



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**  
**Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019**  
**Demand Levels and Resourcing**

**KEY POINTS**

Cafcass' total new case demand, including all Public Law (care and non-care) and Private Law, has increased by **3.1%** in the financial year 2018/19, this included:

- **13,536** new Public Law Care applications during 2018/19 (Apr-2018 to Mar-2019), a decrease of **4.8%** (685 applications) compared to 2017/18 and a decrease of **7.3%** (1,063 applications) compared to 2016/17.
- **5,189** new Public Law Non-Care cases during 2018/19, an increase of **3%** (150 cases) compared 2017/18 and an increase of **14.3%** (648 cases) compared to 2016/17.
- **44,141** new Private Law cases during 2018/19 (Apr-2018 to Mar-2019), this is an increase of **5.6%** (2,359 cases) on 2017/18 and an increase of **8.9%** (3,605 cases) compared to 2016/17.

April 2019 Update (2019/20 Year to Date)

- Cafcass received **1,084** new care applications in April 2019, a decrease of **2.3%** (25 applications) compared to April 2018 and an increase of **3.6%** (38 applications) compared to April 2017.
- Cafcass received **3,719** new private law cases in April 2019, an increase of **7.5%** (258 cases) compared to April 2018 and an increase of **18.9%** (590 cases) compared to April 2017.

Current trend and forecast:

- The overall trend for **new care applications** has seen the number of new applications received per day reduce slightly on average during 2018/19.
- **Care and Supervision** (s31) duration has increased to **33 weeks** in Q4 18/19, an increase on the previous quarters which were reconciled down in the latest data run to 32 weeks.
- **46.8%** of Care and Supervision (s31) applications were completed within 26 weeks in Q4 18/19; this is a decrease from 49.7% in the previous quarter.
- **63.1%** of care applications gave less than seven days' notice before the first hearing in 2018-19.
- **Private law** demand continues to increase significantly with quarterly demand levels consistently being at the highest levels since the introduction of the Child Arrangement Programme in April 2014.
- **26%** of private law cases received in 2018/19 had less than the required four to six weeks to the first hearing from application.
- In their latest quarterly forecast (end of Q4 2018/19), the MoJ projected a decrease of **0.9%** for public law and an increase of **5.9%** for private law. These are reviewed and updated biannually.
- Cafcass' own forecast based on historic data projects an overall increase of **3%** (+4.7% for Private law and -1.1% for Public law) for 2019/20.

## 1 AIM AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 To share with the Board for information and assurance the steps being taken, both corporately and operationally, to manage demand and support the workforce.

## 2 ACTION FOR THE BOARD

- 2.1 To consider the actions being taken by Cafcass to manage demand and support the workforce.

## 3 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 3.1 The Interim Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) continue to ensure that MOJ is fully appraised about the continuous rising demand. The budget secured for 2019/20 will be challenging against the increasing demands for service.
- 3.2 The CMT and the Operational Management Team (OMT) are all fully engaged and contributing to achieve reforms in the Family Justice System. We are fully involved in the Private and Public Law Working Groups and other forums that might influence reform. Significant contributions were recently made to information presented by the MOJ to Ministers at the National Family Justice Board regarding the issue of demand.
- 3.3 All Assistant Directors continue to work with District Family Judges (DFJs) and Local Family Justice Boards (LFJBs) collaboratively to ensure local systems are best recognising and responding to increased demand. Cafcass Managers currently chair 14 LFJBs, one third of the total number in England.
- 3.4 The continued drive for increasing both the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation through support to staff, use of technology and enhanced processes remains key Current work includes:
  - In recognition of the continued rise in Private Law demand and the impact on resources, the Operational Management Team (OMT) have launched an action plan to directly help staff manage current and future workloads. Under the title 'No Stone Unturned', included in this plan are a number of actions to review and consider functional, technical and productivity opportunities. The first example from the plan to be piloted is the short safeguarding letter framework which seeks to cut down system wide bureaucracy in those cases of no obvious safeguarding risk.
  - Work continues to further streamline centralised processes including the ongoing digital C100 (private law applications) pilot with HMCTS and MoJ.
  - 'Small Changes' is an OMT led programme that recognises high value ideas about how to improve the way we work. During the final quarter of last year, in operational team meetings, staff were encouraged to share ideas about how they could work and think differently. A significant number of these ideas have now been allocated to senior managers for oversight and delivery, also many ideas have been diverted to already ongoing change programmes for consideration in future requirements. Staff ideas range from technical improvements to our systems to practical solutions that create more time in courts. 'Small Changes' will continue as an ongoing programme supported by the Cafcass Model Office.
  - The project to upgrade our electronic case management system (ECMS) known as 'Project Sapphire' has undertaken a significant consultation meeting with over 30 local teams to help inform future requirements of the system. A significant number of high quality suggestions have been received from frontline staff to further aid productivity and efficiency that are to be included in the future upgrade. Also, a number of ideas were submitted that are under consideration in the short term to support the impact of demand on our workloads
- 3.5 Electronic Performance and Learning Reviews (PLRs) continue to retain a high rate of compliance that is within target. **90%** of eligible practitioners have had a PLR within the last three months including undertaking a self-assessment. The system has been further enhanced this financial year following feedback from staff to further improve the self-assessment process for both social work and non-social work staffing groups.

3.6 Quality of work remains consistently high as we continue to exceed targets for case file audits graded as Requires Improvement and Outstanding. In the last 3 months: the Requires Improvement rate was **3%** (target <7%); the Outstanding rate of was **14%** (target >10%). Compliance also remains high with **88%** of eligible practitioners having had at least two case file audits in the last three months, just short of the 90% target.

3.7 Detailed work to ensure that the high quality of work is being maintained continues through the work of the National Improvement Team. A rolling programme of audit has included a recent thematic audit of quality thresholds and an area quality review of our Durham, Teesside, North Yorkshire, York, Cumbria and Lancashire teams (A3) and our Kent team (A17). The outcomes of both these reviews evidences the maintenance of quality and validates the reporting from our QAI system.

#### 4 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK RESOURCING

4.1 Established forward recruitment processes and the use of an effective online recruitment platform continue to achieve success. In the 12 months ending April 2019 Cafcass employed **283** new staff.

- We have worked successfully to increase the level of social work capacity over the last 2 years. In this period we aspired and achieved in using additional funding to increase substantive social work resources, reduce the reliance on agency workers and recruit our best agency talent to Cafcass posts (thus reducing the cost of employment and increasing the stability of the workforce).
- As at 30 April 2019 we had an employed<sup>1</sup> social work FTE of **1,373.5** in line with the overall recruitment plan. Agency social worker numbers reduced from 62 in April 2018 to **34** in April 2019. In the past 12 months we have also converted **62** of the best agency talent to permanent positions.
- Cafcass Associates work across both public and private law and can be deployed to the service areas most in need, providing an experienced and flexible additional workforce. Against the backdrop of often unpredictable demand, complex daily analytics enable managers to identify teams requiring support and target the allocation of work to this flexible resource as a response. The overall pool for the Cafcass Associates workforce is currently **124**.
- We encourage skilled retiring staff to consider continuing as bank workers.

#### 5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

5.1 Overall national open caseload (stock) levels has increased by **9.2%** in the last 12 months. Overall, the number of open Private Law cases has risen by 15.5% with the open Public Law cases reducing by -0.5%.

5.2 Average active caseloads continue to increase which can be largely attributed to the ongoing rises in private law demand. At the start of June 2019, the average active caseload for a Family Court Adviser was **22.3 cases** (compared to 20.7 in June 2018), although there is local variation.

5.3 We continue to manage the pressures of demand by supporting staff to maintain attendance levels as high as possible. For the period February to April 2019, social work sickness levels were lower (**10.5** average working days lost) than for the same period in 2018 (10.7 average working days lost). This does represent some lost capacity in this period but most sickness remains related to physical illness.

5.4 Staff turnover for the 12-month period ending April 2019 remains low at **9.7%** for Cafcass' social work staff, compared to a national average of around 16% for local authority children's services social work staff.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Employed' refers to staff with Cafcass contracts of employment and excludes all flexible workforce staff.

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/782154/Children\\_s\\_social\\_work\\_workforce\\_2018\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782154/Children_s_social_work_workforce_2018_text.pdf)

## 6 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The focus of Organisational Development continues to be on equipping staff to be productive, supporting staff wellbeing and developing our talent to enable the workforce to continue responding to increased workload pressures. This includes:

- Reviewing and updating our existing management and leadership development approach, to continue equipping our leaders to best deliver services to children.
- Reviewing 'onboarding' and induction materials to support new starters in the process of joining Cafcass and adapting to the demands of our work.
- Mapping learning and development resources to new smarter working assessments for ease of access for all staffing groups.
- Using information from Cafcass PLR self-assessments to target support to staff who have self-identified as being of lower confidence in key ways of working that enable higher productivity.
- Targeting health and wellbeing support to specific practice areas that are exposed to higher levels of rising demand such as EIT and private law teams.
- Undertaking new stress surveys at Service Area level to create focussed local wellbeing plans.
- Developing Health and Wellbeing resources, to include new materials on Menopause and Dementia.
- Creating a new network of local Strategic Plan Champions from the Emerging Talent pool, which has supported a significant staff engagement exercise with the development of the new Cafcass Strategic Plan and Cafcass Values. Feedback has been received from 37 teams, as well as from external stakeholders. The next phase is the integration of the new Cafcass Values into the PLR process and recruitment and selection activity.

## 7 BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS

7.1 All the actions taken are ensuring that children and families have continued to receive a timely and quality service.

## 8 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

8.1 The organisation has received a budget settlement to sustain frontline staffing levels.

## 9 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 The risk of not being able to allocate work remains if the applications continue to rise and recruitment/staff retention becomes more difficult.

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National Service Director

June 2019

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ALB	Arms Length Body
AWDL	Average Working Days Lost
CMT	Corporate Management Team
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DFJ	District Family Judge
ECMS	E-Case Management System
FCA	Family Court Adviser
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
H&W	Health & Wellbeing
HMCTS	HM Courts & Tribunals Service

IT	Information Technology
L&D	Learning & Development
LAs	Local Authorities
LFJB	Local Family Justice Board
LinkedIn	Worldwide professional network
MIS	Management Information Systems
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
OMT	Operational Management Team
PLR	Performance & Learning Review
PNC	Police National Computer
S31	Section 31
S7	Section 7 Report
SEC	Self-employed contractor (now Cafcass Associates)