



**Draft**

**Cafcass Performance and Quality Committee Minutes  
Monday 9 September 2019, 11.00 - 13.00  
Cafcass, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD**

**Present**

Stuart Smith, Board Member (Chair)  
Fay Selvan, Board member  
Paul Grant, Board member  
Caroline Corby, Cafcass Board Member (via video conference)  
Joanna Nicolas, Co-opted Board Member (via video conference)  
Mandy Jones, Cafcass Board Member (via telephone conference)  
Grace Egbewole-Adereti, Board and Corporate Support Officer

**In Attendance**

Jacky Tiotto, Chief Executive Officer (via video conference)  
Julie Brown, Director of Resources (via video conference)  
Teresa Williams, Director of Strategy (via video conference)  
Anji Owens, Deputy Director for Operational Performance  
Kevin Gibbs, Deputy Director for Operational Service Delivery (via video conference)  
Nicola Blakebrough, Corporate Manager (via video conference)  
Saif Ullah, Senior Research and Evaluation Manager – for item 6 (via video conference)  
Helen Johnston, Assistant Director - Policy – for item 6 (via video conference)  
Alice Smith, Service Manager for A15 – for item 4 (via video conference)  
Stuart Moore, Ministry of Justice (via telephone conference)

**Apologies**

Christine Banim, National Service Director  
Adam Lennon, Deputy Director and Service Owner, HMCTS

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Jacky Tiotto who was attending her first meeting as Chief Executive. Apologies were received from Christine Banim and Adam Lennon.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes and Actions**

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 May 2019 were agreed as an accurate record. The Committee reviewed the action log and noted the progress of actions.

Action 14: The Committee confirmed that it would be reviewing the FCO work programme in further detail at a future meeting.

There were no matters arising.

#### **4. Workloads and Allocation**

The Chair welcomed the Service Managers for A3 (Manchester Early Intervention Team) and A15 (London Private Law Work After First Hearing Team), Alice Smith and Rebekah Tucker to the meeting.

The Early Intervention Team (EIT) is the first point of contact for applications received to Cafcass and operates under the principles of the Child Arrangements Programme. Their objective is to focus on the safeguarding needs of the child during all points of the case.

There has been a 10% increase in applications nationally in the year to date, with some areas having as high as a 20% increase, which is having a considerable impact on resources provided by different services in family justice. This increase is largely driven by an increase in requests for S7 reports and 16.4 cases. Service Managers spend a lot of time forward planning court lists in collaboration with HMCTS colleagues to ensure that the maximum number of cases can be heard to minimise court backlogs.

The A15 (London) WTFH team work with Private Law cases. The team has 30 FCA's and is currently holding 895 cases, of which 100 are inactive. The majority of FCAs in the team have considerably high caseloads. Hearings are conducted in 2 London courts. Managers use an allocation chart and workload weighting tool to review the work load of FCA's. London have one of the quickest court-filing times in the country. The average filing time is 8 weeks. Analysis on 16.4 cases is being carried out to better understand the reason for their extended timing.

Innovations to help manage demand are being worked on through the Small Changes Programme, including the use of shorter safeguarding letters for low risk and returning cases. The shorter safeguarding letter has significantly reduced FCA time-spent, freeing up more availability for children with high risk safeguarding needs. The Central Intake Team (CIT) and EIT are also piloting solutions to reduce duplication and streamline the end to end process.

To better support staff with workloads in high red, cases are temporarily allocated (for 3 days) to a manager to provide relief from further allocations. Staff workload is monitored using the ECMS dashboard. Service Managers also review workload pressures in line with pressure tools developed by the Analytics team.

The Committee queried whether Duty Allocated cases were included within KPI1 and it was agreed this information would be reported separately at the next meeting. The Committee questioned whether the workload allocation tool had been updated to reflect the changing intensity of the work and were informed that updates to the tool were being made, but that this was only one of a number of sources of information for managers to effectively manage staff caseloads.

A Board member noted that during a Board service visit to the Reading office, a judge had praised the shorter safeguarding letter.

Action 1: The workload weighting tool would be updated and brought back to the Committee for information.

Action 2: A further breakdown of KPI1 performance would be presented to the next meeting.

## **5. Customer Services Annual Report**

The Deputy Director for Operational Service Delivery presented the Customer Services Annual Report to the Committee.

The number of compliments and complaints remained similar to the previous year, with 82% of children's feedback recorded being positive and 3 complaints recorded. Despite increasing, the number of complaints received from adults was considered low in relation to the total number of cases. There had been an increase in MP correspondence from 134 to 205 letters. There have been five consecutive quarters with no new investigations opened by the Ombudsman.

General Data Protection Regulations had impacted the number of complaints received. Despite this increase, 100% of complaints were responded to within the timescales required. The complaints team is working with the Family Justice Young People's Board to improve the complaints process. The Committee noted that some children were concerned about the impact of their raising a complaint about the FCA.

The Committee discussed the responses to Cafcass feedback via You Said We Did and asked how we would be able to respond to other qualitative areas identified by children. The Chief Executive noted that the case file audit process should feature feedback from children and families so that this can feed into the quality assurance process.

The Committee were informed that the complaints team were working hard to make data collected more qualitative. The Committee questioned how hard copies of feedback from children were being collected and were informed that more coordination between different offices would need to be conducted to ensure that all data was being effectively captured. The Chief Executive noted that there was a need to clearly evidence the practice changes that were implemented following the feedback identified in complaints and that we would in the future be working hard to demonstrate this.

The Committee noted that the FJYPB Top Tips were an effective tool which drew on children's experience to recommend tips for better practice.

Action 3: Children's feedback would be included in case file audits as part of the quality assurance process.

## **6. Revised Research Governance Arrangements**

The Assistant Director for Policy and the Research and Evaluation Manager presented the Revised Research Governance Arrangements report to the Committee.

The paper explains the revised governance arrangements proposed to manage increased demand for Cafcass data and to facilitate the collaboration between Cafcass, Cafcass Cymru and the Family Justice Observatory to ensure that products remain of a high standard.

A Research Advisory Committee would be set up to oversee requests for access to data for research purposes.

The Committee commended the paper and noted that the deposit of Cafcass data with an external host would be helpful in increasing Cafcass' level of transparency.

The Committee discussed the role of technology in the decision-making process and the ethical implications for this. The Committee were informed that this was also being considered by the Information Assurance Board.

The Committee noted that it had previously raised its own interest in better understanding any research about the complexity of cases. It was noted that the Director of Strategy and the

Deputy Director for Operational Performance were working with business analytics to review how areas of qualitative data could be further analysed in support of this.

## **8. Performance Report**

The Deputy Director for Operational Performance presented the Performance Report and outlined the headline points.

The overall demand continues to increase. The number of new private law cases received in the year to date (April to July 19) had increased by 9.8% compared to the previous year and July 2019 was noted to be one of the highest months ever.

Public law demand had seen a decrease of 4.6% (April to July 19) compared to the same period last year.

The average active caseloads of social work staff had increased to 22.3 cases (August 2019) from 20.8 (August 2018). Maintaining performance in the allocation of private law cases continued to be an area of risk and is kept under review by the Operational and Corporate Management Teams.

Nonetheless performance against KPIs remains strong with all measures in Green during 2019/20.

The Committee discussed the latest forecast from the MoJ which predicts a reduction of 0.1% for public law and an increase of 4.3% for private law for 2019-20. Cafcass' own forecast based on historic trends showed an overall increase of 5.3% for the total demand in 2019-20. The Committee noted that MoJ's data on private law includes divorces and finances, whereas Cafcass data only includes children's cases.

The Assistant Director confirmed that the operation of duty allocation involved allocation to a manager for a maximum of 3 days to review the case and that OMT are conducting further work to review the practice of private law duty allocations.

Action 4:       The Board to receive a report at a future meeting about the extent of duty allocation, the likelihood of it ceasing and the impact on our working practice.

## **9. Strategic Plan Dashboard and Strategic Risk Register**

The Corporate Manager (Secretariat Services) presented the Strategic Plan Dashboard and Strategic Risk Register and noted that the overall assessment of progress is positive based on delivering the key activities and programmes of work set out in the Interim Delivery Plan. A new approach and format for reporting progress of the Strategic Plan is being developed along with a Success Framework. The report highlights key programmes and organisational achievements during the quarter organised to fit within the 3 Pillars of the new Strategic Plan: practice, people and partners.

The strategic risks have been reassessed and are now grouped under the Strategic Pillars. While these are broadly consistent with the previous risk areas, emphasis has also now been placed on risks associated with leadership and succession planning, influencing system change and reputation. Currently the Strategic Risk Register highlights nine risks and one risk, Resources (demand), is assessed as red after implementation of controls and actions.

The Committee discussed the RAG assessment of the reputational risk. The Director of Resources noted that the assessment is based on a robust assurance process (three lines of defence) being in place and individual issues being under constant review by the Corporate Management Team.

The Committee discussed the collaboration work with ADCS. The Director of Strategy said that ADCS had released a discussion paper regarding serious youth violence and knife crime and she would be attending a round table discussion next week on the subject.

#### **10. Any Other Business & Forward Planner**

The Committee discussed the recent Nagalro press release concerning the role of the Children's Guardian and poor practice in two recent cases. It was agreed that the Corporate Management Team would provide a briefing to the Board on the topic and that the process for reporting exceptional cases and information would be reviewed.

Action 5: The Chief Executive Officer to present an amended briefing procedure to the Board.

A Committee Member requested whether a comparison of UK regional performance could be carried out and brought back to the Committee in due course.

There was no further business.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: Performance and Quality Committee – Monday 09 December 2019, 11.00 – 13.00

#### Actions Summary

- Action 1: The workload weighting tool would be updated and brought back to the Committee for information.
- Action 2: A further breakdown of KPI1 performance would be presented to the next meeting.
- Action 3: Children's feedback would be included in case file audits as part of the quality assurance process.
- Action 4: The Board to receive a report at a future meeting about the extent of duty allocation, the likelihood of it ceasing and the impact on our working practice.
- Action 5: The Chief Executive Officer to present an amended briefing procedure to the Board.