



Cafcass Cymru and Safe & Together (August 2024)



Cafcass Cymru has an unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for children and their families who are survivors-victims of domestic abuse, through domestic abuse proficient and trauma informed social work practice. To achieve this goal Cafcass Cymru has commissioned the Safe & Together Institute and to deliver training to all our social work practitioners and managers across Wales. The Safe and Together Model is endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's office and the CEO of Welsh Women's Aid.

What is the Safe & Together Model?

- The goal of the Safe & Together Model is to create systems and practice change that is child centred and keeps children safe and together with the protective parent. The effectiveness of the Model is measured by how domestic abuse-informed agencies make this occur as much as possible.
- The Safe & Together Model fills the gaps in knowledge and practice and assists all systems touching on domestic abuse and child well-being, to become domestic abuse informed, whilst prioritising safety across all partners in the domestic abuse community.
- The Safe & Together Model is a perpetrator pattern based, child centred, survivor strengths approach to working with domestic abuse.
- Overall, the aim of the model is to address domestic-destructive practices by providing a set of principles and components that can guide domestic abuse-informed practice. These include:
 - Keeping the child safe & together with the non-offending parent, where safe to do so.
 - Partnering (meaning understanding the strengths and identifying positives in protective parenting) with the non-offending parent as the default position, and
 - Intervening with the perpetrator to reduce risk and harm to the child.

How will this impact the work of Cafcass Cymru practitioners?

- A key theme of the Safe and Together Model is a shift in the language used by practitioners to ensure the non-abusive parent feels supported and not re-victimised.
- The approach provides a common language and set of standardised tools, focussing on the behaviour of the perpetrator and the strengths of the non-perpetrating parent, with clear focus on the impact on the child.
- Supported by an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help child welfare professionals become domestic abuse informed, the approach will refocus and strengthen how practitioners work with families impacted by domestic abuse perpetrators' behaviours.

- Court reports will contain “perpetrator focussed language”, which clearly identifies the behaviour of the perpetrator and advises the court of the impact on the child and non-perpetrating parent.
- Cafcass Cymru is passionate about how the model supports robust risk assessment and clearly sets out the impact of perpetrating behaviours. This will result in court reports and recommendations being clearer and more robust, leading to safer outcomes for children.

Feedback from our experience of the Model so far...

“...I have taken aspects of the Safe & Together Model and try to apply it to all my practice. Things like changing the semantics I use, feeling more confident to identify and label patterns of perpetrator behaviour, bringing it all back to the impact on the ecology of the child and survivor etc. My confidence in resisting the view that contact is expected and is a right, is growing too. I’ve got a long way to go still but I’m really encouraged that Cafcass Cymru is rolling it out to the whole organisation...”

FCA – South West Wales

“...Having such a clear report with such good analysis and clear route map to the recommendations made it an “easy sell” and proper in court mediation was achieved resulting in an agreement...”

District Judge – South East Wales

The Future...

Cafcass Cymru is embracing the opportunity that embedding the Safe & Together Model into our practice and how it can inform our work to deliver safe outcomes for children and the family’s we work with. We believe this represents a significant change in how we work with adult and child survivors of domestic abuse and evidences our commitment to listen to survivors and take action.