



Delivering quality services for children

***Transforming Services - Transforming the
Organisation***

Business Plan 2005/07



Business Plan 2005/07

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Section 1

Chief Executive's Foreword

This Business Plan sets out much of the exciting work underway in CAF/CASS, especially the ways in which we are attempting to see our services through the eyes of the children and families receiving them. This challenges much of what we do, and our services will be better as a result.

2005/6 is a transitional year for us. Following a major internal and external consultation, we are changing our structure and culture to put the emphasis more on front-line teams and the quality of our front-line services. The best way I can describe this is to say that the centre of CAF/CASS is wherever our front-line service is being delivered at any point in time. We have taken many steps to become less London-centric and to devolve and decentralise decision-making and resources as close to the front line as possible. This is based on a strong belief I have that decision makers need to be as close to the work on the ground as possible. This Business Plan sets out the way in which this vision is being translated into new ways of working.

Originally I had hoped we would have completed work on our 5 year plan, which has the working title of CAF/CASS 2010, by the time we need to go to print. However, we are not there yet, so we are publishing a 2 year plan at this stage. Many targets will be met in 2005/6. Some will take the full 2005/7 period to deliver. By April 2006 we will have the longer-term plan in place, when our current 2003-06 Corporate Plan runs its course.

We have two broad aims for 2005/07:

- Transforming services and modernising practice
- Transforming the organisation

Both need transformation. Many of our services have remained fundamentally unchanged since CAF/CASS's predecessor organisations. Partly that is good, as we have more experienced social workers in our workforce than any comparable organisation. We also offer stability to the children we work with as we rarely have to change the social worker allocated to a case, as happens in many organisations with much greater turnover. However, some of our social work practice needs to be modernised to take account of contemporary research and practice models. This will be a major challenge this year, and we will set out the principles of our new direction in a new professional strategy during 2005/6, which will be the subject of a 3 month consultation starting in September 2005, once it has been agreed by our Board.



CAFCASS as an organisation also needs to be transformed so that we deliver our part of a radically modernised family justice system. At the organisational level, this means a highly devolved and decentralised structure, backed up by strong national policies and frameworks. There are other key transformations, including the fundamental change from being a court organisation to a child care organisation. There are many tensions in here to manage with our partners like the judiciary and the Court Service, as we will need to develop new professional models to sit alongside the best of what we have always done.

I am heartened by one fact above all. Everyone involved in the family justice system knows it has to change and to change fundamentally. I do not say this in response to the chorus of our critics but because all of us inside the system know that we are not serving many children well, because of the length of time cases take, despite the successes of the Judicial Protocol in public law cases, and because we are often intervening too late or with no great effect.

Our work is not easy, in fact it is persistently difficult. The strains it places upon staff need to be recognised as much as the impact of late intervention upon children and their families needs to be understood and acted upon.

I am confident we can provide an even better national service to the 100,000 children we serve over the next few years. In 2005/7, we will put in place the building blocks for that stronger future.

CAFCASS has always been a unique service. It is going to be a great one.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anthony Douglas'.

Anthony Douglas
Chief Executive

Section 2

Our purpose

CAFCASS has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children and young people are put first in family proceedings, their voices are properly heard, the decisions made about them by courts are in their best interests and they and their families are supported throughout the process, no matter what form their family takes in the modern world.

We operate within the law set by Parliament and under the rules and directions of the family courts. Our role is to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Give advice to the family courts
- Make provision for children to be represented
- Provide information, advice and support to children and their families.

We are a non-departmental public body accountable to the Minister for Children, Young People and Families in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). We work within the strategic objectives agreed by our sponsor department and contribute to wider government objectives relating to children.

We have a role in relation to measures outlined in Every Child Matters, which sets out five key outcomes for children, young people and families - being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and experiencing economic well-being.

We actively support the Government strategy in relation to family breakdown and to the significant change programme envisaged. To this end we are an active member of the Programme Board responsible for the implementation of the programme laid down in the Government Green Paper “Parental Separation – Children’s Needs and Parental Responsibilities”

As set out in the Children Act 2004, CAFCASS in Wales transferred to the National Welsh Assembly Government on 1 April 2005. CAFCASS wishes CAFCASS Cymru well and we will maintain good working links.

Section 3

Progress in 2004/05

During the year our work directly impacted on the lives of more than 100,000 children and young people.

Our Annual Report presented a picture of our work for both England and Wales. Since April 2005 Wales has transferred to the National Welsh Assembly Government. The information below relates to the performance of our teams throughout England in 2004/05.

CAFCASS staff responded to the following demands in 04/05

- **12,440** public law cases - these include applications for local authority care and supervision orders and applications for adoption.
- **34,674** Court-directed Dispute Resolution sessions in private law.
- **28,166** requests for reports in private law cases - these include applications for parental responsibility, residence and contact, where parents have been unable to reach agreement and **1,079** Rule 9.5 cases under the Family Proceedings Rules (1991), in which a child involved in a private law case is represented by a Guardian ad Litem.
- **530** Family Assistance Orders, where social work support is provided to families experiencing difficulties after separation or divorce.

Policies






- A comprehensive consultation exercise on CAFCASS' Domestic Violence Policy and Procedures was carried out towards the end of 2004/05 which has resulted in minimum service standards for practitioners and a more robust framework for risk assessment
- Following an extensive consultation exercise, we have reviewed and amended the CAFCASS Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedures. These procedures are now more open, responsive and user friendly
- Our Organisational Change policy has now been agreed, along with additional policies on Performance and Conduct, Grievance, Diversity, Management of Sickness Absence, Mobility, Adoption Leave and Pay and Child Carers Leave and Pay. Work is underway on our Work/Life Balance policy and a Dignity at Work (Bullying and Harassment) policy







Training

- We continued to build upon our existing learning and development programmes and provided 10,500 training days
- We developed and implemented a sponsorship programme, enabling 39 employees from any job grade and profile, to apply for funding to support their continuing professional development.
- In response to the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, we established, in partnership with the Practice Learning Taskforce (now part of Skills for Care) a scheme to provide Practice Learning Opportunities for social work students. During 2004/05 we started this programme in the North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humberside regions.
- A comprehensive case recording system was piloted in the South West region and will be rolled out to the remaining regions.
- CAFCASS lawyers gave 43 road show lectures across the organisation from October 2004 to May 2005. These updates, which covered legislation, public law and private law, were well received
- A group of practitioners and managers based in the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside, supported by the national Children's Rights Development Group, have been developing a resource pack of material for distribution throughout CAFCASS during 2005/06

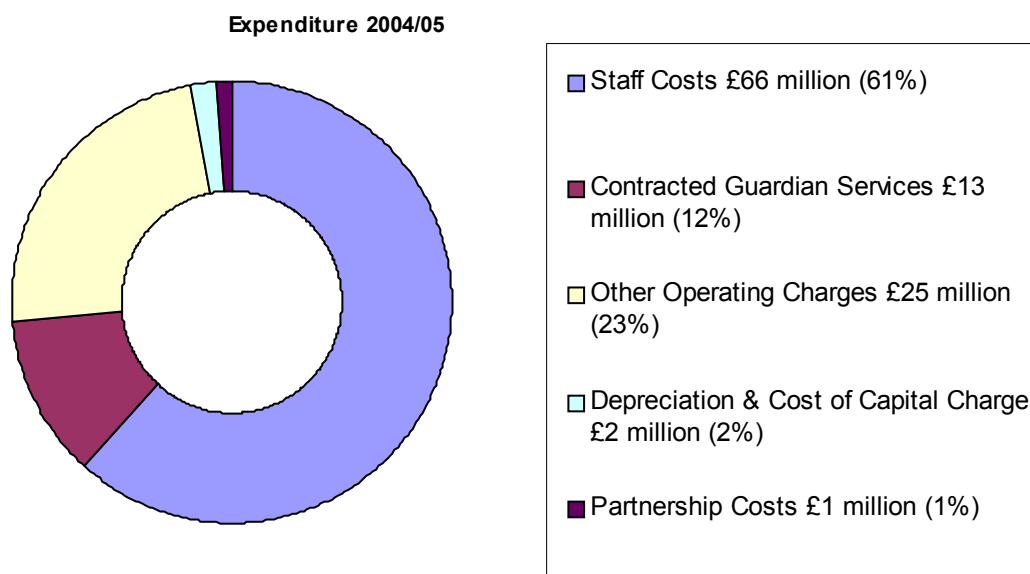
Key Performance Indicators 2004/05

<p>The number of private law reports unallocated less than 10 weeks before court filing date for the month should be no more than 4% of the workload</p>	<p>Achieved 3.9%</p> 	<p>The Regions have performed well against this indicator (2003/04 4.5%). For example, South East improved from 5.1% (03/04) to 2.6% (04/05); West Midlands from 5.5% (03/04) to 3.9% (04/05); Yorkshire & Humberside from 4.3% (03/04) to 3.7 (04/05)</p>
<p>By March 2005, 70% of allocations during the month for Section 31 (care and supervision) cases should be within two days from receipt of request.</p>	<p>Not achieved 49.4%</p> 	<p>An improvement on last year (45.2%) but target still not achieved. We will address this through the new professional strategy which is a priority development in the 05/07 plan. The target to be met over two years will be by first directions in 100% of cases in order to influence the case from the outset</p>
<p>At least 98% of all public allocations each month for all case types should be within 28 days of receipt of request</p>	<p>Not achieved, but progress made 92.1%</p> 	<p>We continue to make steady progress in this area and have improved against last year's performance of 83.3%. East Midlands and Eastern regions consistently met this target and in other areas – particularly Greater London – there is an improving trend. This is one of our major targets in the 'transforming services' section of the plan for 05/07</p>
<p>No more than 3% of the public law workload should remain unallocated at month end</p>	<p>Achieved 2.6%</p> 	<p>A solid performance across all regions. The comparative figure in 2003/04 was 4.0%.</p>
<p>CAFCASS contributions to the Family Resolutions Pilot Project (FRPP) are timely and meet the requirements of the project</p>	<p>Achieved/ ongoing</p> 	<p>The pilots started in September 2004 and are due to end in October 2005. We have met the timescales for intervention and participated in the lessons being learnt</p>

Implement relevant sections of the Adoption & Children Act 2002	Achieved 	We have put in place systems and procedures to implement the relevant sections. These are Section 118 (<i>independent reviewing officers</i>) and Section 120 (<i>amended definition of harm</i>).
Develop and implement an action plan in respect of the findings of the family satisfaction survey	Achieved/ ongoing 	An action plan was written in April 2004 to set out measures to address the issues raised in the report. It has five main areas of focus – provision of information, user contact with CAF/CASS offices, reports, complaints and monitoring user views. Measurable actions have been taken in all areas
All new staff to receive induction within 12 weeks	Not achieved but progress 	Over 75% of all new CAF/CASS employees attended induction within 8 – 12 weeks of commencing employment. 144 newly appointed Family Court Advisers also attended the foundation unit of the Professional Development and Quality Assurance programme as part of their induction. High levels of recruitment in some regions, for example, in Yorkshire & Humberside, meant that there was not the capacity to provide the full induction entitlement but new induction is planned in July and August 05
Sickness absence rate of no more than 4%	Not achieved but progress 4.54% 	The use of computerised absence management has ensured more accurate reporting on this KPI in 2004/05. We are working to reduce sickness absence levels through a combination of proactive health and safety initiatives, our Employee

		Assistance Programme, Occupational Health Services, as well as early local management intervention (following the re-launch of a streamlined sickness absence policy and management guide). Although the percentage is higher than last year this is actually because of increasingly robust data providing a more accurate account of sickness absence
Ensure that CAFCASS support cost ratios are equal to or better than Government and wider public sector benchmarks	Achieved ☺	In general, we remain ahead of all relevant benchmarks shared with the DfES.
Manage our funding to live within, subject to a 1% tolerance limit our resource budget of £107 million	Achieved ☺	See below Chart 1 showing expenditure in 04/05 and Chart 2 expenditure planned for 05/06

Chart 1



Section 4

Our Aims, Objectives and Priorities:

Our primary purpose is to ensure children and young people are put first in family proceedings; that their voices are properly heard; that the decisions made about them by courts are in their best interests; and that they and their families are supported throughout the process.

Our Aims

We have two broad aims which will help us to achieve our primary purpose. These are:

- **Transforming services and modernising practice**
- **Transforming the organisation**

These form the basis of our work plan and priorities for 2005/07

Aim 1 Transforming services, modernising practice

Objective 1.1 - Improve outcomes for children in line with 'Every Child Matters' (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, economic well being) by modernising our practice.

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
1.1.1 Assess the strengths and weaknesses of our current practice	Review of practice completed	December 05
	National and regional improvement plans in place	March 06
1.1.2 Develop and implement a new professional strategy, which ensures that professional time is used to represent all children effectively, without service delays or backlogs, over the next two years	New professional strategy consulted upon and introduced	April 06 onwards
1.1.3 Update and modernise CAF/CASS children's safeguarding strategy in order to ensure that we safeguard and promote the welfare of children in family proceedings.	Updated safeguarding strategy disseminated and implemented	December 05
	Strategy for our role at local Safeguarding Boards in place	January 06

<p>1.1.4 Ensure all teams are organised in a way, which will deliver new national minimum standards based on no delays and backlogs in the allocation of cases</p>	<p>Continuing reductions in delays and backlogs throughout 2005-7, culminating in no delays and backlogs by March 2007</p>	<p>March 07</p>
<p>1.1.5 Allocate all cases within 7 working days over the next 2 years, through an incremental approach</p>	<p>100% of cases allocated by First Directions Hearing</p>	<p>March 07</p>
<p>1.1.6 To report separately on performance in adoption cases</p>	<p>Accurate performance data complete</p>	<p>April 06</p>
<p>1.1.7 Ensure practitioner resources/time are used in line with the principle of '<i>minimum necessary, maximum affordable</i>'</p>	<p>Flexible working practices in teams clearly reducing backlogs</p>	<p>April 06</p>
<p>1.1.8 All teams to have a Private Law Programme dispute resolution scheme in place by April 2006 and available in all family courts</p>	<p>Dispute resolution scheme in operation in 100% of teams</p>	<p>April 06</p>
<p>1.1.9 Launch a Domestic Violence policy and tool kit for all staff</p>	<p>Policy launched</p>	<p>September 05</p>
<p>1.1.9 Launch a Domestic Violence policy and tool kit for all staff</p>	<p>Training and supervision programme on risk assessments in place</p>	<p>October 05 onwards</p>
<p>1.1.9 Launch a Domestic Violence policy and tool kit for all staff</p>	<p>Internal practice improvement programme set up</p>	<p>December 06</p>



Objective 1.2 Mainstream race equality and diversity in all work, in particular in teams

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
1.2.1 Develop and implement five-year diversity strategy	100% of teams implementing diversity strategy	April 06
1.2.2 Establish a new diversity work plan which is reported to Board regularly	All work streams in the Diversity work plan to be completed and Board receiving regular report	April 06
1.2.3 Deliver a National Diversity conference this year	Successful conference held	November 05
1.2.4 Ensure that diversity principles and practice are built into all of our national policies and procedures and monitored regularly	All policies and procedures audited for diversity principles and practice	April 06
1.2.5. Achieve 100% of diversity monitoring of all our service users	Diversity of 100% of our service users monitored	March 06
1.2.6 All our regional development plans to take into account the needs of their communities and diversity issues in their areas.	100% of regional development plans demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of their communities and the relevant diversity issues and demonstrate ways in which the team responds to these	April 06

Objective 1.3 Develop a more highly trained and skilled workforce

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
1.3.1 Develop and implement a five year national knowledge, learning and development strategy	Strategy developed and agreed by Board	March 06
	100% of regions and teams working to strategy; strategy making a demonstrable impact on practice, as evidenced in performance data, snapshot inspections and by outcomes for children and young people	March 07
1.3.2 Ensure all staff have individual development plans, which support the roles they undertake and extend career opportunities in accordance with the 5 year strategy for knowledge, learning and development	Development needs arising from appraisals fully integrated into regional training and development plans	March 06
	System of individual learning accounts up and running	March 07

<p>1.3.3 Devolve the knowledge, learning and development function to the regions, keeping a strategic overview from the National Office</p>	<p>Functions fully devolved and all regions actively managing and delivering functions</p>	<p>February 06</p>
<p>1.3.4 Ensure all regions carry out a training needs analysis to inform national and local priorities and the budget setting process</p>	<p>Training needs analyses completed regionally and collated nationally</p>	<p>April 06</p>
<p>1.3.5 Incrementally designate a percentage of our total budget for knowledge learning and development needs of our staff, so that it stands at 3% by 2010</p>	<p>Incremental increases provided for year on year</p>	<p>April 06 onwards</p>
<p>1.3.6 Explore the accreditation of our Dispute Resolution programmes</p>	<p>Application for accreditation is successful</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>1.3.7 Become a centre of excellence for practice learning, increasing year on year the numbers of social work students we provide learning opportunities for, ensuring placements are self funding by 2008</p>	<p>Centre of excellence gains validity by external review</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>1.3.8 Put in place national standards for all of our work</p>	<p>National Standards written, consulted upon and disseminated</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>1.3.9 Ensure staff are briefed and ready to implement each section of the Adoption and Children Act as it becomes law.</p>	<p>Regional programmes of briefing and training delivered</p>	<p>September –December 05</p>



Objective 1.4 Supporting children and families and improving our services through working effectively with all our partners

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
1.4.1 Develop and implement a national partnership strategy which defines the joint purpose and the main objectives of all our service partnerships	National partnership strategy developed, consulted and agreed with all our service partners and implemented	March 06
1.4.2 Develop policy alliances with key agencies on a range of issues e.g. children's rights, mothers' issues, fathers' issues, grandparents, etc	Issues to progress identified Alliances in place Policy drafts written	November 05 January 06 March 06
1.4.3 Ensure we provide effective rep on local Family Justice Councils and local Safeguarding Children's Boards as well as key national bodies such as the Family Justice Council and the Children's Workforce Development Council and put in place a named link person for all organisations we work with	Representation clarified Named relationship managers for partnerships identified	November 05 January 06

Aim 2 Transforming the Organisation

Objective 2.1 – Becoming a more strategic organisation in order to represent children and their interests

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
2.1.1 Implement all Board and management decisions – 'when we say we'll do something, we mean it'	Quarterly audit to monitor progress on board and management decisions in place of National Management Team	October 05
2.1.2 Update all national strategies by April 06 and realign the total budget to fund key priorities	Medium term financial planning allows funding of priorities	February 06
2.1.3 Implement a new performance management framework embracing team, regional and corporate planning, appraisal, contract management, supervision, competences and quality assurance, over the next two years	Working consultation on performance framework launched 100% of staff appraised Competences and quality assurance tools used by 100% of teams	Summer 05 30 September 05 March 06
2.1.4 Complete the downsizing of the National Office, establishing a more strategic role for it	Restructuring completed	December 05
2.1.5 Developing regions to be more strategic in managing local teams, devolved functions and becoming commissioning bodies	Regional capacity to undertake new roles developed	December 05, ongoing
2.1.6 Establish and implement a children's rights strategy, which ensures that children are at the heart of our planning and delivery of services	Strategy in place Objectives built into all CAFCASS plans	Autumn 05 March 06

2.1.7 Complete and implement the Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure in all regions and establish a systematic approach to learning lessons from complaints	New procedure in place	October 05
2.1.8 Develop and implement a national accommodation strategy to support modernised service delivery	Integrated service, financial, estates and ICT strategy in place	March 06
2.1.9 Develop and Implement a national ICT strategy	Integrated service, financial, estates and ICT strategy in place	April 06
2.1.10 Establish a health and safety strategy with key objectives and priorities	Strategy ready for regional and team application	March 06
2.1.11 Continually strengthen management information systems	Consistency in standards of data collection and coordination increasingly robust	Ongoing

2.2 Strengthen Leadership and Management at all levels

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
2.2.1 Develop common values and culture throughout the organisation centred on outcomes for children by linking the personal objectives of all staff to the aims of CAFCASS through the appraisal and supervision process and supporting new staff through induction	100% of staff appraised 100% of new staff inducted within 12 weeks	30 September 05
2.2.2 Establish a diverse national leadership network representative of all workforce roles and the communities we serve, and which grows the service leaders of the future	Networks active	December 05
2.2.3 Build the leadership capacity of service managers through a review of the service manager role and a management development programme, including contract management skills	New role agreed, resulting in clearer priorities and more manageable workloads for service managers	March 06
2.2.4 Carry out a staff survey within 2 years	Results of survey disseminated and action plan in response to findings in place	June 07



2.3 Develop a workforce strategy to recruit and retain a flexible workforce which better reflects the communities we serve and makes CAFCASS the employer of first choice for professionals in our sector

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
<p>2.3.1 Develop and implement a recruitment and retention strategy with effective tools for managers and which raises the profile of CAFCASS through recruitment, with a focus on lateral solutions in areas where we struggle to recruit and retain permanent staff</p>	<p>Strategy developed and implementation effective in all regions</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>2.3.2 Train all managers in effective recruitment practices, in particular compliance with Warner guidelines</p>	<p>Regional training completed with coverage of 100% managers Regular evaluation of recruitment process in place</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>2.3.3 Continue to develop converged teams i.e. practitioners able to carry public law, private law and adoption cases within their overall caseload</p>	<p>All teams able to allocate all work to practitioners with suitable knowledge and experience</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>2.3.4 Develop competences, which include a diversity dimension, for all staff roles</p>	<p>Generic competences for all staff and technical competences for FCAs, all with diversity dimension, developed and used in appraisals</p>	<p>March 06</p>
	<p>Technical competences for managers, business and administrative staff developed</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>2.3.5 Support regions to set targets for their workforce in line with census information, using socio-economic trend analysis</p>	<p>All regions have targets in place and in use</p>	<p>March 07</p>
<p>2.3.6 Develop modern flexible competitive pay and reward packages.</p>	<p>Pay and reward packages introduced</p>	<p>April 07</p>



2.4 Being more efficient and adding value in all we do

Priority	How will we know we have succeeded?	Target date for completion
<p>2.4.1 Improve use of resources, delivering the required level of efficiency savings</p>	<p>Efficiency savings delivered year on year</p>	<p>March 06 March 07</p>
<p>2.4.2 Set up a Budget Task Force to ensure spend is contained within the 05/6 budget allocation</p>	<p>Task Force established Remedial measures in place to deal with any projected in-year overspend Budget contained within cash limits</p>	<p>April 05 August 05 Out turn 06</p>
<p>2.4.3 Develop a medium term financial strategy which is shared and agreed with the DFES and which enables core objectives to be delivered within budget</p>	<p>Medium term financial planning established</p>	<p>February 06</p>
<p>2.4.4 Establish a full accrual accounting system, which will provide more robust financial information, including unit costs</p>	<p>System in place</p>	<p>Autumn 05</p>
<p>2.4.5 Devolve responsibilities, budgets and other resources to the regions, with a clear delegation schedule across all functions, which promotes accountability</p>	<p>Functions devolved Delegation schedule in place</p>	<p>December 05 Sept 05</p>
<p>2.4.6 Develop and implement a national procurement strategy</p>	<p>Strategy written and procedures in place</p>	<p>Jan 06</p>
<p>2.4.7 Develop sound contractual arrangements, which are robustly monitored</p>	<p>Arrangements used by teams, regional and national offices</p>	<p>April 06</p>
<p>2.4.8 Strengthen risk management processes in line with the recommendations of the CAFCASS Audit Committee</p>	<p>Robust risk management in place in regions and national office</p>	<p>March 06</p>
<p>2.4.9 Set service standards for staff ICT skills and put in place a development programme to enable all staff to be ICT literate.</p>	<p>Standards established and development programme in place All Service Managers able to use CAFCASS systems including Ebis, CRS and complaints data base Full IT literacy</p>	<p>Dec 06 April 06 March 08</p>
<p>2.4.10 Improve the Performance Framework to ensure it contributes to a continuing planning process.</p>	<p>Collate feedback during the autumn review and use it to shape the Performance Framework for 2006-07 and beyond Sustain the planning process to inform the direction of CAFCASS to 2010</p>	<p>December 05 to March 06 April 06 and ongoing</p>



Key Performance Indicators

In addition to the priorities set out above for 2005-07 we shall continue to report on the following key performance indicators:

- The number of private law reports unallocated less than 10 weeks before court filing date for the month should be no more than 4% of the workload
- By March 2007, 70% of allocations during the month for Section 31 (care and supervision) cases should be within two days from receipt of request.
- At least 98% of all public allocations each month for all case types should be within 28 days of receipt of request
- No more than 3% of the public law workload should remain unallocated at month end
- All new staff to receive induction within 12 weeks
- Sickness absence rate of no more than 4%
- Ensure that CAFCASS support cost ratios are equal to or better than Government and wider public sector benchmarks
- Manage our funding to live within, subject to a 1% tolerance limit our resource budget of £107 million

Section 5

Our Resources for 2005/06

Despite additional grant in aid of £12 million in 2004/5, the CAFCASS budget is fully committed and fully stretched, and a major savings programme had to be instituted before a budget for 2005/6 could be agreed by the CAFCASS Board. A Budget Task Force has been established to co-ordinate in-year remedial measures during 2005/6, but also to zero base the budget during 2005/6 in order to realign spend within the budget so we can go ahead with our top service priorities from April 2006 onwards. Further efficiency savings on back room costs will be identified following on from the Gershon report which covers all areas of government. Our savings will mostly come from staffing reductions in our National Office. However, we must ensure we retain sufficient capacity and skills to deliver this Business Plan in full. We have provided our Sponsor Unit with statistics that show we are due to save over £0.5 million on back office costs when 2005/06 is compared with 2004/05. We have similarly provided data that shows we come out as more efficient against central government medians in the areas of Finance, HR and IT. We expect this situation to continue throughout 2005/06.

Our new approach to resource management and allocation is an inclusive one, and our regional directors and business managers play a growing part in ensuring we manage our resources well. For example, our procurement function is now led by the Regional Director and Business Manager in the East Midlands, with each regional business manager involved in identifying the potential for procurement savings or market opportunities for a specific set of goods and services.

This approach builds on the work of our Finance team, who have developed the right blend and balance of skills between the national, regional and local levels of the organisation.

Our corporate approach to resources means we are developing a small strategic national office focused on changing the way resources are used in the organisation, especially as we cannot anticipate further large increases in resources in future years. Whilst we will continue to press our case for more resources through sound business cases, we have to be realistic, resources may well be tight in future years. The pressing question is 'how can we most effectively represent the 100,000 children a year referred to us?'

To answer this question, we are reviewing all our strategies in the resources portfolio. In HR, a strategic review of pay is under way. We are establishing a CAFCASS Property Board which will meet quarterly to plan the sort of accommodation we will need in the future, and to monitor in-year spend in areas like planned maintenance. In ICT, we will either be re-negotiating our current contract with our main provider, or re-tendering the contract and this



work needs to be carried out by October 2005. In Finance, we will be developing full accrual accounting by the end of the financial year, which is long overdue, and will help us to develop our commissioning function through more

accurate nationwide commitment accounting. We are extending the role of our Management Information Service so that all corporate information, including operational, finance and HR data, is handled by one specialist manager in the national office. A more sophisticated model covering unit costs, productivity and effectiveness measures will be developed between now and April 2007.

The scale of change underway in CAF/CASS means we have to strengthen our risk management arrangements, in line with the recommendations from our auditors and Audit Committee. This work will be a corporate priority during 2005/6. The implications of the new professional strategy being developed in line with the Every Child Matters agenda, means that all the functional areas already mentioned will be stretched still further. New job roles and new approaches to accommodation services are two examples where we will need strong support services input to manage the changes well.

Finally, the scope for new partnerships in the resources area will be examined to see if there are wider opportunities for sharing services with partner organisations in the field, such as other national child care organisations, and other NDPBs and Government agencies.

This Business Plan is a challenging and demanding one, and rightly so. We will be monitoring progress monthly through the CAF/CASS Performance Board and through the work of the CAF/CASS Board, who receive regular performance and finance updates. We are also exploring a 3 year budget with DfES to allow us to plan ahead with more clarity and confidence.

