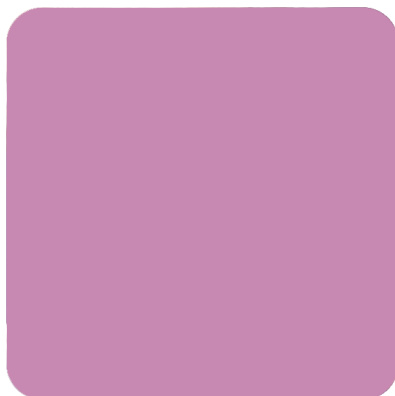


Investing for the future

Cafcass workforce development strategy

2010-2012



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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This is a time of significant change for Cafcass. Increased demand for our services and our continued focus on delivering high quality outcomes for our service users has required changes to our working practices. As a result, backlogs have been more than halved between July 2009 and March 2010 and we are keeping pace with the higher levels of new work in most parts of the country.

Over the coming year, we will continue to improve the design of our services and ensure that our staff and our service users benefit from a modern business support infrastructure. Our business transformation plans set out how we will achieve this. This document refreshes our commitment to our staff that underlies the ongoing change process.

Developing our people is core to our values as an organisation. We are committed to:

- Recognising and valuing the skills and talents of our people
- Supporting each individual to grow and develop in their role so as to make an outstanding contribution
- Rewarding each individual's contribution
- Ensuring that the right skills are present in each team and Service Area to enable Cafcass to provide the best possible service to each child and family on each case
- Ensuring the right support is in place to enable our staff to learn and develop as a result of working in their role
- Ensuring that each year, our staff are better equipped to meet their personal career aspirations

This strategy sets out a serious and joined up approach to how we manage and develop our people. It shows how we will integrate learning with managing for performance and career development; how we will map and profile skills not just in recruitment and induction, but for all staff, so as to develop those skills across the whole organisation. Not least, it sets out how we will develop and support our managers at all levels of the organisation to improve our overall approach to management.

This document shows how we will achieve this, highlights the benefits for our staff and for Cafcass as a whole, and sets a timeline for when we will all begin to see those benefits.

This is an ambitious programme, with results we will all be proud of because we all have a part to play in making it happen.

Whatever our role in Cafcass, we are here to serve our service users, the families and children with whom we work. Developing our workforce not only benefits our staff, it also benefits our service users. Mapping and continuously developing skills is a way to ensure that we are able to provide a high quality service to each and every individual we work with, whatever their heritage and whatever the issues in the case.

In the years to come we will ensure each team has the right mix of skills, strong management and visionary leadership to deliver the best possible service. This document sets out how we are going to achieve this.

Anthony Douglas
June 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides direction for Cafcass on achieving a sustainable workforce for the future. Within this, an optimal model for learning management and career progression are described, to be integrated into the management relationship with our staff, in 2010-12.

What are the objectives?

This strategy seeks to address the following objectives for Cafcass:

- Providing sufficient routes into the organisation
- Providing clear routes of progression within the service.
- Improving our recruitment, retention and talent management.
- Improving our age profile.
- Promoting Cafcass as an attractive place to work.
- Ensuring we have a workforce that is sensitive to diversity issues, culturally competent and more representative of our service users.
- Striking the right balance between flexible and fixed workforce to ensure we are flexible and responsive to changes in demand.

The development of a sustainable and highly skilled workforce is our only means of fulfilling our statutory functions as an organisation in years to come. By 2012:

- We will be able to ensure we have the right skills across the workforce as a whole
- The right skills for the job will be accessible to all of our teams
- Our staff will be engaged and motivated by learning and development opportunities we offer them, and the progression this can offer
- We will find it easier to recruit and retain our staff.
- Staff will be progressing through new roles, and we will be set to replace retiring staff from a new pool of internal expertise
- We will have identified and promoted key skill sets, for example, with the result that we have recruited, developed and retained culturally competent staff who can better respond to all of our service users' diverse needs.

This document is organised into three sections. Section 1 sets out the context and corporate backdrop to the emerging workforce development strategy, then goes on to outline our main workforce challenges and identify the objectives for workforce development in Cafcass. Section 2 details the components of the strategy; and Section 3 then outlines some of the key deliverables Cafcass staff can expect to see in the period 2010-2012

SECTION 1 – The Challenges for Cafcass

1.1 Background and context

The social work profession currently faces a number of workforce challenges. These are increasingly well documented by the Children's Workforce Development Council, the Social Work Task Force and others, and can have a direct impact on our ability to deliver on our statutory obligations and provide an effective service to our users. This paper examines some of the implications of these challenges on the Cafcass workforce, and offers some solutions for Cafcass in addressing these in the years to come.

In addition, this strategy builds on our workforce objectives as set out in the 3-year Cafcass *Workforce Strategy 2007*, namely:

- 1. to ensure that the shape, skills and capacity of the workforce is right to deliver our services*
- 2. to be recognised as an organisation that genuinely equips its people and is an employer of choice*
- 3. to develop our leadership capacity so that it supports organisational and staff improvement and effective delivery of services.*

1.2 Workforce Challenges – Challenges facing Practice

This section examines some of the challenges currently facing our practitioner workforce and considers both external and internal factors.

1.2.1 The External Context – Challenges to the Wider Profession

The social work trained element of our workforce faces a number of external pressures that affect the social work profession more generally and are to some extent outside Cafcass' direct control. Some of these pressures include:

- Barriers preventing people from joining and staying within the profession
 - Social workers often feel as though their profession is undervalued, poorly understood and constantly under media attack. This negative image can make it increasingly difficult to attract people into and retain people within the profession.
 - Social workers feel that they do not have enough time to dedicate to face to face contact with service users. They feel overstretched by staff shortages and tied up in bureaucracy.
 - Barriers to career changers seeking to join the profession.
- Issues with the development of core skills and knowledge

- New social workers are often not fully prepared for the demands of the job and the education system and employers do not together adequately support ongoing development and specialisation.
- Continuous Professional Development standards are low
- Some core skills are weak and poorly taught in training, with development continuing in the workplace. Skills development can be linked to manager competence, and can be weak.
- Challenges to the quality of management in social work
 - Poor quality practice placements during professional training and lack of retention after the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQS) year.
 - Lack of skills of the manager in focusing worker assessments, analysis and case planning on the core issues to the case.
 - Social work degree courses attract candidates with academic attainment levels that are, on average, lower than is the case for other degree courses, though applications may have relevant work/life experience. Many of these will become highly competent social workers, but may not have the capacity or desire to become managers.
 - Systems for managing the performance of social workers have not historically driven quality first and foremost.
- The sector as a whole is experiencing competition between employers for the best staff
 - A limited pool of social workers has resulted in a situation where employers compete for the same staff, out-pricing each other in the recruitment market, making it increasingly important to retain the best staff, especially managers.

Together, these concerns highlight the importance of implementing a workforce development strategy that attracts, motivates and retains talented social workers whilst offering strong leadership and real opportunities for development and career progression, both in practitioner and management roles.

1.2.2 The Internal Context – Issues for Cafcass

Whilst the current Cafcass approach to resourcing already aims to address many of the challenges faced by the profession as a whole, we also face a number of ` and distinct challenges that need to be addressed. These include:

- Barriers to entry to the organisation and limited scope for career progression within existing service delivery model
 - Current roles do not offer a clear path for career progression
 - Practice of allocating a single worker to each case requires highly skilled FCAs with a broad skill set.

- We draw heavily on the Local Authority pool and thus are at the end of the chain of: SW degree recruitment → LA recruitment → NQSW & 1st placement success rate → LA ways of working → LA retention strategies → recruitment to Cafcass.
- Our (subjective) attractiveness as a place to work can be negatively affected from bad press and poor inspection results.
- Workforce Diversity
 - Our diversity profile is currently not representative of our service users. The mismatch between service users and staff ethnicity is significantly different in the North than in the South or Central areas.
 - Nationally 10.13 per cent of our staff are from BME backgrounds compared to 13.11 per cent of service users. The situation is monitored in local Head of Service areas as part of our Equality and Diversity Strategy.
- An ageing workforce
 - The average age of retirement for Cafcass is 62. At present the age profile of our workforce is unevenly distributed with 57.66 per cent of FCAs aged 50 and over as at March 2010.
 - Due to a number of factors including final salary pension scheme and Strategic Pay Review uplifts, we expect a higher than usual rate of retirements in the period April 2010-12 than in previous years.
- Regional challenges to recruitment
 - In certain service areas (S3, S4, S5 and some areas in Central for example) the limited number of available social workers and relative high cost of living makes recruitment particularly challenging.

This section does not seek to provide an exhaustive list of the workforce challenges to social work and to Cafcass, however addressing those challenges identified forms the basis of the solutions set out at section 2 below.

1.3 Workforce Challenges – Challenges facing Business Support

The workforce issues facing Business Support are significantly different to those faced by practitioners. A summary of these is presented here, by way of context for the solutions at section 2, below.

- The Cafcass pay and reward package makes it relatively easy to attract candidates, but limited opportunity for progression makes retention of the best talent difficult. A lack of a clear route for progression restricts development within the service.

- Career progression opportunities within Business Support have traditionally been limited. As a result, ambitious people may need to leave Cafcass to further themselves, resulting in loss of staff, increased workloads to remaining staff and increased recruitment costs where replacement is necessary.
- Lack of specialisation provides further limits to development opportunities and the generalised nature of Business Support roles makes it difficult to absorb work of a specialist or more complex nature.
- The small size and generalised nature of Business Support teams can result in inflexibility to demand, with shortfalls in capacity often being met by temporary staff. This can involve significant cost and management input.

As with the challenges for the Practice stream, the above issues highlight the need for a development strategy that provides clear opportunities for people to progress within the Business Support function.

1.4 Wider Challenges facing the Organisation

The public sector as a whole currently faces significant challenges primarily owing to the challenging economic situation and need for modernisation and reform. These changes are difficult to quantify at present, though we anticipate that public sector spending will reduce over the next few years as the government attempts to rebalance the public finances. This makes it highly likely therefore, that we will need to adapt to a reduction in real terms funding.

We also face further challenges in that demand for our services has increased markedly over the past year. 2009-10 has seen an increase in demand of 30% in public law cases and 15% in private law cases in comparison to 2008-9 levels.

The above factors all highlight a need to manage business as usual with fewer resources, and increasing our overall capability and capacity is of vital importance if we are to continue to provide a high quality of service.

1.5 Objectives for Workforce Development in Cafcass

This strategy seeks to address the challenges outlined above with the following objectives for Cafcass:

- Providing routes into the organisation that enable us to provide on the job experience to prospective FCAs and make us less dependent on recruiting experienced social workers (primarily from LAs).
- Remodeling our Business Support Function to offer clear routes of progression within the service.
- Improving our recruitment, retention and talent management through new approaches to induction, career progression and development.
- Addressing our diversity and age profile and the associated challenges that occur as a result.

- Working collaboratively with other employers of social workers to develop our people and promote Cafcass as an attractive place to work.
- Ensuring that we have a workforce that is sensitive to diversity issues, culturally competent and more representative of our service users.
- Striking the right balance between flexible and core workforce to ensure we are flexible and responsive to changes in demand.

The sections that follow set out what we will do to achieve these objectives in 2010-2012.

SECTION 2: Investing in our workforce in 2010-12

2.1 Career Pathway for the Social Work Stream

This change involves providing new routes for entry to, and progression within the organisation for staff with or pursuing a social work qualification. This change is informed by the Government's plans for the children's social care workforce. Within their respective roles, our staff will be supported to build up the required knowledge and expertise in order to progress. The learning and development components of this strategy link the corporate need with individual learning through personal career development planning, supervision and self reflective learning.

2.1.1 New entry routes into the organisation

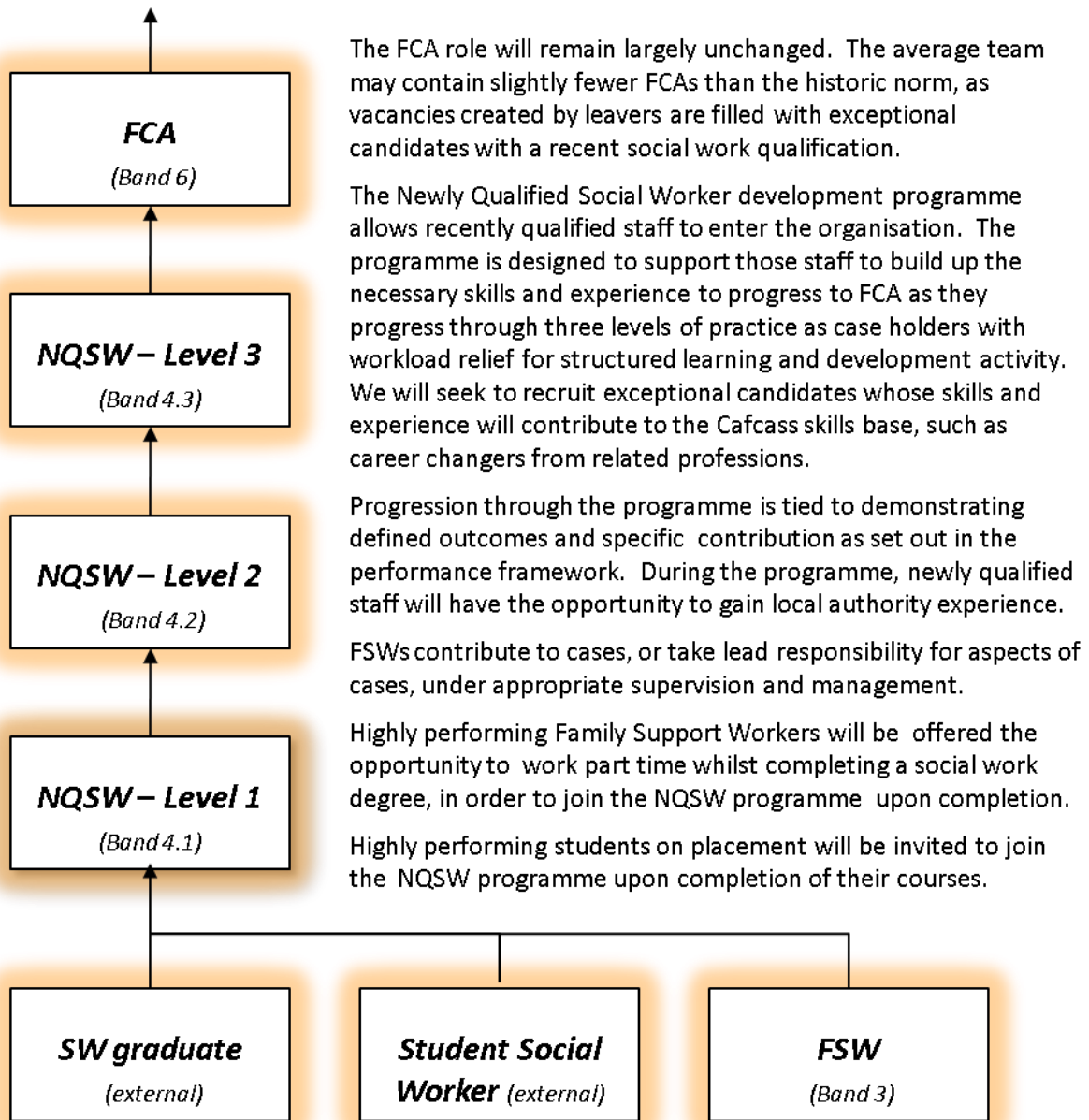
Cafcass will introduce a development programme for newly and recently qualified social workers. Social work graduates will be recruited to the programme, and expected to progress through three levels, each with defined job description, learning and development outcomes and defined expectations of level of contribution. In order to gain necessary local authority experience, the second level of the programme will include secondment activities with local authority partners. This programme will be mutually beneficial for Cafcass and Local Authorities and aims to build capacity in the sector over the longer term.

2.1.2 Family Support Workers

Cafcass employs a small but significant number of Family Support Workers. As experienced child care professionals in a role that does not require a social work qualification, FSWs have brought a range of skills and experience to the team. In the current structure, the gap between FSW and FCA is significant, and there are no routes for progression within Cafcass from FSW to FCA. This strategy bridges that gap.

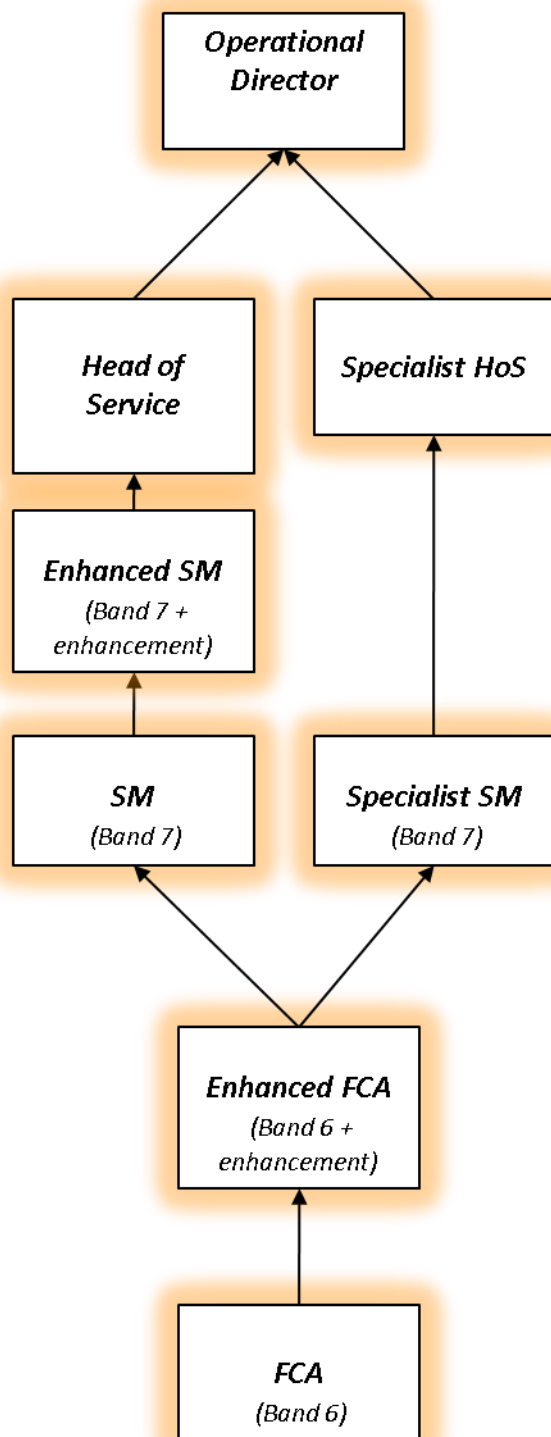
Suitable FSWs will have the opportunity to work with Cafcass, whilst studying for a social work degree. Individuals with experience as a Cafcass FSW and displaying the appropriate competence in that role will be given priority as applicants to the Cafcass Newly Qualified Social Worker development programme. Whilst Cafcass may not be able to fund every FSW's learning, the organisation will guarantee flexible working during the period of study, and entry to the NQSW development programme upon completion of the degree course. Subject to performance within the programme, this offers former FSWs the opportunity to double their existing salary within three years of qualifying. This provides a strong incentive for motivated individuals to invest in their own learning and development, within a supportive structure provided by Cafcass.

Practitioner Career Pathway from Entry Level to FCA



2.1.2 Progression beyond FCA

The structure below shows progression beyond FCA, providing a career pathway both for those who display strong leadership and management potential and wish to progress into management, and for those with enhanced skills but who do not have management ambitions.



The Operational Director is the director accountable for service delivery for the Operational Area, and reports to the Chief Executive.

The Head of Service is the senior manager accountable for service delivery for the Service Area, and is responsible for the design of service delivery models and processes. The Specialist Head of Service supports operational colleagues through practice audit, learning and development activities, and auxiliary specialist support. Enhanced SMs roles are created at the discretion of the Head of Service, to support the management team in the Service Area.

The Service Manager holds overall accountability for the work of the team, supports FCAs to manage risk, plan cases and conduct analysis. The SM is also responsible for liaison with local delivery partners and the running of systems and business processes. The Specialist Service manager supports operational colleagues through practice audit, learning and development activities, and auxiliary specialist support.

Enhanced FCAs support the work of the team by providing practice learning support to recently qualified staff on development programmes and students. FCAs with a particular specialism may also be invited to take an enhanced role, providing specialist support to colleagues across the wider organisation in their area of expertise. Enhanced FCAs can also provide a quality assurance role in the team, under the supervision of the Service Manager.

Family Court Adviser (FCA) is the allocated worker on cases.

This model supports talented and highly skilled practitioners to remain in front line work, whilst making their skills accessible to a wider proportion of our service users. For those with management ambitions, the pathway supports the development of future managers, by providing exposure to some people management tasks, without full line management responsibility. This provides Cafcass with a mechanism through

which we can develop our overall management capability and our practice capability, both of which should lead to direct benefits to the quality of service we are able to offer to our service users.

The introduction of the NQSW programme opens up Cafcass to a pool of talent to which we have previously not had access. It will also enable us to support the best and most able of social work graduates to gain the experience and expertise necessary to qualify for FCA roles in future. This rather breaks our reliance on recruiting from among the pool of existing Local Authority social workers. It also allows us to offer a career path for talented students and Family Support Workers to develop and progress into Family Court Adviser roles.

New joiners will be able to join Cafcass at the point on the pathway most suited to their skills and experience.

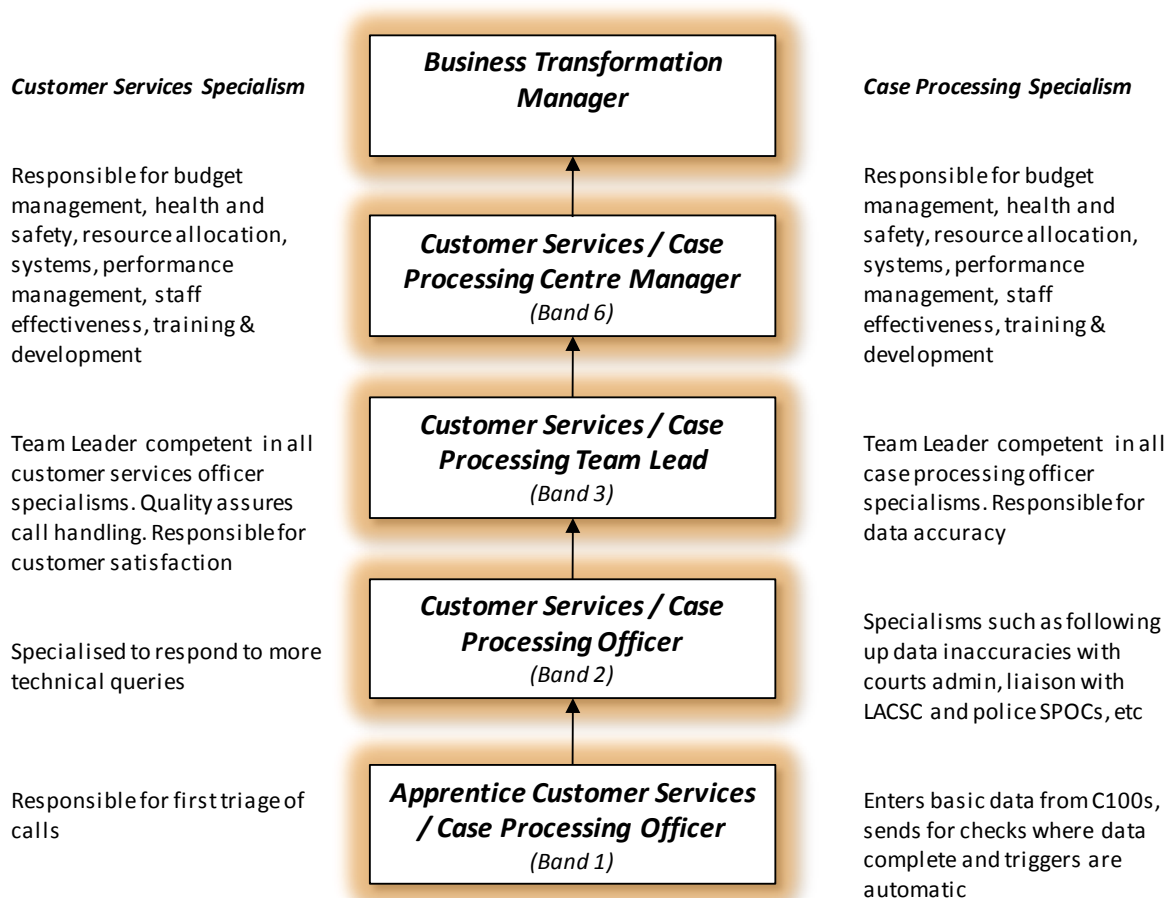
2.2 Career Pathway for the Business Support Stream

The principles outlined above apply equally to business support staff. Business Support in Cafcass is organised around distinct skill sets: customer service, data processing and practitioner support.

With the introduction of new roles in 2010 comes greater opportunity for career progression from band 1 to band 3.

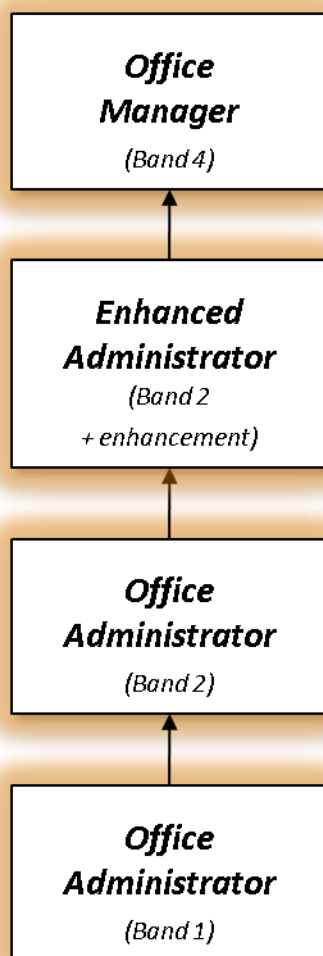
2.2.1 Customer Service and Case Processing Pathway

The proposed career pathways for the customer services and case processing specialisms are as follows:



2.2.2 Office Support Pathway

By reorganising the majority of customer service and case processing responsibilities nationally, local office administrators are freed up to provide more direct support to practitioners. The proposed model ensures improved support to practitioners is strengthened; by administrators in the team who are equipped provide the robust local support to the service users and the team as a whole.



The Office Manager is responsible for resource allocation, systems, performance management, staff effectiveness, training & development, and report to the Head of Service.

Enhanced administrators are appointed at the discretion of the Head of Service and provide additional support to Office Managers in undertaking their duties, deputise for the Office Manager in their absence, provide supervisory and day-to-day support to Administrators as required.

Band 1 and Band 2 Office Administrators share between them the FCA support, SM support, front facing customer service, life of case activity – progress chase and the day to day running of the office, reception, post, etc.

Note: All grades for new roles indicated in this paper are indicative, subject to the usual Job Evaluation Processes.

2.3 A Firm Foundation for All of Our Staff

Success in implementing the career pathways, in order to realise the workforce development objectives outlined above will be dependent on a number of supporting changes.

Although the section above focuses primarily on our practitioner and business support workforce in its illustrations, the principles reflect our broader commitment to our whole workforce. We will deliver on our commitment to invest in our people and become an employer of choice across all the functions that make up the organisation. For specialist staff, individual services (such as IT, Policy, HR, MIS, Legal, Governance, Communications, Finance, etc.) will set out possible career paths where pragmatic given the small size of our support departments. In all cases, learning and development will be and will be supported, with reference to the professional and occupational standards for the relevant profession. The building blocks of the strategy apply to the entire organisation and all of our staff.

2.3.1 Recruitment and Development Partnerships: Working in collaboration with local authorities to create capacity and develop skills.

In order to ensure that NQSWs can gain the necessary breadth of experience to become full Family Court Advisers three years after qualifying as social workers, significant contribution to their learning outcomes will come from secondment opportunities in local authority teams where experience in a range of LA statutory work can be gained. The learning outcomes for are carefully defined, and it is likely that the Cafcass NQSWs will obtain experience in service areas such as children in need, child protection and looked after children. Each Cafcass Service Area is supported to form a development partnership to meet this need.

Partnerships are already in place to support business support training and development, in the form of our national training partner, linking to government funding to pay for the development of younger workers through the modern apprentice scheme and Train to Gain.

2.3.2 Active Workforce Planning: Incorporating Career Aspirations within the Appraisal process

A new approach to professional development will capture our staff's career aspirations, and support managers to match them against the business need. The appraisal conversation and an extended mid-year supervision focussed on learning and development) will include discussion of progression opportunities within Cafcass, including any opportunities to fulfil career aspirations elsewhere in the organisation.

2.3.3 Improving Capability: A revised approach to Performance Management and Learning and Development

An improved performance management framework will enable managers and staff to identify personal learning and development objectives. A Learning Management System will help join the demand for and supply of learning activities, with a blended learning approach contributing significant elements of e-learning to the delivery of training. This will provide better training needs analysis and thus provision of training, and more focussed professional development. In the short term, we will ensure we invest in e-learning to provide a wide range of sustainable learning solutions for the longer term future.

2.3.4 Talent Management: a Planned Approach to Career Progression

All staff will have dedicated career development planning included as part of the supervision and appraisal process. The combination of the personal skills profile, career development planning and performance assessment will provide a robust and objective basis for the management of progression through the career pathways. For example, this more structured approach to talent management will ensure that those identified as performing at good to outstanding and aspiring to leadership, are fast tracked through the career pathway as leaders of tomorrow. This programme will help Cafcass attract, retain and promote the best management potential.

2.3.5 Active Aging: Managing Retirement Flexibly

As part of a fresh approach to workforce planning, there will be a strong and structured focus on the need to retain highly skilled and well-performing staff, and to transfer their skills to others. Fuller analysis of the skills profile of those approaching retirement will contribute to planning of the provision of learning opportunities so as to ensure Cafcass retains the right skills despite expertise leaving the organisation as a result of retirement. Flexible working arrangements are encouraged for over 60s, and we aim to increase the average retirement age for FCAs above the 2009 average of age 62.

2.3.6 Elasticity to demand: Achieving the right mix of the fixed and flexible workforce

Cafcass, like any organisation, needs to be responsive to demand for our services. As we have little control over the pattern of work coming into the organisation, we need to be flexible in how we resource it in order to ensure that the burden of that work is equally shared across the organisation. The route to achieving this lies in the flexible workforce. As part of workforce planning, the fixed staffing level in Service Areas should be equivalent to the staffing complement needed to meet the historic low point in demand. The gap between that point and current demand should be met by flexible staffing. Managers will be provided with analytical tools to achieve this balance, and indeed to ensure that there is consistency of throughput for cases of similar type from team to team. As demand increases in some parts of the country and

drops in others, this approach to resourcing will enable Cafcass to allocate resources evenly, prioritising the areas of highest demand as part of a corporate response.

2.3.7 Investing in Managers: Supporting and Promoting Good Leadership

Reorganising our workforce along the lines described gives frontline managers great flexibility in organising their teams to respond to local business needs and priorities. Supporting managers at all levels to develop both strategic business awareness and people management skills to bring about successful change lies at the heart of this Workforce Strategy. Underpinning the strategy is a leadership and management development programme for all our managers, running from 2010 to 2011.

SECTION 3 – The development partnership with our staff

3.1 Benefits of a new approach to learning and development

The new approach to career development through the introduction of career pathways will be underpinned by changes to how we manage. The results of meaningfully investing in our people in 2010-12 will be clear:

- We will be able to ensure we have the right skills across the workforce as a whole.
- Our staff will be engaged and motivated by learning and development opportunities we offer them, and the progression this can offer.
- We will find it easier to recruit and retain our staff.
- We will support FSWs and recently qualified staff to gain the experience and skills necessary to develop into Family Court Advisers.
- Cafcass will provide new routes into and within the social work profession.
- A wider range of professional skills and expertise will be present in teams.
- We will better retaining talented social workers contributing to frontline practice, with specialist Enhanced FCAs and Service Managers supporting skills development and improving our overall capability.
- We will have reduced the administrative burden on FCAs, thereby having a direct impact on frontline delivery.
- We will see a healthier age profile for the organisation as a whole, with more people working flexibly into retirement, and a growing number of younger staff.
- We will have identified and promoted key skill sets, for example, with the result that we have recruited, developed and retained culturally competent staff who can better respond to all of our service users' diverse needs.

The development of a sustainable and highly skilled workforce is our only means of fulfilling our statutory functions as an organisation.

3.2 Achieving the change

Cafcass is evolving, and this document sets out a strategy for the development of our approach to people management into a model that is right for 2012.

3.2.1 Developing our performance management framework

With the introduction of Quality for Children in 2008, great emphasis was given to performance assessment. This was right for Cafcass at that moment in our evolution, and the improved performance identified through internal audit and positive pattern of external inspection results is testament to this. 2010 is the right time to bring

development further to the fore, alongside performance management. Quality for Children will remain our performance framework, and in 2010 we will engage with staff on some key changes:

- Introducing a discussion of skills and career development planning tasks to the supervision and appraisal agenda
- Dedicating at least one supervision session a year to learning and development
- Introducing productivity and throughput to the supervision agenda
- Introducing a proportionate approach to the use of management time on performance management

These changes will be consulted upon at the same time as we review and update the frameworks for assessment in line with changed service delivery models, in summer 2010. Implementation of the ensuing changes will be phased over the autumn of 2010, with full implementation by the end of the financial year.

3.2.2 Developing new roles

The Newly Qualified Social Worker Development Programme will be developed in summer 2010, with recruitment to these new roles from the 2010 cohort of graduates. There are several components of this work:

- Job description
- Application pack & selection materials
- Performance framework for the role
- Learning outcomes for each level of the programme
- Guidance to Service Managers
- Support arrangements for those joining the development programme (practice learning support)
- Guidance to enhanced practitioners in delivering that support

Similar work has been completed for the recruitment of apprentices to business support roles, facilitated by a national training provider.

3.2.3 Developing new systems

An integrated learning management system and e-learning platform has been procured and will soon be available to staff. Once up and running, we will populate it with all our course information, and ensure that new training commissioned has an e-learning component. This will make learning activity visible to staff and managers, and the development log available 'self service' to all staff.

We will continue to develop tools and systems for managers and staff, with the aim of reducing the burden of bureaucracy and improving the consistency and standard of management approaches.

3.3 Realising the benefits

The full benefit of the sum of these changes will be achieved in 2011-12, and felt for the years to come. This is dependent on a healthy partnership between Cafcass providing the structures for learning, for personal development and for career development, and our staff taking advantage of that offer.

This strategy sets out how we will invest in that partnership in 2010, 2011, 2012 and beyond.

Further information can be found on the Workforce Development pages of the Cafcass intranet

- *Ends* -