



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**  
**Paper for the Board meeting on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017**  
**Demand Levels and Resourcing**

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**KEY POINTS**

1. Demand continues to rise in both Public and Private Law.
2. Current year to date (YTD) percentages for new applications are
  - 18.6% higher in Public Law (Care) and
  - 8.8% higher for new Private Law applications than in 2015 (year on year).
3. Some service areas have seen a higher percentage rise:-  
Public Law (Care) new applications:
  - A1 45%
  - A2 39.2%
  - Worthy of note is the 31.7% increase in London (A15), an increase of over 500 applications.Private Law Cases:
  - A2 34.3%
  - A12 23.7%

**1. AIM AND PURPOSE**

To update the Board about demand pressures and the actions being taken to ensure performance and quality standards are being met and maintained.

**2. ACTION FOR THE BOARD**

To note the continued pressures and action being taken

**3. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER**

- 3.1 The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) continue to discuss with MOJ the need for extra financial resources in 2017/18 to support the gap in the current workforce. A further submission about this was made on 20 January.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive has worked with the President of the Family Court Division to produce draft guidance that limits Family Court Advisor (FCA) time at court and numbers of reports produced. A further discussion about this will take place with the President in February.
- 3.3 Every Assistant Director is working with their local Designated Family Judges (DFJs) and Family Justice Boards (FJBs) to ensure local systems consider and take action where necessary e.g. local protocols about court attendance by guardians, to reduce time wasted in court, and work with local authorities (LAs) on defining the urgency of care applications, to ensure First Hearings are effective.

- 3.4 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, and the case plan has been automated to streamline and reduce duplication in expectations on the amount of professional time spent on case recording.
- 3.5 IT training has been 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.
- 3.6 In response to the need to recruit more quickly and to maintain the necessary level of workforce capacity, 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 directly led to significant success in applications and appointments particularly in some of the hard to recruit areas. A recent campaign attracted over 70 applicants.
- 3.7 We have increased the use of our flexible workforce and every service area is now using self-employed contractors (SECs). SECs carry out all types of work and they are being deployed to the service areas most in need. 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; we have increased the quantum of bank workers 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.
- 3.8 The 2016/17 operational contingency budget has been spent exclusively this year on frontline staff. The National Service Director has been able to target areas to support service pressures.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 Focus on Productivity: We are working to ensure all staff are equally productive.
- 3.11 All FCA programmes have consistent messages built in about doing things that make the most difference and using our expertise to best effect.
- 3.12 New child engagement tools have been developed to support better engagement and effective assessment of children's wishes and feelings.
- 3.13 Leadership and staff engagement: a Service Managers' Workshop was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> 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 working 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, using the content from the Service Managers' Workshop.
- 3.14 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.

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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 planned 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 six months.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS**

- 4.1. 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.

#### **5. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

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

#### **6. RISK ANALYSIS**

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

**Christine Banim, National Service Director**  
**19 January 2017**

<b><u>Acronym</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>
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