

Children and
Family Court
Advisory
and Support
Service

CAFCASS Corporate Plan 2003/06

Putting children and young people first

Children and Family Court Advisory
and Support Service
(CAFCASS)

Putting Children and Young People First

Corporate Plan 2003/06

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Foreword

I am very pleased that CAF/CASS is now able to publish its first full Corporate Plan. It builds on the interim Corporate Plan published in February 2002 and reflects the very real progress we have made during 2002/03, as well as the outcome of the consultation exercise we held in May 2002 with our staff and our key stakeholders.

A key theme from the consultation exercise was the need for us to get the core service working effectively first. We have made progress on this over the last year but we accept that we still have much more to do here. So this will remain a key priority.

This Plan is also informed by the outcomes of the Spending Review 2002 – in terms of the overall priorities set by the Government, and the resources allocated to us by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

We have, over the last year, been able to make progress on a number of key issues:

- We have announced new harmonised terms and conditions for our employed staff, an essential step in creating a unified national organisation that is able to respond flexibly to the demands it faces, and in recruiting in an increasingly competitive employment market.
- We implemented, from April 2002, new contracts for our self-employed practitioners and implemented new rates from January 2003.
- We have piloted an induction training course for new staff and made further progress in identifying our requirements for other professional training.
- We have introduced a new website which is much more accessible and easy to use, particularly for the children and young people who use our services.
- We have consulted on, and now published, our Service Principles and Standards and our Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy.

These measures are all part of the platform on which we can now build, to make further progress in improving the service we provide. However, if we are to move on and play a broader role within the family justice system, then we need to look at different ways of working. This will mean reviewing our own internal ways of working but also working constructively with our stakeholders, particularly the courts.

We also have to accept that there are limitations on what we can do. We have to live within the funding we are provided with by the Lord Chancellor's Department and there

are limits on our internal capacity to develop and implement changes but it is important that we make as much progress as possible. We will use our funding in the most appropriate way so that we can make efficiencies and can invest more in our priority areas at the earliest possible opportunity.

The strategy set out in this Corporate Plan covers both getting our service right and some proposals for the further development of our service. This will be a challenging agenda. It takes more than two years to set up a national organisation from scratch, given the different structures and traditions we inherited, and more work is needed to ensure we have the right infrastructure to support such an organisation. However, we are also now in a position to capitalise on some of the progress made and to work collaboratively with our stakeholders towards ensuring that children and families get the outcomes they deserve.

There will inevitably be some issues that arise that we have not been fully able to anticipate. A key issue here will be the Government's response to the report of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. All of us here in CAFCASS share the horror that this case has rightly generated. We are studying carefully the recommendations of the report, to identify those that have an indirect impact on CAFCASS, and will work closely with other agencies in the child protection field. We will also work closely with the Lord Chancellor's Department on the Government's consultation paper on children at risk.

Anthony Hewson, OBE
Chairman of the CAFCASS Board

SECTION A

Our purpose, aims and ambitions

Our Purpose

CAFCASS exists 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 Role

The interests of the child are always at the forefront of our work. In delivering our remit we want to be active in promoting children's welfare. We operate within the law set by Parliament, and the strategic objectives set by the Lord Chancellor, and under the rules and directions of the family courts. Our role in respect of family proceedings in which the welfare of children is or may be in question, is to:

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

We can act only within the legal functions given to us. In all our work we will respect the rights of those we deal with in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, as enforceable in England and Wales through the Human Rights Act 1998. We will also seek to promote the rights of children set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our Approach

In delivering our remit we aim to:

- Engage with children and families so what we do is determined by their needs.
- Seek the best we can for all the children and families we serve within the resources available to us.
- Measure and account for what we do so that our performance is open to scrutiny. We recognise that our measures only imperfectly capture what is the real test of success for all involved in the family justice system – improving the outcomes and life chances for the children.
- Develop national standards and procedures, which apply across England and Wales, so that we are delivering a consistent service.
- Welcome feedback on our work and provide a transparent procedure for complaints to be assessed and answered.
- Base our practice on research and evaluation, equipping our practitioners with the knowledge they need to do their work.
- Continuously improve the service, using our broad spread of work and practice to evaluate and promote best practice and test new ways of working.
- Respect that, while our advice should be authoritative, it is the independent courts that are entrusted by Parliament to make the decision in individual cases.

Developing the Service

The core of our service is advising the courts in family proceedings so that they reach the best decisions for the children. Our credibility rests on our success and professionalism in doing so.

The ambitions set for us by Parliament go beyond that. We want to:

- Make an active input to broader policy development across Government, bringing our knowledge and independent perspective to contribute to policies to improve services for children; and
- Develop the broader support and advice role that those who argued for a national body aspired to and Parliament entrusted us with.

Private Law

In private law we promote the welfare of children in cases where the parents remain responsible for their children. Generally in these cases we are the sole representative of the child's interests and source of independent professional advice to the courts. We:

- Recognise that the best outcomes for children will usually be where parents themselves reach agreement, as the great majority do without recourse to the courts. State intervention in family life where agreement cannot be reached may be needed but is generally likely to be second best.
- Become involved where parents cannot agree, where there may be hurt and emotion that create conflict, and where delays and adversarial proceedings may harden that conflict.
- Aim to test more active engagement with families at the point they approach the court, providing advice and support to broker agreements where that has a realistic prospect of success. We would aim to shift more resources to this area if they can be released from elsewhere in the system.
- Recognise that, where there is no prospect of agreement, the interests of the child may best be achieved by formal decisions as soon as possible, and that in a defined minority of cases separate representation of the child may be needed.
- Fully support the aim of maintaining contact between the child and both parents where that is in the child's best interests.
- Recognise that further research is required about the circumstances in which contact with a non-resident parent is in a child's best interests, particularly in cases of high conflict.
- Recognise that arrangements reached between parents through the courts may be fragile. Children's needs and views change over time, and successful contact takes hard work, is aided by goodwill, and current sanctions against non-compliance may be judged disproportionate.
- Wish to work with and provide support for others, particularly those in the voluntary sector, engaged in advising families and supporting contact. We believe we have a distinctive role in facilitating contact arrangements which may, over time, improve the family relationship.

Public Law

In public law we safeguard and promote the welfare of the children, ensuring the voice of the child is heard, in cases where the parental responsibility for the child is under challenge. We become involved following intervention by other front-line child protection agencies so our role is affected by the quality and effectiveness of their work. We:

- Safeguard the child, who will be a party to the proceedings, working with a solicitor appointed to represent the child.
- Work with local authority social services departments who have the direct responsibility to protect and support children in need and provide services for their families; the solicitors who provide legal representation of the interests and rights of the other parties; other professionals and the courts that make the decisions.
- Make investigations, assure what others do, aim for clarity of roles and partnership so that we add professional value, where possible develop a common approach on what is best for the child, and advise clearly where our opinion differs.
- Commit to work with others in the child protection system so that children at risk are safeguarded and to reduce the level of delay in the family justice system, which is currently too long to the detriment of the children. We will work with others through our practitioners to ensure that we focus on providing the best advice in the shortest time we can achieve.

Adoption

We welcome the reform of adoption law heralded by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and in particular that, when it comes into force, the child's welfare, throughout his life, will be the paramount consideration of the court and adoption agency.

Our Style

Generally we work with others: first, and most important, the children themselves whose voices may be lost in the formal proceedings, together with their families; our partners in the family justice and child protection systems; and our stakeholders. We:

- Will seek children and families' views and measure their satisfaction with what we do.
- Will consult those with an interest where we look to change and develop our services and publish the outcome of that consultation.
- Want to be open and accountable so that what we do is explained in leaflets and other means, transparent, and well communicated.

- Will be honest about what we can achieve, aspiring to do more but not promising more than is deliverable.
- Will work with our partners in the social services, courts, legal and voluntary providers of service to provide a common approach and effective service.
- Will ensure the efficient overall management of our resources.
- Expect the courts to share responsibility for best use of our resources, in each particular case and more generally.

Supporting our People

We know that we deliver service only through the skills and commitment of all our people, the professional practitioners and those who support their work. We:

- Value and respect the professionalism of all our practitioners, whether they have joined CAFCASS from the Family Court Welfare Service, the Guardian ad Litem Service, the Children's Division of the Official Solicitor, or from outside these three organisations.
- Know that much of the knowledge of what CAFCASS does rests largely with the people who provide the service. We will build on that in deciding our service policies and plans.
- Need to respect practitioners' professional judgement in advising on individual cases, operating within a clear accountability and performance framework for what they do.
- Will take the opportunity of a national service to develop our staff's knowledge and skills across the public and private law boundaries that divided the work before CAFCASS, extending their expertise to provide a more flexible and effective service.
- Believe learning between public and private law practice is a two way process. Each of the three main traditions brought together into CAFCASS has strengths to offer to develop a better whole and increased professionalism.
- Know we need to develop a more diverse work force; we will support our people in equipping them to deliver services across the range of communities we serve.
- Commit to work in line with the Partnership Agreement with the unions who represent our staff.

Delivering Value

We operate within the resources – people, money and systems – available to us. We:

- Commit to increase the quality and productivity of what we do, through developing best practice.
- Will use performance management and measurement of what we do to seek continuous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of our service.
- Move as fast as we can to allocate available resources equitably in relation to workload rather than the historical inheritance, and encourage ownership for their use by those delivering the service.
- Will aim to use our buildings to provide the right environment for families and our staff, and use technology to improve the access of the public to our services and the efficiency of our management of cases.
- Measure and compare performance so that people know what is expected of them, can assess their performance against that of others, are accountable for their service delivery, and are encouraged and challenged to improve.

Our Ambitions

We will measure our success over the period of the Corporate Plan by the extent to which we have:

- Effectively engaged with children and families so that our service reflects their needs and views.
- Remedied current service shortfalls, providing a consistent level of service across the country and in both public and private law.
- Delivered evidence-based practice, informed by knowledge, research and evaluation of what best meets the needs and interests of children.
- Managed our performance so that what we do is measurable and transparent, recognising that the performance levels in this plan are those we can commit to, not those we aspire to longer-term.
- Become recognised by our partners for providing a high quality service and working together with them to improve services.
- Worked with others to reduce delays in the family justice system and to increase child welfare and protection.

- Refocused some of our resources to provide more support for children and families at the early stage of proceedings to reduce adversarial conflict and promote better outcomes for children and families.
- Become influential in the policy debate, using our independence and knowledge to be an active voice for children in developing future services.
- Created a national organisation, with a common culture, standards and terms and conditions for our people so that we are organised for success, and are on course for recognition as an Investor in People.
- Engaged our people and released their creativity, so that we build on their knowledge and develop their skills and expertise to improve the service.
- Become an organisation that people want to join and take pride in working for.
- Matched our resources to demands placed on us so that our service is efficient and effective for all those we serve.

In short, CAFCASS must truly make a difference for the children and families we exist to serve.

SECTION B

About CAFCASS

CAFCASS and Government priorities

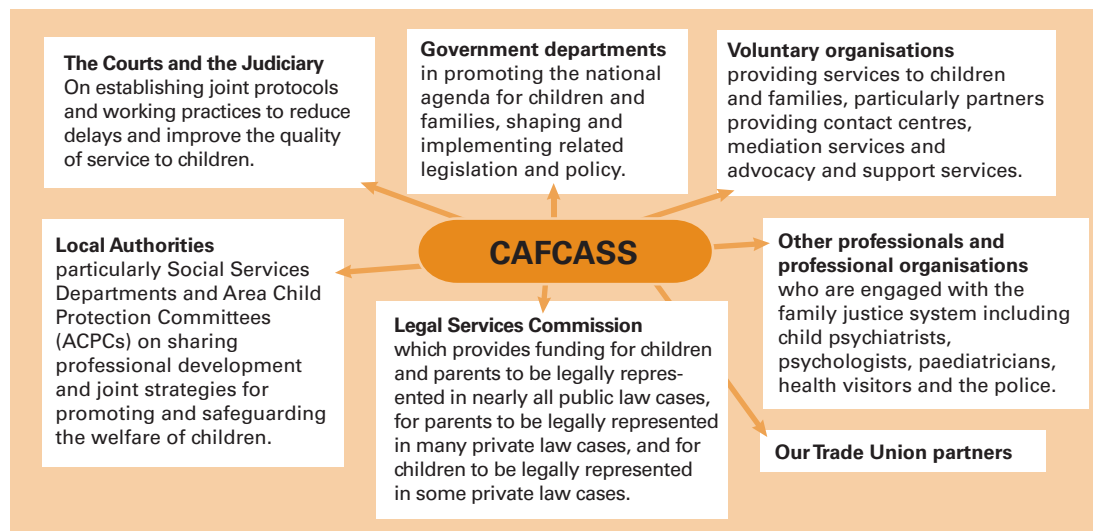
CAFCASS is a national Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) for England and Wales, set up in April 2001, providing services that support children in family proceedings. We have an important role in protecting children – a key part of delivering the government’s objectives in relation to tackling child poverty and combating social exclusion.

We contribute to the Lord Chancellor’s aims and objectives for family justice. The relevant strategic objective, set out in the Public Service Agreement published as part of Spending Review 2002, is:

“Reduce social exclusion, protect the vulnerable and children, including maintaining contact between children and the non-resident parent after a family breakdown, where appropriate.”

CAFCASS and the wider family justice system

CAFCASS does not operate in isolation. What we do needs to be considered within the context of the wider family justice system. In order to deliver our remit, and ensure children receive the best outcome possible, we need to work effectively with other parts of the family justice system and other stakeholders. In particular:



CAFCASS' roles and responsibilities

Our primary duties (as shown in section A above) are set out in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. Specifically we provide a service to the courts in family proceedings under the:

- Children Act 1989
- Adoption Act 1976
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990

In these different proceedings, CAFCASS officers are appointed by the court to provide a report and to fulfil the respective functions of Children & Family Reporter, Children's Guardian, Reporting Officer, Guardian ad Litem, Parental Order Reporter and Litigation Friend.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 will create new challenges (see Section D). In addition, we currently provide over £1million per year to around 160 different projects provided by our partners in the voluntary sector, in support of Contact Centres and Mediation Services.

CAFCASS' accountability framework

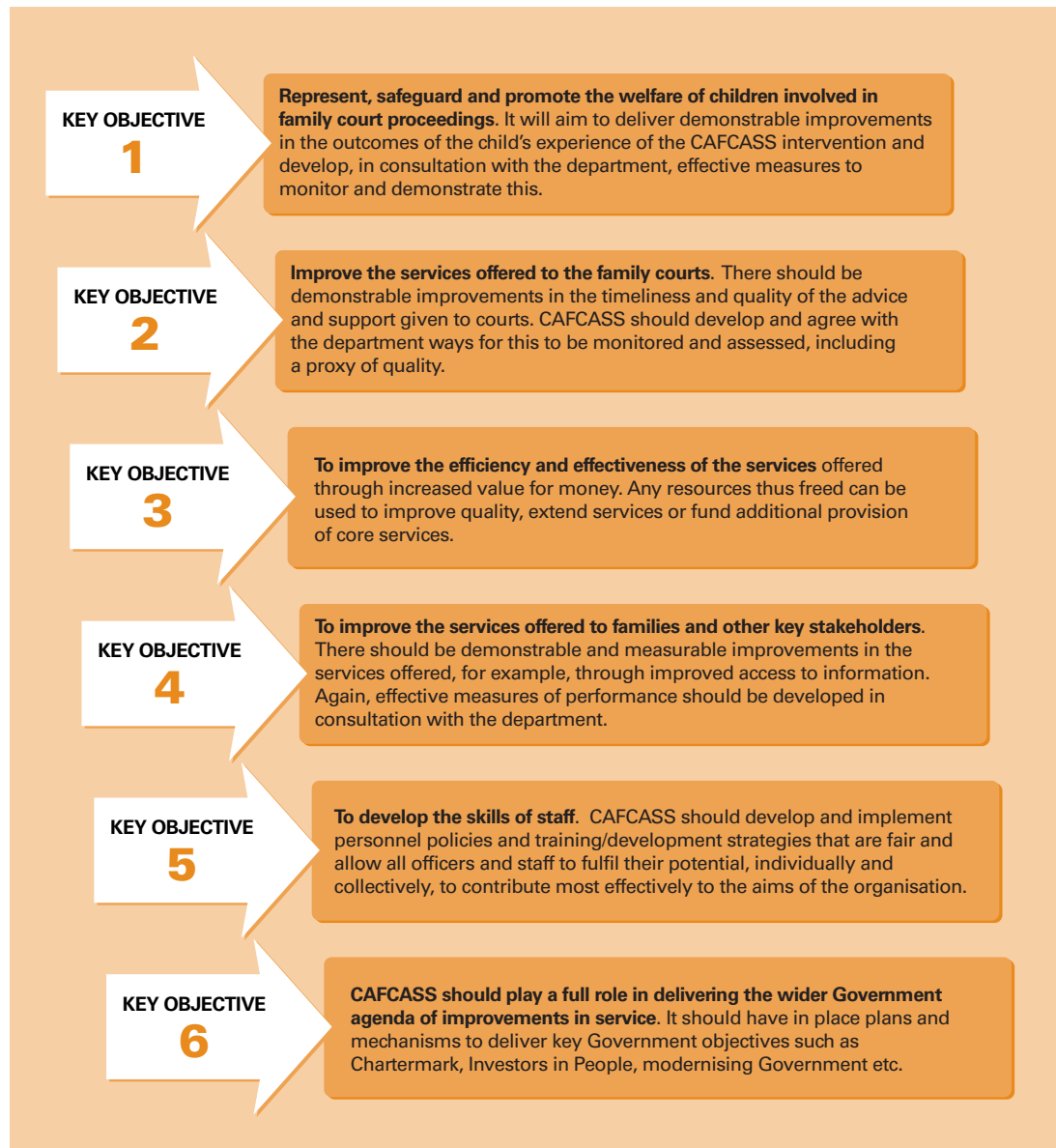
The relationship between CAFCASS and the Lord Chancellor's Department is set out in an agreed Framework Document, comprising a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. This specifies:

- The rules and guidelines we must operate within.
- The conditions under which public funds are paid to us.
- How we are to account for our performance.
- The relationship between us and the Lord Chancellor and his department.

We are accountable, through our Chairman and the Board, to the Lord Chancellor for ensuring that our policies are compatible with those of the Lord Chancellor and for probity in the conduct of our affairs. The Lord Chancellor is accountable to Parliament for our activities and performance.

CAFCASS' strategic objectives

When CAFCASS was created in April 2001 the Lord Chancellor set us six key objectives, and these remain in place for the period covered by this Corporate Plan:



SECTION C

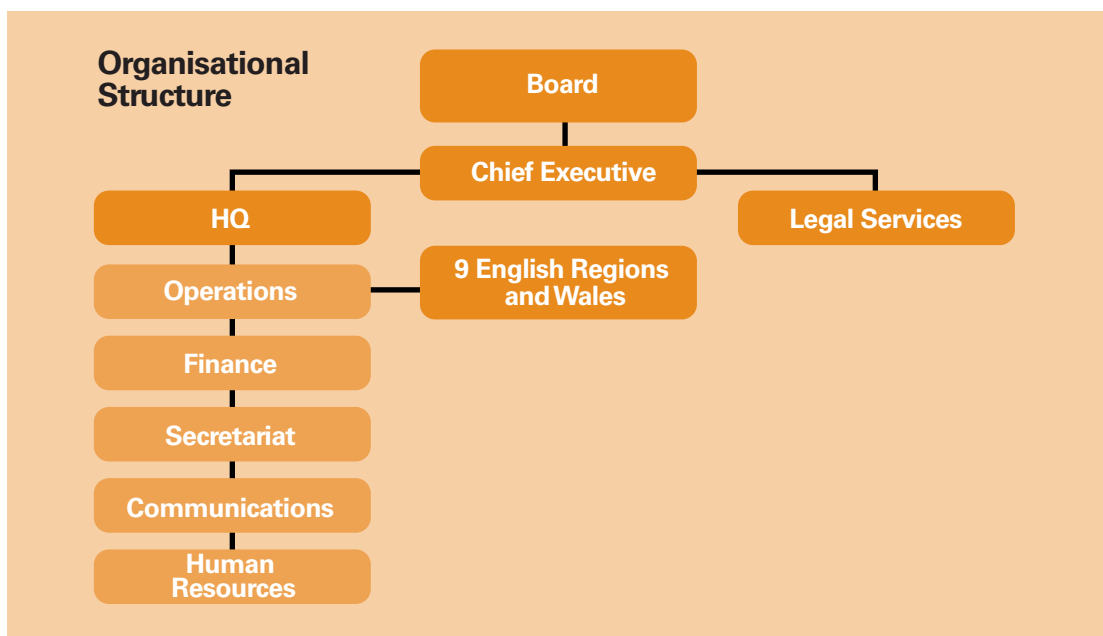
The starting point for this plan

Background

CAFCASS is still a young organisation, only two years old. We brought together three broad areas of service, and staff from 117 previous employing authorities. Creating a cohesive, national organisation in those circumstances was always going to be a significant challenge. Our Annual Report for the year 2001/02 (available on our website www.cafcass.gov.uk) sets out our progress in our first year.

The scale of our service

We are organised into nine English regions, and Wales. These are supported by a small headquarters team and by CAFCASS Legal.



We directly employ 1904 staff, including 1233 practitioners, and we also use the service of 390 self-employed practitioners under contractual arrangements introduced in 2002.

Over the course of the 2002/03 year we expect to deal with over 35,000 private law cases and nearly 14,000 public law cases. In total we expect to help some 75,500 children. This is in the context of some 160,000 divorces and family breakdowns in a year, and some 5,000 adoptions.

Further information is given in Annex A.

Progress made

During the last year we have been able to progress a number of key initiatives, crucial in our programme of action to create a unified national organisation and improve the quality of our service delivery. In particular we have:

- Announced, effective from July 2003, harmonised pay and conditions for new and existing staff. This is designed to help us recruit and retain, within a very competitive employment market sector, the staff we need. Without it, we will not be able to develop a single organisation and deploy our staff effectively.
- As part of harmonisation, we have developed CAFCASS job profiles to support the development of our organisation. These will enable us to have clear roles and career structure for our staff. Practitioners will be encouraged and supported, where appropriate, to extend their skills across public and private law, managers will have a broader responsibility to manage the service in the locality, and administrators will support both public and private law practitioners. This will enable us to provide a more flexible service, capable of responding more effectively to new demands.
- Run major recruitment campaigns to increase the number of our practitioners. Since April 2002 we have recruited over 200 new practitioners.
- Implemented, from April 2002, a new contract for our self-employed guardians with reviewed and improved terms with effect from January 2003. As with our employed staff this will enable us to offer fees that are more competitive within the market. It also renews the basis for the operation of a mixed economy in our service delivery.
- Developed, following a consultation exercise, new Service Principles and Standards for implementation from April 2003. These will enable us to offer common standards across the England and Wales and improve the overall standard of our service delivery.
- Begun the rollout of a new induction programme and, in conjunction with the Royal Holloway College, London University, are developing a modular programme of subject specific topics. This links to our commitment to ensuring our staff have the training and skills they need to do their jobs effectively and professionally.

- Completed a tender exercise to replace our current finance information technology contract. New arrangements become effective from April 2003, and are aimed at giving us a more robust system, more suited to our needs, and giving much more detailed management information. In addition, we have put in place new arrangements for external legal advice. Both of these new contractual provisions show our commitment to demonstrating better value in the use of our resources.
- Made significant improvements in our communications, with the introduction of a revised website, new leaflets on our core services, and by being more proactive and engaged with the press and other media.

All these measures will give us a sound platform on which to make further progress over the coming three years. Nonetheless, we accept that there is still much to do. We have undertaken a significant programme of recruitment over the year (resulting in the appointment of 210 new practitioners) and we are also implementing service review plans. These actions are beginning to show results, but there still remains service shortfalls in both public and private law in some parts of England and Wales. The additional resources available in 2003/04 will enable a substantial increase in capacity and our ability to deliver and improve our overall core service delivery.

Our key challenge, in partnership with the courts, is to reduce substantially delays and provide an equitable and consistent high quality service nationally. We are now putting in place the people, systems and structures to create a single, cohesive organisation.

Consultation on the CAF/CASS Interim Corporate Plan

In our interim Corporate Plan, published in February 2002, we undertook to consult with our staff and stakeholders, in order to inform this revised Plan. The results of that exercise have been published in a summary report (available on our website at www.cafcass.gov.uk).

The key themes that emerged from that exercise were:

- Getting the core service working effectively first.
- Taking stock on the meaning of 'convergence' in public and private law practice.
- Valuing the workforce including issues of pay and conditions, training, qualifications, and their involvement in developing the organisation.
- Establishing an information base including management information, performance indicators, targets and research capacity.
- Identity including leadership, managing the 'brand', two-way communications.

- The breadth of remit including partnerships, influence, and the other 'S' (Support) in CAFCASS' name.

As noted above, we have already been able to make some significant progress in a number of these areas, for example in addressing our service delivery problems, harmonising our pay and conditions, beginning the roll-out of our training programme, improving our communications and improving our management information. These themes have also informed the development of our delivery programme, set out in Section F.

SECTION D

Future challenges

In developing this Corporate Plan we have taken into account, as far as we are able to, changes arising from those external developments we know will affect the service we provide.

However, there are a number of issues on the horizon where the effects of any changes are less clear-cut at this stage. We will continue to work with, in particular, the Lord Chancellor's Department, other central Government Departments and Local Authorities, to assess what they might mean for our service, and to ensure that any changes are implemented effectively. As this plan cannot take full account of these issues, we will be reviewing it regularly so that any significant changes can be reflected.

The main issues likely to have some impact for us are:

- **The Victoria Climbié Inquiry** – like all organisations working with children we are looking carefully at the recommendations in Lord Laming's report and reviewing our internal procedures and liaison arrangements with other agencies.
- **The Children at Risk Consultation Paper** – we will be working closely with the Lord Chancellor's Department and other relevant organisations to ensure issues affecting our work are identified and that, where appropriate, we contribute to the delivery of any changes to current arrangements for dealing with children at risk implemented as a result of this consultation.
- **Domestic violence and risk to children** – in partnership with the Lord Chancellor's Department, the National Association of Child Contact Centres and others we will continue to contribute to multi-agency initiatives, informed by recent research, aimed at improving risk assessment and increasing safe contact between children and their non-resident family members.
- **The Adoption and Children Act 2002** – this is likely to have an impact on our workload and will require training on the new provisions and procedures for our staff. We are currently working with the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Department of Health on the detailed implementation issues.
- **Separate Representation** – The Adoption and Children Act 2002 also signals that more children should be made a party in private law cases, than has been the case to date. We will be working with the Lord Chancellor's Department and with the Legal Services Commission to consider what changes might arise from this provision and what the impact for us will be.

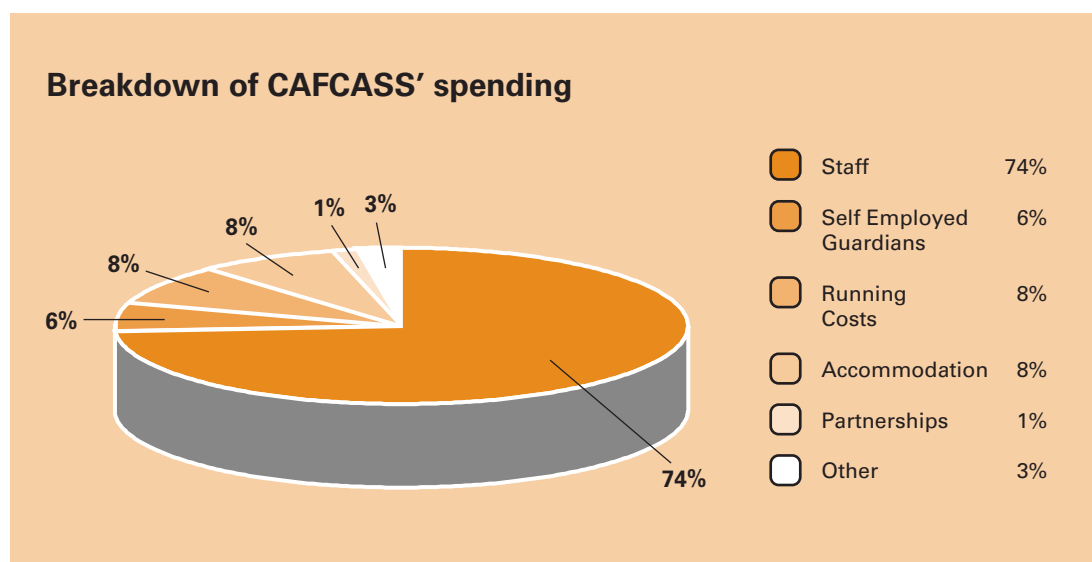
SECTION E

CAFCASS' resources

Our resource funding for 2003/04 is £95 million. This compares to our budget of £84.5 million in 2002/03.

This compares to a recurring costs budget of £72 million (with an additional £8 million for specific set up costs) in 2001/02.

The bulk of our funding – 80% – will be spent on staff costs (including our employed staff, self-employed practitioners and contract and agency staff). The following chart shows how our spending is broken down.



Our operating structures have a significant impact on the proportion of our spending on overhead costs, such as accommodation and computers. For example, we operate from some 170 different locations across England and Wales but we also have a significant number (some 250) home-workers who are provided with the same computer facilities as office workers, to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. In addition we need to reimburse our employed practitioners for the significant amount of travel they have to undertake in the course of completing their cases.

The increases in our funding since we were set up are welcome. Nonetheless, there are significant unavoidable costs and pressures that have to be met from that funding, before we can consider extending our services. These include:

- Potential increases in private and public law workloads. The judicial statistics showed a significant increase in the number of cases (in both private and public law) in 2001 from the numbers in 2000. There is also a growing expectation about what a CAFCASS officer should do in each case. Delay in public law proceedings has increased the average number of hours spent by a CAFCASS officer in each case.
- The ongoing costs of the harmonisation of pay and conditions and the revised self-employed guardians fees. It is essential that we invest in our practitioners if we are to attract and retain sufficient numbers of staff and contractors.
- Increased accommodation costs, as a result of leaseholds coming to an end and the need to ensure staff are housed in fit-for-purpose premises.
- Costs not fully identified when CAFCASS was established, for example, training costs and Value Added Tax. Our Value Added Tax costs are some £3 million a year, costs which our predecessor organisations did not have to meet.

Further information about how this funding breaks down is given in Annex A.

SECTION F

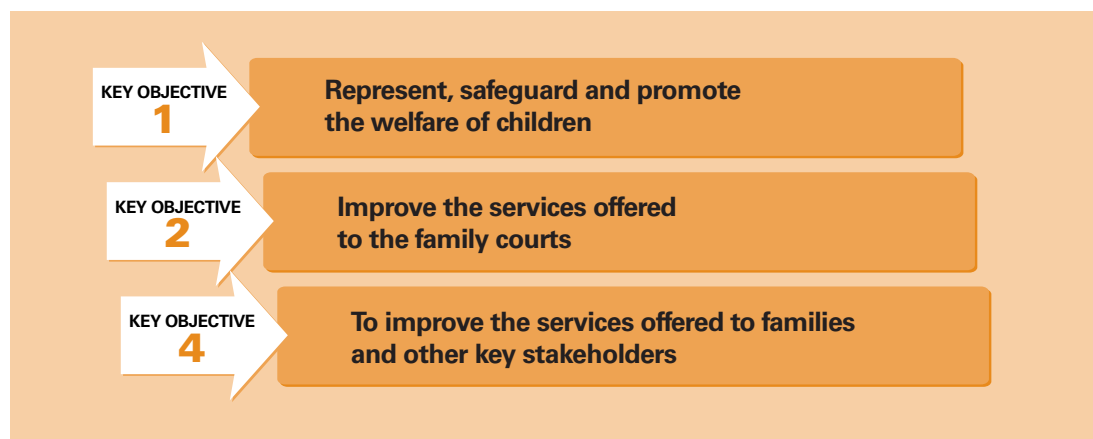
Delivery strategy

Delivering key results

In support of the Lord Chancellor's six key objectives, we have agreed a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2003/04 against which the overall delivery of our core service can be judged. Performance against these KPIs will inform those to be set for subsequent years. We will be aiming to improve our performance year on year.

Key objectives 1, 2 and 4

These objectives relate to delivering the core service of CAFCASS.

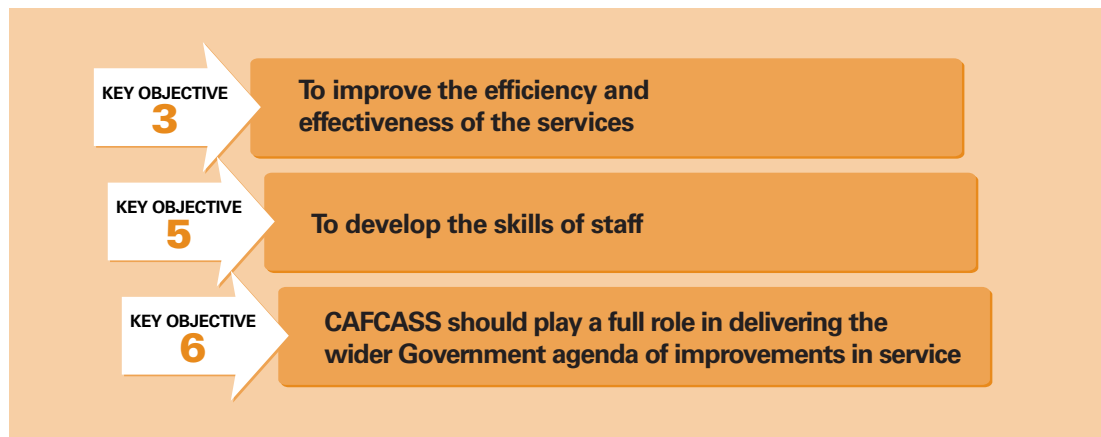


The performance indicators supporting these objectives are:

- In public law no less than 80% of cases should be allocated within 7 days.
- In private law cases at least 95% of requests in the month should be allocated 10 weeks before the filing date.
- Carry out during 2003/04 a customer satisfaction survey to inform the development of a service improvement action plan.

Key objectives 3, 5 and 6

These objectives relate to providing the appropriate financial, staffing and other resources structure to enable delivery of the core service set out in key objectives 1, 2 and 4.



The performance indicators supporting these objectives are:

- All new recruits to have received induction training within 16 weeks of joining.
- Sickness absence rate of no higher than 5% (equivalent to 12 days per person per annum).
- Manage our funding to live within, subject to a 1% tolerance limit, our resource allocation of £95 million.
- During 2003/04 develop a demonstrably robust methodology for calculating unit costs and assess the baseline position, to inform specific key performance indicators from 2004/05.

Our wider delivery strategy

Our focus over the coming three years centres on:

- completing our set-up and recovery programmes
- improving our performance
- managing our resources effectively and efficiently
- developing our remit

Completing set-up and recovery

We have made very good progress over the last year, for example through the harmonisation package, recruitment exercises, recovery plans, and new contracts for our IT and external legal support. In order to consolidate this, and make further progress, we need to ensure that our staff are equipped to do their jobs with the right infrastructure support and the right training.

We also need to recognise that much of our work is demand led. Increases in volumes could seriously undermine our ability to make progress.

To address these points, over the period of this Plan we will:

- **Implement Service Reviews (Key Objective 1).** During the current year we have completed a programme of reviews in each of our English Regions and in Wales. The purpose of these reviews has been to look at the resources currently available, to identify steps needed to clear backlogs of work or delayed timescales for report, and to review resource requirements.

In 2003/04 each region will agree and implement an action plan covering issues such as recruitment, training, structured use of overtime, management of long term sickness.

- **Complete the harmonisation of our terms and conditions (Key Objective 5).** During the current year we announced, following extensive consultation with our Trade Union partners, revised terms and conditions for our staff.

In 2003/04 our aim is that most of our staff should transfer to these new terms.

- **Continue to enhance our internal and external communications (Key Objective 4).** Our staff and our stakeholders need up to date information about what progress we are making and what more still needs to be done.

In 2003/04 we will be issuing new leaflets about our service, aimed specifically at children.

- **Develop a more integrated and flexible service through the convergence of practitioner workloads and management (Key Objectives 1 and 5).** This will be supported by a modular programme of practice training and development, covering the full range of the statutory functions of our practitioners.

In 2003/04 we will ensure all service managers receive training to manage their teams successfully post-harmonisation.

Improving our performance

The Service Principles and Standards, which come into effect across the whole of CAFCASS from April 2003, will be a key element of our strategy to improve our performance. The introduction of key performance indicators across a range of our work will also enable us to assess our progress.

In addition, ensuring our staff are trained and developed is important. We have already begun to rollout our induction and training programme.

Over the period of this Plan we will:

- **Set up effective joint working arrangements with the judiciary (Key Objective 2).** We already have very productive discussions with the President of the Family Division, with local courts, and with the Courts Service. We now need to build on these, to ensure that the referral of cases and court listings are managed effectively, and to help reduce the delays in cases.

In 2003/04 we will work with the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Court Service and the judiciary on developing and implementing a protocol for the case management of public law proceedings. We also believe there will be further value in developing a similar protocol for private law proceedings.

- **Implement a programme to evaluate and disseminate best practice (Key Objective 1).** We will be reviewing our legacy to look at what works best and to develop a more consistent approach across all of our service.

In 2003/04 we will undertake, with our Regional Managers, an audit of good practice examples.

- **Complete a review of what is needed for professional and practice development, and implement the recommendations (Key Objectives 1 and 5).** This will include ensuring appropriate operational procedures and practice guidance are in place, reviewing training requirements, and ensuring that we implement effective systems for communicating relevant publications and legal decisions, and set up effective library arrangements.

In 2003/04 we will roll-out nationally induction training for new recruits, aiming to ensure they receive the training within three months of joining. We will also work with the Royal Holloway College, London University to finalise a modular training framework for our practitioners, with the aim of introducing this training from the Autumn.

- **Develop new case management systems supported by technology (Key Objective 3).** Our current systems are mainly manual and we have no national database of all our cases. We plan to develop new systems to enable us to have a better understanding of our overall caseload and will facilitate more effective management.

In 2003/04 we will take forward the development of better case management support.

- **Engage further with families and children (Key Objective 4).** Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is central to our work. We will be developing a customer satisfaction survey in order that we can understand how the families and children for whom we work see our services. We will then use the results to develop action plans to deliver improvements in the future. We will also be looking at how we can best engage with children more widely, to understand their experiences of CAFCASS.

In 2003/04 we will complete the customer satisfaction survey and develop action plans for implementation in later years.

Using our resources effectively

Our staff are our key resource in our efforts to improve our service. We are committed to ensuring that they all receive appropriate training and development, are enabled to reach their full potential, and are appropriately and fairly rewarded for the work they undertake. Our human resources policies and strategies to support this will be developed with our staff, and working in partnership with our trade union partners.

Over the period of this Plan we will:

- **Aim to achieve the standards for Investors in People accreditation (Key Objective 5).** We will be looking to develop our practice in accordance with the standards set by the Investors In People award.

In 2003/04 we will undertake a workforce survey as part of our initial preparatory work.

- **Ensure our staff are equipped to work with all the communities we serve (Key Objective 5).** We will ensure that staff are enabled to work with children and families from the diverse communities requiring our services. We will also ensure that our recruitment practices encourage applications from these diverse communities, particularly those that are under-represented.

In 2003/04 we will be finalising our staff and user diversity policies.

We will continue to use our resources efficiently and effectively to ensure the best value for money. Our new contracts for IT services and external legal advice will enable us to realise efficiencies in respect of the costs of those services. In addition, over the period of this plan, we will:

- **Introduce a fairer financial resource allocation system (Key Objective 3).** Because of our inadequate data systems resources have mainly been allocated throughout our organisation on the basis of historical expenditure. However, our new

finance IT system will ensure we have a much better range of data available to us. This will enable us to develop methods of allocation that are more equitably related to demand and workloads, and to track expenditure throughout the year.

In 2003/04 we will continue the process of refining our budget allocation methods and progressively introduce the new system for 2004/05 and 2005/06.

- **Keep our organisational structures under review (Key Objective 3).** Over the coming years we will be facing new demands and consider that some changes to our current structures will be needed. We are now concluding a review of our future requirements.

In 2003/04 we will ensure that new structures are implemented where appropriate and that in all parts of our organisation we recruit up to agreed staffing levels.

- **Manage our change and development programme effectively (Key Objective 3).** We have a significant number of measures to implement over the period (including new IT systems, new policies and procedures, training programmes). We will be introducing a work programme, managed at a strategic level by a Programme Board, and with clearer roles and responsibilities for all those involved. This will help to ensure that any emerging problems are identified at an early stage and appropriate remedial action taken.

Over the period of this plan the Programme Board will meet regularly to assure progress.

Developing our remit

We help and support children who are involved in court proceedings, and we are working with other stakeholders to reduce delays in the overall handling of cases. But in some instances, particularly in private law cases, children's best interests might be best served if issues can be resolved without the need for the courts to get involved. CAFCASS will look to test where alternatives to court proceedings might assist resolution (for example by more use of conciliation). We believe we will be well placed to play a key role here given our wealth of experience and professional knowledge. It will also be in the best interests of children to ensure that best use is made of finite practitioner resources.

Over the period of this plan we will be reviewing these issues and will:

- **Continue our joint working and dialogue with our stakeholders (Key Objective 6).** CAFCASS' role in supporting children cannot be looked at in isolation – it needs to be considered within the whole spectrum of the family justice system. So we need to work effectively with central Government, other public bodies and the voluntary sector to ensure that the system overall works most effectively for children.

In 2003/04 we will finalise with the National Association of Child Contact Centres a protocol to underpin our partnership arrangements with contact centres. This will enable us to adopt a clearer and more consistent practice with the centres.

- **Pilot new ways of working (Key Objective 6).** We believe that the best interests of children may be better served, in private law cases, by taking more action to avoid cases coming to adversarial and expensive court hearings – by targeting cases earlier in the court process. However, there is little evidence available about the comparative outcomes for different ways of working. To address this, we propose to work jointly with our stakeholders on piloting actions at different stages in the process: outside the family justice system (eg at the Solicitor stage), early mediation and advice, and active CAFCASS case management at the Court application stage.
- **Implement new arrangements with our voluntary sector partners (Key Objective 1).** During the current year we have completed a consultation exercise on how to make the most effective use of the funding we provide to support contact centres and mediation services. We will be implementing the changes announced as a result of that exercise.

In 2003/04 we will work closely with our partners on the transfer to new contractual arrangements. We will develop and issue new guidance for staff, undertake training, and will review and implement new contracts with partners from September 2003.

- **The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Key Objective 1).** We are working with the Lord Chancellor's Department and Department of Health on the development of the regulations and the implementation of this new legislation.

In 2003/04 we will develop our internal guidance and procedures on the effects of the new legislation.

SECTION G

Risks to the delivery strategy

We are committed to deliver the strategies and proposals set out in this Plan. However, as an organisation whose work is demand led, which is still facing a number of problems in relation to the allocation of work, which has still not recruited to full strength, and which still has gaps in its infrastructure support, we face a number of risks.

Our internal planning and management processes build in risk assessment and management. Key to this is our risk register. The register currently identifies our top ten risks as:

Mission

- Failure to establish ourselves as an effective organisation, plan for the future and develop our intended remit

Operations

- Failing or inadequate service delivery
- Ineffective management as a result of poor management systems and information

Human Resources

- Inability to recruit, develop and motivate high calibre staff
- Lack of management capacity

Finance

- Current and future budget does not meet increasing demands or is ineffectively deployed

IT, Estates and Facilities

- Key systems or premises are unavailable for significant periods of time

External relations

- Lack of confidence and support from external stakeholders prevents us operating effectively

Compliance

- We are in breach of our legal and regulatory obligations
- Our governance arrangements leave us operating ineffectively and in breach of our Framework Document.

We will review the risk register regularly to ensure that any changes to the risks we face are assessed and that our plans for managing the risks are updated and amended as necessary. This work is directed by the Audit Committee.

In addition, the Programme Board will be meeting regularly to assure the progress of the overall work programme. The programme includes the measures set out in this Corporate Plan, and the Programme Board will be monitoring projects to ensure they are on track to deliver and that risks to delivery are being managed effectively.

ANNEX A

Workload and Resources

Anticipated workloads in the period 2003/06

Type of work	2002/03 forecast	2003/04 projections	2004/05 projections	2005/06 projections
Private Law Reports	35,100	35,500	35,900	36,300
Public Law Cases (incl. Adoptions)	13,700	13,900	14,100	14,300
Family Assistance Orders	570	650	750	850
Privileged Mediations	4,445	4,500	4,600	4,700

Note: 2003/04 to 2005/06 based on current trends. Our workload is determined by the number of applications to the family courts and is not within our direct control.

Annual income and expenditure forecast for 2003/06

Income 2003/04 (£000's)		Anticipated expenditure 2003/04 (£000's)	
Resource budget	95,000	Employed staff	70,111
Legal Services	50	Self-employed contractors	6000
		Partnerships	1215
		Running costs	7790
		Accommodation	7434
		Non-cash costs (depreciation/capital charges)	2500
TOTAL	95,050	TOTAL	95,050

People

Region	Self-employed (headcount)	Employed staff	
		In Post (headcount)	In Post (Whole Time Equivalent)
Eastern	50	125	102
East Midlands	23	138	120
Headquarters		54	54
Legal Services		14	14
London	130	200	173
North East	13	117	106
North West	29	298	263
South East	97	190	146
South West	35	168	140
Wales	16	147	129
West Midlands	38	206	179
Yorkshire & Humberside	13	247	211
TOTALS	444	1904	1637

Total number of starters 427 Total number of leavers 140 Projected annual turnover 6.86%

Note: Some self-employed guardians are used in more than one region. The total number used is 390.

Staff Group (employed)	In Post (headcount)
Family Court Advisors	579
Children and Family Reporter	634
Guardians	20
Private Law Managers	62
Public Law Managers	51
Directors (inc. Chief Executive)	5
Senior Managers	34
Specialists	28
Administrative Staff	410
Ancillary Staff	26
Sessional	55

Notes: Senior Managers – Assistant Directors, Regional Managers and Business Managers
 Specialists – Lawyers and HR Advisors
 Administrative Staff – Regional and Headquarters support functions

Note: position at 28 February 2003

Information Technology

Building on our initial infrastructure, networked services have been extended by 300 PCs to cater for the expansion in staff in offices and working from home. A new contract has been let for the supply of IT services after a full competitive process. This will run for three years with the possibility of an extension for a further two.

The infrastructure is fully equipped to deliver the new financial and payroll systems which are due to come on-line in March 2003, and further developments in the delivery of centralised services such as management reporting and knowledge information are planned for the coming year.

We have spent approx £3.4 million on running, expanding and enhancing the IT services during the last year; and plan £3.2 million next year.

Estates

We now have a total of 148 properties on our estate. Of these 95 are planned for long-term occupation, 20 planned for disposal in 2003/04 and 20 planned for disposal in 2004/05. In addition 13 of the properties are interview facilities only.

We have spent some £1.2 million in 2002/03 acquiring and upgrading our property estate.

ANNEX B

Details of Board, Executive Team, Regional and other Senior Managers

Board Members

Anthony Hewson OBE Chair

Angela Killick Deputy Chair

Danny Bernstein

Peter Hargrave

Leonie Jordan

Anne Morgan OBE JP

Pip O'Byrne

Nalini Varma

Mike Walker

Nedine Watson-Cutts

Judy Weleminsky

Executive Team

Jonathan Tross Chief Executive

Sarah Carrington Director of Human Resources

Anne Chan MBE Director of Operations

Jonathan Kalemera Director of Finance

Charles Prest Director of Legal Services

Mara Broome Head of Secretariat and Corporate Planning

Cathy Byrne Head of Communications

Regional Managers

Sheena Adam (North West)
Elizabeth Coe (East Midlands)
Alan Critchley (Eastern*)
Suzie Goodman (London)
Andrew Guymer (West Midlands*)
Elizabeth Hall (North East)
Dafydd Ifans (Director CAF/CASS (Cymru))
Jo Lock (South East)
Barbara Melville (Yorkshire and Humberside)
Lamorna Wooderson (South West)
(* Acting Regional Manager)

Senior Managers

Simon Bartrum Interim Assistant Director of Operations
Ola Fajobi Assistant Director of Human Resources
Mike Hinchliffe Senior Lawyer, Legal Services and Special Casework
Sharon Reed Assistant Director of Finance
Denise Rickards Assistant Director of Human Resources
Lennox Simpson Assistant Director of Finance
Lamorna Wooderson Interim Assistant Director of Operations

Annex C

Glossary of Terms

Children and Family Reporter

CAFCASS officer appointed in private law proceedings to report to the court on matters relating to the welfare of the child.

Children's Guardian

CAFCASS' officer appointed in public law and adoption proceedings to safeguard the interests of the child.

Contact Centre

A neutral venue where children in separated families can enjoy contact with one (or both) parents and sometimes other family members, in a comfortable and safe environment when there is no viable alternative.

Family Courts

There is no single 'family court' in England and Wales. Family proceedings are dealt with in courts at all levels by specially designated and trained members of the judiciary and magistrates.

Family Court Advisor

This non-statutory term refers to CAFCASS officers contracted to fulfil all the different roles a CAFCASS case officer can be asked to perform.

The Family Court Welfare Service

The Family Court Welfare Service formed part of the remit of the probation service. The primary objective of all family court welfare work undertaken by the probation services was to help the courts in their task of serving the needs of children whose parents are involved in disputes in private law.

Financial Memorandum

The Financial Memorandum sets out in greater detail certain aspects of the financial provisions which CAFCASS is required to observe.

Framework Document

The Framework Document comprises a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. Drawn up by the Lord Chancellor, it was agreed with CAFCASS, the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. It took effect from 1 April 2001. The arrangements set out in the Framework Document are to be reviewed formally at least every fifth year but it will be reviewed and updated before then if needed.

Guardian ad Litem

This term is now limited to a role for the separate representation of a child that usually only arises in particularly difficult private law proceedings. Where it arises it will usually (but not always) be an officer of CAFCASS who is appointed.

Guardian ad Litem and Reporting Officer Service

Provided children's guardians (formerly called Guardians ad litem) and reporting officers prior to the establishment of CAFCASS.

Key Objectives

Objectives set by the Lord Chancellor to be met in establishing, developing and maintaining CAFCASS.

Key Performance Indicator

Key performance targets and indicators relate to the key objectives agreed by the Lord Chancellor and set out in CAFCASS' Corporate and Business Plans. They are selected to measure movement towards or away from a pre-defined target.

Litigation Friend

In family proceedings brought under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court, a role which can be fulfilled by a CAFCASS officer.

Mediation

The aim of mediation is to help find a solution that meets the needs of all of the parties and, especially those of their children, and that both parties feel is fair. At the end of mediation, parties should feel that there has been no 'winner' or 'loser' but that together they have arrived at sensible, workable arrangements.

Official Solicitor (Children's Division)

The Official Solicitor provided welfare advice and legal representation to children in some family proceedings, often in cases that were particularly unusual or complex. This role transferred to CAFCASS Legal in April 2001.

Parental Order Reporter

CAFCASS officer appointed in cases brought under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Private Law

Private law Children Act 1989 cases (i.e. applications for parental responsibility, residence, contact etc. when these matters are in dispute between the child's parents.)

Public Law

Public law Children Act 1989 applications for local authority care or supervision orders and other care related proceedings.

Public Service Agreement (PSA)

The delivery targets which HM Treasury agrees for each Government department in return for the funds allocated.

Reporting Officer

The Reporting Officer is under a duty to witness the parent's agreement to proposed adoption and to ascertain that any such agreement is given freely and with full understanding.

Service Principles and Standards

Service Principles and Standards are intended to promote the delivery of consistent, timely, high quality services. They set standards for court work with children and families. Management and Her Majesty's Magistrates' Courts Service Inspectorate (MCSI) will monitor them.

Stakeholder

Someone, other than children and families, with an interest or concern in CAFCASS. This includes Government departments, the courts, local authorities, and other organisations in the public and voluntary sector supporting children and families.

Contact details

If you wish to contact us please write to:

CAFCASS
13th Floor
Archway Tower
LONDON N19 5HQ

We can also be contacted by telephone on 020 7210 4400.

Further information is also available on our website www.cafcass.gov.uk; which includes contact details for our regional offices and CAFCASS (Cymru).