

# Improving Child and Family Arrangements Service



Improving Child and Family Arrangements (ICFA) is the name of the service designed by Cafcass to help families agree safe, beneficial and sustainable child arrangements when they are finding it difficult to do so on their own. The ICFA work is short term, for private law cases only, and a referral can only be made by Cafcass if it is Court ordered.

## How does the ICFA service help families?

ICFA supports families to make the most suitable arrangements for children by:

1. Reducing barriers and resistance to agreeing arrangements, and managing any risks so that these are safe.
2. Promoting positive communication within families.
3. Ensuring children's wishes and feelings are heard and considered.
4. Helping families agree a Parenting Plan to avoid future issues arising.

## Who delivers the ICFA service?

Cafcass have five regional providers who lead and co-ordinate the work in their areas;

- North – [Child Action North West \(CANW\)](#)
- East – [Children's Links](#)
- West – [Child Action North West \(CANW\)](#)
- South East – [Swanstaff](#)
- South West – [Swanstaff](#)

Each regional provider has links with local partners so the work can take place as near to the child's home as possible.

## How do you access the ICFA service?

If the Family Court Advisor (FCA) has assessed that conflict between the parties is preventing safe and beneficial arrangements being achieved, then they can recommend to the Court for a referral to the ICFA service to be directed.

ICFA is only available to families involved in private law cases where Cafcass is involved. In most cases, parties are expected to have been Court Ordered to attend the Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP), although there can be exceptions to this. Click [here](#) to find out more information about SPIP.

There also needs to be clear commitment from families to undertake the ICFA work and prior to making the recommendation to Court, the FCA should have informed families of the ICFA service, how it could help them, and what is required from them.

Following the Court order being made, the FCA will make a referral to the ICFA provider. The referral will include information about the family and the FCA's assessment of what is needed to move forward to agree safe, beneficial and sustainable child arrangements.

## What happens when an ICFA referral has been made?

When the ICFA provider gets the referral from the FCA, they will contact both parents to complete a Proposed Work Plan (PWP).

The PWP will set out the agreed work to help the family to achieve better arrangements for the children.

The work will take place over a few weeks and, depending on the individual needs of the family, may include;

- Meeting with parents individually and/or together to help them resolve issues, prepare for time with the child(ren), and agree a Parenting Plan.
- Working directly with the child/ren to prepare them for time with their parent or family member.
- Observation of time the child spends with the parent or family member, offering guidance and support where necessary, and providing further insight into any potential risks.

At the end of the ICFA service, the provider will prepare a Final Report outlining the work completed and progress made which will be discussed with the family and shared with the FCA.

## Where does the ICFA work take place?

This depends on the individual needs of the family and will be agreed before the work begins. It could be at home, in the community, at an office or a [NACCC](#) accredited contact centre or a combination of them all.

## How does the ICFA service inform Cafcass work?

When the ICFA work is completed the FCA will use the information from the provider's Final Report to inform their assessments and further reports back to court.

## Do families have to pay for an ICFA service?

Families do not have to pay for the ICFA service. However, families will have to make their own travel arrangements, which are not funded and, depending on the ICFA work required, some expenses may also have to be paid for by families (such as activity costs, food and refreshments).

## What if I am not happy with the ICFA service provided?

Any complaints about the ICFA service should be raised directly with the provider who should follow their organisations complaints policy. The FCA should also be informed of any concerns and or issues.



© Cafcass. Updated October 2021.

Cafcass, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3HF  
[www.cafcass.gov.uk](http://www.cafcass.gov.uk)

