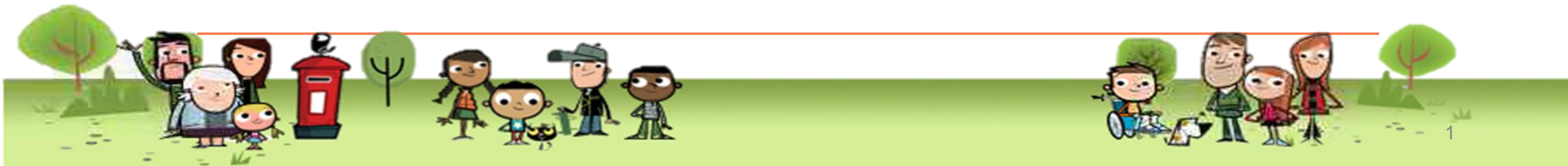




Board Meeting 26 January 2022

CEO headline messages with senior leadership team



Impact of Covid-19

1. Covid-19 Overview and contingency planning - JT
2. The numbers and our demand in context - JT
3. Prioritisation – regional updates and the balanced scorecard – JC

Performance, Accountability and Improvement

1. Performance and Accountability Framework – revisions - JC
2. Quality Assurance Framework – new – SP
3. National and Regional Improvement plans update – JC
4. Ofsted Annual Self Assessment - JT

Budget

1. Budget and Spending Review- JB

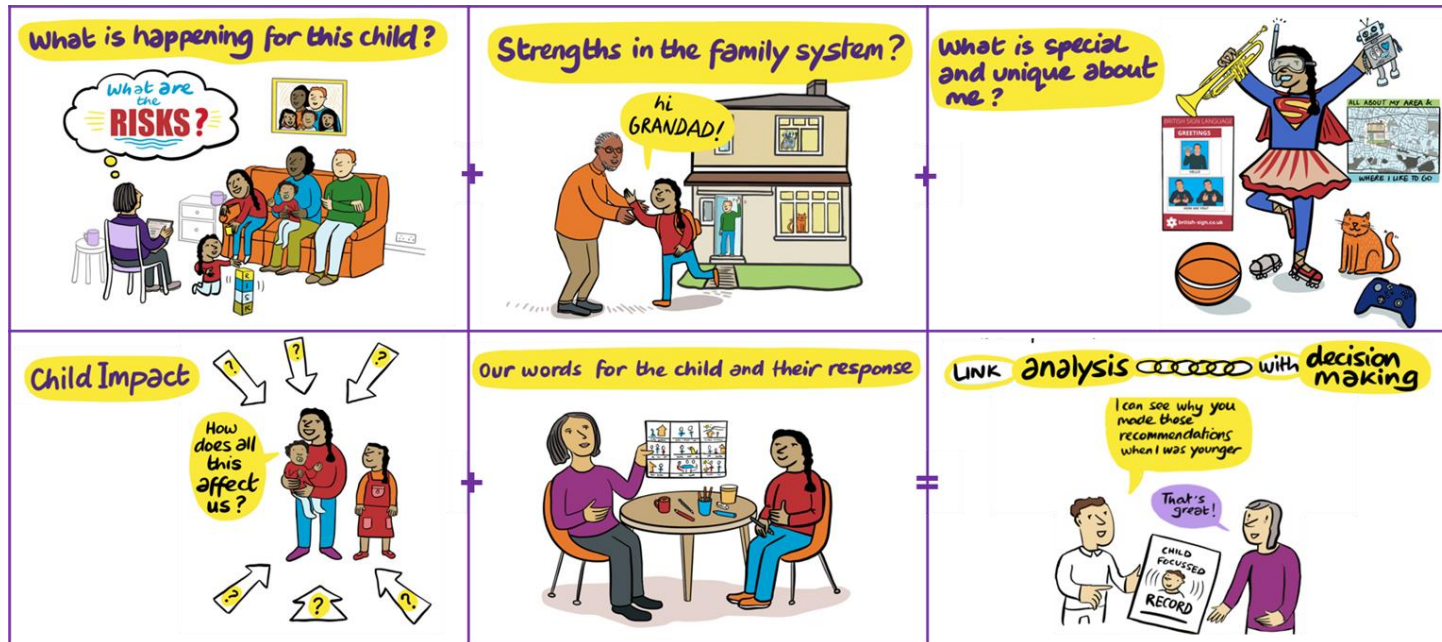
People

1. Workforce update – live issues and actions - AB
2. Workforce Matters – transformation programme update - JB
3. Annual renewal of social work registration – update - AB
4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - launch plan - JB
5. Sickness absence – draft proposals – AB
6. Leadership conference update and next steps – AB

Practice

1. Seeing children – SP/JC
2. FJYPB and Cafcass work programme
3. Together implementation plan for the year - BT
4. Principal Social Worker update - SP
5. Case Quality Audit - SP
6. Domestic Abuse learning and development plan – SP
7. Complaints review – update - TW

IMPACT OF COVID - 19



Covid-19 Overview

1. **Programme board continues to meet fortnightly** – important for data review, revisions to guidance on seeing children, offices and court attendance. Still provides much needed temperature checking and shared decision making.
2. **Since January this year – introduced a contingency planning** meeting on alternate weeks to review impact of OMICRON on staffing and capacity
3. **Business is as usual** – visits to children (with risk assessments), vulnerable colleagues (personal risk assessments) and offices open for people not able to work from home. Court attendance as ordered.
4. **Prioritisation** – remains our only alternative to saturated frontline and managers. Active in 6 of 19 areas
5. **Planning for an organisation after COVID** – new ways of working established for business services in form of working from home with support to offices – very well received
6. **People data** – closely monitored – significant rise in absence and self isolation in January (30 and 57 respectively). 4 service areas under significant pressure
7. **Morale** – holding but relentless allocations and durations are challenging on top of 2 years of uncertainty and pressure. No pay award has been damaging – we continue to lose c20 FCAs every month and whilst able to recruit, this is a serious and ongoing challenge for us. Annual staff survey positive overall
8. **Quality of practice and seeing children** remains a leadership priority. 96% of children seen have a recording – c 73% in person (14.1.22)
9. **Trades unions** are actively engaged with us
10. **Family Justice System** – remains under pressure – but Cafcass feels to be carrying a disproportionate weight. Increased recognition from MOJ though no system solutions.
11. **Visible leadership a priority** – vlogs, blogs, live events, think ins – a different sort of connection which remains popular
12. **Weekly communications** about Covid -19 and CMT decisions and questions still important – Managers receive on a Monday and all staff on a Wednesday

The numbers... *New note: To exercise caution with conclusions about pressure. Active open work is falling slowly and caseload AVERAGES are better. BUT these numbers will show (in blue colour) the very extreme pressures at the front line and in first and second line managers workloads.*

1. Number of children and families with **proceedings open to us remains c5000 cases higher than before the Pandemic. This equates to 8,000 more children.**
2. Whilst **demand in overall terms is lower than this time last year** (both public and private law), the length of time work is open to us, repeat ordered work, turnover of frontline practitioners (meaning reduced caseloads in many teams for prolonged periods) and sustained higher volumes of open work, all mean that **pressure at the frontline and for managers is not lifting significantly.**
3. There were **34,958 open active cases for Cafcass as of the end of December 2021, compared to 30,136 at the end of March 2020 (+16%).**
4. **There is 16% more active work (+4,822 cases / ~8k more children) compared to March 2020.** By type of proceedings, this means there is **13% (1,557) more open public law work and 18% (3,265) in private law.**
5. **Case durations continue to increase** and therefore negatively influence caseload levels. Public law s31 proceedings continue to average **44 weeks** and Private proceedings that go beyond the first hearing have increased to **55 weeks**. R16.4 cases in private law have increased further to **92 weeks**.
6. **Private Law pre-first hearing (EIT) cases are +14% (+1,060 cases)** when compared to the end of March 2020 snapshot.

The numbers (2)

- 1. System throughput remains compromised, there are still fewer disposals than before the pandemic and the system is opening more work than it is closing.** Between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2021 Cafcass has opened 107k new cases and closed 101k cases, leading to the additional c5k+ cases and c8k children on active cases.
- 2. Workloads for Family Court Adviser (FCAs) have reduced in the last 12 months following our leadership decision to protect frontline caseloads (and subsequent investment / increase in frontline work capacity), but still remain high in many areas:** work after first hearing is **21.7 sets of proceedings**, with **61.4%** of qualifying staff holding > 20 sets of proceedings with known future work. For private law case work before the first hearing, active caseloads average **47.1** due to increased delay in hearings.
- 3. More than 1 in 4 FCAs carrying 'above threshold' caseloads in our non-EIT teams (>25), increasing to more than 1 in 2 for FCAs working in EITs (>40)**
- 4. Duty allocations in service areas at 1,733 (2,750 children) – close to highest since CAP in 2014.** This is absorbing 25% of our service manager capacity. We are concerned about the pressure on them and our ability to oversee practice safely. This is a significant factor in the decision to activate the prioritisation process in some areas
- 5. Practice supervisors carrying on average 15.5 sets of proceedings**, of which for **70%**, they are the lead allocated social worker. This remains close to a full caseload impacting on support and oversight
- 6. In terms of system capacity at Cafcass – long term teams are at 86.5% saturation.** This means there is little headroom to allocate more work as lower overall disposal rates continue to contribute to high levels of active children's cases allocated

Our demand and pressures in context

1. In the **year to date** April – December 2021 **demand for public law has decreased by 8.5%** compared to the same period in 2020 and **Private law has decreased by 5.6%** compared to the same period in 2020. This results in an overall **reduction in new proceedings of 6.4%**
2. We have **34,958 open active cases** (c57,000 children) – this is **4,822 cases (8,000 children)** more than 1 April 2020 – 13% more public law and 18% more private law work is open – **see slide 2**
3. **A risk of suppressed demand remains** as the system starts to recover. Latest MoJ data forecasts likely demand increases in 2022/23 of potentially over 10%.

However **demand is only a part of the context**

1. **Durations** on all cases are longer resulting in more work and repeat work 44 weeks public law, 55 private law if there is work beyond the first hearing - we will be looking at how to make the best use of 'inactive time'
2. **Completing proceedings** – the number of cases concluding in courts is still lower (about 10%) than it was before the pandemic
3. **Volumes of section 7 reports** after first hearing in private law have increased by 16% this year to date including an increase in **addendum reports** of 15%
4. Our **staff turnover** in some places is higher than it was, which means that work cannot be allocated as quickly whilst new FCAs build up their learning and experience

Our demand and pressures in context (2)

1. Because we have ~**8,000** more children in our system than we did in March 2020, we have had to **take action as a leadership team in partnership with the Cafcass board to protect the well-being of our colleagues and to prioritise the effectiveness of our work with children and families.** We have had to be much more thoughtful about a caseload ceiling.
2. As a **starting point**, we set this at 25 in work after first hearing and 40 in work before the first hearing (EIT). **This is not a fixed or inflexible number** but depends on many factors discussed between FCAs and their managers.
3. The **impact of protecting frontline caseloads is significant** because the children and their casework have to be managed somewhere
4. **Our additional ~8,000 children**
 - ✓ About **43%** (c2,200 cases or c3,500 children) are **allocated to permanent FCAs.** We have 129 more since March 2020
 - ✓ About **29%** (c660 cases or c1,000 children) are **allocated to locum FCAs** of which we have 62 at the current time. Our pre – pandemic numbers were between 14 and 30.
 - ✓ About **27%** (c400 cases or c600 children) are **allocated EITHER substantively to Practice Supervisors and Service Managers or are held on duty** (c1,200 cases or c1,900 children)
 - ✓ **Allocation hubs** are holding c600 cases (c1000 children)
5. Our **challenge now is to reduce the additional ~8,000 children back down to the pre – pandemic numbers.** Whilst we are working out ways to do this, MOJ have recognised our in year pressure to end March 2022 and we will retain our current staffing levels. **Phase 2 engages us in restoring our management capacity so that lead allocations are not with practice supervisors or service managers AND that the additional work on duty is allocated to new FCAs.**

Prioritisation – a regional update and our balanced scorecard headlines

Prioritisation (at 31/12/2021)

- 4 regions have activated prioritisation and opened allocation hubs (supporting 6 service areas and 14 courts): Region 1: A12 Birmingham, the Black Country, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire; and A13 Coventry and Northampton; Region 2 A3 Greater Manchester; Region 3 West Yorkshire; and A4 South Yorkshire & Humberside; Region 4 A14 Essex, Suffolk & Norfolk.
- 2 other service areas came close to activating prioritisation but managed to pull back: A9 Cheshire & Merseyside and A15B London Private Law.
- So, 6 of 19 service areas are in prioritisation – with 2/3 likely to de-activate in February/March: A4, A12 and A13
- Additional MoJ funding is being used to establish Post-Assessment Hubs as a sustainable way of reducing the pressures on FCAs and service managers – 5 have been/are being established – in the South West Region; Birmingham and West Midlands; South/West Yorkshire & Humberside; Easter Region; and London Private Law.

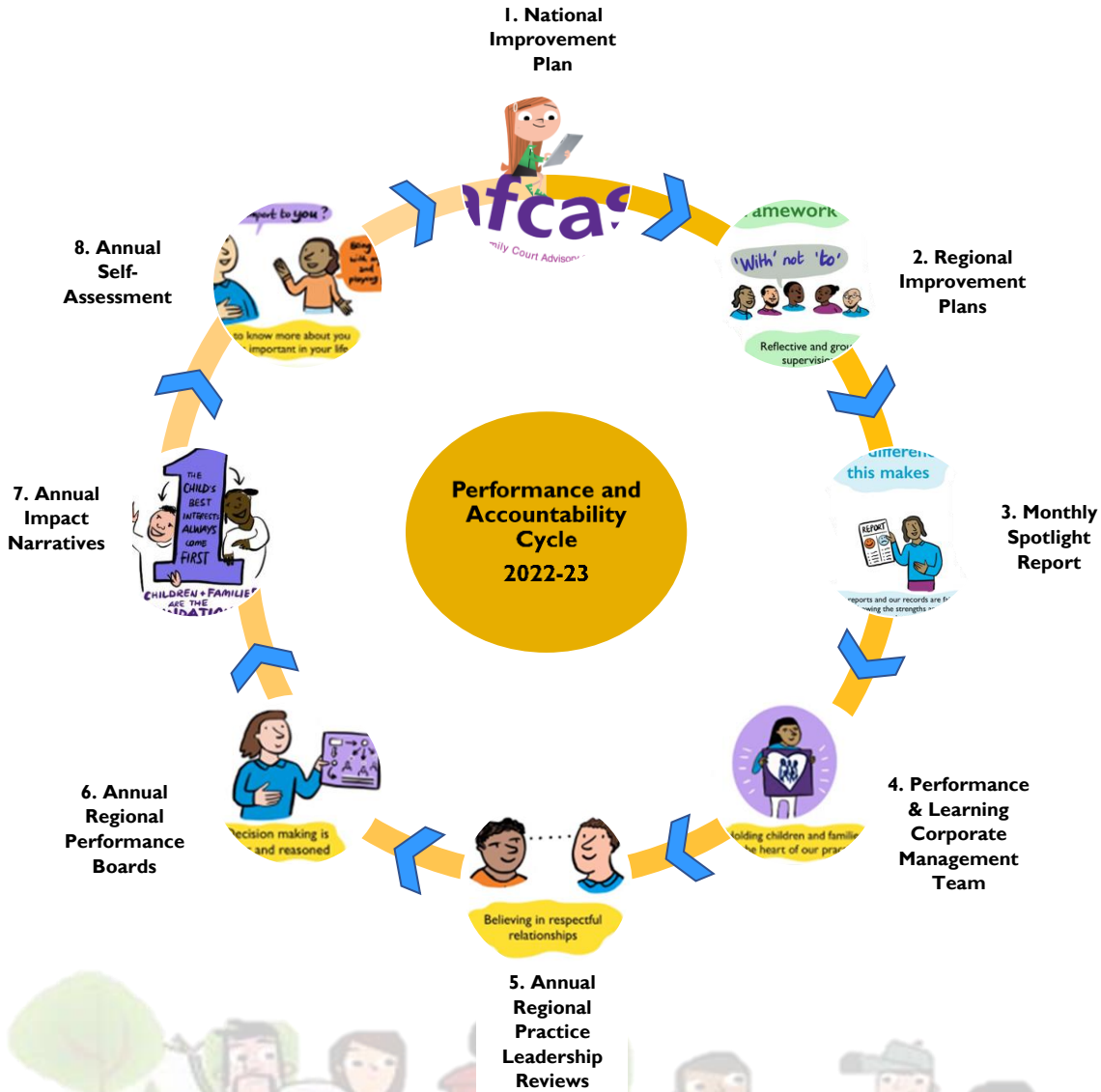
Balanced Scorecard highlights – [13.1.21](#)

- Total demand (April-Dec) -6.4% (3,000 children's cases) Public: -8.5% and Private: -5.6%
- Number of duty cases has reduced to 1,114 – only 1 service area with 3 figures
- Days to allocation has reduced to an average of 15.7 days – only 4 service areas above 20 days
- Service Managers holding duty cases has reduced to an average of 10.8 – only 3 service areas above 20
- Practice Supervisors holding over 12 children's cases has barely changed at an average of 48.3%
- FCA saturation has reduced with only 5 service areas now above 90%
- The average number of children's cases has reduced to 21.7 with an average of 25.7% above 25
- While the average QAIs rated Good or Outstanding is now at 81.6% the average percentage of FCAs without a QAI in the last 3 months has increased to 29%

PERFORMANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT

<p>What is happening for this child?</p>	<p>Strengths in the family system?</p>	<p>What is special and unique about me?</p>
<p>Child Impact</p> <p>How does all this affect us?</p>	<p>Our words for the child and their response</p>	<p>LINK analysis is with decision making</p> <p>I can see why you made those recommendations when I was younger</p> <p>That's great!</p>

Performance and accountability framework – revisions



Explanatory Key:

1. National Improvement plan: Bi –annual

- **Purpose:** Establishes annual priorities for improvement derived from learning, inspection and performance oversight

2. Regional Improvement plans: Bi –annual

- **Purpose:** Establish leadership and practice priorities for the region and service areas

3. Monthly Spotlight Report:

- **Purpose:** To monitor areas of practice improvement which require targeted and regular oversight in all regions

4. Performance and Learning Corporate Management Team (6 weekly)

- **Purpose:** To review Data, Audit, Feedback and Impact by national and regional themes and to make individual improvement commitments for intervening 6 weeks which are reported back to the same group

5. Annual regional Practice Leadership Reviews (annual – 6 months before regional performance board)

- **Purpose:** To review the impact of leaders on practice and improvement in each region

6. Annual Regional Performance Boards

- **Purpose:** To hold National Operational Director and Assistant Directors to account for progress with improvement priorities and evidence of change for children

7. Annual Impact Narratives (Bi Annual and updated between 5 and 6 above)

- **Purpose:** To report evidence of impact on children and their families through the learning, improvement and performance oversight throughout the year

8. Annual Self – Assessment

- **Purpose:** To present to Ofsted our understanding of the quality and impact of practice, our evidence base and our improvement priorities

Quality Assurance Framework – new

Explanatory Key:

1. Local Practice Audits and Practice Observations (4 audits per year per FCA and 2 observations)

- **Purpose:** Practice oversight. 2 of the 4 are collaborative with family feedback and FCAs self assess on impact before the collaborative audit. Observed practice evidences the transfer of learning into practice, identifies impact and sets improvement actions

2. Moderation Reviews (monthly)

- **Purpose:** Moderation of local practice audits for oversight, practice discussion and improvement

3. National Case Quality Audits (3x 200 cases – 30% moderated by NIS)

- **Purpose:** Supplements local practice audits with national overview. Improvement priority themes included and one of three national audits always focused on domestic abuse work.. A proportion are collaborative and seek family feedback

4. National Improvement Service Reviews (as directed- currently 30% of Serious incident reports)

- **Purpose:** Focused case review for learning following a serious incident report where there is probable learning for the organisation

5. Regional Practice Analyses (as directed from spotlight)

- **Purpose:** Targets additional practice scrutiny on areas for improvement in all regions, including collaborative audit and a local learning conversation where specific practice issues identified

6. Back to LOCAL practice audits (monthly)

- **Purpose:** Senior regional leadership oversight of practice improvement and learning

7. Back to NATIONAL practice audits: (8 per year by CE, National Director and Deputies)

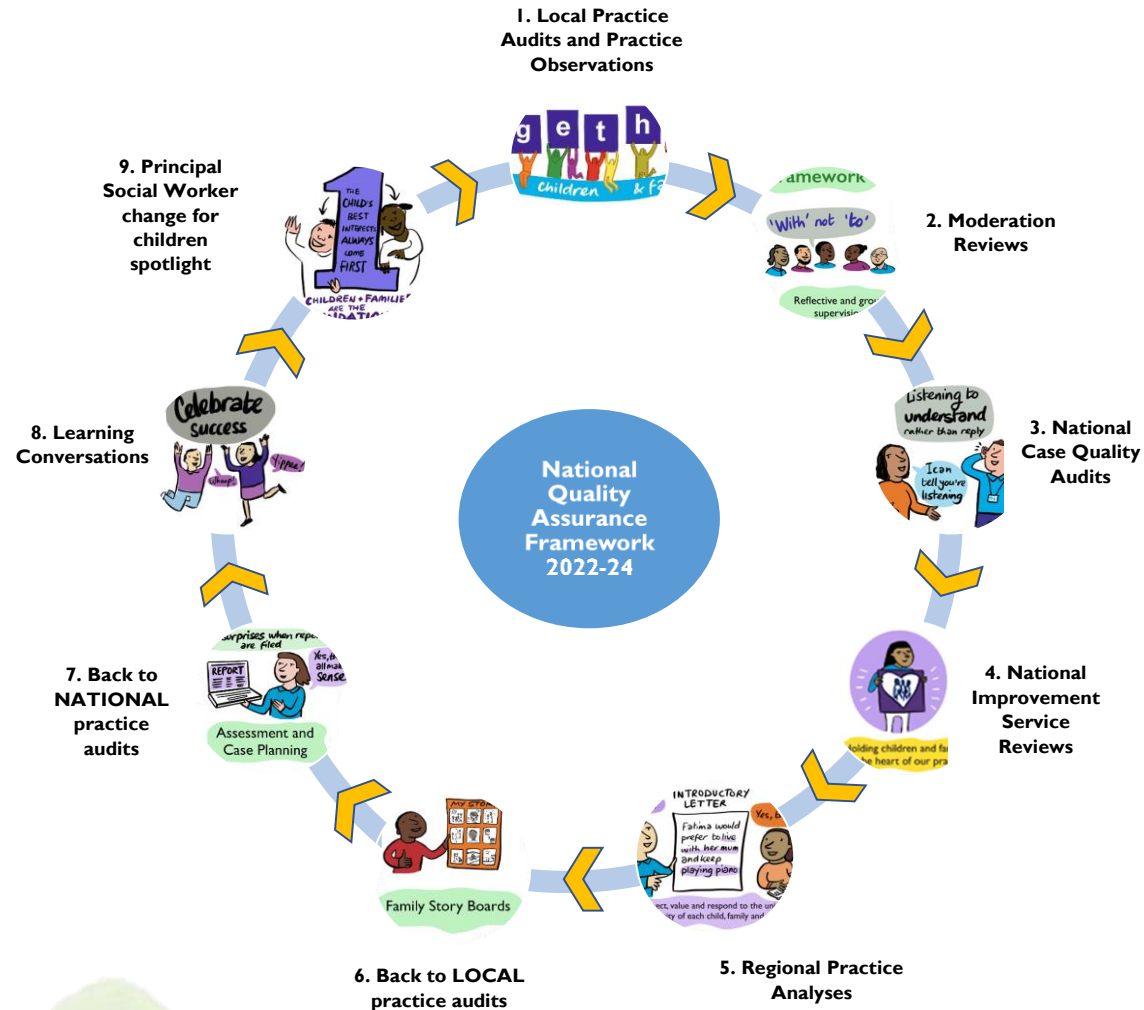
- **Purpose:** Senior national leadership of practice improvement and learning

8. Learning conversations: as directed

- **Purpose:** Dip sampling from learning knowledge bites in advance of regional learning festivals (one per year)

9. Principal Social Worker ‘change for children spotlight’ (annual)

- **Purpose:** Review of evidence in discussion with Assistant Directors in respect of improved and changed practice making a difference to children throughout the year. Informs annual impact narratives. Includes AD review of sample of introductory letters testing extent to which uniqueness of children is explored and understood



National and Regional Improvement Planning – update

- Progress in implementing the **Regional Improvement Plans** being evaluated by the Assistant Directors with support from the Learning Analysis Manager – drawing evidence from performance data, audit, management oversight, supervision and feedback
- **Impact narratives** being written to inform annual Ofsted self-assessment and annual engagement meeting – whilst there is significant evidence of actions to improve the quality of practice, evidencing the impact has been more challenging
- **Improvement plan evaluations are evidencing that the quality and impact of practice has been sustained** through another challenging year – with some aspects of practice improving
- **Variations in performance between regions** for a combination of reasons, including differences in demand pressures; capacity of service managers; staff turnover; staff sickness; and in the reliance on locum practitioners
- Self-assessment will inform review and refresh of the National Improvement Plan as set out in accountability cycle
- **Top 5 practice improvement priorities and 5 leadership improvement priorities** will be agreed for 2022/23 and subject to scrutiny through the Performance & Accountability Framework
- There will be a **greater focus on evidencing impact through undertaking the required number of QAIs**

Ofsted Annual Self – Evaluation – new

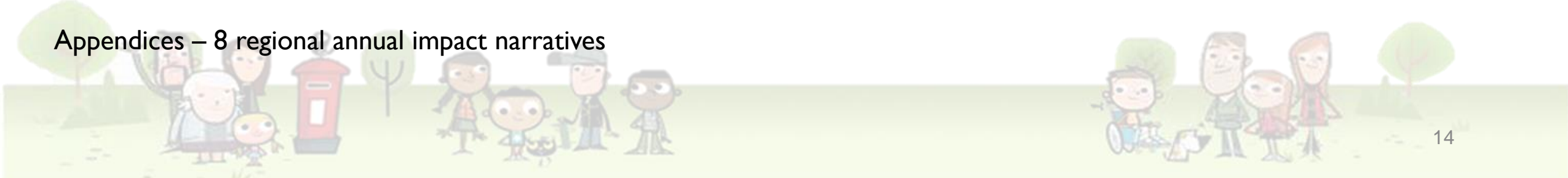
1. Due for **submission** 15 February 2022

2. Used as basis for **Annual Engagement meeting** (early April 2022) and inspection/visit planning

3. Main structure

- i. Impact of Covid-19, strategic priorities, transformation and summary of the difference we have made
- ii. The five Ofsted questions (What are we hearing from children, what do we know about practice, how do we know it, what are the learning themes, what are our improvement priorities), practice framework, performance learning and Improvement, since the last inspection
- iii. Demand in public and private law
- iv. Quality Assurance
- v. Our People
- vi. Leadership (including impact, supervision, partnerships and reform)
- vii. Improvement plans

Appendices – 8 regional annual impact narratives



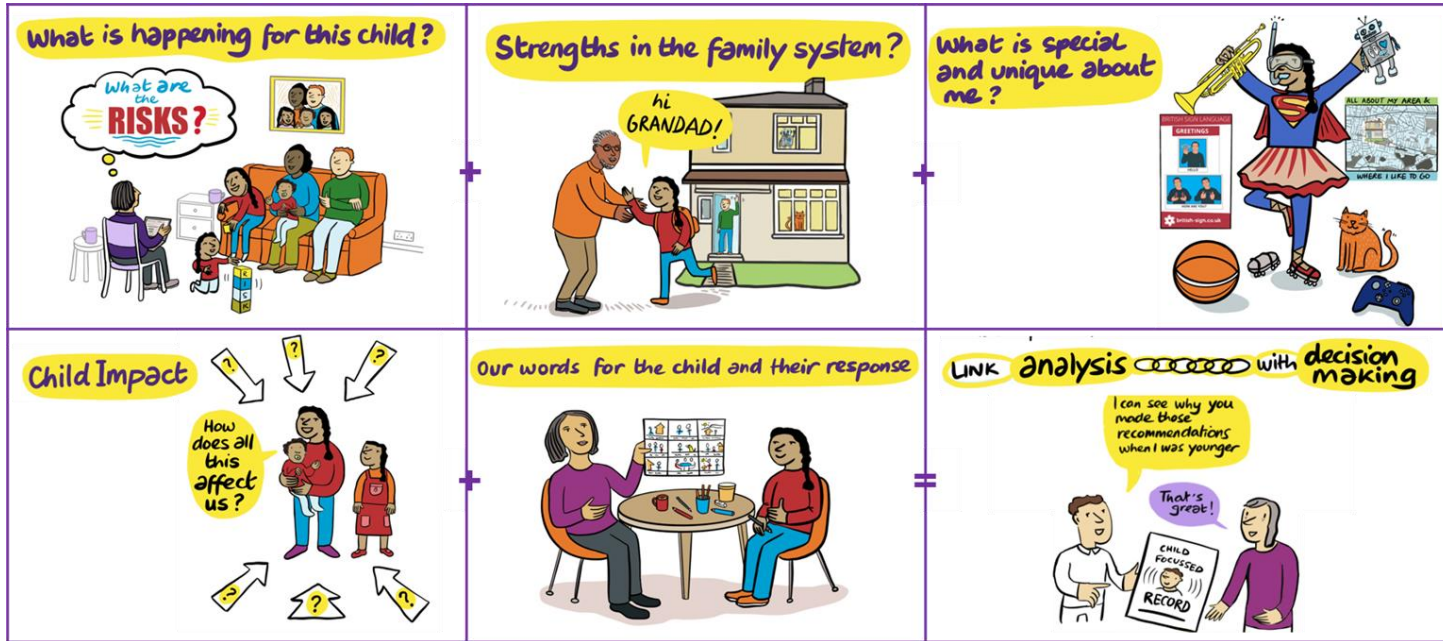
BUDGET AND RESOURCE

<p>What is happening for this child?</p>	<p>Strengths in the family system?</p>	<p>What is special and unique about me?</p>
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Budget and Spending Review 2022/23

- We have received provisional allocations for 2022/23 – 2024/25
- This allocation consolidates the additional spending approval of £4.7m into baseline awarded in 2021/22. Current projections assume this additional spending approval will be utilised
- Included within the allocation are uplifts for general and pay inflation (although the latter remains subject to separate approval processes). These uplifts are replicated across the three years provisional allocations through to 2024/25
- The balance of increase in the allocation will have to cover any unavoidable cost increases, including a number of estates moves as well as resource the delivery of the remainder of our Strategic Programme
- All in all this is a positive settlement, reflective of the MOJ's continuing support of Cafcass, especially enabling us to maintain higher staffing levels to support the ongoing elevated level of open children's cases

PEOPLE

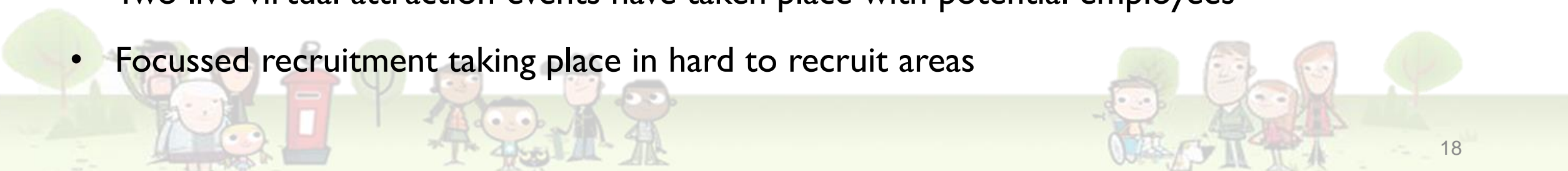


Workforce Update – Live issues and Actions

- Turnover of social workers, corporate and business service colleagues remains an issue. We have been successfully able to recruit more joiners than leavers from 1st April 2021 to 13th January 2022

	Joined	Joining January	Leavers	Balance
FCA's	187	13	119	+81
Other	80	9	62	+27
Total	267	22	181	+108

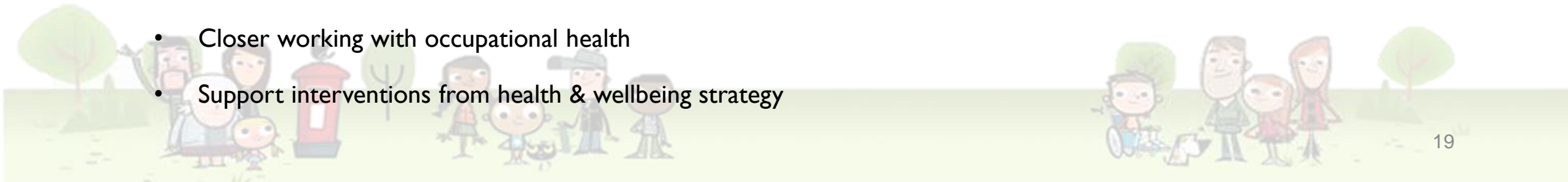
- Most common reasons for leaving are retirement and career progression
- Ongoing work on attraction, employee value proposition and Employee Brand
- Two live virtual attraction events have taken place with potential employees
- Focussed recruitment taking place in hard to recruit areas



Workforce Update – Live issue – Sickness absence

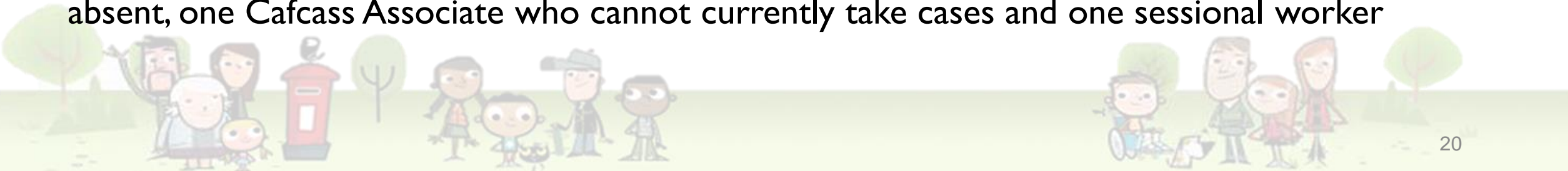
Sickness Absence remains high - recently increased with Omicron

- The current Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) due to sickness for social work staff as at 12 January 2022 for the last 3 months is 12.5 days for Social work staff and 10.7 days for Corporate & Business Services staff. The recent increase has been largely due to Omicron
- We have had a peak of 37 staff away from work with Covid and up to 60 working at home but self isolating
- Sickness due to Mental ill health at work for Social Workers has seen a large decrease from the peak, representing 25% of absence days to 15% now
- Sickness absence proposals to CMT in early February to consider:
 - Option of more focussed triggers rather than discretionary triggers
 - Improved training on managing sickness absence
 - Increased focus and ownership by managers
 - Closer working with occupational health
 - Support interventions from health & wellbeing strategy



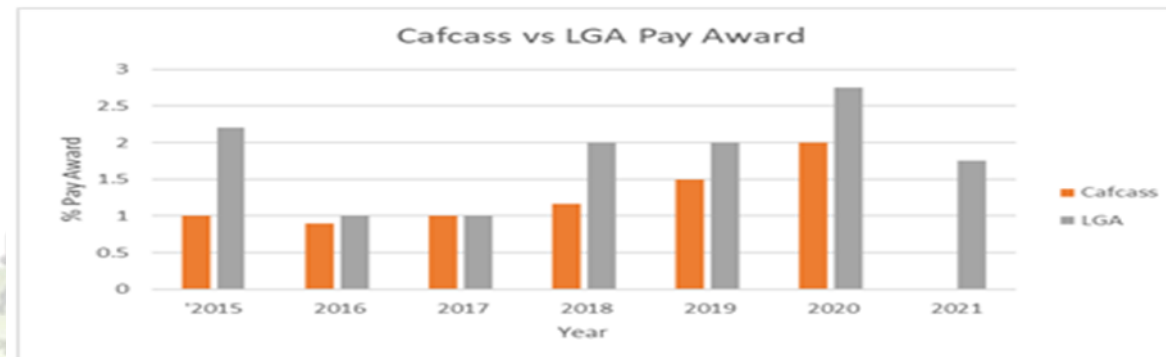
Social Work Registration – December 2021

- **Cafcass has continued to refund the cost of Social Work England registration**
- **SWE online register** is less user friendly for employers and doesn't allow for real-time updates on re-registration.
- In addition to news items and all-staff comms, we utilised the Cafcass Learning system to send reminder emails and track progress on re-registration by asking staff to log that they had completed the process with SWE.
- Targeted follow up was then undertaken to ensure completion of registration.
- Live register was checked/monitored in December.
- **1,713 staff were refunded for SWE registration fees in January '22 payroll (100% bar 3)**
- There are currently 3 workers who did not renew their registration of which one is long-term absent, one Cafcass Associate who cannot currently take cases and one sessional worker



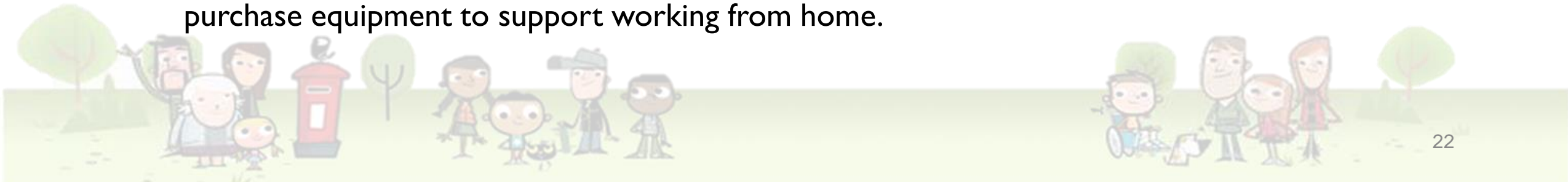
Pay Award 2021/22

- No Pay Award for Staff earning over £24,000
- £250 Award for Staff Earning under £24,000 FTE salary pro-rata - to be paid in Feb 2022
- Although not unexpected, as central government pay pause announced by Chancellor in Nov 2020, very unwelcomed after such a difficult year when colleagues have given so much
- Limited options within central government pay mechanisms to offer an award and Cafcass could not meet the very restricted criteria.
- Puts Cafcass at a further disadvantage against Local Authorities most of whom are likely to make an award of 1.75%



Pay Award 2021/22

- Pay Award has been communicated back to both colleagues and Unions
- Unions are very disappointed as they had put in a joint pay claim of 3% pointing out that staff at Local Authorities have received an award. They have written with their concerns to MOJ – the Secretary of State
- Options we are considering
 - 1) Formally seeking greater delegated autonomy on pay which reflects the arms-length nature of our relationship and recognition that our appropriate pay benchmarks are not with the civil service.
 - 2) Introducing an option to buy and sell annual leave.
 - 3) Greater flexibility around ways of working and working patterns.
 - 4) Continuing the Covid disruption fund into 2022 to allow colleagues to claim up to £100 to purchase equipment to support working from home.



Cafcass Leadership Conference – December 2021

- 222 leaders and managers at this first event
- Themes – leading change, staff survey headlines, leadership behaviours
- External speaker – John Ameachi
- Highly positive feedback from attendees
- Next steps:
 - ✓ Leadership development programmes
 - first priority for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues
 - ✓ Embedding and leading new behaviours



Workforce matters- transformation update

Progress continues to be made across the four elements of this programme:

- **New Reward Package** - CMT considered and agreed in December 2021, the scope of elements of reward to be taken forward and developed within this review. These include proposals to impact on pay itself (baseline, allowances and expenses) as well as options for flexibility aside from pay (including flexible working and annual leave).
- **Pay Structure** - To be driven by the findings and recommendations of work currently being led by Director of Operations, the requirement for revised pay structures should also align with career and qualification pathways for social work staff within Cafcass. Equivalent pathways will be developed for Corporate and Business Services.
- **Cafcass Academy** - We continue to embed and expand the Academy as a source of internal talent development in order to secure our own supply of social workers. The extension of an offer from the Academy to all staff will be explored in a workshop before financial year end
- **Single View; current and future staff levels** – work on the module within the HR/Payroll system continues



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

- **The work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group**

- 25 November 2021: review of role and respective contributions of the Steering Group, Diversity Champions and Diversity Staff Networks. Agreement of monitoring arrangements for current year priorities under the 4 objectives of the emerging Strategy. Review progress on actions to ensure compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty. Review of three month forward look on ERD&I calendar. Review of feedback from Black History Month live event.
- 19 January 2022: focus on draft ED&I Strategy. Setting out priority actions under the four objectives and the principles underpinning delivery of the strategy. Further drafting changes for review at March Steering Group, then to Cafcass Board in April 2022.

- **Other activities in the period under review**

- Annual Gender Pay Gap Report is being finalised ready for publication by end March
- Staff Networks currently engaged in work to explore appropriate terminology/classification of EDI data to improve the options for children, families and staff to tell us about their protected characteristics and other aspects of their identity
- Recruitment training currently being updated to ensure it incorporates EDI effectively to ensure that all staff involved in the recruitment process have a level of EDI knowledge and skills appropriate to their role/responsibilities.

PRACTICE

<p>What is happening for this child?</p>	<p>Strengths in the family system?</p>	<p>What is special and unique about me?</p>
<p>Child Impact</p> <p>How does all this affect us?</p>	<p>Our words for the child and their response</p>	<p>LINK analysis is with decision making</p> <p>I can see why you made those recommendations when I was younger</p> <p>That's great!</p>

Seeing children – an update

- **Our priority continues to be to see children in person wherever possible.** Staff undertake risk assessments prior to a visit to reduce the risks associated with Covid-19 to children and families and themselves
- As at 20 January 2022, **96% of children with open active cases were recorded as having had a meeting** with their Family Court Adviser, with **71.1% of children having had a ‘seen in person’** record added.
- We continue to investigate and formally manage the process for children for whom there is no record of being seen, to seek and test the rationale.
- Our focus remains on: ensuring all children have a record of the engagement with them; on the quality of that engagement and ensuring a child’s voice is heard; that children and young people have a say about how the engagement happens,; and that the rationales for the decisions regarding, timing and method of meeting are recorded. We also consider how we can best meet the unique needs of a child when seeing them.



Cafcass and Family Justice Children and Young People's Board work programme – new

- The FJYPB increased the number of commissions undertaken from **316** in 2020 to **457** in 2021. **239** of the 2021 commissions were with Cafcass.
- Cafcass promoted the increase in work through: funding for additional support to the board; commitment for the voice of the FJYPB to be represented in all aspects of work, practice and policy development; and challenge to achieve a greater impact.
- The FJYPB have a detailed work plan with Cafcass which includes:
 - ❖ *Feedback strategy including children's complaints*
 - ❖ *Children's voices in proceedings*
 - ❖ *Domestic abuse : Improving the voice of the child in decisions made.*
 - ❖ *Regional Performance Boards*
- 2022 key events:

Book launch – 27th January 2022

Voice of the Child Conference – 28th July 2022



Together Implementation Plan 2022

Learning



Monthly Together theme and live event • Champions training on key aspects of our Together Framework - restorative practice, group supervision, appreciative inquiry, assessment and child's plan, family story boards and equality, diversity, and inclusion. Champions deliver to their teams via group supervision • Aligning all Cafcass training to Together • Resources and support materials on how to use introductory letters, child's plan, storyboards, appreciative inquiry, and the diversity wheel • Weekly champions drop-ins, monthly group supervision, quarterly champions festivals, mid-term implementation review and an annual practice week. Quarterly group supervision for Champions with NIS.

Leadership



Together Champions lead in developing and adopting a new workplace culture. Target is to have 500 • Leaders ensure time, support, and constructive challenge to prioritise implementation, understand the difference it makes and develop skills to apply Together • Assistant Directors and Heads of Practice are leads for our Together values; developing practice expectations and ensuring systems support practice • Together is reviewed monthly at Head of Practice meetings and Operational Management Team • Corporate Management Team focus 6 weekly at Transformation Board • Strategically a Steering Group chaired by the CEO and Tactical Group chaired by National Operations Director meet monthly.

Systems alignment



New People and Organisational Development Strategy • Developing values in action statements aligned to Together - used in HR, recruitment, performance learning reviews and supervision • ChildFirst Data Project - collaborative work with analytics and ChildFirst to identify opportunities to capture the impact of Together with children and families • Digital storyboard working group • Family Forum materials for parents around early intervention, welcome packs, and sharing recommendations • Together with Partners strategy, including FJYPB Top Tips for professionals and work with the judiciary around child-friendly orders and judgements.

Quality assurance



Aligned quality assurance framework and audit tool; being clear on what good looks like and impact made for children • Private Law Practice Quality Standards • Launch Feedback Strategy and continue to seek feedback from children and families on their experience with Cafcass. Did our practice reflect our values? What impact did this have? What can we learn? • Additions to the staff survey to obtain feedback on the difference Together has made for those working at Cafcass • 3 month review after each monthly focused theme – asking colleagues how we are doing and asking children and families what difference this has made.

New child's plan – January 31

<p>What is happening for this child?</p> <p>What are the RISKS?</p>	<p>Strengths in the family system?</p> <p>hi GRANDAD!</p>	<p>What is special and unique about me?</p>
<p>Child Impact</p> <p>How does all this affect us?</p>	<p>Our words for the child and their response</p>	<p>LINK analysis with decision making</p> <p>I can see why you made those recommendations when I was younger</p> <p>That's great!</p>



In 2022.....

- ✓ **Not using our practice framework as the foundation for all of our work, should feel more significant than having no home wifi or broadband**
- ✓ **No child in 2022 should tell us that they don't understand the reasons for our recommendations to the family court**

January – decision making is clear and reasoned

- Champions Festival (17th)
- Child's Plan virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Child's Plan live on ChildFirst (31st)
- Values in action statements
- Digital storyboard working group established



February – values in action

- Showcasing our values, values in action statements launched
- Showcasing the Child's Plan
- Together with Partners strategy launched
- ChildFirst Data Project begins



March – from learning to impact

- Implementation stocktake: storyboards, child's plan, appreciative inquiry, group supervision, introductory and ending letters, welcome packs, practice quality standards
- People and Organisational strategy implementation review
- Family Forum 'Top Tips' on early intervention + video list of explainers



April – restorative practice

- Champions Festival with Mark Finnis (27th)
- New Quality Assurance Framework and QAI tool launched
- Updated Performance Learning Review aligned to the values of Together
- Clear and reasoned decisions: Are we showing our working out? - let's ask children and families...



May – always looking for the strengths and risk

- Reflective and group supervision virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Group supervision programme for champions led by NIS launched



June – feedback from families

- (Re)launch Feedback Strategy
- Introductions and endings with children and families: How are we doing? Welcome letters for families: Are they? let's ask children and families...
- Private Law Practice Quality Standards



July – holding children and families at the heart of our practice

- Together Champions Festival with Mark Finnis (11th)
- Family storyboards virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Quality Assurance: what difference - let's ask our colleagues...



August – professional development

- Virtual marketplace – career development, training, personal and professional development
- Reflective and group supervision: what difference - let's ask our colleagues...



September – believing in respectful relationships

- Practice Week with Mark Finnis (14th - 20th)
- Appreciative inquiry virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Health and wellbeing activities for staff
- Together training in induction
- Restorative practice training for all

October – wanting to know more about you and what is important in your life

- Introductory letters and reporting to court virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Diversity wheel virtual toolkit launched (resources and support materials pack)
- Family storyboards: how are we doing?

November – together with partners

- Testing our impact - What would others expect to see differently in our practice over the next year using the Together framework? ADCS, local authorities, Ofsted, Judiciary, HMCTS, legal partners and Social Work England.
- Annual staff survey

How will we know we're making a difference?



December – reflections from the year

- Appreciative inquiry: how are we doing?
- Programme of health and wellbeing activities for staff



Principal Social Worker Update

1. Private Law Practice Quality Standards - not yet live. Include collated points from practice learning, such as:

- extent of enquiries in s.7 extending to wider family, clarity on recommendations for spending time with a child when there has been Domestic Abuse, knowledge on specific cultural issues

2. Private law model of practice – in development as a transformation project

- A confident model of triage/ risk identification,
- Link more closely with LA community based early help offers and work with LAs on a shared approach - workshop with Essex CC

3. Transferring learning into practice and assessing its impact

- Learning reviews commenced on high profile deaths of children. There are two in progress
- Reunification – Children’s Guardians’ in their role as critical friends in local authority case plans
- Audit tracking impact on key practice improvement priorities

4. Development of systems and skills to support reflective supervision

5. Being a feedback led organisation

- Feedback themes collated and shared at the Learning and Improvement Conference – 3 March
- Family Forum

6. Supporting Social Work practice in the context of Covid - Emotional mapping programme

7. Social Work Academy

- The campaign for next year’s recruitment of current students into the Aspiring Programme and of NQSWs is underway
- Monthly Social Work Academy meetings established, monitoring Academy achievements, standards and plans

8. Avoiding orders for wasted costs

- An eLearning module and a knowledge bite on Wasted Costs have been launched. To support all social work staff to avoid them. **To assist service managers**-additional information is being added to the dashboard to help identify upcoming hearings where the FCA is recorded as being absent (sickness/annual leave).

November 2021 Case Quality Audit

- 120 children's public and private law records.
- Audit concluded that practice was **Good or Outstanding in 71% of children's cases. This is a better result than we have found in the past.** In this practice we could see what the FCA was thinking and why they gave the advice they did.
- **26% was judged to meet our standard** with improvements to make and **3% did not meet our standard and required managers to oversee the improvement.**
- FCAs working hard to **build relationships with children**, writing to them to introduce themselves, seeing them when they needed to be seen, keeping them informed about what was happening and helping the court and adults focus on what was happening for the child.
- Children's records had **detailed recordings** that we thought children would understand if they looked at them. Recordings were kindly and respectfully written
- FCAs working hard to understand what was unique about children and what each child in a family needed. This was better than what we have seen in the past. **Further work is needed to sustain the focus on what is unique about children**
- FCAs spoke about having too much work to do everything they should and everything they wanted to do. Most FCAs knew what the gaps in their practice were but felt unable to do everything. **Some FCAs and managers are feeling overwhelmed.** This was found more frequently than in past audits.
- **Understanding domestic abuse and making a clear, understandable risk assessment** where there had been domestic abuse needed to be better in practice graded Requires Improvement and, in some practice that was graded Met.

Action plan The key learning themes from this audit are in relation to **Diversity and Domestic Abuse**. These areas already feature in the National and Regional Improvement plans and further plans to support the transfer of this learning into practice were approved by CMT

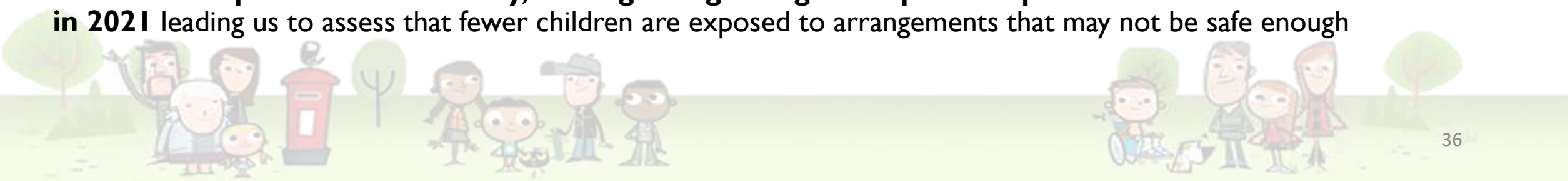
Improving our work in proceedings featuring domestic abuse and our learning and improvement plan - update

The top 5 changes required in practice are:

1. Family Court Advisers to **routinely contact other professionals who know the child** to assist with our assessment
2. Our recommendations should be **well reasoned more consistently and explain the recommendations to children** when appropriate to do so
3. **Use of introductory letters, storyboards and other restorative direct work techniques** associated with the *Together with Children and Families* Practice Framework are increasing, but need to be used consistently so that all children feel they can explain if they feel frightened, what they have experienced and what they want to happen
4. We are getting better at **distinguishing domestic abuse from harmful conflict**, and at risk assessing 'non recent' harmful behaviours without minimising them as 'historic'. We **need to do this consistently and make sure** that recommendations flow from the analysis into reports
5. Our understanding of the impact of **coercively controlling behaviour** on children is improving. This needs to extend to include Family Court Advisers **understanding how the mental ill health of a victim can be used by an abusive parent to cause further trauma to the individual in proceedings**

Domestic Abuse Case File Audit (1) – November 2021

- A. Audit of practice undertaken in the **context of additional pressures** on Family Court Advisers (FCAs) Practice Supervisors and Service Managers
- B. Wider practice improvement priorities, including the implementation of Together, which support improvements in domestic abuse practice, such as **using introductory letters, explaining our rationales and sharing recommendations, show signs of improvement but are not yet consistently applied**
- C. The **Cafcass Domestic Abuse Learning & Development Programme** launched in May 2021. **Improvement plan monitored by the Domestic Abuse Learning and Improvement Board** was published in June 2021.
- D. Audit in October 2021, 49% of Family Court Advisers (FCA) had attended a development workshop. **More than 1300 FCAs have now completed or are part way through the learning and development programme.**
- E. Regional Improvement Plans specify the **activity underway locally to improve practice where domestic abuse is a feature of the child's life.**
- F. In the 2020 audit (and in other private law audits), **8.5% of child records found that the decision making for the child did not promote their safety, leading to a grading of 'requires improvement'. This has reduced to 4.5% in 2021** leading us to assess that fewer children are exposed to arrangements that may not be safe enough



Domestic Abuse Case File Audit (2)

- H. Range of case quality audits through the year have reached similar conclusions, that a **higher percentage of children's records where domestic abuse is a risk are graded met and requires improvement than in other aspects of practice**
- I. There is **significant regional variation** in the audit grades.
- J. There is **evidence from local and national audits and from the external moderation exercise, that there is improvement in key areas of practice** that were raised by the Harm Panel report, including **sensitive safeguarding interviews, careful use of language, trauma informed practice, distinguishing domestic abuse from harmful conflict, and risk assessing 'non recent' harmful behaviours without minimising them as 'historic'**.
- K. **In 2020 60.5% of families were judged to have received a service that was good or better. Our 2021 audit judged good or better work in 58.5% of the sample.** Our organisational priority on improving our work in proceedings where domestic abuse is known or alleged, requires us to **continue helping children to explain their experiences, understanding the impact of all domestic abuse on children regardless of when it happened, consistently assessing and addressing coercive control and consulting with other professionals who know the child/ren.**
- L. Evidence from the **2021** audit, indicates that **although there are clear signs of improvement, progress is not yet consistently good**
- M. Managers and supervisors in the regions need to bring a relentless and forensic focus to this aspect of practice in the coming year, **learning from the approach and success of those areas that have achieved more progress and improvement in the quality of practice**

Complaints service review – update

Reminder: we recommenced our review co-chaired by the Director of Strategy and Director of Operations. One year: Sept 2021 to Sept 2022

Objectives: restore timeliness and efficiency given increased volumes; support children and families with the ‘how and when’ of giving feedback, making representations or complaints; provide proportionate responses which seek resolution at earliest opportunity; align complaints system with ‘Together’, our new practice model; improve how we reflect on learning and ensure it is actioned to improve our service; and improve our ability to evidence the performance of the complaints service.

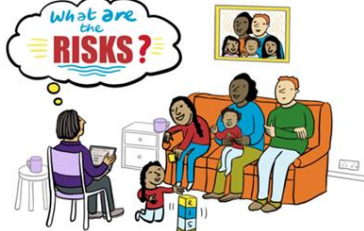





So far we have:

- commenced workshops with the customer service team to map current processes and resource requirements, and review a representative range of case examples to identify what could be done differently to improve our approach with children and families
- reviewed how work of other teams, including corporate functions, links with complaints and other types of feedback and correspondence.
- spoken with colleagues across government and with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to learn from their experience and anticipate planned changes to the complaints standards framework for government departments.

What next?

- **By March 22:** we will have drafted our new complaints policy/process, setting out our approach drafted by the end of March, with greater clarity on how our process will deliver timely resolution for children and families, in the most cost effective way. Where possible, we will have implemented some immediate improvements to how we can more quickly get to the essence of a complaint or representation, and improve the timeliness of our response.
- **By September 22** – we expect to have migrated to new ways of working to fully implement new policy and procedures, including as they apply to our wider correspondence functions

THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS

<p>What is happening for this child?</p>  <p>What are the RISKS?</p>	<p>Strengths in the family system?</p>  <p>hi GRANDAD!</p>	<p>What is special and unique about me?</p>  <p>ALL ABOUT MY AREA A</p> <p>WHERE I LIKE TO GO</p>
<p>Child Impact</p>  <p>How does all this affect us?</p>	<p>Our words for the child and their response</p> 	<p>LINK analysis is with decision making</p>  <p>I can see why you made those recommendations when I was younger</p> <p>That's great!</p>