



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on 16 April 2010

Commissioning & Partnership Update

1. AIM AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide Board members with background information and a current situation report about the range of services that Cafcass commissions from partnership providers. These comprise child contact support services and, on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), contact activities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION FOR THE BOARD

For information only – the Board is invited to note the contents of this report.

3. SHORT SUMMARY

Commissioning & Partnerships - Current Provision (2009/10):

- Contracts with Child Contact Services and grants to Supported Contact Centres
- Contact Activities – DCSF grants to providers of Parenting Information Programmes (PIP) and Domestic Violence (DV) Perpetrator Programmes

Area	Contracts	Grants	DCSF PIP Grants	DCSF DV Grants
North	27	55		
Central	32	84		
South	29	85		
Total	88	224	54	8

Units of service, at three different levels of cost and intensity, are commissioned from the 88 partnership providers. In 2009/10, 2,316 units were commissioned – in nearly all cases, no more than one unit of service was provided in an individual case. Examples of types of child contact services are set out in the attached annex.

Commissioning level	North 27 Contracts	Central 32 Contracts	South 29 Contracts	Total 88 Contracts
1	27	0	90	117
2	780	673	576	2029
3	32	138	0	170
Total	839	811	666	2316

4. BACKGROUND

In 2007, there were approximately 10 contracts for the delivery of supervised contact and about 50 grants were made to supported contact centres. The Commissioning and Partnerships Team has, in the ensuing years, developed effective sustained partnerships with a much larger number of providers. This has enabled the development of a specialist niche of providers, 95% of which are from the third sector. Their focus is to contribute to improving outcomes for the children of separated families. The growth to the current number of contracts and grants has involved a substantial re-direction of commissioning budgets, away from previous long-standing relationships with a relatively small number of providers, some of which pre-dated Cafcass, to a more diverse mixture of bodies, both those with long-standing links to Cafcass and new providers. This has enabled the development of a more even geographical spread, reflecting the wishes of the DCSF and the needs of Cafcass teams for locally available services.

Cafcass requires all of its providers of commissioned child contact support services to meet the requirements of the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) Enhanced Accreditation scheme. NACCC is the umbrella membership body for contact centres, which has received DCSF funding to develop the accreditation scheme. Cafcass has a protocol with NACCC, which makes clear that Cafcass will only commission child contact services from providers who are assessed by NACCC as meeting (or who commit to meeting) the Enhanced Accreditation standards. In similar vein, a protocol with Respect (the membership body for providers of domestic violence programmes) specifies that Cafcass will only make referrals, including for the provision of contact activities through court directions/conditions, to Respect-accredited Perpetrator Programme providers.

A national interactive map is available on the Cafcass intranet & Cafcass external website to inform legal practitioners, the judiciary and others about locally available services, which are commissioned or given grant assistance by Cafcass or the DCSF. This is intended to inform local judicial consideration about the possible use of contact activities and child contact services. In recent months, a set of 40 local information sheets has been developed, based on the interactive information, to provide each Designated Family Judge Area with specific local information.

The main provisions of the Children & Adoption Act 2006 were implemented on 8 December 2008. The Act provides the courts with more flexible powers to facilitate contact and enforce contact orders made under the Children Act 1989, including the power to order adult parties to participate in contact activities, under the terms of contact activity conditions or directions. Cafcass has been heavily involved in assisting the DCSF to commission a network of providers of parenting information programmes for separated parents and domestic violence perpetrator programmes. The third type of contact activities – mediation assessment meetings – have been procured, without direct Cafcass involvement, from Legal Services Commission-accredited mediation providers. The take-up of contact activities has been slow during 2009/10, with only about 1,000 parenting information programmes being provided during the year (to about 500 cases). However, there has been steady growth across the course of the year, with almost half of the year's total being provided during the January to March 2010 period. With effect from April 2010, Cafcass will have full responsibility for ensuring the commissioning and provision of the parenting and domestic violence programmes. This change of responsibilities has been made possible by the DCSF decision no longer to impose

charges on those who undertake these types of contact activities. Cafcass could not previously directly commission contact activities, because of the lack of any charging powers.

5. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

The development of the revised model of private law work, now set out in the President's revised (2010) Private Law Programme would not have been possible without the underpinning provided both by the range of child contact services and, more recently, the availability of contact activities. The availability of both types of intervention is essential in assisting the courts and families to arrive at sustainable, safe outcomes. The publication of the Programme, which is expected to be implemented in all areas by 4 October 2010, creates a major opportunity to ensure that, after pre-first hearing risk screening and safeguarding checks work have been completed, suitable cases are assisted through these means.

6. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

The use of child contact services and contact activities provide additional ways of developing safe beneficial outcomes for children whose cases are brought before the courts by separated parents, where such interventions are assessed by Cafcass and the courts as being potentially beneficial.

7. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Funding Source	Budget £ 09/10	Volumes 09/10	Forecast 10/11 £
DCSF Allocated Child Contact Services Budget (over and above Cafcass Grant in Aid)	2,000,000	2,316 units of service average cost per unit = £1,036	2,400,000
DCSF Additional Allocation in response to demand	400,000		
DCSF Contact Activity Spend	369,400	1,000 PIP 22 DV	2,019,000
Cafcass Allocation from its Grant in Aid	1,000,000	£500,000 C&P Team £500,000 Supported Contact grants	1,000,000
Total Spend	3,769,000		5,419,000

8. RISK ANALYSIS

Cafcass Commissioning & Partnerships have supported the establishment and ongoing support of a specialist niche, which is primarily third sector-based, and which now has better geographical coverage than in the past. However, Cafcass/DCSF resources are insufficient on their own to sustain the sector, which is subject to fluctuations in its capacity to attract funding from other sources. To assist in mitigating this risk, Cafcass seeks to work within the boundaries of the Government's 'Compact' with the voluntary

sector. The risk for Cafcass is that if providers are unsuccessful in attracting other funding, 'gaps in the map' of provision may emerge, which would be unhelpful for children, families and the courts.

9. DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

The capacity of providers to meet service users' needs arising from diversity forms part of the providers' three year Framework Agreement. Within the specification set by Cafcass, providers must comply with all legal requirements relating to equality and access to services. Services should be delivered in a way that is sensitive to the needs of service users and service users must receive a service in a language of their choice.

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