

8 things to know about

Children's participation in the family court

We asked 11 children and young people aged 8 – 17 what it was like to share their views about going through the family court with Cafcass Cymru. This is what they told us...



1. My nerves disappeared quickly

Children were sometimes nervous before the meeting but they said that this went away once they met the Cafcass Cymru worker. Most felt relieved to talk about what they wanted to happen.



2. I felt listened to

Most children said Cafcass Cymru were very good at listening to their views. They felt they could be open and honest.



3. I didn't get many choices

Most children did not get to choose when, where and how to talk to Cafcass Cymru. Most of the time parents decided. For some, the place they met made them feel uncomfortable.



4. Taking my time was important

Some children said the meeting lasted a good amount of time, but it was shorter than expected for others. These children didn't get asked as many questions as they expected.



5. I felt confused about some things

Children understood the job that Cafcass Cymru, judges and the family court did. But quite a few (including older teenagers) felt confused during and after the meeting.



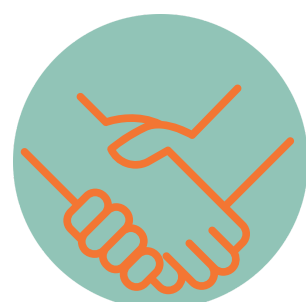
6. Being told about the court's decision is important

All the children found out what happened at court from their parent(s). Most were happy with this but a couple wanted to be told by someone outside the family like Cafcass Cymru or the judge.



7. I didn't know I had options

Children did not know they could write a letter to the judge, or meet them. One had been invited to go to court but chose not to because it felt nerve wracking.



8. I need to trust you to be my voice

Children relied on their worker to be their voice in court. Most children felt they could trust them to do this. But where children didn't feel understood, they felt worried about what might happen next.

Based on this, we think children should:

1. be sent information about **who they will meet** and **what they will be asked** before the meeting
2. have things **explained in lots of different ways** so that they can **understand what is happening**
3. be the ones **making the choices** about **when, where** and **how** to share their views
4. be offered **other ways of having their say** that they feel **comfortable** with