



Cafcass Quality Account 2014 -15

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Introduction

This is the second annual quality account of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass). We operate within the legal framework set by Parliament and under the rules and directions of the family courts. Our statutory functions are to: safeguard and promote the welfare of children, give advice to the family courts, make provision for children to be represented and to provide information, advice and support to children and their families. Our commitment is to do all we can to ensure that the service we provide to children and their families, referred to us by courts, is of the highest possible standard. In this quality account, we set out what steps we took between April 2014 and March 2015, to improve our practice and to provide constantly improving services to children and families who are involved in family proceedings. We also describe what we plan to do next year to keep improving quality.

Two things happened in April 2014 which influenced our work throughout the year. First, we received the result of the first national inspection of Cafcass by Ofsted. The overall finding of 'Good' confirmed that we had made substantial progress and helped us to identify some of the things we needed to do to improve further. Second, the Children and Families Act which came into force on 22 April 2014 turned into statute those reforms that we and the family justice sector have been working on for some years. We start this account by describing our responses to these two important events, before describing other steps we have taken to 'get better and better'. We are judged, quite rightly, on the services that we provide to children and families but behind this lies a 'whole organisation approach' in which everybody in Cafcass, regardless of which function they work in, pulls together in one single goal of continuous improvement. We hope that you will find this year's Quality Account interesting and informative.

Have we achieved what we said we would in the 13/14 Quality Account?

What we said we would do...	How have we got on?
Completion of the Ofsted Action Plan	The action plan arising from the 2013/14 Ofsted inspection is being delivered via the Operational Management Team and all work is in hand. See page 4 .
Next stage of the 'Getting Better and Better' programme (increasing the quantum of 'Good' work, reducing the quantum of 'Not Met' work)	We have successfully increased the quantum of 'good' work and reduced the quantum of 'Not Met' work as evidenced in the November 2014 audit results. See page 4 .
Improved real time feedback from children and families	We have worked with the Family Justice Young Peoples Board to improve real time feedback from children and families. See page 18 .
Continue to implement our Equality and Diversity Strategy to ensure that all children achieve a high quality service	We have continued to embed the priorities of our Equality and Diversity Strategy into our practice. See page 20 and 21 .
Stronger and more consistent joint working with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)	We are piloting joint working with IROs in Birmingham City Council to help improve the service they provide. We are also in the process of updating our joint protocol with Independent Reviewing Officers nationally. See page 22 .
Learning and applying the lessons from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)	We have continued to apply lessons learnt from Serious Case Reviews through, for example, research and training packages. See page 10 .
To develop better and faster technology and systems to support our staff in their work	We are refining our IT requirements in consultation with staff to ensure they are provided with the best technology to support their work. We have also developed interactive practice tools to assist staff in their work with children and families. See page 23 .

Quality of our practice

What did we do to improve the quality of our practice?

We have continued to be a key player in Family Justice Reform

Cafcass has played an instrumental part in the implementation of the revised Public Law Outline (PLO). The Children and Families Act 2014 requires that care cases are concluded within 26 weeks, unless an extension is necessary and judicially endorsed. In April 2014 we introduced a tighter model of case analysis through a new template and guidance which enabled Guardians to provide the court with a timely analysis by the Case Management Hearing (CMH). This case analysis is now fully embedded into our practice. As of December 2014 the average duration of care applications was 30 weeks compared to 35 weeks in December 2013.

Cafcass also played a key role in the Private Law Working Group which was responsible for overseeing the development of the Child Arrangements Programme (CAP) which came into force in April 2014. The CAP is designed to assist families to reach safe agreements, where possible out of the court setting. If parents/families are unable to reach agreements, and a court application is made, the CAP encourages swift resolution of the dispute through the court. We have continued to support the CAP by playing a key role in private law out of court pilots and by providing training to the judiciary.

We are working closely with the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) to ensure their national charter for child inclusive family justice is implemented effectively across the organisation.

We are continuing to exceed our Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets set by our sponsor department, the Ministry of Justice. The table below shows the KPI figures for 14/15.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Year to date (YTD) Performance	Trend
1. Public care cases allocated to Children's Guardian at month end	97%	99.7% (Green)	Stable: (last month YTC: 99.7%)
2. Average working days to allocate Children's Guardian to care cases	<3 working days	0.8 days (Green)	Stable: (last month YTD: 0.8 days)
3. Private law cases allocated to Family Court Adviser at month end	97%	99.4% (Green)	Decreasing: (last month YTD 99.5%)
4. Private law section 7 reports filed by agreed date	97%	97.8% (Green)	Stable: (last month YTD 97.8%)

National Audit Results

Managers regularly look at case files and observe practice to ensure that it is of the required standard. Periodically we have also conducted national audits, the third of which was undertaken in November 2014 by the Cafcass National Improvement Service (NIS) which looked at more than 500 cases. Sixty-five percent of cases were graded as Good, which was a significant improvement since the last national audit in September 2013, and since Ofsted inspected the organisation in March 2014.

The November 2014 National Audit also established that the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection were met or on track. An example of how this has been met is that we have ensured that all private law casework work begins as early as possible once a Family Court Adviser (FCA) has been allocated.

How will we continue to monitor the quality of our practice?

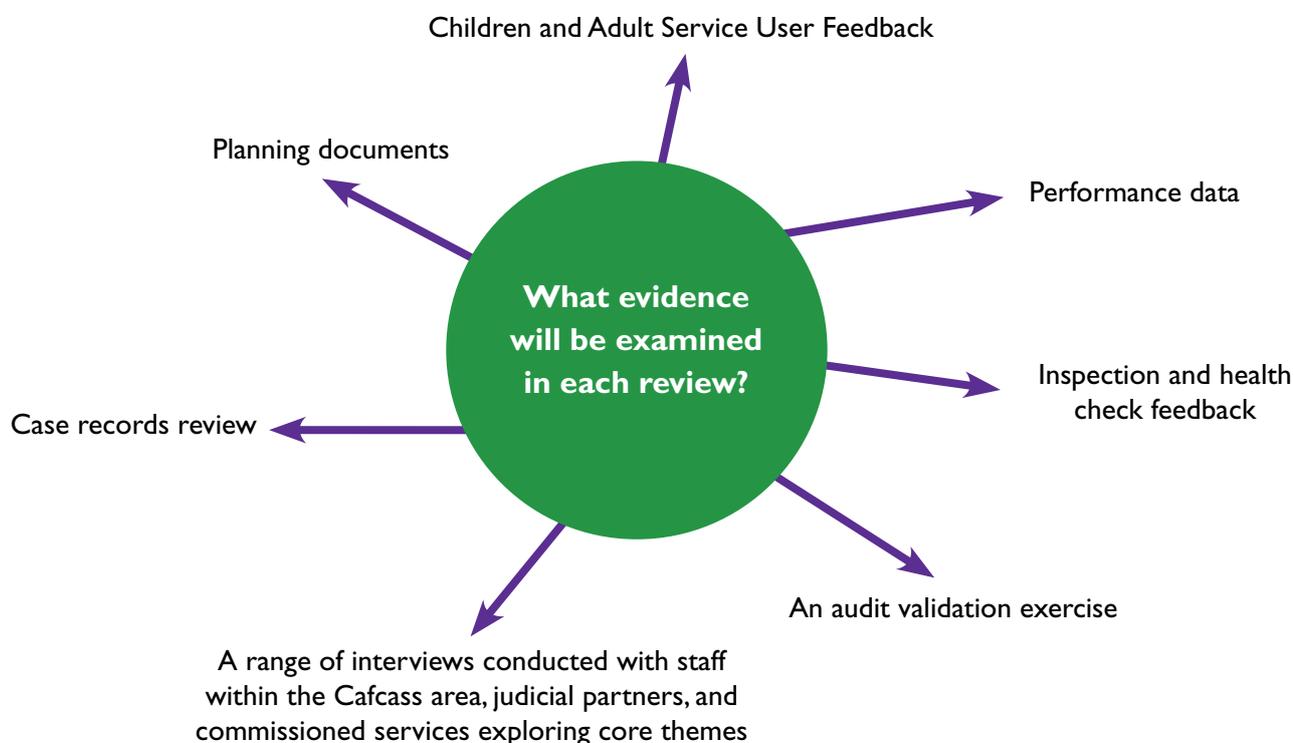
The future focus for quality will be to consolidate the improvements already made and develop measures to focus more on outcomes for children.

We will also carry out three thematic audits during 2015 that focus on the further improvements required. The three thematic audits will be on the following:-

- The extent of the improvement in the joint working/liaison between the Independent Reviewing Officer and the Guardian during the life of Cafcass involvement in proceedings.
- The Guardian's involvement and agreement to any position statement filed in proceedings either written or verbally.
- The quality of analysis and the use of research and tools in Private Law Work After First Hearing.

Area Quality Review

The National Improvement Service (NIS) has recently piloted a new 'Area Quality Review' (AQR) audit model. The new model will replace the previous healthcheck process, bringing in a more collaborative/peer approach through the involvement of the relevant Assistant Director/Senior Heads of Service for the area under review. The aim is to deliver one AQR per Cafcass service area during the next 3 years. The findings of the AQR will inform action and development plans.



The FJYPB will form part of the peer review team. Their role will be to look at how child centred Cafcass is and to ensure the voice of the child is heard throughout the process. The FJYPB will be looking at past office inspection findings and recommendations, results of a children and young person's feedback questionnaire and focus groups with Service Managers and practitioners.

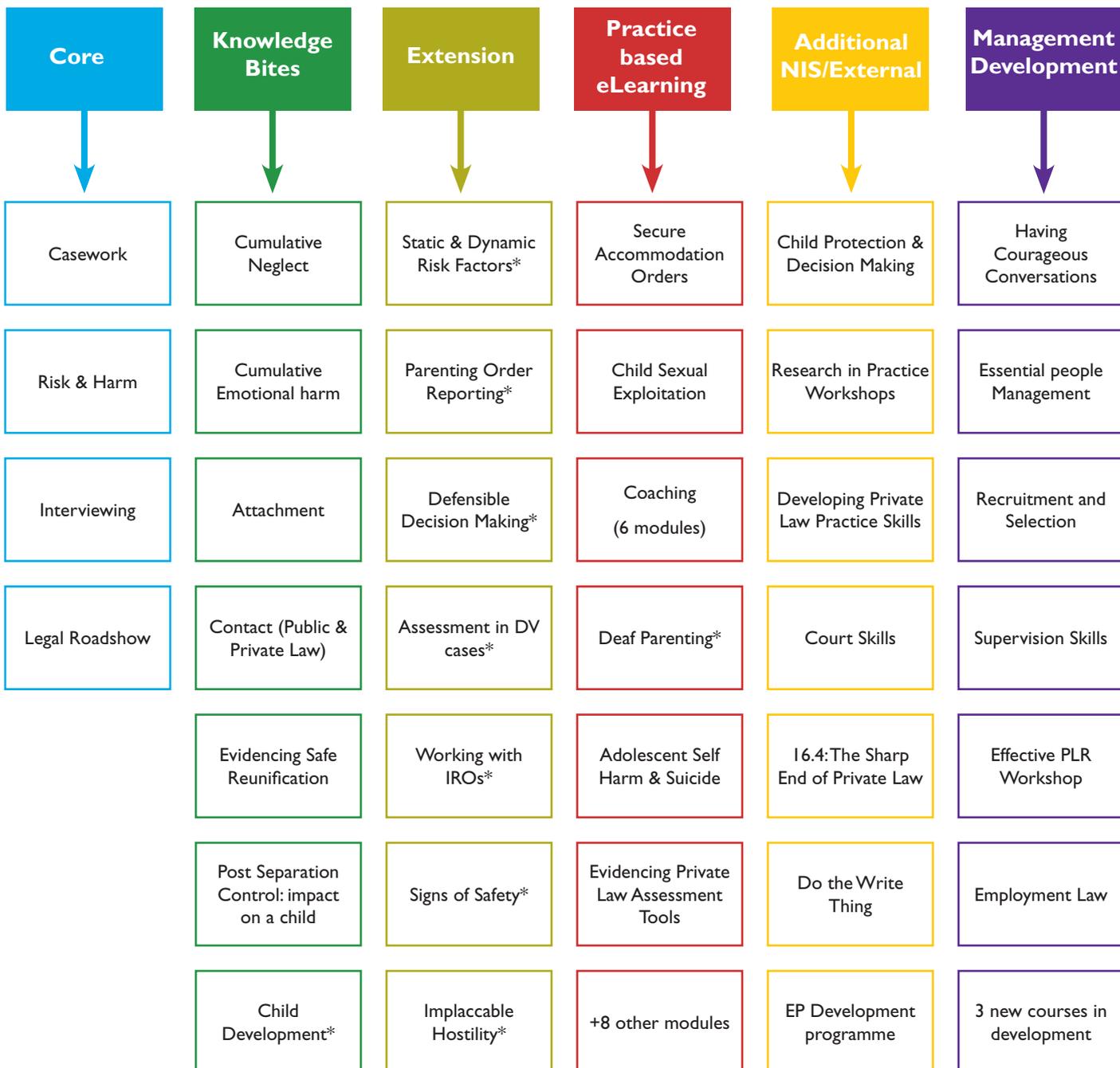
How will this help children and young people?

The fundamental aim of each review will be to help us reflect on and improve the quality and impact of the services we provide for children and young people.

Learning and Development

What did we do to improve the quality of Learning and Development?

The National Improvement Service (NIS) contributed to the improvement and development of practice by providing: individual coaching and training, group workshops, team development days, developing MySkills modules and knowledge bites, the quality assurance of reports and information regarding the lessons learnt from Individual Management Reviews (IMRs). Please see below the National Training Plan for 14/15.



*Available Summer 2015

Development of the Child Exploitation Strategy

The strategy was developed in the light of Cafcass submissions to serious case reviews (SCRs) on the subjects of child sexual exploitation (CSE), and a number of high-profile reviews and reports on the subject. Radicalisation and trafficking have recently been added to the strategy, the core elements of which are as follows:

- **Training:** The CSE module, hosted on MySkills, has been updated. It is available for use by all staff but compulsory for new practice staff, and managers are able to mandate it in response to the local context.
- **Child protection policy:** The Child Protection Policy is currently being revised to include a discrete and succinct section on CSE.
- **Dedicated management resource:** Two service managers have dedicated time (the equivalent of about one day a week) to support the delivery of the strategy at a national level.
- **Ambassadors:** An ambassador has been nominated within each service area to support staff, to promote awareness and to cascade information between the service managers and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB).
- **Collation of data:** Practitioners are now required to indicate on our Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) when a case features CSE. This will allow us to conduct further research into these areas.
- **Specialist input:** Cafcass has commissioned two clinical psychologists, based in the North-West, to present at management forums. One will also undertake a workshop for the NIS that will influence NIS' auditing, development of training etc. It is also planned to make a video of a presentation by an expert on CSE, trafficking and radicalisation.

Secure Accommodation training and guidance

We have recently published practice guidance and a MySkills module for children's guardians working with children subject to an application for a secure accommodation order, as recommended in the Ofsted Report (April 2014).

What impact has learning and development had our employees?

- NIS/ HR provided courses to 2,702 staff in 14/15; the total number of hours our staff spent on these courses was 12,636 hours.
- Since April 2014, over 2000 staff have logged into My Skills to access eLearning, knowledge bites and policies.
- Since April 2014, 86 induction events will have been delivered to 277 new starters. New starters have rated 90% of these events as good or excellent.
- Timely PLR completion for our Social Work staff has demonstrated a continued overall improvement during 2014 following the Ofsted national inspection.
- We now have 41 eLearning modules, which are reviewed at least every 12 months to ensure they remain up to date.
- In 14/15 the Cafcass library received a total of 5722 requests from staff for advice and searches which were all responded to within two working days. This has significantly increased compared to previous years; in 2011/12 there were 2786 requests and in 2012/13 there were 3863 requests.
- Through the use of Research in Practice, the Cafcass library and our membership of the College of Social Work our practitioners take responsibility for their own learning and development.
- We have a proportionate quality assurance strategy which gives practitioners delegated authority to audit and close their own cases once a set standard has been met and evidenced. This allows managers to invest more attention in the staff who most need support.

Work has recently been completed to evaluate the impact of HR Learning and Development in Cafcass. This evaluation has focussed on development initiatives within the organisation including Emerging Talent, Management Development, Leadership Development and the use of Strengths within Cafcass. The feedback from participants and their managers who have been involved with learning and development programmes has been very positive.

"Managers' morale is improved by greater insight to strengths".

Survey Respondent,
Manager Survey

"Talent Management is a great employee engagement strategy and a proactive approach to succession planning and staff retention".

Assistant Director

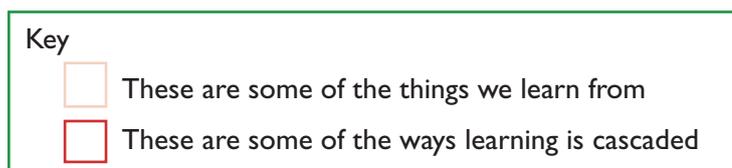
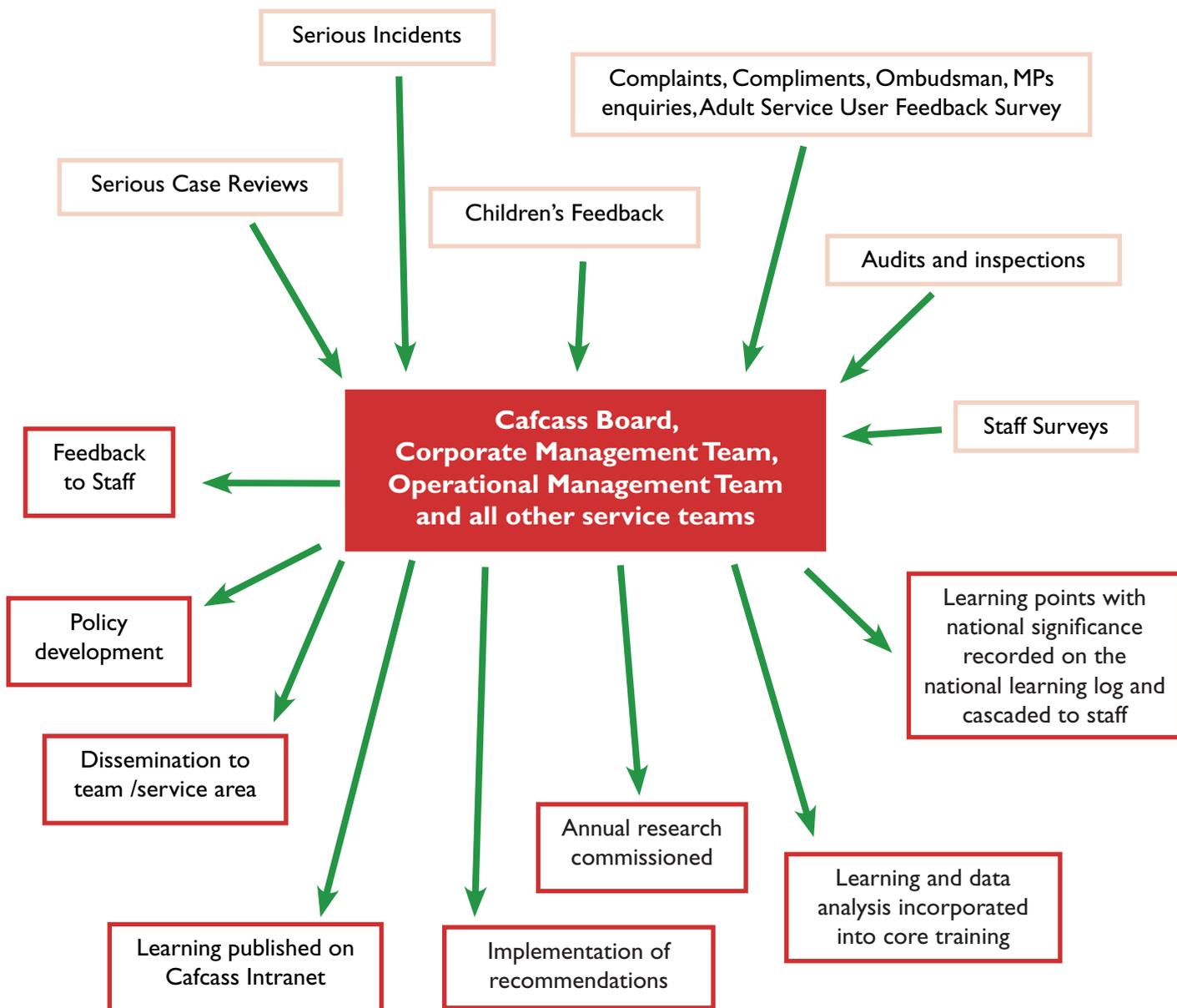
How will we keep improving?

- A number of new modules are being developed as part of a flexible approach to learning and development, with a clear process to ensure quality and relevance.
- We will review core Induction training to ensure that: it is up to date and congruent with national and Cafcass policy and guidance; it reinforces practice issues arising from serious case reviews (SCRs) and the recent national audit and that it promotes a strengths approach.
- We will continue doing what has helped us to improve. We will provide staff with the support they need to do this, continue to learn from our strengths and weaknesses and continue to respond to Family Justice Reform.

How will this help children and young people?

By ensuring we provide our staff with knowledge, confidence and skills, we are helping them to provide the best possible service to children and young people.

How is learning cascaded within Cafcass?



Examples of learning recorded in the national learning log 14/15

Source	Learning point	How was this learning cascaded?
Ombudsman Investigation	FCAs to ensure they distinguish between reporting professional opinion and reporting facts i.e. professional opinion should not be reported as if it is a 'fact'.	Head of Service/Assistant Director to cascade this learning into team meetings and monitor impact on practice through local Quality Assurance processes.
Ombudsman Investigation	When FCAs do not inform parents of the making of a child protection referral the professional assessment for not doing so must be recorded on the case file.	Child Protection Policy to be updated to reflect this specific point. An update on this to be publicised to staff via the intranet.

How will this help children and young people?

Having a robust system in place for cascading learning is essential to learn from and improve the service we provide to children and young people.

Workforce Development



“It was helpful to take time out and think about oneself and lifestyle, a rare luxury.” Health and wellbeing Seminar attendee.

How will we continue to improve workforce development?

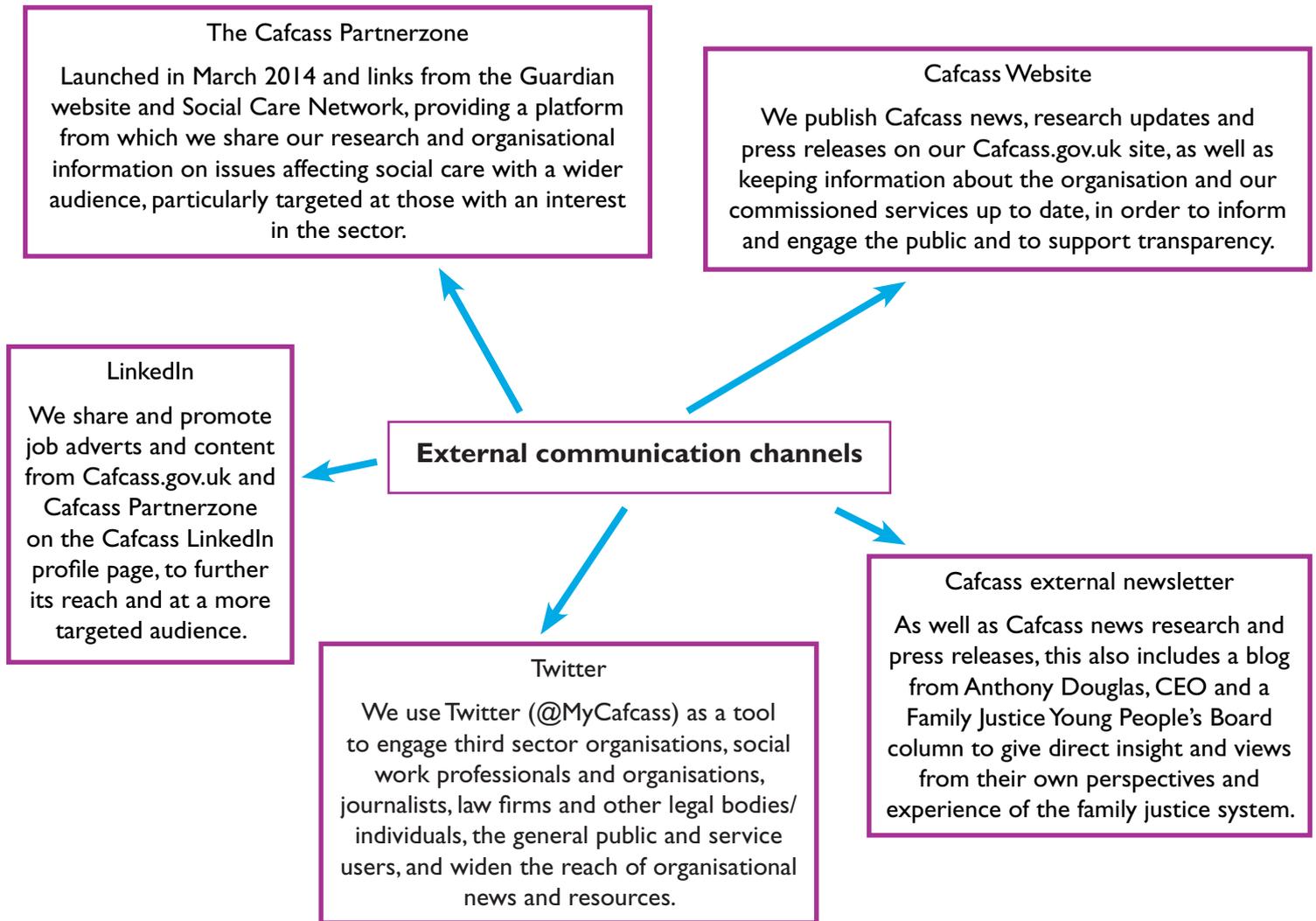
- We will continue with the programmes outlined above.
- We are currently tendering to identify a provider for an open leadership development programme for our 15-20 most senior managers in the organisation.
- We have launched a pilot of a feedback platform. The platform will help bring a rounded perspective from colleagues and stakeholders into the Performance Learning Review process for our managers and give staff the opportunity to provide feedback on managers.
- The FJYPB will continue to be part of the Cafcass recruitment process, including sitting on the interview panels.

How will this help children and young people?

We continue to develop our workforce to ensure that they are fully equipped in providing the best possible service to children and young people.

How have we engaged with the public?

We provide information and organisational news, and co-ordinate messaging, to service users, stakeholders and the general public via our external communication channels, with the purpose of informing them about our services, developments within the sector and research updates, as well as sharing our experiences of best practice.



How else did we engage with the public?

- We responded to 185 Freedom of Information Requests in 14/15
- We responded to 183 MP enquiries in 14/15
- We received 490 compliments in 14/15
- We responded to 1319 complaints in 14/15
- We continue to engage with key stakeholder groups

Cafcass Open Board Meetings

Each year Cafcass opens two of its Board meetings to the public. The March 2015 Open Board focused on mental health issues in families and how they affect children both directly and indirectly within the specific context of the family justice system. Colleagues and stakeholders from across the sector together with members of the public were invited to attend to discuss the nature of the issues and what can be done to help children and young people.

The meeting included presentations from the Earl of Listowel, the Family Justice Young People's Board, YoungMinds and an open discussion led by Cafcass Board Chair, Baroness Claire Tyler. The key themes arising from the discussion included how mental health affects the family as a whole, and how agencies can work together to better support children and young people in proceedings. Following the Open Board Meeting it was decided that a study of the mental health of children in family proceedings will form one element of the Research Programme for 2015-16.

Some examples of research that we have published ...

Learning from Cafcass submissions to Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)

- Both of the two most recent studies, 2013 and 2014, have analysed data from Cafcass' submissions to SCRs in relation to three areas: children and families; index incidents and risk; and Cafcass' involvement in the case.
- Both studies drew out the key learning points for practitioners, which were disseminated throughout the organisation.
- Findings from the 2014 study have helped to inform Cafcass' child exploitation strategy and our training on this topic.
- A summary of the research were published externally and a presentation was made available for Cafcass representatives to share with Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs), helping a wider professional audience to understand the different contexts within which such incidents take place and relevant learning points for practice.

Cafcass Care applications study 2014: Three weeks in November...five years on

- This study captured the views of 304 Cafcass Children's Guardians on the decisions of local authorities in care applications received by Cafcass during a three week period in November 2013. This builds on earlier studies in 2009 and 2012, which explored the reasons for the spike in care application demand after the tragic Baby Peter Connelly case.
- The research provided a unique insight into how local authority social work practice has responded to significant legislative and cultural changes, as well as increased demand.
- The overall impression from the research was general endorsement by Guardians of much of the work of the local authorities, regarding: the timely issuing of the majority of applications, the vast majority of assessments having been viewed as being helpful; and compliance with the revised public law outline. It is reassuring to note that Guardians consider, in general, that local authorities are bringing the right cases to court, usually at the right time, and with the cases having been well prepared.

Partnership working

- We continue to work with partners such as the Association of Directors Children's Services (ADCS), the FYJPB and the National Family Justice Board to identify and share good practice.
- We are also in the process of updating our joint protocol with Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Cafcass also plays a strong leadership role at a local level, actively participating in Local Family Justice Boards. Cafcass chairs 10 out of 42 local Family Justice Boards and has a strong leadership role on all others.

What will we be doing to continually improve our engagement with the public?

- We will continue with our partnership work to identify and share good practice.
- We will continue to undertake at least four research projects per annum on aspects of our practice and interventions which add the most value for the children concerned.
- We will continue to stress the expertise of social workers – in Cafcass and local authorities – in family proceedings.
- We will continue to develop our external communications channels.

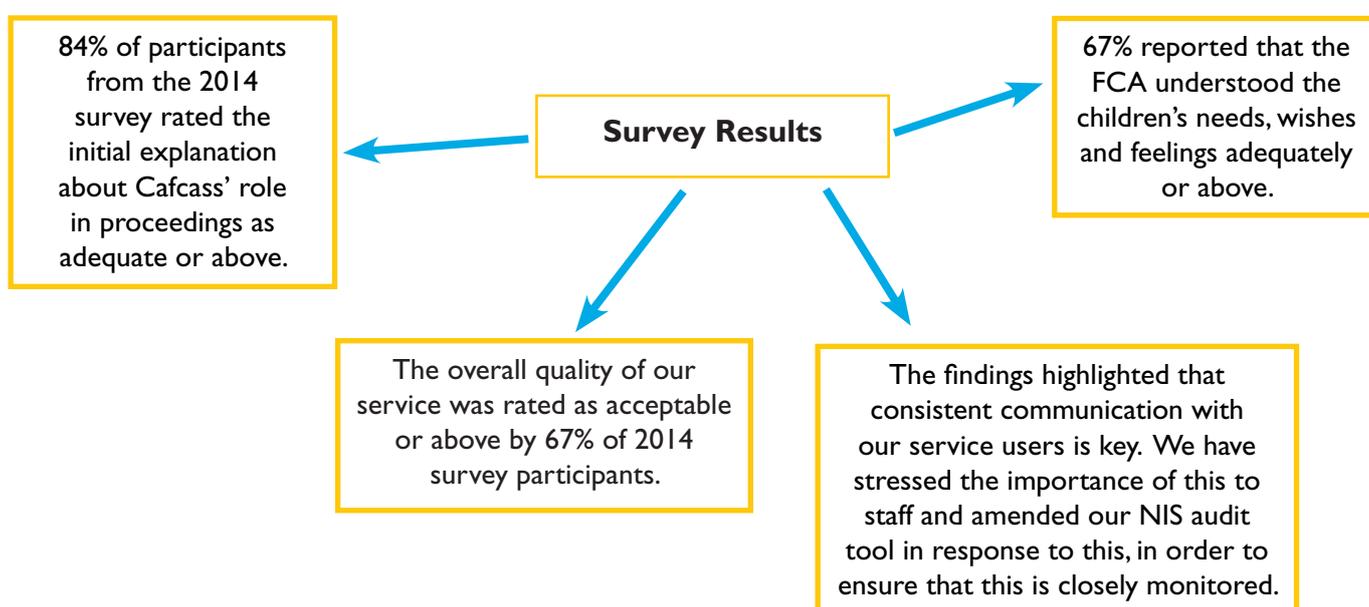
How will this help children and young people?

It will help the public including children and young people understand better how children are safeguarded within the Family Justice System.

Service user feedback

How did we find out what Adult Service Users think of our service?

Following the success of the first national adult service user feedback survey in 2013, Cafcass completed its second national adult service user feedback survey in October 2014. The survey formed one aspect of the quality programme of the Cafcass Strategic Plan (2013-2015) to gain more feedback from the children and families we work with. The aims of the survey were to gather the views of a sample of adult service users of private law services. It is important to recognise that the survey is limited to a small sample of 131 adult service users. The survey will be carried out again later this year; however, the methodology for the survey will continue to be adapted year on year to improve the capturing of data.



“ Mother: “The Cafcass officer was very supportive to my child, obviously trained well in dealing with children, but was also professional with myself as a parent. They made it very clear to me that it was about my child and not me, which was hard to take, but they were firm which was good.” ”

“ Father: “Just to reiterate, the Cafcass officer I had was pretty good and had a lot of empathy. I had confidence in her to take a well-balanced and judged view. It's just that the communication was a little bit disappointing.” ”

Assistant Director Sarah Parsons said “All Heads of Service and Assistant Directors have incorporated the learning from the feedback into service area Business Plans. The Quality Assurance and audit methodologies have also ensured adequate focus on the quality of communication, respectful treatment, delays to filing and child centeredness of assessments and direct work, and we will also be incorporating some of the feedback into the Cafcass Operating Framework.”

How did we find out what children and young people think of our service?

Following a review by the Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB), we introduced feedback forms along with a compliments, complaints and feedback factsheet specifically for children and young people to encourage them to express their views. A number of offices have introduced ‘feedback trees’ and other child-friendly means of providing feedback on the work we carried out. The FJYPB has continued to support developments within Cafcass practice through a system of commissions. FJYPB members are invited to sit on interview panels for new staff members and have devised a ‘Recipe for an FCA’, which forms part of the Cafcass recruitment pack. It highlights the characteristics that children and young people value in their FCA. Members of the FJYPB also look at children’s complaints every six months to find ways Cafcass can improve the complaints procedure and feedback to the Operational Management Team. We are in the process of developing a child outcomes framework to boost our knowledge of the impact of Cafcass and family justice on children’s welfare.

“ Ellie member of FJYPB “It was good to speak to the Cafcass worker because at that point it was really hard to talk to my parents, really hard to communicate with both of them. Cafcass told us about the possible outcomes and what might happen, and that was helpful.” ”

“ Jason member of FJYPB “Anne said that she was going to write a report for the court about me and my family, and about spending time with my mum and dad. I thought she was going to ask me who I wanted to live with, but she didn’t. We talked about my pets and school, and drew some pictures about dad and mum. Anne told me that someone called a judge would decide about me seeing mum and dad, but they wanted to know what I thought. I didn’t say much about this, and Anne said that was OK.” ”

Children and young people can now talk to the Judge in their case

We have supported the Ministerial initiative to give children aged 10 and over in private law cases direct access to the judge in their case, subject to safeguards being in place for those children who do not want to take advantage of this facility. This was implemented following the success of Cafcass pilots that ran in Leeds and York (over three months) from November 2014.

Marie Gittins, Senior Head of Service for Durham, Teeside and North Yorkshire, who supports the FJYPB, said of the announcement “The Former Minister’s announcement in support of helping children to express themselves and feel involved in the decisions made about their future is an important step to strengthen the focus on child inclusivity for the sector, which Cafcass and the FJYPB have been promoting through our work. Our frontline staff are attuned to children’s needs to voice their views while not feeling responsible for the outcome of their case and our role is to continue to support children to feel heard in proceedings, whether that be a meeting with the judge, a letter or a picture or via a third party, in a way that is appropriate for each individual child and sensitive to their needs.”

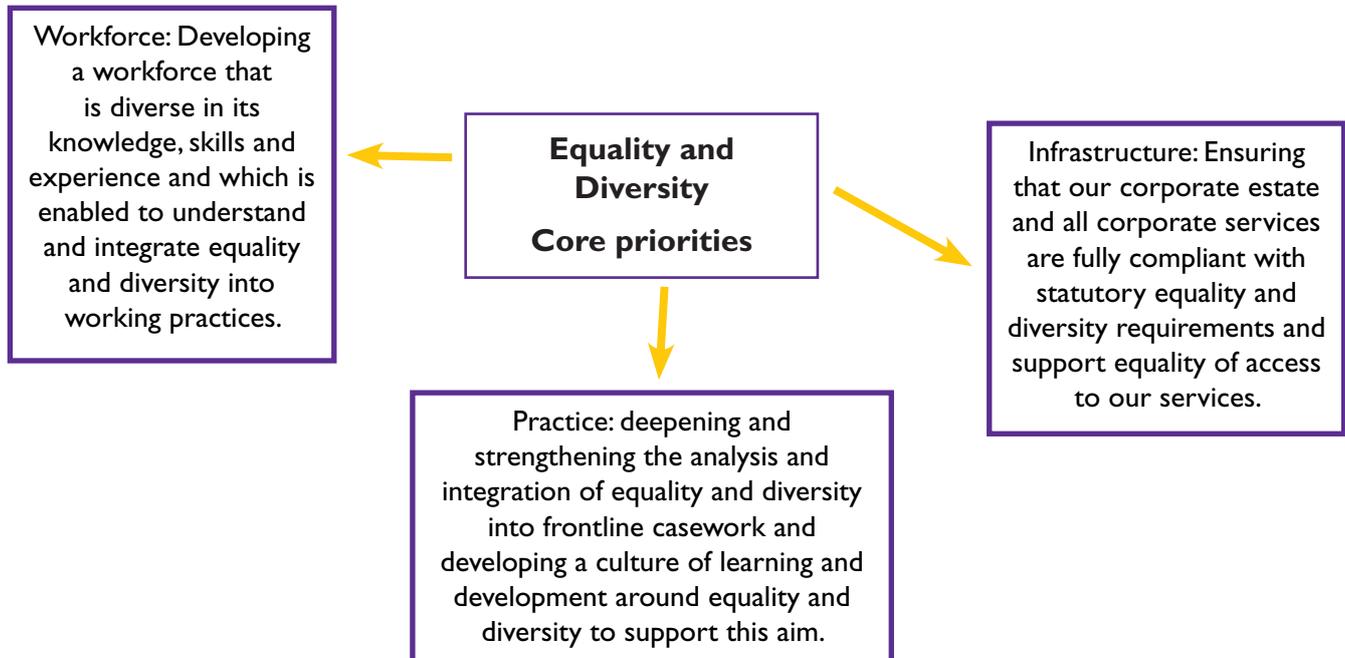
How will this help children and young people?

Learning from our adult and children Service Users helps us to improve the service we provide to children and young people and their families. We have worked closely with the FJYPB to develop ways of encouraging children to express their views about the service Cafcass provides.

Equality and Diversity

What did we do to improve Equality and Diversity?

We have continued to embed the Equality and Diversity Strategy into our work.



“We have a strategy that we can be really proud of and which reflects exactly how we want to be as a diverse organisation, both as a service provider and employer.” Cafcass Board Member

- The national audit was completed in November 2014 and good equality and diversity case exemplars have been collated and cascaded to staff.
- The role of the Diversity Ambassador has been created and embedded to further develop the understanding and the importance of equality and diversity in our front line practice.
- Our Diversity Ambassadors work in sharing initiatives and good practice at Service Area level: this is integral to the further implementation and success of the Equality and Diversity Strategy. We have 22 Diversity Ambassadors in the organisation who have a broad range of knowledge, skills, experiences and interests.
- The Diversity Ambassadors are also establishing links with external local partners including Barnardo's and Commissioning Partners to ensure that local Service Areas can identify and respond to local and national equality and diversity issues arising from our work.
- The analysis of diversity data is one of the key factors that drives our objective of providing the best possible service to children and families. The collation of diversity data from ECMS as part of our assessment process from 1 May 2015 will contribute to our continuing aim of enhancing the quality of practice in relation to equality and diversity in the outcomes for children.

- A Dyslexia Awareness and Support eLearning module has been developed in partnership with Dyslexia Action and launched along with workshops on the issue.
- The equality and diversity self-assessment form has been reviewed and a new form is being developed which will further enhance the quality of the discussions around equality and diversity in Performance Learning Reviews.
- A link has been developed with Disability Matters for eLearning around disability.
- Work is ongoing with Deaf Parenting UK to review tools for working with children and families with hearing difficulties; and an eLearning module is being created.

How will we keep improving?

- We will continue to improve the analysis of diversity in casework, as part of the overall quality improvement agenda. The aim is to provide a high level analysis to focus on the uniqueness of each child without bias through a vulnerability and relevance assessment.
- We will review the performance of the contract with the organisation providing translation and interpretation services to ensure all service users get a proper service.
- We will continue to identify and respond to local and national equality and diversity issues arising from our work, applying any knowledge or practice changes in the Cafcass Operating Framework.
- Diversity Ambassador Briefings will continue to be published to share local knowledge, learning and development across all Service Areas.
- A virtual network for staff to share best practice on Equality and Diversity is being developed.

How will this help children and young people?

The approaches within the Strategy and Action Plan will further enhance the knowledge, skills and understanding we have of Equality and Diversity so that we can fully appreciate the individual life experiences of each child.

Innovation

How can innovation improve the quality of our work?

Innovation is when good ideas about changing or improving the quality of a service are expressed, tested, taken on board and applied.

Innovation is managed by four different Boards within Cafcass. These are: the Innovation Board, which identifies major innovations and focuses on externally building up a knowledge base about successful, relevant innovation; the Innovations Projects Development Board, which refines the innovations, the Business Change Programme Board which focuses on specifying business needs for new digital products/services and the Model Office which project manages specific innovations.

Examples of Innovations

Private Law pilots

- Supporting separating parents in dispute helpline: The pilot is aimed at separating parents who have been unable to resolve disputes and want to avoid lengthy proceedings. The helpline will put callers through to a Cafcass practitioner who will act as their single point of contact throughout the dispute, talking through the difficulties being faced and to offer them support, guidance and information.
- Cafcass ran pilots in Taunton and Bristol to trial the delivery of drugs, alcohol and DNA testing in cases to tackle delays stemming from allegations and disputes around these matters. As a result of these pilots the former Minister Simon Hughes, announced that from September 2015 all family courts will be able to order DNA tests to determine a child's parentage in those cases where the findings will be essential and determinative in reaching a swift and beneficial decision about arrangements for the child. Further work will continue on piloting drugs and alcohol testing over the coming months, with Cafcass testing and developing a new model for delivering these services to provide vital information in cases where this is essential, and at affordable cost.
- Psychologist pilots: A helpline for our practitioners to book consultations with psychologists to discuss their cases is being piloted in one area. The pilot has been extended to incorporate a further phase of analysis based on a national consultation service with the existing psychologists.

Public Law

- A partnership project with Birmingham City Council to support their IRO service. Cafcass began managing the Birmingham IRO service in November 2014, initially until March 2015 on a piloting basis. The aim was to ensure a safety net for around 2000 looked after children in Birmingham was put in place and working by March 2015. The pilot is being extended for a further six months until September 2015, to ensure the progress being made is sustained.
- First set up in London over seven years ago, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) works to help parents in care proceedings tackle substance misuse, with the overall focus on improving outcomes for children so that they can return to or stay in their parents' care. FDAC will now be extended to East Sussex, Kent, Medway, Plymouth, Torbay, Exeter and West Yorkshire. Some Cafcass public law cases have already been successfully seen by FDAC. In the coming months Zafer Yilkan, Senior Service Manager for public law in Greater London and Cafcass' national lead on FDAC, will be sharing information with staff about the court model and explaining its role as it extends to other areas in the country.

Technical Innovation

Cafcass has used IT to give our staff flexible working options and to increase efficiency. Last year we provided all social work staff with tablet and Blackberry devices, allowing them to access our network remotely, including via wireless internet or 4G SIM devices. We are now in the process of refining our IT requirements further in consultation with staff to ensure they are provided with the best, latest technology to support their work.

The launch of the **Electronic Case Management System (ECMS)** in July 2014 has greatly supported practitioners in their frontline duties, reducing the amount of time spent entering case information into two separate systems. ECMS also has 'dashboards' which allows staff to see how many reports they have due and their upcoming hearings.

We are also in the process of developing interactive practice tools to assist staff in their work with children, young people and adult service users such as:

- The **'View my case portal'** is currently being developed as an online tracking portal where service users can enter a case reference along with a user name and password so that they can receive updates about their case and review relevant case documentation.
- **'Court Skills'** is the development of a 'serious game' based around court skills. It will help to train our practitioners so that they know as much as possible about their role in the court room. It will help adults who are representing themselves in court, so that they know what to do and it will also show children and young people what it's like in the courtroom.
- **'This much'** is an interactive tool for practitioners to use with children and young people which allows them to express how they are feeling.
- **'Backdrop'** is an interactive tool for young Service Users it allows them to illustrate in detail their feelings towards different home environments.

The FJYPB have assessed some of the children's tools and have been involved with the development of the electronic direct work tools, and other resources to ensure they are child focussed.

Cafcass Innovation: 'Your Idea Here' campaign

In order to raise awareness of Cafcass' approach towards innovation and to gain feedback on ways we can continue to innovate, we are launching a 'your idea here' campaign. This will focus on receiving ideas from staff, service users, stakeholders, and the wider public on potential innovations. Our website will be updated with the progress of our innovations; **click here** to view the web page. If you have an idea please email it to innovations@cafcass.gsi.gov.uk

Or send by post to:

 Cafcass Communications Team
21 Bloomsbury Street
London
WC1B 3HF

How will this help children and young people?

Where diversion from court is safe this is likely to be beneficial to children as it may avoid lengthy and sometimes acrimonious proceedings. Interactive practice tools will help children and young people express their feelings.

Looking forward and summary

What will we be doing over the next year to keep improving the quality of our work?

Each child we work with needs and deserves the highest quality service from us. In order to achieve that ambition, we must continue to improve in a measurable and demonstrative way every year. Over the next year we will remain committed to the following:

- To show continuous improvement in the quality of our work. This will be demonstrated through thematic reviews and Area Quality Reviews. We will also develop measures to assess outcomes for children and the added value of our work.
- To meet all Key Performance Indicators for Cafcass and demonstrate our contribution to the Key Performance Measures for the family justice system.
- To make sure that we bring the uniqueness of each child to the court's attention, including any diversity related needs.
- To make sure we respond to key practice issues to continually improve the quality of our service.
- To continue to develop our workforce and, through applying learning through our practice, make sure our staff are fully equipped to provide the best possible service to children and young people.
- To continue our work to help the public understand better how children are safeguarded within the Family Justice System and to receive the feedback from children and families that helps us to improve the quality of our service.
- To deliver our savings requirement by continuing to innovate throughout all front and back office functions and across organisational boundaries.
- To use our unique position and insight to generate high impact and timely research to inform our own practice and influence across the family justice system.

Our annual Quality Account is our track record. We hope it attracts interest and comment as all organisations responsible for providing complex services benefit from a wider interest being taken in their work, to shine a light on aspects of work where we could do better. Please send any feedback, comments or suggestions by email to:

Customerfeedback@cafcass.gsi.gov.uk

Or send by post to:

 Customer Feedback Team
National Business Centre
Millburn Hill Road
University of Warwick Science Park
Coventry
CV4 7JJ

Glossary

Cafcass Board - The role of the Cafcass Board is to establish the overall strategic direction for Cafcass and monitor its delivery within the available resources. The Board is accountable for the work of Cafcass. It delegates operational responsibility to the Chief Executive and CMT. The Chief Executive is also the Accounting Officer for Cafcass.

Corporate Management Team (CMT) - The Corporate Management Team, is accountable for the running of the organisation. It is led by the Chief Executive and includes the National Service Director, the Director of Resources and the Director of HR and organisational development.

ECMS – Electronic Case Management System- a combination of two platforms previously used by practitioners which is a file and information sharing programme.

FCA – Family Court Advisers are Cafcass’ professionally qualified social work practitioners who work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by giving advice to the family courts and providing information, advice and support to children and their families.

FJYPB – The Family Justice Young People’s Board is a non-statutory board with membership largely drawn from those who have direct experience of both Cafcass and the family courts – having either been through divorce or family breakdown, lived in care or been adopted. The role of the Board is to give young people a direct say in the way in which the Family Justice System is run and on the service it provides to children, young people and their families.

‘Getting to Good’ audit – looked at a sample of cases and assessed the quality of the work using the threshold tool.

IRO- an Independent Reviewing Officer is the person who ensures that children looked after by the Local Authority, have regular reviews to consider the care plan and placement. It is the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer to ensure that a child’s views are taken into consideration and that the Local Authority is fulfilling its duties and functions.

IMR – Individual Management Reviews of cases where a child has been killed, seriously harmed or died in a way which requires the agencies involved to review the work they did.

MySkills – is the e-learning platform through which Cafcass staff can access both internet based courses and book training sessions provided by Cafcass.

myWork – is an electronic tool enabling staff to access information relating to their work, learning, health and wellbeing and PLR discussions.

NIS – The National Improvement Service supports individuals, teams and service areas to identify and make changes required to drive forward the quality of work done throughout Cafcass.

Ofsted – Cafcass’ inspectorate is Ofsted, which also has responsibility for inspecting other social care and educational organisations. The aim of inspection is to provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the services we provide to children and their families at particularly difficult times in their lives.

Operational Management Team (OMT) – OMT is led by the National Service Director. Its membership is made up of the operational Heads of Service, Assistant Directors and includes staff from Finance, Human Resources and Management Information, who directly support operational services.

PLR – Performance and Learning Reviews are quarterly reviews of staff performance, conducted by line managers.