



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**  
**Paper for the Board Meeting on Friday 24 March 2017**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

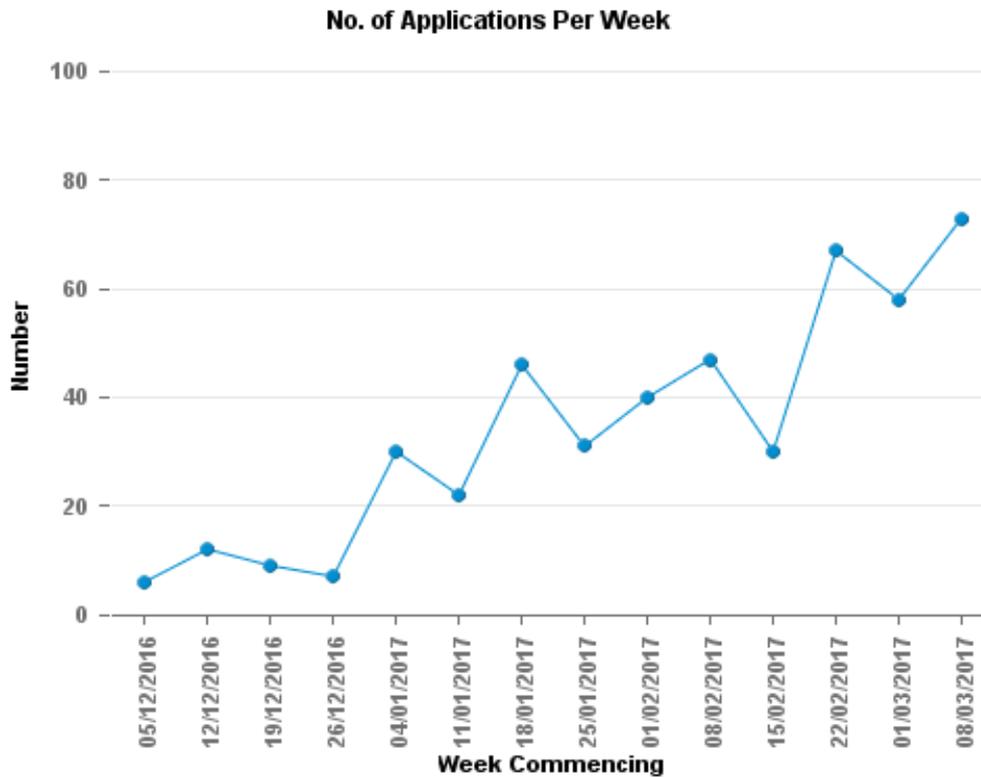
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1. Our budget allocation for 2017/18 has been confirmed as 6.2 million higher than our allocation this year, and will be paid in two instalments. The £6.2m exactly matches the submission we made last November about our future resource requirement. This has been the subject of extensive analysis and discussions with MoJ since then. £2.8 million is being held back by MoJ in a process called 'gated release'. This process is being applied to all programmes across the entire MoJ operation and reflects the overall MoJ financial position. The process will not involve further hurdles for us. Corporate Finance have written to me saying that 'Cafcass are still to spend resource to maintain performance levels and once the point comes that the £2.8m is needed, the department will transfer the funds...as a single funding block'. This will be confirmed in a formal delegation letter in due course. We will of course only draw down these funds if we need them. We will be monitoring spend, demand and performance on a monthly basis throughout 2017/18 in the usual way, and we have established a mechanism for tracking and monitoring this. The MoJ have expressed a wish for 'light touch reporting'.
2. Operational pressures continue. These are set out in detail in the report by the National Service Director on today's agenda. Work continues across the system to understand the exact drivers of local increases. I will be joining a round table discussion with Ministers on 2 May about this, along with other sector leaders.
3. Operational priorities for 2017/18 are being finalised within the overall parameters of the Board strategy for 2015-20, which still holds. This will be the subject of a presentation and discussion later at the 24 March Board meeting and if need be at the Board planning day on 28 April.
4. It is proposed that all KPI's (Cafcass) and KPM's (the national Family Justice Board) remain the same for 2017/18, in recognition that they are now increasingly challenging targets (see the attached paper from the Performance Sub Group of the national Family Justice Board, Appendix 2) because of the continuing high levels of demand pressure. The Board may wish to consider this view of the executive and members of the national Family Justice Board, in the light of its long-held wish to see the introduction of more outcome-based measures across the family justice system.
5. Discussions about reform continue at all levels, but it is unlikely any public document will be issued before next autumn. Funding has been withdrawn from our out of court pilots from 1 April, so we need to make a decision whether to continue with these or

not. As MoJ will only re-visit this later in 2017 or in a future year if and when the out of court blueprint becomes clearer, we should probably do the same.

6. I have been asked to provide a contribution to thinking about the reform process and the Board is also working on a short strategy document to inform the process, concentrating on the needs of children and families within the family justice system going into the 2020's. These submissions work well together and will be welcomed by MoJ.
7. A number of organisations have expressed the need to work together to drive change forward, in a sector-led process so that progress can be made operationally with some of the issues concerning the whole sector. These organisations are the Family Rights Group, ADCS, Cafcass, the Children's Commissioner, Coram and the Fostering Network. The President of the Family Division is also interested in this work. The first meeting is likely to be held in May.
8. We have agreed a provisional work programme with ADCS for 2017/18, building on the various pieces of work carried out over the past 3 years. Items scheduled in so far are:
  - To produce 2 standardised evidence packs, one for care applications based on emotional abuse, and one for applications where child neglect is the primary issue. These are the two categories of concern behind the major recent rises in care applications.
  - A protocol about complying with Court order and directions, which aims to avoid the high number of wasted or ineffective hearings and to reduce the friction and tension that comes from numerous court hearings not being able to go ahead because of non-compliance with previous directions.
  - To produce a standardised template and guidance for court reports in private law cases
  - To produce an abridged template for the court care plan, which is currently integrated within the Social Work Evidence Template, for those courts insisting on a separate document.
9. On 18 April, the National Service Director and I are meeting the team of Ofsted inspectors who will inspecting us in 2017/18. The inspectors will be moderating two of our main categories of reports (8 reports in all) before the meeting as part of their induction. It is particularly important that the inspectors understand our private law roles and work ahead of the inspection, as this will be unfamiliar to some of them. This lack of understanding has come through in some of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) reports into the local multi-agency response to domestic abuse referrals, the last of which - of 6 - is taking place in Hounslow at present. The Chair will be part of the inspectors' induction programme, which will also involve visits alongside practitioners.
10. Recruitment performance has been improving. This is vital as we are expanding our workforce capability to manage the high levels of incoming work and to spend our increased budget next year on time and in the right way.

The below shows a trend line for the number of job applicants per week. This includes non-social work roles which can skew it somewhat but it is a fairly solid trend line representing more applicants in the system. This has improved from a low of 6 a few months ago to 73 in the last week.



Service Area	Number of applicants	Number of vacancies	Number of appointed applicants
A3, A9, A10	70	8	6
Stafford	5	1	2 (1 applicant appointed to another branch)
Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire	5	3	3
Lincolnshire	5	1	1

We currently have some 80 FCA vacancies at various stages of the recruitment cycle:

- 80% at the attraction stage (i.e. internal or externally advertised)
- 20% at a selection stage (ranging from telephone interview through to final assessment)

At this point in time we have 58 FCAs going through pre-employment checks. It is in this phase of the candidate journey that much of our recent efforts will see significant

improvements in the coming weeks (e.g. online DBS, changes to offer processes, proposals on reference checking) and we'll see time between accepting an offer and actually starting with us reduce significantly.

11. Our IT service has continued to be poor. I have attached a schedule of recent problems and outages to illustrate the cumulative impact, especially at the National Business Centre (Appendix 1). I am writing to Fujitsu formally about this. Many staff would now list IT difficulties as their main frustration at work.
12. Our bid to the DfE to develop a national pre-proceedings pathway in public law cases was unsuccessful. Here is the explanation we received:

'Assessors felt the proposal was interesting and there is more to be done in the pre-proceedings space to stem the flow of children coming into care. The bid was clear about the outcomes they want to deliver in terms of system change, but less developed in terms of explaining what will change for children and young people as a result of the new approach. The value for money case could have been more explicit about how the model would be flexible enough to respond to reductions in core resources. Assessors also felt there is a lack of clarity regarding how it would realistically be sustained after IP funding expired. However, there are strategic discussions being held regarding the pre-proceedings space and someone from the Department may be back in touch with you regarding them.

Although you have been unsuccessful on this occasion, we welcome you to remain part of the programme, including taking part in our [learning](#) activities.'

I will de-brief this more at the meeting.

13. Work with HMCTS on the single (rather than dual) digital scanning of all C100's is progressing. This means the C100 will be dropped into the HMCTS system (Familyman) and the Cafcass system (ECMS) upon receipt at the National Business Centre. The cost of scanning all C100's in is around 85K and these costs will be shared between ourselves and HMCTS. For us it will represent a saving in excess of 250k as we will not need the current data inputters. For HMCTS the savings are massive as they currently have about 43 teams around the country performing this task. The change will save us around 4 days in production of the safeguarding letter in private law cases. This is part of our ongoing effort to identify future admin savings, as well as maintaining and increasing the number of front line posts.
14. Finally, we are setting a Cafcass Alumni programme, for staff who have worked for us in the past and who may wish to be kept in touch with developments and who may perhaps have a future role to play on some basis in how we operate. This work will go forward as a managed network.

**Anthony Douglas**  
Chief Executive

20 March 2017

