

Cafcass Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-20

Foreword

I want our 2017-20 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to support taking our work in this area to an even stronger level. We will focus on three main areas. Firstly, we will aim to deepen the positive impact of our work on children, where diversity and inclusion issues are important for them. Secondly, we will continue to develop Cafcass as an inclusive employer, so that we recognise the diversity and inclusion needs of our own staff and make sure their experience is positive. Finally, we will work on the diversity make up of our staff group, so that we achieve balance in relation to need and demography, reaching industry standards as a minimum and aiming to go beyond this where we can.

An example of how we aim to deepen the positive impact of our front line work and our culture as an inclusive employer is to take more time understanding our impact, through discussing this with our service users and our staff. As a large national organisation, this will mean carrying out some surveys of service users and staff, and also by undertaking a number of in-depth interviews in those areas of our work and our practice where we know we need to do more. For example, a young person on the Family Justice Young Peoples Board talked to me about how we should work with children with disabilities. She has cerebral palsy and asked in particular that we gave her support and sufficient time to be able to participate in her court case. This discussion has been written up for our Operating Framework as a 'Top Tip' for working with children with disabilities.

The context we work in is changing rapidly, as are social trends, so it will be important to ensure our strategy remains live and active at all times and that it is adjusted as circumstances change. To do that, we will build in six-monthly stocktakes by our Board and Executive.

Julie Brown

Interim Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Cafcass serves the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and families, during periods of great difficulty and upheaval in their lives. The service users we work with on a daily basis come from all sections of our diverse society, and we need an approach to diversity and inclusion that recognises this. We are committed to providing the best service possible for each child referred to us, within the limits of our available resources. Key to this is acknowledging the individual life experiences of the child and reflecting these in the advice and recommendations we make to the Family Courts. This is both the challenge and the reward of placing diversity and inclusion at the heart of our work.

Our starting point with regards to diversity and inclusion is the same as our starting point in all that we do; the child. We understand that each child is unique and different and those differences need to be brought to the fore in our work, understood and then acted upon. For diversity and inclusion purposes, we use a threshold of relevance and vulnerability as a guideline. Relevance, in this context, means determining if the diversity factor makes a difference to the issues in the child's case. If not, it is not relevant. If it does, it must be included, analysed and acted upon. The threshold for vulnerability means that the child is, or may be, adversely affected by the diversity issue, directly or indirectly, and therefore this becomes an essential element of the evidence base in their case. This is in line with the various welfare checklists underpinning our work legally.

As an organisation, our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality in recent years, and our strategic priorities in this regard, have undoubtedly increased the extent to which these factors are evident (as measured by audits) in frontline social work practice in Cafcass. Nonetheless, it remains imperative that we continue to strengthen and deepen the planning, analysis and impact of diversity and inclusion considerations in our work, to ensure the very best outcomes for children. This has implications for our practice and hence for our workforce. Consequently this strategy, to 2020, has three clearly defined points of focus, under three key headings:



Child Impact

*Inclusive
Employer*

Staff Diversity

CHILD IMPACT

Vision:

Through our practice we will evidence our continuous learning about diversity and inclusion and build on the journey of each child, taking into account their individual differences and diverse needs. We will continue to achieve added value for children and families as a result of the understanding and application of diversity and inclusion considerations in our casework. Much of good practice in relation to diversity and inclusion is good practice more generally, for example, in avoiding delay and uncertainty, in co-producing work as far as possible and by actively listening and acting upon what we hear.

What we will aim to achieve:

- A refreshed national **Operating Framework** that captures developments to date and extends aspirations in applying diversity and inclusion to all areas of practice; strengthening the voice of the child from application to the conclusion of their case. Work will include recognising the additional needs of many children and building this into our training materials, practice and management oversight of practice.
- **Learning and Development pathways** to support diversity and inclusion, in areas where we identify a need for greater maturity in our recognition, understanding and implementation of diversity and inclusion issues in our casework. Such areas include the impact of mental health on the ability to parent safely and the prevalence and complexities of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Radicalisation and Child Trafficking.
- **Thematic audits** providing diversity and inclusion learning that is dynamic and will assist the organisation in better appreciation of its strengths and vulnerabilities, applying them to shape future interventions. One area we will look at is enhancing our understanding of Child Exploitation (CE) by assessing the effectiveness of our CE Strategy and making recommendations for improvements.
- Review of our **Quality Assurance and Impact** tool, to build on the quality and consistency of our practice and to ensure that diversity and inclusion considerations are fully captured. This will help evidence the effectiveness and consistent application of diversity and inclusion considerations, to measure the quality of the work we do and to assess possible areas for more targeted learning and development.
- Development of a **model of inclusivity** by encouraging self-assessment by service users and exploring how far the principles of co-production can be applied to our work. The aim is to strengthen the voice of the child by gaining a greater understanding of their experiences at the end of our involvement, to assist our learning and to apply this across practice, strategy and policy where required.
- Creation of a learning and development stream in relation to supporting children suffering from **emotional harm through high parental conflict**, so that a structured intervention can be put in place.
- **National benchmarking audits**, which will include assessment of the quality and consistency of diversity and inclusion practice in case audits. Our national approach to QA evidences an improving picture of practice where the voice of the child is held at the centre.

- A strong **network of ‘Cafcass Experts’**, supported by **Diversity Champions**, able to share good practice, provide casework consultation and support in areas associated with diversity and inclusion.
- **Analysis of data sets for service users and partner services** to ensure that the organisation continues to understand the changing profile of the children and families we provide services to. Better understanding of diversity and inclusion through evaluation of key data will enable and contribute to positive developments in practice to improve added value for children in our work.
- **Piloting of a Child Impact Analysis Framework** which aims to ensure a child centred analysis about the child’s situation in the Section 7 process. This will include an amended report template, with the case and any diversity factors seen through the eyes of the child. The pilot will evaluate the impact and quality of this new model.
- **Design of new pilots for pre-court models** for working with families and increasing child inclusivity in the pre-proceedings space. These will aim to work with families to resolve disputes at an earlier stage, decreasing the impact of conflict on children. Models will seek to promote the value of child input into decision-making outside of proceedings.

How we will monitor and measure impact:

- Monitor uptake and conduct staff surveys to gather feedback on Learning and Development streams specific to diversity and inclusion e.g. training workshops, Cafcass ‘Experts’.
- Gather continuous feedback and insight through co-ordination of the network of Cafcass ‘experts’ and Diversity Champions, using virtual communications channels as well as dedicated meetings at regular intervals.
- Analyse audit and benchmarking results and explore any correlations with diversity and inclusion interventions and external environment changes.
- Use the Model Office evaluation framework to assess pilots for new ways of working.
- Regularly measure data against external benchmarks and continue to work with partners including MoJ and DfE to develop and maintain matched data sets.

INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER

Vision:

We will continue to support a workforce and an employment relationship characterised by mutual dignity and respect, creating an inclusive working environment where individual employees can flourish and maximise their potential, regardless of their differences and diverse needs. We will be recognised as an employer of choice because of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, which is integral in our approach to the recruitment, induction, learning and development and performance management of our people. We will continually assess what we do and work to enhance diversity and inclusion in our organisation wherever possible.

What we will aim to achieve:

- A refreshed national **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**, suitably integrated with local business and workforce planning, to ensure all key aspects of our work are properly assessed for their potential to impact on diversity, inclusion and equality grounds, and to make sure our work is always aligned, as far as possible, with our priority of enhancing diversity and inclusion considerations.
- A sector-leading **flexible and agile working environment**, which enables our workforce to deliver the best possible service and outcomes for children because it enables them to manage and integrate their work and non-work lives effectively for them, allowing for different individual needs and circumstances.
- A workplace that continually prioritises and supports the **mental health, wellbeing and resilience** of our people, offering internal support and training resources underpinned by a partnership with recognised external organisations.
- The best possible support for individuals in the workplace affected by **cancer**, offering bespoke training for managers and other staff and establishing a network of cancer 'buddies' to provide appropriate support and information.
- Continued support for the individual needs of staff with **dyslexia**, providing learning and guidance for managers and utilising all sources of information and advice to ensure that suitable reasonable adjustments are considered and implemented where possible.
- Acknowledgement of the **Carer responsibilities** of some staff and a commitment to ensuring they are enabled to identify themselves as a carer without any hesitation or fear of discrimination. We are committed to supporting our staff to combine their caring and work responsibilities as far as possible.
- Membership of the government's **Disability Confident Employer** scheme, and an aspiration to be a Disability Confident 'Leader'. This is a key part of our commitment to ensuring Cafcass is free from any form of discrimination towards individuals (employees, prospective employees and service users alike) who may have a disability or long term health condition.
- A **safe and accessible corporate infrastructure** for staff and service users, with buildings that comply fully with equality legislation, where we have direct responsibility and where this is practically possible.

- **Benchmarking** against key industry measures and national standards, e.g. British Standard: 'Valuing people through diversity and inclusion,' being developed by Manchester University's Alliance Business School.

How we will monitor and measure impact:

- Annually update the EIA and benchmark national work streams and area business plans against it.
- Continue to submit for appropriate national award recognition in respect of our commitment to diversity and inclusion and the various workstreams that support this e.g. flexible working, Health & Wellbeing, Learning & Development.
- Analyse absenteeism data, information from the *Medicash* Health & Wellbeing Plan usage and in-house support services to assess uptake of available support and resources.
- Collate feedback via surveys for training and other staff support initiatives.
- Complete and maintain the *Disability Confident Employer* self-assessment to work towards *Disability Confident Leader* status.
- Evaluate the outcomes of estate audits and make any required adjustments / improvements to our Estate where necessary.
- Assess Cafcass against the new British Standard for Diversity in the first instance and seek to develop our strategy in line with this and other such key benchmarks.

STAFF DIVERSITY

Vision:

Continue to recognise and harness the value of a diverse workforce and celebrate the differences that exist amongst our people, maximising the potential of those differences to improve practice. Use the different experiences and expertise of our staff to ensure our workforce grows professionally, adapting our approach to learning in order to support all staff and encourage the sharing of knowledge and best practice. Analyse key workforce diversity metrics and pursue priority lines of enquiry emanating from these to further strengthen and understand the diverse nature of our staff group and deliver better outcomes for service users as a result.

What we will aim to achieve:

- Enhancement of our staff network of **Diversity Champions**, closely supported and co-ordinated to deliver their remit of promoting diversity, inclusion understanding, knowledge-sharing and best-practice throughout the organisation, across teams and service areas.
- Re-establishing and nurturing appropriate **virtual staff networks**, to represent, support and engage staff who share a similar background, protected characteristic or common cause. These networks will have clear terms of reference and will help promote a working environment and culture that respects staff diversity and inclusion.
- A focus on **key workforce metrics** and regular monitoring / reporting of diversity data, using a visual 'dashboard' approach that will be built using the latest reporting tools to enable effective analysis of the impact on service delivery.
- Exploration of the **gender imbalance** (female predominance) within the Cafcass frontline social work, which reflects the wider social work sector and professional context. Establish the possibility for partnership working with key stakeholders to look at existing and new long-term strategies to better understand the impact of the current workforce composition on outcomes for children and to encourage greater numbers of male practitioners into social work.

How we will monitor and measure impact:

- Collect feedback from and via Diversity Champions (e.g. focus groups).
- Measure level of engagement with virtual staff networks and evaluate their impact.
- Assess the priority themes arising from workforce analytics and pursue these through bespoke actions / project work streams, to form strategies to improve service delivery.
- Partner with external agencies and employer networks to evaluate strategies around gender imbalance within the wider social work profession.

Summary

Diversity and inclusion considerations are central to the core business of Cafcass. It is unrealistic to hope to be able to deliver outstanding services and the best possible outcomes and added value for children without being able to understand and accurately assess the diversity factors impacting them and their environment both prior to and at the point of our contact with them.

Neither is it feasible to expect this level of knowledge and expertise around diversity-aware practice, without nurturing and developing a workforce that is itself diverse in composition, talent, knowledge and experience. These are the aims of this strategy and the action plan that underpins it.

Whilst the three key pillars of this strategy – Child Impact; Inclusive Employer and Staff Diversity - will not change, the specific targets and objectives set out within the action plan against each of these aspects will need to change and adapt, as progress is made to deliver them and the strategy evolves.

The data set and management information reporting tool ('dashboard') that underpins this strategy will be used to ensure that key lines of enquiry are established and can be monitored in respect of all three of the key pillars above, on an ongoing basis. The data dashboard will continue to evolve and be aligned to wider 'day to day' business intelligence analytics across Cafcass at a national and local area level, to feed into key service delivery and workforce planning objectives.

Using new reporting technology and visualisation software, our workforce analytics will be expanded to include external datasets that will enable us to understand our workforce against the much wider context of the United Kingdom's population. The visualisation of our intelligence through dashboards will be augmented via interactive mapping and 'drill down' datasets.

This is a key high level strategy which will be subject to scrutiny and challenge from the Cafcass Board and Corporate Management Team, with specific input from the Cafcass Board Diversity Lead.

This strategy will therefore be a live document, updated regularly to report on both our progress and any changes in approach through six monthly stocktakes. Twice yearly update reports will be produced and provided to the Corporate Management Team, Operational Management Team and the Cafcass Board and will also be accessible to all Cafcass staff via SharePoint.