

08 September 2021

Dear

Request for Information – ATISN 15420

I refer to your information request received on 11 August 2021. You asked:

1. Year on Year between 2018 to 2021 - for the whole year to date. How many children have allegedly been “abducted” by parents or close family members during that period during or immediately following contact with the family courts?
2. Year on Year between 2018 to 2021 - for the whole year to date. How many children have been “abducted” - please provide a breakdown of the numbers of children allegedly abducted by their Mother, Father, Grandparent (s)?
3. Year on Year between 2018 to 2021 - for the whole year to date. Please provide a breakdown by age of the children who have allegedly been “abducted”
4. Year on Year between 2018 to 2021 - for the whole year to date. Please provide a breakdown of the local authorities involved in these cases.
5. Year on Year between 2018 to 2021 - for the whole year to date. Please provide numbers of current and concluded criminal cases in relation to these alleged “Abductions”

With regard to parts 1–4 of your request, for the period 01/01/2018 to 17/08/2021 Cafcass Cymru had involvement in 16,183 cases, covering all areas of our work. There is no automated way to identify if abduction has been a factor in any of those cases.

Of the 16,183 cases, 28 involved applications for Recovery Orders. Recovery Orders can relate to children who are abducted but also (and this is more likely) children in public law cases who are in care and abscond. In these circumstances, to retrieve the child Local Authorities may apply to court for a Recovery Order. As part of this process, the court may appoint a Cafcass Cymru Family Court Advisor to act on behalf of the child.

We undertook a manual review of the 28 case files where applications for Recovery Orders were made, and three of the 28 cases involved an allegation of abduction.

In two of the three cases children were lawfully visiting the parent with whom they did not reside but did not return immediately their contact visit was due to end. In both cases, children were visiting their father. The third case involved both parents leaving the UK with their children: the children resided with their parents but were subject to a Care Order giving the Local Authority shared parental responsibility.

The cases occurred across three of Cafcass Cymru's operational areas: Gwent, Mid & West Wales and North Wales; and involved six children ranging in ages from 2 to 16.

Allegations of abduction may have been a feature in some of the remaining 16,155 cases where separated parents are in dispute over child-related arrangements and Cafcass Cymru may therefore hold further information falling within the description of parts 1- 4 of your request. However, we can only retrieve this information by examining individual case files.

In order to identify and locate the information, we estimate it will cost more than the appropriate limit set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 to answer your request. The appropriate limit specified for central government is £600. This represents the estimated cost of it taking over 24 hours of time to determine whether we hold the information and to thereafter locate, retrieve and extract it.

In the 28 cases reviewed, it averaged 12 minutes per case to locate, retrieve and extract the information. Based on an average of 12 minutes per file (in reality the average time is likely to be much more than this as the majority of case files will hold far more content than the 28 cases containing applications for recovery orders) to locate, retrieve and extract the information would take an estimated 3,231 hours (16,155 files x 12 minutes = 193,860 minutes/60 = 3,231 hours).

We do not hold information matching part 5 of your request.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to:

Nigel Brown
Chief Executive
Cafcass Cymru
cafcasscymru@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference numbers above.





You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. Normally, however, you should pursue the matter through our internal procedure before you complain to the Information Commissioner.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

