



National Psychology Service – Guidance

Guidance for Practice Staff

- Consultations can be booked for both private and public law cases. Consultations may also be booked for non-specific case discussions, e.g. for practice development or training.
- Referral forms for case related consultations need to be authorised by Service Managers to ensure that the case is appropriate to bring to a consultation. An appropriate case might include complex risk factors, as opposed to features covered in case discussions.
- Referral forms should be returned at least three days in advance of the consultation slot so that the psychologist can review it ahead of the consultation. Short notice referrals may be accepted if a slot is available or a cancellation arises. For non-case specific consultations, please complete a referral form and enter N/A for case specific questions.
- The psychologists will **not** have access to the Cafcass case file, they will only have the information contained in your referral.
- The psychologists do **not** provide an expert assessment but specialist case supervision. As such there should be no reference to the use of the service in the report to court, in the same way that you currently do not report situational supervision discussions.
- Use of the service should however be recorded on the contact log and incorporated in the case plan.

Organising a consultation

How far in advance should I book a consultation?

You are more likely to secure the consultation slot you want if you book in advance. However, if a slot is free it may be possible to book a consultation for the same day. Even in the final stages a consultation with a psychologist may help you reinforce the reasons for your decision.

Do I call the psychologist or does the psychologist call me?

You will need to call the psychologist. Once a consultation time has been agreed, the NIS support team will send you an Outlook Appointment containing the phone number of the duty psychologist.

Do I need to seek approval through my line manager?

Yes, approval from your line manager is required before undertaking a consultation.

What makes a case a "good" one to bring to a consultation?

If there are high risk factors or complex issues at play in your case, or perhaps you think a psychological perspective would help progress it, your case is appropriate for a consultation.

Can I request a further consultation to discuss the same case?

Yes, it is possible to request a further consultation on the same case if you have identified clear reasons that mean a follow-up consultation would be valuable. If you are unsure if the case is appropriate please contact your line manager or the NIS support team at NISsupport@cafcass.gsi.gov.uk.

Getting the most out of your consultation

Should I have a specific question to ask?

Practitioners do often come to the consultations with specific questions or certain issues they want to explore. However, it is not a necessity. The aim of the consultation is to provide a psychological perspective on risk management and may lead to the discussion of aspects of a case you may not have previously considered. It is important however, to have clarity over what you hope to achieve from the consultation.

How much background information of a case do I need before I can make a referral?

Whilst you do not need to know every aspect of the case, it is important that you have a good working knowledge of it and the relationships between the relevant parties. Consultations can provide you with a psychological perspective on your views, rather than help you establish your views from the outset.

Should my case include an expert report to make it suitable for a consultation?

It isn't necessary for you to already have an expert witness report on the case. Additionally, a meeting with a psychologist may help you identify whether such a report is necessary.

I already have an expert report - can a consultation add anything?

The psychologist's consultation is not an expert assessment, but rather specialist case supervision. The aim is to provide you with extra support and the benefits of a psychological viewpoint on the case. It can fulfil a role that an expert report cannot.

I feel confident when it comes to understanding the children, but not the parents. Can I discuss them with the psychologist?

Yes, many referrals focus on the parents' behaviour and a psychologist's perspectives could help understand any risks posed to the child.

What if I don't think I can fill an hour and a quarter?

Many consultations do not take up the allotted hour and a quarter. Do not be put off if you feel you don't have enough questions - the consultation could bring up other issues to explore.

How can I make most effective use of the service?

By writing a clear and succinct referral form the psychologist will be well-informed to help you with your case. You should include a brief outline of the key issues and challenges you have come across. Making clear what you wish to discuss with a psychologist is more important than including lots of detail in your referral form.

After your consultation**Where should I record the outcome of the consultation?**

The outcome of the consultation should be recorded in the same manner as case-related situational supervision, in the contact log within ECMS.

Can I refer to the consultation as evidence in my report?

No, this is simply a consultation and not an expert assessment. It must not be cited as a reference in your report.

Got another question?

Email the NIS support team at NISsupport@cafcass.gsi.gov.uk.