



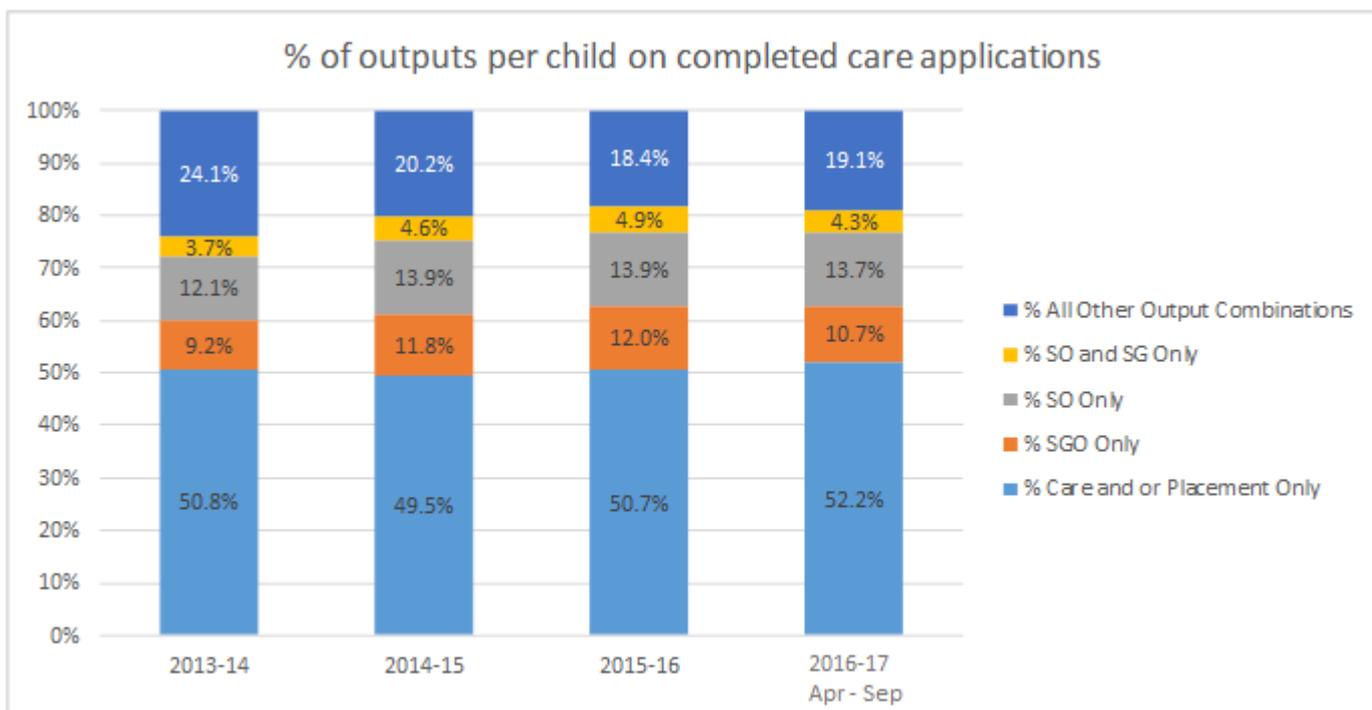
CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE
Paper for the Board Meeting on Friday 28 October 2016

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. Demand continues at a high level. September increases were over 20% higher than a year ago in public law and over 10% higher in private law. Private law numbers are almost back to pre-LASPO levels in 2013. At the time of writing, the increases for October show a lower monthly increase for public law at 7% (with a year to date increase of circa 21%) and a higher increase for private law at 12% (with a year to date increase also of circa 12%). Forecasting future demand levels with any confidence remains a hazardous enterprise. The underlying root causes of demand increases are set out in the agenda paper and Board seminar presentation about the current pressures we face.
2. Performance and quality are being maintained, despite the high increases in demand, though workloads and sickness levels have – unsurprisingly - increased slightly. Recent audits and Area Quality Reviews show clear evidence standards are being maintained, including a reduction in complaints. The situation is being kept under continuous review and all possible steps to minimise harmful impact are being taken. For example, we have revised our recruitment process to use continuous forward recruiting, taking account of known planned departures through retirement or other reasons for leaving, so that new staff can take up post immediately – rather than start recruitment when someone hands in their notice. We are also re-branding the self-employed contractor (SEC) unit, so as to raise its profile externally and so that we can target independent social workers in hard to recruit areas. We have also revised the online recruitment process to make it easier to use. In the last recruitment round in London two weeks ago, we filled 4 out of 5 vacancies with high performing candidates, so we have confidence these measures will help.
3. Our proposed pay award for 2016/17, which was circulated to Board members for their comments, was approved by the Secretary of State last week. We are now able to commence the formal consultation process with our Trade Unions. This will take place during November, aiming for the December payroll.
4. Discussions continue with the judiciary, both nationally and locally, to limit the unnecessary use of Cafcass resources in individual cases. Many judges are supportive of taking these steps, as they themselves are under the same levels of pressure. The detailed measures under discussions are set out in the report on the current pressures we are facing, which is also on today's agenda.
5. Positive discussions have been held with MoJ about our resource requirement for 2017/18. Detailed work on this will start after the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 24 November. Returns will need to be made by all ALB's to MoJ by late December or early January with the official allocation process being wrapped up by the end of February. This process will be discussed at the Board meeting on 28 October 2016.
6. We have so far been part of 2 Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI's) of multi-agency responses to domestic abuse referrals. A third inspection, in Wiltshire, is imminent. There will be 6 such inspections before the programme concludes. The general feedback so far has been positive, with some learning points. At most, we will warrant a sentence or two in the overall letter which is fed back to the local authority concerned

– as lead agency - after each inspection. No letters have been published yet, and when they are, I will circulate them to the Board.

7. Work continues towards a possible Green Paper on family justice reform sometime next year. For example, the C100 analysis will be repeated in November at MoJ's request. The first such analysis found that, in our professional opinion, over 20% of private law applications could have been dealt with out of court, as they did not contain any safeguarding or serious welfare concerns.
8. The first phase of MoJ research, conducted with the judiciary about the value of the tandem model, received over 600 responses. The second phase of the research, which will be conducted through multi-disciplinary focus groups, will be carried out over the next few months, culminating in a publication sometime in the spring of 2017. Other programmes may or may not feature in the eventual Green Paper. For example, I am a member of the Settlement Conference Advisory Group which meets for the first time on 26 October to consider the merits and demerits of settlement conferences as a building block for the problem-solving family court of the future.
9. The national Family Justice Board is meeting on 7 November, and this is the first meeting that will be co-chaired by Dr Philip Lee, our Minister from MoJ, and Edward Timpson, the Children's Minister in DfE. It is likely that as a result of the re-formed Family Justice Board, a clearer direction for the future will be set. I am a member of this Board, and also of the Adoption Leadership Board, which continues to focus on how looked after children can achieve a high quality permanence placement and outcome as soon as possible. An infographic showing the outcomes of care and supervision proceedings in terms of court orders can be seen below. The colours on the bars are for distinguishing purposes only (visually).



10. Our Innovation Fund bid based on developing a stronger national pre-proceedings framework for public law, has made it through to the final competitive stage. There were several hundred new bids which have come down to a final 20. Ten of these will be funded, so we have a 50/50 chance. Our partners are the Association of Directors

of Children's Services (ADCS) and a small number of local authorities and voluntary organisations. Our final proposal needs to be into DfE by 3 November. The final decision is made by DfE Ministers, taking into account the advice of the Investment Board established for that specific purpose.

11. Following discussions with DfE, Cafcass practitioners will be categorised as practice supervisors for the purpose of the future assessment and accreditation of social workers. We will be in Phase 2 of the roll out of this programme, not Phase 1. Our assessment and accreditation programme will start in 2018/19 at the earliest. These measures are intended to dovetail at some point with the new regulatory body for social work currently being debated in Parliament within the Children and Social Work Bill. The Board will receive a detailed report about this in due course as there are many detailed points and issues to resolve about how this will work in practice.
12. The Board may have read about Fujitsu UK planning to make a large number of redundancies over the next 18 months to 2 years. We have sought and received assurances that this will have no implication on our contract with them.
13. Working jointly with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and Barnardos, we have started work on the Foreign Office-led practice improvement programme with the British Overseas Territories. We were invited to participate in this programme. This enables us to demonstrate Partner in Practice-type support for other social work organisations in need, and it will offer a number of development opportunities to our staff over the next few years. This work is fully funded by the Foreign Office and contains a release clause which can be activated with 3 months' notice on either side. An annual review will be built in every November to assess whether the work can be built into the respective business plans for the following business year.
14. The Chair and myself are both members of a small group working on 9 November at the Cabinet Office, concerning the implementation of the National Audit Office (NAO) report on the oversight of arms-length bodies across Government. This was the report we participated in through structured interviews with senior members of the Board and Executive. The aim is to make sponsorship more consistent and effective.
15. At its last meeting, the Strategic Innovation Task Group received a presentation about video-enhanced observation of practice. Technical difficulties have prevented earlier adoption of this facility, but a pilot is due to commence shortly in the National Improvement Service.
16. We have been short-listed for 5 awards at the Social Worker of the Year awards to be held on 25 November 2016 – Employer of the Year, Social Worker of the Year, student social worker of the year, Newly Qualified Social Worker of the Year and Team leader of the year.

Anthony Douglas CBE, Chief Executive
24 October 2016