

Hampshire & IOW Pathfinder News

Go Live Date:

Tuesday 6th January
2026

What's New

It has now been a little over 6 weeks since the Pathfinder model launched in Hampshire and Isle of Wight. The Local Implementation Group (LIG) have been meeting regularly to discuss progress and address quickly any issues that have arisen.

Since the beginning of January training has taken place across all the Local Authorities. Judicial training has started with one more session still to be run and Magistrates training is set to take place in early March which will focus on judicial conciliation.

HMCTS staff completing case progression duties have been busy issuing a higher than usual number of applications and completing the calls to litigants in person to explain the process to them. Cafcass and all of the local authorities in this area have been asked to complete Child Impact Reports and are in the process of completing them.

Next milestones:

- First Child Impact Reports filed
- Safeguarding Gatekeeping Appointments (Gatekeeping 2) begin w/c 9th March
- Decision Hearings begin w/c 23rd March

There will be a Post Launch event on 3rd March where we can hear a little more about progress so far and have a short Q&A session. The link to join this has been included below.

In this newsletter you will find: Cafcass and their work with children under the Pathfinder model, a local authority perspective from Southampton City Council and detail on the role of the IDVA.

Alex Thomas

Deputy Local Implementation Manager

Date for your diary

**3rd March—Online Post
Launch Event**

Link: [Join the meeting](#)

LIG Contacts

Helen Sewell & Alex Thomas

Local Implementation Team

HHJ Barlow

Designated Family Judge

DJ Samuel & DJ Goodall

Lead Pathfinder Judiciary

Alan Guest,

CAFCASS (Local)

Danielle Dunbar, Laura Falconer, CAFCASS
(National)

Hema Sheno, Dan Clark

Southampton CC

Nicola Instance, Nicola Cooper

Hampshire CC

Sarah Carvalho, Mat Drake

IOW Council

Ciara Morgan

Portsmouth CC

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**Anna Munday, Sarah Milne, Tania Baxman,
Angie Foot**

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Hannah Penfold, Jasna Wall

HMCTS Legal

Sara Chalk, Rebecca Caws

Bar

Rebecca Hawkins, Anastasia Said

Solicitors

Roger Trencher

Hampshire Police

Lucy Harling/Staphanie Churchill

The You Trust



Pathfinder—The Child’s Journey with Cafcass



Private Law Reform (Pathfinder) can make a huge difference to the journey of every child in private law proceedings. Cafcass can determine the extent of our enquiries and engage with children much earlier under Practice Direction 36Z, and their voices are heard and considered in our reporting. The aim is for our assessments to be more comprehensive from the outset, rather than the previous restrictions in the safeguarding letter, which enables courts to make the right decisions for children more efficiently, reducing delay for children and families. Victim survivors of domestic abuse and their children share their experiences safely and sensitively and they’re able to access domestic abuse support services before, during and after proceedings.

Children and young people enjoy greater participation than under the Child Arrangements Programme and as far as possible, children tell their stories to one practitioner. We use photographs of children in our reporting where consent is in place and it is safe to do so, and their lived experiences are shared in a relevant and impactful way to ensure that decisions about them and for them are timely and right. We listen to their wishes and feelings and ask them who they’d like to tell them the outcome of their proceedings so that this may be included in court orders. Children remain at the heart of our practice and their safety and welfare remain paramount.

We write to children. Parents/carers receive a welcome letter from us that includes an information pack they are able to share with their children. Where we are seeing children and young people, family court advisers write a letter of introduction to each child which explains who we are and what they may expect from working with us. When our work with a family concludes, family court advisers write a goodbye letter to children so that they know what we did on their behalf and what our recommendations have been. We are eager to hear from children and young people about their experiences and will continue learning and improving from what they tell us.

Cafcass Project Team, February 2026

On the following page you will find an example of a goodbye letter to a child.





Goodbye letter

For children and young people

Cafcass reference:

Hello James

I am writing to update you because the recent court proceedings came to end on 15/12/2025.



I do hope you remembered me coming to see you at school. However, just to remind you, the court had given me the job to visit and listen to what you had to say, and it was my role to tell a Judge what was best for you.

I shared your letter with the Judge, which your Mum had e-mailed to me and included it in my report to the court. I told the Judge about some of the things you liked. I also said that you wanted your surname changed to 'Jones' and your reasons for wanting it changed.



The Judge listened to your Mum and me on your behalf, and the Judge agreed that it was best for you to have your surname changed legally to 'Jones'. Therefore, an order was made called a Specific Issue Order. The order also gave your Mum permission to share the order with any other organisations (such as school and others) to evidence the surname change.

James, I hope that you have an enjoyable Christmas holiday, I was so pleased to meet you at school, and I wish you all the happiness throughout your childhood growing up. Should you wish to, please feedback any comments about how I worked with you via the QR code below, as we would like to hear more from children. Thank you.



Yours sincerely

Polly

Polly Franklin
Family Court Adviser

Cafcass will keep the details of your family proceedings journey safe until you or the youngest child in the proceedings turns 25 years old. You can request to see the information Cafcass holds about you at any time. You can do this by asking for a Subject Access Request. We will follow the My Cafcass Journey process to send you the information we hold about you. You can find more information on our website at www.cafcass.gov.uk/subject-access-requests-and-my-cafcass-journey/

The role of the IDVA

Paragon is delighted to be a part of the Pathfinder delivery model across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. We will be working in partnership with Cafcass and the local authority to help safeguard survivors of domestic abuse who are going through the family court process.



The IDVA provision is an integral part of the Pathfinder model. Our Pathfinder team will be geographically located to provide dedicated IDVA support. We will meet with the survivor and complete the DASH Risk Assessment and the Summary Report which will be submitted to the court with the Child Impact Report. We will work in a trauma informed way to ensure that the voice of the survivor and the child is heard. This, in turn, should reduce the risk of families having to go through unnecessary hearings or having to return to court.

Moving forward, we will agree with the family what advocacy and support they require, and we will co-produce their Individual Safety and Support Plan. We will support to empower the survivor and the child, help the family to navigate the family court process with confidence, and secure outcomes that are safe. We will work together with partner agencies to ensure that all areas of support need are met. We are passionate about improving the lives of families going through the family court process, and we believe that the Pathfinder delivery model and ongoing recovery work offered by Paragon will do this.

Lucy Harling

Paragon, The You Trust

The Local Authority Perspective

Before the launch of the Private Law Pathfinder, it would not be uncommon for Local Authority social workers and solicitors to become involved in private law proceedings at a late stage. It is a welcome development to now be involved from day one, particularly where the Local Authority has extensive knowledge of the family.

In January, Southampton received 21 referrals for new Pathfinder cases. Out of those referrals, three Child Impact Reports have been allocated to Southampton social workers. The Southampton MASH manager dealing with Pathfinder referrals has described the process of liaising back and forth with the Court as “seamless” thus far with no issues.

Southampton’s Social Work Academy convened three well-attended training sessions across December and January about the purpose of Pathfinder and how to complete the Child Impact Report. At these sessions, social workers received helpful practice tips from a Birmingham social worker Adam Birchall who spoke at the Partnership Day Event. Feedback about the Child Impact Report is generally positive due to the fact that it is more prescriptive and structured than a Section 7 report.

We are cautiously optimistic about the Pathfinder process at this stage. It is reassuring to know that any problems that arise can be raised at upcoming meetings of the Local Implementation Group.

Hema Sheno, Solicitor Southampton County Council

Want to get in touch?

Please contact the person named for your organisation, alternatively:

Pathfinder-SW@justice.gov.uk

