



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting 3 September 2010

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT FOR 2009/2010 TO CAFCASS BOARD

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the first Report of the Cafcass Safeguarding Board to the main Cafcass Board. It provides information about key activity during the period 2009-2010.

2. Governance and scrutiny

2.1 This year, a dedicated Safeguarding Sub-Committee (the Cafcass 'Safeguarding Board') was formed from the Board, which is now supported by Darren Shaw, the lead Operational Director for Safeguarding, Bruce Clark, Director of Policy and Eileen Shearer Head of Safeguarding and other members of the safeguarding team. There are currently two Board members of the Sub-Committee: Jennifer Bernard and Mary MacLeod. Consideration is being given to the recruitment of an additional Board member.

2.2 The Safeguarding Board meets quarterly, and receives regular updates on safeguarding-related activity in which Cafcass has had an involvement. The role of the Board members is to receive, consider and interrogate this information. One way in which this can be done is through the sampling of 'Individual Management Review' reports prepared by Cafcass for the Serious Case Review sub-Committees of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, following the deaths of children or other serious incidents.

2.3 Board members are not intended to have an active day-to-day involvement in the operational management arrangements of Cafcass. Board members' role is one of critical scrutiny and overview, to help ensure that Cafcass has in place the necessary procedures, processes and practice to provide a safe operational service to children and to contribute on an inter-agency basis to the work of other agencies with safeguarding and child protection responsibilities, locally and nationally.

2.4 For the purposes of the activities of the Committee it is the child protection elements of safeguarding that are under review rather than the wider issue of the promotion of children's well-being. Safeguarding applies to children in both public and private law cases, but as Cafcass may be the only agency involved with families engaged in private law activity, it has a particular importance in this area of work.

2.5 During the 2009/10 year, Ofsted conducted six inspections of Cafcass work. In each of these, safeguarding (a limiting judgement, in terms of Cafcass' ability to obtain an overall judgement of 'satisfactory') was scrutinised. In three of the inspections, Cafcass safeguarding' work was assessed as being 'inadequate', while in the other three inspections it was rated as 'satisfactory'. Four post-inspection monitoring reviews also took

place during 2009 -2010 (of areas where the original inspections had led to an 'inadequate' overall rating, and which had been undertaken between February 2008 and July 2009). In all four post-inspection monitoring visits, safeguarding was assessed as 'satisfactory'.

- 2.6 The Board has previously considered the apparent variations in the application of the Ofsted inspection methodology, which can be seen from scrutiny of the various inspection reports. However, this does not mean that the assessments of Cafcass practice are invalid, and it clear that Ofsted's finding have had a considerable impact on Cafcass practice, and in particular on how that practice is evidenced and recorded. This is discussed further below.
- 2.7 This report does not describe all the procedures, processes and practices in place in Cafcass or in its partner agencies. It seeks to highlight activities during the year that illuminate the child protection-related aspects of Cafcass work.

3. National Policy and Practice

- 3.1 Every Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCBs) (the bodies responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring inter-agency work to safeguard children in each Local Authority area) has a named member of Cafcass staff associated with it and a list of representatives for each Service Area is available on the intranet. The role of Cafcass staff is to contribute to the work of the LSCB, as prescribed by s13(3) Children Act 2004. Cafcass' activities as LSCB members are considered as part of Ofsted reviews, based on attendance measures. Cafcass is the only national agency to be represented on LSCBs in this way (other agencies are local in nature, such as the police and health bodies), and it is important to continue to monitor the workload implications of this involvement alongside its benefits, and the contribution that Cafcass can add to the knowledge and skills of local agencies. This will be subject to further analysis during 2010 -11. It is intended that the Safeguarding Team will develop a strategic approach to Cafcass' involvement in LSCB work, including support materials to assist effective and efficient inter-agency communication.
- 3.2 One of the duties of each LCSB is to ensure that, where a child has died or been subject to a serious incident, they commission Serious Case Review, which involves the provision of a report from each agency (an Internal Management Review), and each LSCB's dedicated Review Panel also commissions the preparation of an overview report on events, including lessons for practice. The Internal Management Reviews and Overview Reports are subject to Ofsted review, and overview reports commissioned since June 2010 are now to be published in full, rather than merely the executive summary reports alone, which had previously been the practice.
- 3.3 Training has been delivered to 35 specialist Service Managers and Senior Managers, who are available to act as authors of Internal Management Reviews.
- 3.4 All Internal Management Reviews are subject to national quality assurance by the Head of Safeguarding, before being released to the LSCB. It is important to ensure that they accurately reflect Cafcass practice expectations and that appropriate learning issues are identified required from agency, and the quality assurance process is also important because of the wider publication of overview reports that is now in prospect.
- 3.5 Partnership work with CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) is under way to develop new ways of assessing risks for children in domestic violence situation This work is intended to improve the quality and consistency of Cafcass' risk identification and risk management practice. It is also intend to improve the contribution that Cafcass makes to the work of other, specialist staff, such as the network of Independent Domestic Violence

Advisers (IDVAs). It is also intended to ensure that other, more specialist staff and agencies are fully aware of the statutory role of Cafcass in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are the subject of private law applications.

4. Serious Case Reviews

- 4.1 Appendix 2 provides an overview of incidents involving the death of a child or a serious incident where Cafcass knew of the child. Some of these cases have required an Internal Management Review to be undertaken for the LSCB.
- 4.2 This Section is exempt from disclosure of Section 44 of the Freedom of Information Act.
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- 4.4 Lessons learned in relation to Cafcass and other relevant Serious Case Reviews are now systematically disseminated via Channel C. Learning from Cafcass reviews are considered at Learning Action Panel meetings, which are chaired by the Chief Executive, and attended by the HR Director, the three Operational Directors, the Director of Policy, the Head of Safeguarding, the Heads of Service (Quality Improvement) and the Head of Learning Resources.

5. Cafcass Policy and Procedures

- 5.1 The Cafcass Safeguarding Framework has been updated and implemented across the organisation through team briefing sessions in all Operational Areas, delivered by Quality Improvement Service Managers to Service Managers, Family Court Advisors and Family Support Workers. The Safeguarding Framework is available to all staff on the intranet in the 'Online Policy Centre', and staff are required to read and log their acceptance of this key policy (see Appendix 1a below for Online Policy Centre staff acceptance figures).
- 5.2 An Assessment Workbook and Record of Assessment has been developed and launched nationally. It is intended to be used when a full assessment is requested by the court in private law cases. The model focuses on the needs of the child, the parents' capacities to meet those needs and on wider family and environmental factors. It appears that most teams have yet to make use of the workbook, despite the team level briefings that were completed by March 2010.
- 5.3 Observation of contact tools have been developed and are available on the intranet.

6. Cafcass practice

- 6.1 'Duty and intake' audits were undertaken in 56 offices across the Cafcass between March and May 2009 to establish compliance against a number of standards (23), which had previously been set out in Practice Alerts 1 and 2. Feedback was given in relation to each of the audits and the findings were shared with the Operational Area Management Teams. The contents of the Practice Alerts have now been incorporated into the revised Safeguarding Framework.

7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 It has been a challenging year for Cafcass, in terms of both ensuring effective contributions to the wider inter-agency child protection network, through participation in LSCBs and the provision of Individual Management Reviews, while at the same time working to ensure that the quality of Cafcass' own direct safeguarding work is satisfactory. Cafcass is making a very significant commitment of resources to improving practice, and in particular how it is evidenced and recorded. This is beginning to show results, in terms of Ofsted assessments, whether in initial inspections or through Ofsted's post-inspection monitoring work. A considerable investment has been made in Individual Management Reviews, ensuring their independence of the line of management of the case and that their quality is assured by the Head of Safeguarding. The lessons that overview reports provide for Cafcass are being considered by senior managers and are being widely disseminated. There is no room for complacency in any agency with a responsibility for the welfare of children, and in particular for their protection. Cafcass has a specific child protection role for children who are the subject of family proceedings and is working hard to fulfil this role.

Jennifer Bernard
Chair of the Cafcass Internal Safeguarding Board



APPENDIX 1A

On-line Policy Centre: % of staff who have read and accepted the Safeguarding Framework 2009 (as at 09/04/10)

North – **91.3%**
Central – **94.9%**
South – **73.0%**

APPENDIX 1B: KPI DATA FOR SAFEGUARDING 2009-2010

Area Performance Summary - Operational Area Level
Financial year to date as at end of March 2010

SAFEGUARDING		North	Central	South	National
KPI 3	Safeguarding rated as satisfactory or higher in Q4C (97%) ytd	97.7%	93.1%	95.2%	95.3%
PI 3a	Safeguarding assessed at least once - practitioners (100%) ytd	106.9%	111.4%	91.6%	102.8%
PI 3b	Safeguarding assessed at least twice - practitioners (100%) ytd	82.4%	91.6%	72.5%	81.8%
PI 3c	LA checks sent for received cases (95%) ytd	98.2%	98.9%	98.3%	98.5%
	<input type="checkbox"/> Average time to send LA check in days ytd	3.4	5.4	5.6	4.9
	<input type="checkbox"/> Average time to receive back LA check in days ytd	9.1	8.5	9.6	9.0
PI 3d	Police checks sent for received cases (95%) ytd	96.3%	95.5%	93.9%	95.2%
	<input type="checkbox"/> Average time to send Police check in days ytd	5.8	8.2	8.5	7.6
	<input type="checkbox"/> Average time to receive back Police check in days ytd	12.9	10.4	9.6	10.9