



Children's Guardians
have an important job
to do in helping to
protect children.

What has CAFCASS been asked to do to improve?

CAFCASS is the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. Children's Guardians work for CAFCASS. CAFCASS looks after the interests of children involved in family proceedings. It works with children and their families, and then advises the courts on what it considers to be in the children's best interests. For Guardians to help children more, Inspectors have asked CAFCASS:

- To make sure that all Guardians work well and in the same way.

If you would like to see the full report it is on the HMICA website at www.hmica.gov.uk. The report is called *Children's Guardians and Care Proceedings*.

You can also get a printed copy by contacting HMICA on 0207 217 4355 or by writing to HMICA, 8th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP.



Caring for you

Information for
children with guardians

What is a Children's Guardian?

When children might be suffering harm, Social Services may go to Court and start 'Care Proceedings'. For instance, Social Services might think that the child cannot be kept safe at home. Or Social Services might think that the child should be adopted, or live away from home.

Then the judge asks a Children's Guardian to talk to everyone. The Guardian should be the voice of the child. Then the Guardian writes a report to Court to say if the Guardian thinks that Social Services are right. The Guardian must also tell the judge what the child wants to happen. So Children's Guardians have an important job to do in helping to protect children.

What did inspectors do?

Inspectors work for HMICA (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration). HMICA inspects how well Children's Guardians do their job.

In 2007 we met a lot of Guardians and saw them working with children, parents and other adults. We also read the reports that Guardians wrote.

When Guardians met children

This is what the Inspectors thought after watching Guardians meeting children:

- Most children won't have heard of a Guardian so it needs explaining. Some Guardians are very good at explaining what their job is. One Guardian always prepares a nice letter explaining her job. She writes to each child and with the letter is a story, using the child's names to show what is going to happen.
- Some Guardians are not so good at explaining their job. So sometimes Guardians do not help children to understand the difference between a Guardian and a social worker.
- Almost all Guardians spend a lot of time making the children feel comfortable. They play games or do drawings so that the child gets to know them.
- Some Guardians do not pay enough attention to what younger children want.
- Some Guardians do not see the child enough.
- Almost all of the Guardians listen carefully to what the child tells them.

When Guardians write reports

The report that the Guardian writes is very important. The judge pays careful attention to what the Guardian has written. When Inspectors read the Guardians' reports we thought that:

- In about half of the reports, the Guardian is not good at being the voice of the child. For instance, often they do not clearly say what the child wants.
- Some reports do not say how much the child understands about what is happening.
- Some reports are very long. Some are over 40 pages which is hard to read for some children.
- If there are brothers and sisters, some reports do not talk enough about each of the children. Sometimes the report spends too much time on one child.
- Some Guardians' reports explain clearly when they think that the local Council is not making the right plan for the child.
- Some Guardians are good at explaining to the judge how the child has been harmed by what has happened.

