



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE
Paper for the Board meeting on 24 March 2017
Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

1. Demand continues to rise in both Public and Private Law.
2. Current year to date (April 2016 – February 2017) percentages are:-
 - 14.6% higher for new Public Law (Care) applications; and
 - 8.7% higher for new Private Law cases
3. Some service areas have seen much higher percentage rises:-
 - Public Law (Care) new applications:
 - A1: 32%
 - A2: 29%
 - A12: 27%
 - Worthy of note is the 26% increase in London (A15)
 - In the last week A3 had 47 cases to allocate against a usual average of 25.
 - Five out of the 17 Service Areas with Public Law (Care) demand have seen decreases in year to date new applications, including:
 - A17: -13%
 - A8: -7%
 - Private Law Cases:
 - A2: 42%
 - A12: 29%
 - Five out of the 17 Service Areas with Private Law demand have seen decreases or no change in year to date new case, including:
 - A9: -25%
 - A10: -10%

1. AIM AND PURPOSE

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

To consider if the actions taken by Cafcass officers provide assurance in the Board's governance role.

3. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 3.1 The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) continue to discuss with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) the need for extra financial resources in 2017/18 to support the gap in the current workforce. Recruitment has commenced for an additional 34.5 social work staff in line with the assumed 17/18 budget.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive is working with the President of the Family Court Division to produce guidance that limits Family Court Advisor (FCA) time at court and numbers of reports produced.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive, CMT and the senior Operational Management Team (OMT) are all fully engaged and contributing significantly with the MoJ to achieve reforms in the Family Justice System.
- 3.4 Every Assistant Director is working with District Family Judges (DFJs) and Family Justice Boards (FJBs) to ensure local systems respond collaboratively and constructively to the increased demand. For example, local protocols about court attendance by guardians, to reduce time wasted in court, work with local authorities (LAs) on defining the urgency of care applications and to ensure First Hearings are effective.
- 3.5 Using IT Innovation, ECMS Mobile has been developed and implemented to save FCA time by providing direct access to case information and recording 'on the go' through smartphones; the case plan has been automated to streamline and reduce duplication in expectations on time spent recording and is live from 20th March 2017.
- 3.6 IT training continues to be provided through Webinars, making IT more accessible and time-efficient thereby supporting staff to use the technology to its full potential; to date over 1000 staff have accessed training in this way.
- 3.7 New Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) have been put in place to ensure better and more targeted support consistently to all employees; this has been achieved by aggregating all available data on performance, learning, quality assurance audits and self-evaluation. The new PLR is used to pinpoint support required in order to improve quality and productivity.
- 3.8 Focus on productivity: the Top 10 Productivity list for FCAs and managers will be a focus for the next six months. This is key in terms of working out with each FCA what they need to do differently to manage the level of demand and how we can support them to achieve this.
- 3.9 New child engagement tools have been developed to support better engagement and effective assessment of children's wishes and feelings.
- 3.10 Leadership and staff engagement: a Service Managers' Workshop was held 30th November 2016; we secured an outside facilitator and the main focus of the day was helping our frontline managers to develop tools and strategies to deal with work in a high pressure environment and in building resilience. This is now being rolled out to all service areas for staff via the area or team-based development days and using the Service Managers' Workshop content.
- 3.11 Learning and Development (L&D): the Management Development programme supports front-line managers in the critical role they play in managing increased demand. We have recently developed a managers' self-assessment tool which will be built into the PLR to target and assist managers with key training and coaching opportunities.
- 3.12 All FCA programmes have consistent messages embedded about doing things that make the most difference and using our expertise to best effect, building confidence to make safe decisions with limited information.

- 3.13 We have a continued focus on seeking ways to centralise services; this is in order to deliver saving and efficiency and relieve the pressure on frontline services. The savings are re-invested in frontline staff.
- 3.14 The focus on Health and Well-being continues. One-to-one support is available for staff via Health and Well-being officers. Over 100 members of staff had at least one individual session during April to December 2016; this includes commissions from managers. In addition, management development sessions are underway in February to March with the focus on Working in a High Pressure Environment, and this will complement the e-learning on stress and mindfulness that has been live for over six months.
- 3.15 We are implementing Mental Health First Aid Training for Staff (using Time to Change champions) which will give us a number of qualified Mental Health First Aiders. Alongside this, training for all managers is being provided, with supporting resources.
- 3.16 We have appointed a Health & Well-being officer with a Health Psychology Master's degree to facilitate greater support and resources around mental health and resilience. In addition we are launching a "Mindfulness Coach" course so that we will have a number of mindfulness coaches internally who can then support colleagues in this area, and further e-learning courses on "Growth Mind-set/Positive Thinking" and Time Management courses are being developed.

4. CURRENT SOCIAL WORK RESOURCING

- 4.1 There were 139 (headcount) employed FCA leavers in 2016 compared to 101 in 2011.
- 4.2 CMT agreed a strategy of Forward Recruitment. Every service area has worked with HR and Finance to predict future leavers in 2017/18, and early recruitment to fill those posts has commenced. A different and innovative recruitment strategy has been put in place, using a range of different methods of advertising and promoting the use of CVs and LinkedIn. This has evidenced significant success in applications and appointments particularly in some of the hard to recruit areas. The number of applicants continues to rise and the improvements in the recruitment process is supporting applicants being confirmed into post quicker.
- 4.3 We have increased the use of our flexible workforce and every service area is now using self-employed contractors (SECs). The SECs work across both Public and Private Law and they can be deployed to the service areas most in need. We have recently recruited a further 20 SECs to strengthen our existing complement of 44. We are encouraging staff members who are retiring to consider continuing to offer their experience and expertise as bank workers, and this is proving to be a popular choice: numbers of bank workers increased by 11% in the last year. We continue to use high calibre agency staff where the need arises and have consistently throughout the year engaged an average of 84 nationally.
- 4.4 The 2016/17 Operational contingency fund has been spent exclusively this year on budget for frontline staff. The National Service Director has been able to target areas to support service pressures and this will continue into 2017/18.

5. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS

- 5.1 All the actions taken are ensuring that Children and Families have continued to receive a timely and quality service in 2016, however the risks of continuing without extra budget to bridge the staff deficit are significant.

6. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

6.1 The organisation will require increased budget in 2017/18 to meet the workforce gap.

7. RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The risk of not being able to allocate work remains but the actions being taken do mitigate that risk to some extent.

**Christine Banim,
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14 March 2017**

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Definition</u>
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ECMS	E-Case Management System
FCA	Family Court Advisor
IT	Information Technology
<i>LinkedIn</i>	<i>Worldwide professional network</i>
MIS	Management Information Systems
PLR	Performance & Learning Review