



# Board Meeting 28 April 2022

**CEO headline messages with senior leadership team**



# For today...

Strictly confidential and not for onward transmission



Decision making is clear and reasoned

## Practice

- Covid – 19
- Demand and performance
- Prioritisation
- Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes
- Children as parties in proceedings
- The listening post and subject access requests
- Public Law improvement programme
- Private Law transformation
- Principal Social Worker - overview



## People and budget

- Budget and allocations
- Workforce Matters
- Staff Survey
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Sickness absence



## Partners

- Communication priorities
- Cafcass Website
- Cafcass Cymru
- Estates
- Complaints review
- Ofsted

# PRACTICE

- ✓ We remain under significant pressure from the additional number of children in live public and private law proceedings
- ✓ We continue to prioritise the reduction of frontline caseloads, effective management capacity, the timely allocation of all public law and high risk private law and the leadership of our top five practice improvement priorities
- ✓ We are proud and committed of our continued improvement and the commitment of our people under unrelenting pressure who are focused on doing the best and right things for children and their families



# Covid-19 Overview

- 1. Programme board continues to meet fortnightly** – moving to recovery scrutiny board from 20 May
- 2. Business is as usual** – visits to children (with risk assessments) expected to be in person and in accordance with policy, , offices open without restriction – though we ask for testing before coming in person and court attendance as ordered.
- 3. Prioritisation** – remains our main alternative to saturated frontline and managers. Active in 5 of 19 areas
- 4. Post Assessment hubs** (family support hubs) developing as a means of continuing to manage additional 8000 children and longer proceedings
- 5. People** – we continue with higher turnover than before the pandemic – pay, workload and development opportunities – limited flexibilities as an arms length body of government – one of our top three challenges is recruitment and retention
- 6. Morale – staff survey positive about working here – many strengths to report**, but relentless allocations and durations are challenging on top of 2 years of uncertainty and pressure. No pay award has been damaging
- 7. Quality of practice and seeing & engaging with children** remains leadership priorities. As at 19 April, 98% of children have a engagement record. ~ 80% seen in person.
- 8. Family Justice System** – remains under pressure and Cafcass still carrying a disproportionate weight in terms of volumes of open work, relentless pressure at frontline and limited workforce flexibilities
- 9. Visible leadership and weekly communications a priority** – weekly communication, vlogs, blogs, live events, think ins – a different sort of connection which remains popular

## The numbers

1. Number of children and families with **proceedings open to us remains c5000 cases higher than before the Pandemic. This equates to c8,000 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 **35,211 open active cases for Cafcass as at 18 April 2022, compared to 30,136 at the end of March 2020 (+16.4%).**
4. By type of proceedings, this means there is **13.8% (1,674) more open public law work and 18.1% (3,280) in private law.**
5. **Case durations continue to increase** and therefore negatively influence caseload levels. Public law s31 proceedings continue to average **45 weeks** and Private proceedings that go beyond the first hearing have increased to **54 weeks**. R16.4 cases in private law have increased further to **96 weeks**.
6. **Private Law pre-first hearing (EIT) cases are +15.8% (+1,197 cases)** when compared to the end of March 2020 snapshot.



## The numbers (2)

- 1. System throughput remains compromised, there have been fewer disposals since the start of the pandemic with the system opening more work than it has closed.** Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2022 Cafcass has opened 122k children's cases and closed 117k children's 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 capacity), but still remain high in many areas:** work after first hearing is **21.7 sets of proceedings**, with **65.4%** of qualifying staff holding > 20 sets of proceedings with known future work. For private law case work before the first hearing, active caseloads average **45.5** due to increased delay in hearings.
- 3. 24% of FCAs are carrying 'above threshold' caseloads in our work after first hearing teams (>25), increasing to more than 1 in 2 for FCAs working in Early intervention teams (>40)**
- 4. Duty allocations in service areas at 1,316 (2,100 children).** We are concerned about the pressure on managers and our ability to oversee practice with high duty volumes. This is a significant factor in the decision to activate the prioritisation process in some areas
- 5. Practice supervisors carrying on average 15.9 sets of proceedings**, of which for **69%**, 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 86.2% 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 **2021/22 financial year** April 2021 – March 2022 **demand for public law decreased by 6.2%** compared to the previous financial year and **Private law has decreased by 7.2%**. This results in an overall **reduction in new proceedings of 6.9%**
2. We have **35,211 open active cases** (c56,000 children) – this is **4,954 cases (8,000 children)** more than 1 April 2020 – 13.8% more public law and 18.1% more private law work is open
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 45 weeks public law, 54 private law if there is work beyond the first hearing - we are looking at how to make the best and safest use of 'inactive time'
2. **Volumes of section 7 reports** after first hearing in private law have increased by 8.6% (1 786 reports) in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21 including an increase in **addendum reports** of 11.4%
3. 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) An illustration of the additional children and how we are managing

- 1. A leadership decision – protect frontline caseloads accepting that there will be a significant impact elsewhere.**
  - As a **starting point**, we set ceiling 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.
- 2. Our additional ~8,000 children**
  - ✓ About **42%** (c2,100 cases or c3,350 children) are **allocated to permanent FCAs**. We have 126 more since March 2020
  - ✓ About **9%** (c455 cases or c700 children) are **allocated to locum FCAs** of which we have 54 at the current time. Our pre – pandemic numbers were between 14 and 30.
  - ✓ About **36%** (c300 cases or c500 children) are **allocated EITHER substantively to Practice Supervisors and Service Managers or are held on duty** (c1,500 cases or c2,400 children)
  - ✓ **Allocation hubs** are holding c650 cases (c1050 children) - **13%**
- 5. Our challenge now is to reduce the additional ~8,000 children back down to the pre – pandemic numbers. Phase 1 has been to retain the staffing allocations** to protect caseloads, **phase 2** is now to **restore our management capacity** so that lead allocations are not with practice supervisors or service managers





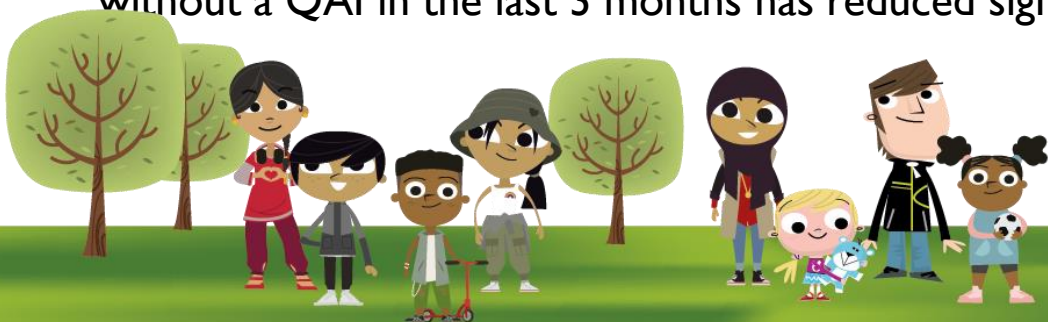
## Prioritisation – a regional update

- 4 regions are still operating the prioritisation protocol, supporting 5 service areas and 13 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: A4 South Yorkshire & Humberside
- Region 4: A14 Essex, Suffolk & Norfolk
- 1 service area has de-activated prioritisation (A5 West Yorkshire).
- 1 other service area, (A15B London Private Law.) remains finely balanced in terms of demand/capacity/ways of working
- So, 5 of 19 service areas are now in prioritisation and unlikely to de-activate before end June 2022
- Post-Assessment Hubs have/are being established in all regions as a sustainable way of reducing the pressures on FCA caseloads and restoring practice supervisor and service manager capacity
- Post-Assessment Hubs are designed to enable strong management and oversight of children's cases where the assessment has been completed and the report filed – but there is no court hearing listed or one has been listed more than 6 weeks ahead



## Prioritisation – our balanced scorecard data – 20 April 2022

- **Total demand (April 21-March 22) -6.9%** (4,374 children's cases) – comprised of Public law : -6.2% and Private law : -7.2% compared to 2020-21. NOTE - **some service areas have seen significant increases** (for public law :A17 (+11%), A5 (+5.8%), for private law:A3 (+4.7%)
- **Work within the open cases has increased significantly.** In private law, the number of section 7 reports have increased by 8.6% and the number of addendum reports is up by 11.4% (significant increases (over 20%) in A12,A13,A7,A14 and A18)
- **Number of duty cases has increased** by ~200 compared to end of Jan-22, and is now 1,316 – 7 service areas with over 100 cases each (this excludes cases held on duty in Hubs)
- **Days to allocation** has increased from 17.5 days at the end of Jan-22 to an average of 20.8 days – 7 service areas above 20 days
- **Service Managers holding duty cases** has increased from 10 cases to an average of 15.6 – 5 service areas above 20. **Practice Supervisors holding over 12 children's cases** has increased from 50% to 57.9%
- **FCA saturation** has reduced marginally from 87.1% to an average of 86.2% with 5 service areas above 90%
- The **average number of children's cases** held by FCAs in work after first hearing teams has reduced from 21.8 to 21.7 with an **average of 23.5% FCA holding above 25 cases** (27.2% at the end of Jan-22).
- **The average quality impact audits rated Good or Outstanding** is now at 80.5% and the average percentage of FCAs without a QAI in the last 3 months has reduced significantly to 9.8%



## Prioritisation Protocol: review of early experience

- ✓ **Internal review of first 6 months** (July-December 2021) of implementation of allocation hubs.
- ✓ We found the approach had:
  - protected the allocation of public law and high risk private law;
  - prevented further uncontrolled increases in workloads for frontline practitioners;
  - restored capacity for management oversight and supervision, including of children's cases in the hubs;
  - been implemented consistently in accordance with the national service standards set out in the protocol.
- ✓ We identified **important learning** about:
  - improved collaboration with local judiciary to develop a shared understanding of demand, capacity and ways of working to make best use of shared resources
  - the need for more systematic feedback from children and families
  - development of more timebound plans for deactivating allocation hubs, and demonstrating progress
- ✓ We have **updated the prioritisation protocol**, especially to clarify the deactivation process. To be published shortly
- ✓ We are working on a **fuller evaluation**: summary report to be published end of year and will **inform development of a new operational delivery framework** with a wider range of options beyond prioritisation, to cope with the additional 15-20% of children's cases for which there is no national solution at present



# Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes 2022 and beyond

## MoJ decision on the future of Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPP)

- The current DAPP commissioning arrangements come to an end on 31 March 2023. MoJ Ministers have decided that a new more comprehensive DAPP is needed. The MoJ will lead the work to scope, resource and review commissioning arrangements.
- DAPP providers have faced significant challenges due to Covid-19 which has resulted in patchy geographic provision. The development of the new programme will need to ensure a sustainable and consistent offer across all regions.
- A new programme will take at least 2 years to develop and commission so a new offer will not be available until at least the middle of 2024. From 1 April 2023 there will be no DAPP provision available to the family courts given that it takes 9 months from Cafcass receiving an order for the individual to complete the programme. Therefore only court orders received on or before 30 June 2022 can be referred to providers for a place.

## Interim arrangements pending a new programme

- In cases where the court would usually consider a DAPP but there is none available, they will consider a range of available options set out in new guidance to be issued in the coming months. These safety and welfare of children will be paramount
- Cafcass FCAs will ensure their assessments build on the approach set out in our updated Domestic Abuse practice materials, requiring increased liaison with other agencies and family members. This will enable them to advise on children's best interests in respect of contact and help them to make recommendations for either a safe and beneficial arrangement for family time (whether direct, indirect or supervised) or for no direct arrangements to be in place.



## Domestic Abuse – new guidance and extending the learning and improvement board

- Cafcass established the **Learning and Improvement Board** in September 2020 in response to the [Moj's Expert Panel report on Harm in the family courts](#) to strengthen Cafcass practice with children and families who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The Board has been effective in providing oversight and challenge in respect of the Domestic Abuse improvement programme and it is recommended that the operation of the Board is extended for a further year.
- **clear and well-reasoned decision making**, especially in respect of the rationale for a recommendation for a child to not to spend time with a parent or why we are satisfied that spending time is safe and beneficial when there has been or is domestic abuse being experienced in the family
- **for assessments to clearly set out the child's view and experience and very specifically their wish for contact or not**
- **informed by safety planning** involving the child and parents and carers
- clarity in respect of the **actual harm that has occurred and a clear analysis of the risks** to the child that have been considered if contact is to happen



## Children as parties in proceedings

- The appointment of a Children's Guardian in private law proceedings is intended to ensure that the child is represented independently from their parents and has an advocate for their best interests.
- It arises when the conflict between the parents threatens to compromise the interests of the child or drown out their voice
- At 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022, there are 2,112 open active R16.4 children's cases. 75% (1,593) have been open for 52 weeks or more and 39% (820) for 100 weeks or more.
- The impact of this extended duration on children is that they feel very anxious, with the ongoing exposure to unresolved conflict in which they are embroiled, impacting on all aspects of their development and well being
- The long-running proceedings reflect the complexity of the work and they require a focused intervention to reduce durations.
- In consultation with the Judiciary, we are working through how to reduce durations more consistently.
- One idea is that all Rule 16.4 cases will follow a structured case management approach with a final hearing date agreed at the earliest stage. The model incorporates elements of the successfully evaluated Cafcass Positive Co-parenting Programme and is aligned to our relationship-based Practice Framework - Together with children and families
- Subject to further discussion and agreement from the President of the Family Division, we hope to pilot the model in a number of service areas



## Listening post

- The aim of this new service is to increase the amount of direct feedback from children once their proceedings are complete, so that we can use this to improve practice and therefore their experiences of Cafcass
- A new phone number will be available from May 2022 as part of the existing national call centre service
- This will enable children to contact Cafcass and provide direct feedback in their own words
- For children in live proceedings, we explain that they can provide feedback to their FCA or anonymously in our introductory letters to them
- The phone number will be advertised in the goodbye letter, on the FJYPB new website and on our Cafcass website. The phone number will be staffed by call handlers trained to speak with children and with the support of local FCAs and managers, especially in relation to any child protection or welfare issues that children may raise with us
- The feedback received will be reviewed by our Learning Analysis Manager, regional leaders, the principal social worker and our corporate management team to inform practice development and learning priorities



# My Cafcass Journey – a new approach to subject access requests

The aim of this new initiative is to improve the process that a child and young person follows when they make a request to see their file through a Subject Access Request (SAR)

The service will offer options to children and young people requesting access to their data

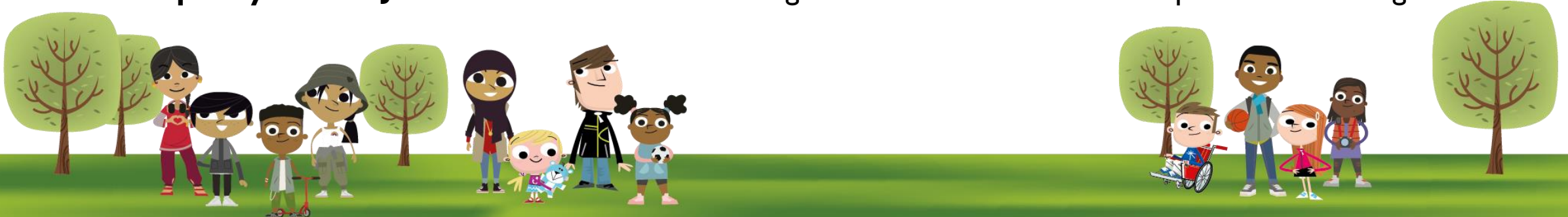
- A choice - receiving the information via email, post, video call, support to read and understand the information, option to review and come back with questions, option to review independently or to review with support from a social work professional
- Support for additional requirements such as large print, audio recording, translation
- Detailed follow up if we have been unable to provide any information or limited information under the Family Procedure Rules / GDPR
- Signposting options such as providing an introduction, for children and young people to other agencies when and if we are aware that they may hold personal data about them
- The service will launch in May and will be promoted via the Cafcass website, the new FJYPB website and a range of internal communications.





# Public law improvement programme 2022-23

1. One of our top **five national practice improvement priorities**
2. X3 internal learning reviews, national safeguarding panel case reviews, significant incident reports directed us to **repeat learning themes**
3. **Managing public law demand** over last five years has probably led to less time for guardians to spend with children, some arrangements for proportionate working also reducing contact with children and judicial arrangements allowing position statements as submissions – **we are clear that effective assessments of what is in children's best interests is our priority balanced alongside timely case allocation**
4. Public law improvement priorities now housed in a **single improvement programme – 11 areas**
5. Complemented by **Public Law Practice Quality Standards**
6. Supported by **strengthened arrangements for management oversight and supervision**
7. **Operational and corporate governance** through OMT and assurance report to CEO/CMT and board spotlight
8. **Case quality audit – June 2022** for further baselining and then annual review of improvement through audit



# Public Law improvement programme – priority areas

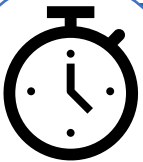
1. Deprivation of Liberty applications and practice
2. Management oversight of delayed proceedings
3. Public law practice quality standards and requiring a self – assessment against them during the year
4. Management quality standards (across all practice)
5. Variation in local practice and regional performance
6. Seeing and engaging with children
7. Assessing risk and harm for children under two who have been physically harmed and/or are at risk of physical harm
8. Oversight of revised triggers for situational (case) supervision
9. Learning reviews
10. Termly multi – professional discussions about practice
11. Training and development



# Private Law Transformation - The increased number of children and families with whom we are working in private law and the delays they are experiencing, mean we have no option but to change



To support the court in earlier identification of families who need our involvement / to support families to use help before court. Increasingly loud evidence and feedback internally and externally that safeguarding letters can be too long. We are committed to making clear recommendations with supporting rationales – also part of the improvements.



To make better use of the range of professional skills and the use of technology in our all of our work, but particularly in our work to first hearing teams. We want to be more efficient in supporting active case management and therefore progress for children in the proceedings about them.



To ensure proportionate work tailored to the needs of the family depending on the needs of the children and their experiences at home – including seeing children sooner where needed. This is likely to mean reviewing the current arrangements between Safeguarding Letters and s7 reports



To improve the experiences of private law proceedings for children and families in line with our practice framework: they tell us they need more help to understand proceedings and the alternatives, they want more active help to achieve change and for us to be more flexible about when and how we hear children's voices.



# Project Workstreams

## What will look different?

## External dependencies?

### Workstream 1

#### New Assessment Model

Create social work capacity initially through pilots to: improve/automate data collection; automate administrative tasks or move to Business Services; generate dynamic capture of child and family circumstances.  
 Early engagement with child (where needed)  
 One initial pilot on triage and assessment model with new Child Impact Assessment Report

One pilot requiring judicial engagement.  
 One requiring LAs.

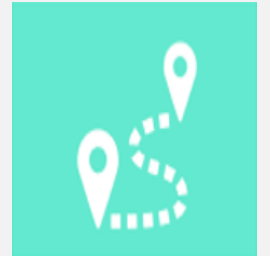


### Workstream 2

#### Reform Pathfinder

Multi-agency pilot (Dorset A6)  
 New Child Impact Assessment Report  
 Better signposting to out of court support  
 New review / follow up stage  
 Strengthen multi-agency assessment of domestic abuse

Multi-agency pilot very heavily dependent on stakeholders



### Workstream 3

#### Intensive Offer (WAFH)

Early identification of families with higher risk or more complex needs  
 More time with children especially those in greatest need  
 Reduction in unnecessary delays/duplication of complex work  
 Increase sustainable outcomes / reduction in returning cases  
 16.4 review group

Largely internal change with some judicial engagement required



### Workstream 4

#### Information for children and families

Review of all Cafcass interactive information, resources and digital services accessed by children & families  
 Review of Family Justice System information/access to information  
 Improvements to signposting & Cafcass information on website  
 Removal or reduction of barriers for engagement with C&F

Internal only



## Phase One Pilots - April to October 2022:

**New Assessment Model (Workstream 1)** - First phase of testing planned from April to October 2022. Six key pilots identified. Pilots aim to deliver a reduction in admin tasks completed by social work roles and improved engagement with families

**Reform Pathfinder (Workstream 2)** - Dorset – launched 21 February 2022

Cafcass

Remove alerts for no trace safeguarding checks – Reducing social work time on admin tasks

Triage Assessment Tool – supporting social work decisions

CIT Triage - identifying CAP adherence

Diversity information collection – Better and earlier data collection

PNC commissioning Level 2 checks - Reducing delays and improving response times

Automated Text Reminders for appointments – Improving engagement



MoJ

MoJ Reform Pathfinder Pilot – testing a multi agency approach

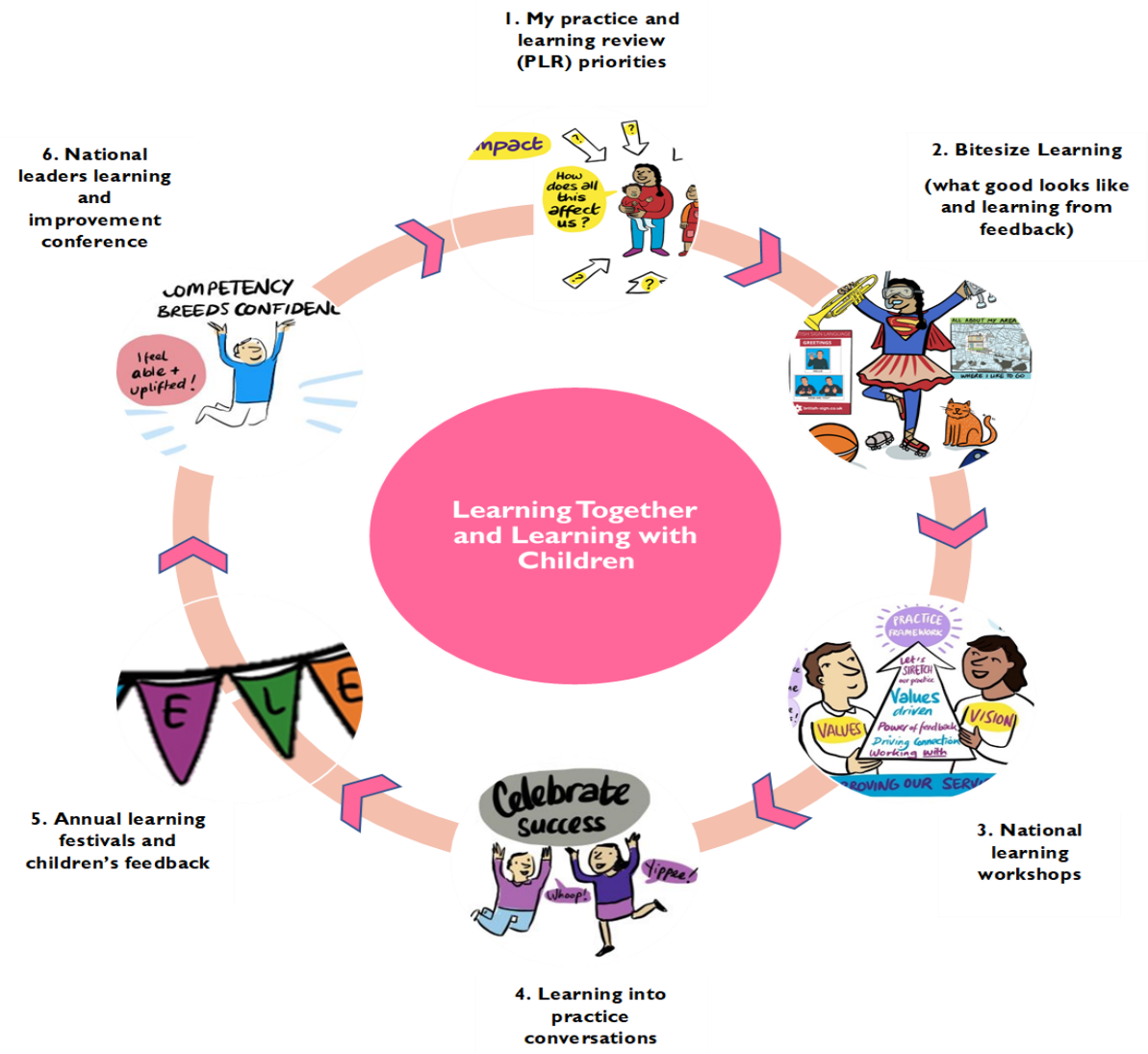


# Principal Social Worker Update: Quality Assurance and impact

- We have worked with FCAs and managers to develop our **Quality Assurance and Impact framework**. This specifies the number of audits that will take place throughout the year, who will undertake them and be involved in them and how we will use them as part of our management oversight and improvement programmes
- It introduces a **new Quality Assurance tool** to assess how well we explain our recommendations to children, requires collaborative audit in at least 50% of local case audits and establishes feedback from children and adults in 2 audits per year per FCA and 30% of national improvement service audits
- **Audit questions relate to our Practice Priorities** – allowing us to track the impact of change in practice and the new audit requires ‘Agreed Actions’ – considering case specific actions as well as practitioner and organisational learning
- We have **changed the grading descriptors** to ‘Inadequate safeguarding for children, Requires Improvement to be Good, Good and Outstanding (previously Requires Improvement, Met, Good, Outstanding)
- We are doing this because:
  - We feel that it is being **honest and clear** about the way practice is graded – as well as bringing us in line with Ofsted criteria
  - ‘Met’ can be seen as good enough for practitioners when it is not good enough practice for children
  - We need to be clear when our work is inadequately safeguarding children because to be strengths based you have to be clear on risk
- It is not mandatory for operational managers to give grades, apart from **work that is inadequate for children**, which will result in conversations with the FCA and improvement actions and support
- The **National Improvement Service will continue to grade in all of their audits**, the number of focus of which are specified in the framework



# Learning and improvement



# Our top five practice improvement priorities

Priority	Rationale
<b>1. Seeing and engaging with children</b>	Children have the right to be seen and heard and to feel safe. We cannot fulfil our statutory duty to safeguard and promote their welfare without seeing them and engaging with them
<b>2. Understanding the impact of domestic abuse on children</b>	Thematic audits show that we need to make more consistent improvement in setting out how we will protect children from the harm and the risk of harm caused by domestic abuse
<b>3. Understanding the impact of the child's uniqueness on their life and future</b>	Feedback from children is consistent about the importance to them of adults being curious and respectful about their individuality and differences
<b>4. Implementing and embedding the new child's plan</b>	A clear assessment of the risks and strengths in families is part of our new practice framework. The new child's plan, requires a strong analysis of risk and harm, the impact on the child and ensuring their understanding and response to our recommendations
<b>5. Public law practice</b>	Reviews following significant incidents have identified learning themes in seeing infants, assessing higher risk care plans, the need for strong and consistent management oversight and the evidence base for supporting some recommendations





# BUDGET AND RESOURCE

# Budget 2022/23

- We have received provisional allocations for 2022/23 – 2024/25 but still await the formal letters of delegation confirming amounts. Letters of authority to spend have been issued by the MOJ against the provisional allocations
- The draft budget adds a further £1.4m directly into operational service areas compared to their forecast spending in 2021/22 – primarily the funding for the Post Assessment Hubs, largely absent from spending in 21/22. A number of other increases are proposed, of particular note: the National Improvement Service £0.6m (against 21/22 forecast), National and Corporate Budgets £3.3m (against 21/22 forecast – of which £1.7m ICT (including Childfirst), HR £0.5m, the remainder across functions)
- In order to bring the budget back to balance a number of overlays have been agreed to pause spending until the first quarter monitoring is complete. These include but are not limited to: prioritisation of ICT spending £1.5m, top slice corporate and operational contingency budgets £0.6m, top slice travel and subsistence while levels remain lower £0.2m.
- Recycling these budget reductions will create an L&D fund in the order of £0.8m being a key part of the recruitment and retention strategy.



# PEOPLE

- ✓ We are recruiting more people than are leaving. We are using additional budget allocation to do this
- ✓ Our social work turnover remains lower than that in local authorities (16% on average) but higher at 12% than in previous years
- ✓ Pay, work/life balance and professional development are our most pressing issues in the retention of all staff
- ✓ Our arms length body status restricts the flexibility we have to make pay awards or offer retention/recruitment packages for social workers in particular – without urgent action, our longer term stability as one of the largest social work employers in England is threatened
- ✓ We are prioritising the development of a new reward package, a new career and qualification pathway and investing in a whole staff development programme



# 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 100 more joiners than leavers from April 2021 to March 2022. This additional headcount has been funded from MOJ budget to support our additional case load and also through reduction of use of agency workers.

Employed Joiners and Leavers Apr 21 - Mar 22			
	Joiners	Leavers	Balance
Practice	258	193	65
Corp/BS	99	64	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>100</b>

- Turnover and vacancy rate is one of the biggest issues in the social work sector with a vacancy rate of 16.7% across England. Cafcass turnover rate for the last year was 12.2%
- Most common reasons for leaving are retirement and career progression
- Focussed recruitment activity in hard to recruit areas and around workforce planning has shown success.
- Ongoing work on attraction, employee value proposition and Employee Branding



# Workforce Update – Live issue – Sickness absence

## Sickness Absence remains high - recently increased with Omicron

Overall 12 Month AWDL						
2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
7.5	10	8.7	9.6	9.9	8.6	10.8

- Long-term sickness has decreased in Jan – Mar 22, but short-term sickness has been relatively high.
- Covid-19 has been a clear contributor to the recent increases.
- Covid-19 related absence accounted for 2.5 AWDL (22%) in the Jan – Mar 22 period, this is significant.
- As of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022 we had 20 Staff Absent (peak 51) and 18 (peak 62) working at home but self isolating
- Sickness absence linked to mental health continues to be the most significant single reason (~31%) However work related mental ill health has seen a large reduction from a peak of c25% of absence cases in social work staff to only 8.2% (21st April 22)
- Increased focused work between business partners and managers on sickness absence is taking place including, improved support from occupational health, wellbeing teams and continued advice around Covid.



# Workforce Update – Live issue – Pay & Reward

- Obvious disappointment with 2021/22 Pay Award of 0%, against a local government award of c1.75%
- Pay award envelope of 2% for 2022/23, Chancellors Spring Statement, but also needs to take into account pay progression.
- Possible 1% additional available by business case around strict criteria of no increase in average pay bill per employee.
- Meeting with the MOJ reward team on 4<sup>th</sup> May for discussions on pay
- Pay & Reward options we are progressing
  - 1) Ability to sell 3 days unused annual leave happened in March 22
  - 2) Introducing an option to buy and sell annual leave. June/July
  - 3) Greater flexibility around ways of working and working patterns.
  - 4) Review of inflationary effect on expense reimbursement



# Staff Survey – 1700 responses October 2021

## Organisational Timeline



- Staff workshops have taken place in March and April to produce local action plans
- National Action Plans (Pay, Workload, Development) and local actions plans going to People Committee on 23 May 2022
- Publication of Action Plans to staff in May 2022

# 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).
- **Career and Qualification pathway** - phase 1 focuses on strengthening the management and supervision capacity and capability around practice teams in the first part of 22/23. Phase 2 extends through the practice team. This also forms the foundation for extension on similar principles in to corporate and business services.
- **Social Work Manager Development Programme** – urgent early work to support above, as a subset of broader Talent and Development programme (see below).
- **Investing in people** – outline proposals for a framework to develop skills, qualifications and talent across the organisation agreed through CMT with work on detailed phasing now in hand.
- **Job descriptions** - systematic review proposed for all roles incorporating clear statements of expectations and embedding the Together principles.
- **Single View; current and future staff levels** – work on the module within the HR/Payroll system nearing completion.





# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

## The work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group

- 16 March: EDI Strategy consultation workshop took place with FJYPB members.
- 8 April: EDI Steering Group meeting focused on final review and amendments to the draft strategy.
- Cafcass EDI strategy to be published on website May 2022

## Other activities in the period under review

- Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme has been renewed. The decision was made following a 'think in' when key issues were explored by members of the Corporate Management Team and Pride network.
- 'Exploring the Impact of Bias', a new mandatory training module has been launched. It is currently being rolled out with sessions scheduled March – August 2022.
- FJYPB members have been taking part in conversations with Cafcass Family Court Advisors to demonstrate inclusive ways to ask questions about children and young people's diversity. The conversations have been recorded and will form part of training for Cafcass staff. The project is being led by Rehana Hanif, Head of Practice.
- A 'positive action' programme has been agreed by CMT. The programme is aimed at supporting the development of colleagues from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds as they are under represented at management grades in the organisation.



# PARTNERS

- ✓ Extending the intended impact of new practice framework into developments with partners – what can they expect to see?
- ✓ Growing pressure in our estate to provide child and family hubs near to courts and to enable the best relationship based practice to thrive
- ✓ Complaints review first phase in development
- ✓ Our role in private law transformation – internal and external is significant and is now at the start of piloting phase



## Communications priorities (partners)

Our current communications priorities are as follows:

- To develop a **partnership communications strategy** to enable stronger relationships with external partners in respect of shared priorities
- Develop communications in respect of our **new practice framework** and the changes partners should expect to see in our work and the difference it will make to them.
- Enhance our **quarterly partner ebulletin** so that it includes engaging content and we are able to measure insights such as which partners have read it and what content was most popular.
- Work closely with our policy colleagues to develop a **horizon scanning function** which allows us to have better insights into the family justice landscape and understand the opportunities and risks in the system.



# Redesign of Cafcass website

- The Cafcass website is being redesigned as part of the Cafcass Digital Transformation programme. The main objective of the redesign is to: *Design a website that is focused on the needs of children and families involved in family law proceedings and make it as easy as possible for them to access and understand the information about what is and will be happening for them.*
- Since January, we have undertaken a discovery exercise to consult external experts. We have also surveyed children, families, colleagues and partners to gain a better understanding of what is required for the new Cafcass website. As a result of this discovery exercise, we now have a set of requirements as the basis of our development and search for a design partner.
- Following the award of a new contract, we will work with external and internal focus groups and the new provider to develop the structure and content of the new site due for launch in January 2023



# Cafcass Cymru Police Safeguarding Checks Partnership Working

- 1. Background**– Cafcass uses the Police National Computer (PNC) to produce Level 1 police checks - disclosures relating to criminal records for use by FCAs to inform safeguarding letters and S.7 reports – target within 2 working days. Cafcass Cymru use PNC information for the same purposes, however, obtains disclosures from local Welsh police forces, which can take up to and above two weeks to be returned.
- 2. Objectives**– Cafcass are working with Cafcass Cymru with the intention of producing Level 1 police checks on their behalf, transferring responsibility from police forces in Wales. This will enable c2400 Level 1 checks commissioned a year by Cafcass Cymru to be actioned within 2 working days, improving the speed for which disclosures are made available.
- 3. Benefits**– Sharing best practice with Cafcass Cymru supports an improved service for children across England and Wales.
- 4. Risks & Issues**– Access to PNC information requires strong adherence to legal and security standards, so authorisation for sharing will need to be granted by the Police. Cafcass will be responsible for regularly evidencing compliance for both Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru in regular inspections and audits.
- 5. Next steps**– The resource sharing has been agreed in principle by Cafcass. Cafcass Cymru are now seeking funding approval from the MoJ. Subject to approval, a Service Level Agreement and Data Protection Impact Assessment will be produced before a date to start sharing is agreed.



# Estates and Health and Safety team Update

- **Birmingham** – approval from CMT, MoJ, and the Cabinet Office has been received to enter into a new lease agreement. The agreement for lease in place with the move from temporary accommodation to the new office in Temple Row - July 2022.
- **Brighton** – approval from CMT, MoJ, and the Cabinet Office has been received to enter into a new lease agreement. The agreement for lease in place with the move from temporary accommodation to the new office in Lees House - July/August 2022.
- **London**, - Cafcass occupation term ends this year and cannot be extended. The estates team have established suitable new office space in central London and are now going through the approvals process with the Cabinet Office to agree a new lease, to commence September/October 2022.
- **Newcastle** - notice served to Cafcass by the Landlord and occupation term presently extended to May 2022 and Cafcass may be able to extend this further. We are currently considering options for a temporary relocation and will then consider options for a permanent move later this year.
- **Chatham** – currently in temporary accommodation and will be commencing a property search for a permanent office shortly to allow a relocation this financial year.
- **Carlisle** – currently looking at options for a relocation from the court space which is now too small for our needs. A property search for a permanent office is ongoing to allow a relocation this financial year.

**New office design** – presently focusing on the layout, decoration and soft furnishings to provide a more child and family focused space, better wellbeing facilities for staff and the need for more collaborative work space. A working group will be held in May to review proposals to be presented to CMT in June, with the Birmingham and Brighton offices to be showcased as concept child and family hubs.

**Health & Safety update:** Compliance with statutory requirements across the estate remains complete to 31 March 2022. The overall risk level for all offices remains low.



# Complaints review – phase 1 (co chairs – Director of Strategy and Director of Operations)

## What we want to achieve:

- ✓ 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 framework so that the experience feels more human and collaborative
- ✓ improve how we reflect on learning and ensure it is actioned to improve our practice;
- ✓ improve the performance of the complaints service, including whether children and families feel their issue has been resolved.

## So far we have:

- held workshops with colleagues to understand and reflect on current processes. Held sessions with the FJYPB and family forum to share emerging thinking and understand what is important to children and families in a revised complaints process
- started the process of reviewing our current system for recording complaints and other correspondence
- joined the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman’s steering group for the development and implementation of their government complaint standards framework – to which our new ways of working will be aligned
- implemented some improvements to support timeliness of responses and clarify processes within the customer service team

**What next? July 22:** we will share our revised policy with the Board in July, together with plans for partner engagement and implementation. **Early Autumn 22** – we expect to have begun implementation of our revised policy and processes, aligned with the government complaint standards, including as they apply to our wider correspondence functions. The transitional period may take one year.



# Changes to Children's Complaints Process

## Aims:

- To respond more quickly to children
- To enhance the quality of responses
- To improve how we learn and change in response

## Changes:

- Interim guidance to September 2022 (linked to complaint review)
- Objective for children's complaints to be managed by the Customer Services Team (CST)
- Underpinned by Head of Practice oversight and CST ensuring the process is followed
- Quicker logging and initial contact with child (24 hours)
- Contact by allocated Service Manager within 24 hours
- Choice of method of contact but expectation of face to face
- Inform child when investigation will complete and they will receive the outcome
- New Response Template (with input from FJYPB)
- Recording of learning (Learning Analysis Manager)
- New 10 working day timeframe (from 20 working days)
- Updating website to set this out





# Ofsted Annual Self – Evaluation and annual engagement meeting

1. Annual self – evaluation submitted to Ofsted in March – will be the basis for **Annual Engagement meeting** (10 May) and inspection/visit planning

## 2. 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



# THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS

