



Joint Statement on Workloads from the Management and Trade Union Sides of the National Partnership Committee

1. We jointly acknowledge that legal frameworks, as well as approaches to practice and management models, have changed since the workloads guidance of 2004 and that the duties of Cafcass will continue to change, as too will approaches to practice. We also acknowledge that Cafcass is not in control of the peaks and troughs in demand for services, and that Cafcass operates within a fixed budget. Within this context, the partnership is committed to ensuring that staff have the time and space to do what they are asked to do, safely and to a satisfactory standard, balancing both the need to complete work to the agreed standard and the duty of care Cafcass owes its staff.

2. We are equally committed to safeguarding all children in respect of whom we provide a service. In order to deliver the most effective service, practitioners need to be able to work flexibly. Both Cafcass as the employer, through its managers, and individual employees have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of employees.

3. Cafcass requires that all incoming work receives a response and workload management needs to ensure the use of time is targeted to enable this to happen within a context of good staff care. Management recognises that many staff are working over their contracted hours, more so in times of acute pressure. Management and unions agree they will work closely to ensure the health and well-being of staff is kept in the forefront of managerial consideration when allocating work. Staff care should not be compromised and over a four-week period no-one should be expected to work more than an average of their contracted hours per week and negotiated policies on TOIL, Unsocial Hours and Overtime should be observed. They are designed to support flexible approaches to working hours but prevent and control overworking. Regular supervision is the place to carry out a regular impact analysis of pressure on individual staff.

4. The 2004 Workloads Policy Allocation Guidelines were partly designed as a tool to help practitioners and their line managers measure an individual practitioner's workload to ensure that allocated work could be reasonably performed to expected standards within contractual hours. The principles of a 'reasonable and manageable workload', which underpinned the Workloads Policy, remain valid, but it is jointly accepted that the calculations used in the Allocation Guidelines have been rendered obsolete by subsequent changes in practice.

5. The allocation and maintenance of reasonable workloads must be based on a collaborative dialogue between the line manager and the individual practitioner. Through supervision, the line manager will be able to obtain an understanding of the practitioner's capacity, existing workload and any other service obligations. They will also take into account personal, health and work/life balance circumstances (including their situation re TOIL and annual leave). They will assess the level of input required for the work allocated and in individual cases agree, through the case-plan, the level of resource (time) available to be put into the work. Decisions about allocation of work should then be recorded, preferably in supervision notes.

6. Line-managers will prioritise a practitioner's tasks in accordance with Cafcass Operating Priorities, taking into account practitioner judgement. A procedure to support this is attached.

7. If a team makes a collective agreement about work allocation (e.g. reallocating a backlog among members of a team) consideration must still be given to the individual practitioner's circumstances.

8. This Agreement will be regularly reviewed by the NPC

9. This agreement should be read specifically in conjunction with:

- Cafcass Workloads Policy (2004) Cafcass Guidelines on TOIL
- Cafcass Health & Safety Policies
- Cafcass Stress Policy
- The April 2008 Time Recording Exercise
- Cafcass Management of Sickness Absence Policy
- Cafcass Supervision Policy
- Work/Life balance Policy
- Other related policies

Negotiated procedure for workload management

1. A one to one meeting between each practitioner and their Service Manager (SM) will take place where individual capacity will be discussed.
2. The line manager and practitioner should agree specific tasks related to all cases and also, importantly, what work should not be completed within the parameters of the new agreement.
3. If practitioners do not receive a one to one meeting with their SM they can escalate this up the management chain and request a three way meeting involving the appropriate Head of Service in order to resolve any issues as quickly as possible.
4. Where managers reprioritise work this will be recorded (Case Plan and Supervision file) and the courts will be informed where applicable.
5. Managers will take responsibility to ensure these agreements between the SM and practitioner are embedded and practitioners are not overburdened with unrealistic expectations regarding the level of our involvement in casework;
6. Cafcass will share a copy of the Protocols agreed in accordance with the President's Guidance with staff and Trade Unions. This guidance should help to clarify expectations going forward regarding the new practice models being developed.
7. Cafcass will support staff in using simplified practice tools and key documentation, which will reduce the bureaucratic burden placed on practitioners.
8. Cafcass will undertake risk assessments on all change processes involving teams and also important planned changes in accommodation across all areas.
9. These issues will be shared openly and involve regular dialogue with Trade Union representatives as part of the existing South/Central/North Area Partnership forums.
10. Where presentations/briefings are being held with local solicitors to update and inform them about the new working models that support the implementation of the interim guidance from the President, Cafcass will extend the invitation for Trade Unions to send a representative to attend these briefing sessions.
11. Cafcass will review with the Trade Unions, within the Partnership forums already established, to review the implementation of the interim guidance from the President and new agreements reached with the DFJs across the country.
12. The reviews will focus on the agreements; actions and principles outlined in this procedure and will hopefully enable resolution of any outstanding issues which remain at the time regarding the workloads and new working models.

11th December 2009