promotes difference and individuality, aiming for all staff within the organisation to experience and connect with our values.

The Framework provides a narrative for our approach to develop and deliver high-quality services to children and their families. It also serves to support our partner agencies, and the parents, carers and young people we work with in understanding the way we work, providing a context for our approach, and the principles which underpin this. In summary, it describes the way we do things in Cafcass Cymru and why we do them that way.

Our Values are set out in our **Strategic Plan** which demonstrates our commitment to work in a way that is child centred, inclusive and with integrity and respect. It also includes our goals of providing our staff with an environment in which they feel valued, where we support their wellbeing and provide continuous learning and development opportunities. We understand the need for our senior leaders to be visible and approachable and we value the views of every member of our staff. We are a learning organisation individually and collectively: one where we learn from each other, the children, young people and the families that we work with and from our stakeholder colleagues working within the family justice system.

The Practice Framework has been developed in consultation with our staff, young people from the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) and stakeholders to ensure that children and young people receive high quality, individualised and proportionate support and intervention. We want to ensure that every conversation and practice consideration starts with the child and stays with the child, enabling safe outcomes for every child and young person we work with in Wales.



Our Underpinning Principles

Our approach to working with children, young people and their families is shaped by:

A valued, skilled and healthy workforce.

The law and evidence-based good practice guidance that underpins our responsibilities.

Our values and behaviours.

Our practice model.



A Valued, Skilled and Healthy Workforce

The health and wellbeing of our workforce is a core component of our Practice Framework as we cannot achieve our goals without a healthy, stable, and sustainable workforce. Our workers are our most valuable asset; We value the skills, knowledge, and individuality of everyone in our organisation.

We nurture strengths, value different perspectives and reflective discussions and are committed to ensuring that everyone receives regular individualised support which allows reflection on the individual's wellbeing and development needs.

We are also committed to supporting continued professional development; investing in our staff to ensure that children and families receive the best possible service.



Our Legal Responsibilities

Who we are and what we do plays a vital role in supporting children and families who are involved in family court proceedings and referred to us by the Family Court. Part 4 of the Children Act 2004 specifies our noted functions:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children,
- Give advice to any court about any application made to it in proceedings,
- Make provision for the children to be represented in proceedings, and
- Provide information, advice and other support for the children and their families.

Our complex and wide-ranging work falls into two main categories: **Public Law** and **Private Law**. All work undertaken is grounded in the same approaches, values, principles and beliefs, which should ensure that children, young people and their families experience a degree of consistency in the way we engage and work with them. At all times, the child's safety and welfare is at the heart of every interaction and recommendation made and every action taken by Cafcass Cymru.

Our purpose is to safeguard each child and ensure their voice is heard within the family justice system.

There are many other legislative roots, practice directions and evidence based good practice guidance that help anchor us and provide the principles that underpin our work. The following is not exhaustive and includes some Welsh specific elements:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- **WG Guidance for working with parents who have a learning disability.**
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Children Act 1989
- Family Procedure Rules 2010
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which enshrines the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) into Welsh legislation.
- The **Corporate Parenting Charter** - A promise from Wales which specifies how we should work with adults and young people who are care experienced, which Cafcass Cymru have endorsed.
- We provide our service in Welsh and English as set out in the **Welsh Language Standards.**

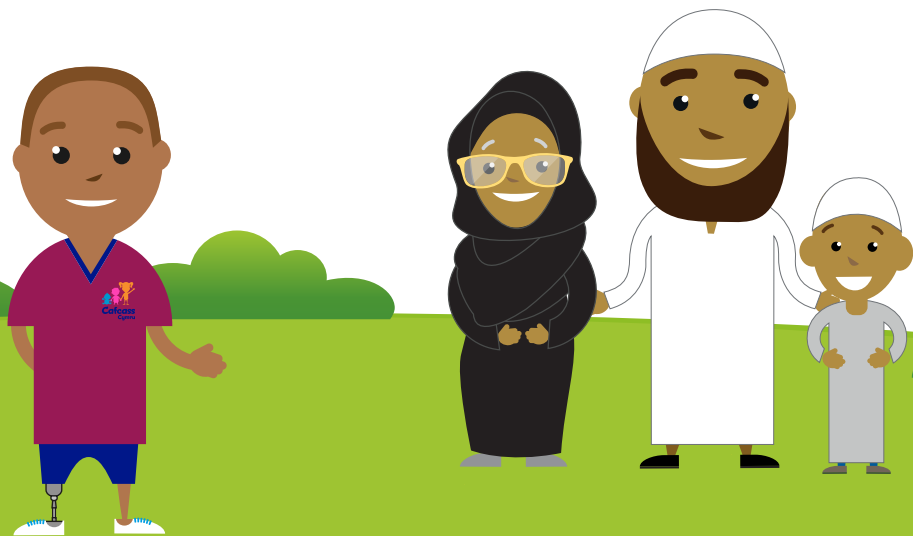


Our Values and Behaviours

In consultation with our staff, we have identified core values and principles which guide how we behave towards each other and those we work with. We strive to create and embed a culture of being child centred, inclusive and working with integrity and respect, which supports and challenges people at all levels of the organisation to play their part in improving the lives of the children and young people we work with.

We promise we will:

- Establish and maintain professional relationships with people who use our service by treating people with respect, having an approachable and personable manner, adapting to meet individuals' needs. We will listen to what others are saying whilst also managing expectations about what can be achieved; reflecting back what we have heard, ensuring people feel they have been listened to and clearly explaining why our views may differ.
- Build skilful and influential working relationships with other professionals and agencies by using clear communication, which is respectful, professional and with adaptations made to meet individual needs.
- Work together across teams in a consistent way to enable cohesion and support for colleagues to ensure each child or young person receives a consistently high quality and timely service.
- Work with your personal information accurately, be timely and keep your data safe.
- Take appropriate responsibility for our own conduct and learning. Use our strong and supportive peer relationships to reflect on our work and learn from others' experiences and knowledge. We will learn from compliments, complaints and feedback.



In addition, practitioners will:

- Approach families with empathy, compassion and creativity using relationships for positive change. We will be curious, sensitive and reflective as well as being professional and determined in improving the outcomes for children and young people. We will strive to work sensitively so that our practice does not retraumatise victim-survivors of domestic abuse and other forms of harm, operating with a safety first approach at all times. We will ensure a whole family approach is taken.
- Use strength-based practice approaches and interventions. This will be balanced with professional curiosity, honesty when discussing concerns and appropriate challenge to adequately assess risk.
- Maintain the skills and knowledge to complete high quality effective assessments of risk, underpinned by professional analysis of all of the evidence, to provide court reports that are child centred, proportionate and above all provide safe recommendations. They will reflect the wishes, feelings, needs, strengths and capacity of parents and carers to change to enable them to safely meet the needs of their children now and in the future. We will acknowledge and consider any competing needs and rights of individuals but we prioritise safety and protection from harm.



Child Centred - Our Promise to Children and Young People

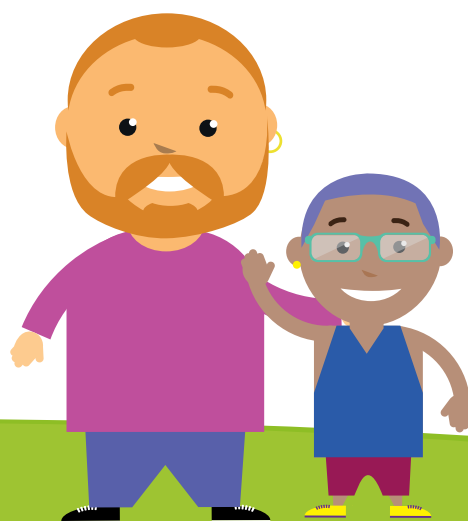
We have listened to children and young people who are members of the FJYPB who identified what is important to them.

We promise we will take a safety-first approach and:

- Treat you with respect and build a trusting relationship, albeit time limited, by being honest, open and reliable. We will not make assumptions about you and will check your understanding of the situation. We will explain what your rights are and keep you updated about delays. We will check out your preferred name and pronouns and find out what is important to you: your likes and dislikes, what is unique about you and who is important in your life. We will let you know how to contact us and signpost you to others who may be able to help.
- Take time to listen to you and make sure your views, wishes and feelings are heard and your lived experience is understood and actively considered in all decisions that the court makes about you. We will make recommendations which balance your expressed views against your safety and welfare needs.
- We will be creative and responsive to your needs when engaging with you. If our first attempt to engage with you does not work for you, we will try different ways.

- Read case papers before meeting with you to understand how your life has been, particularly if there have been multiple proceedings. We will explain our role, responsibilities and recommendations to you in plain language and why the court's decision may not be the same as your wishes and feelings.
- Speak to important people in your lives to help us understand your experiences and speak to your brothers and sisters separately.
- Be flexible when arranging when and where to meet and think about how we can make you feel comfortable and relaxed, e.g., the clothes that we wear and sitting at the same level as you.

We will give you information about how you can give feedback about our service, including how to make a complaint should you feel we are not adhering to promises in this Framework.



Our Practice Model

Our practice model is underpinned by the trauma informed framework Trauma-Informed-Wales.

As a social work organisation, our practice is also informed by research and theory which helps us understand and make sense of what is happening for the individuals and families that we work with, as it is important for us to be flexible and adapt to each individuals' circumstances.

This means we work in a way that recognises individuals' responses to their circumstances, and our involvement, may be affected by previous trauma experiences.

To help those we work with feel physically and emotionally safe we will use a safety-first approach and actively resist re-traumatising by:

- Building trusting, safe and reliable relationships to support our work and assist in reaching solutions. We will be open and honest at every stage, even in the most challenging of circumstances. We will listen to people that use our service, our colleagues and stakeholders to inform our continuous development programme.
- Proactively supporting people by using a co-productive, collaborative, strengths-based approach to help them identify, understand and support their needs to promote psychological and physical safety.
- Recognising the impact of diversity, discrimination, racism and understanding the impact of cultural, historic and gender inequalities. We are inclusive within the work we undertake.
- Mitigating the impact of professional trauma on all our staff by creating environments, systems and practice that take this into account and help with staff self-care. Our support and supervision procedure places equal weight on wellbeing, learning and development and performance management, with additional opportunities given for our practitioners to have reflective case discussions.



Outcome Focused - Our Key Success Measures:

Our service adds value to the children and families we work with by focusing on key outcomes.

Outcomes	In practice	The difference this makes
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We build emotionally safe relationships by building trust and working collaboratively. We gather information in a respectful way. We use a strengths based investigative approach. We make decisions which protect those who need it most. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People feel listened to and respected. Risks and strengths are identified and the impact of these on children are specified to reach a balanced and safe recommendation.
Voice of the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We introduce ourselves and enable children to engage with us, in their chosen place, using flexible methods to find out what is important in their life. We listen, recognise, understand, and reflect back their lived experience and stated wishes and feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's voices have been heard, their lived experience is clear and forefront within the court proceedings.
Better Represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We ask children and their families about their unique identities and circumstances, recognise and understand the impact of these when working with individuals and use this information to inform our recommendations. We actively consider the impact of delay and do not recommend/ support expert reports unless necessary to determine welfare outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and families feel that they have been treated with respect, have been understood and their views and individual experiences have been heard. Children and families receive a timely and proportionate service.
Enabled & Advised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We keep children and adults up to date throughout our involvement. We are transparent about our role in the proceedings and the reasons for our recommendations. We enable adults and children to participate within the case assessment and decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and families know and understand what has happened at the end of our involvement. Information gathered assists the court to make evidence-based decisions in the best interests of the child. Relevant signposting is recommended and appropriate interventions are suggested.