



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on 9 June 2016

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. This report covers the period between the last Board meeting on 22 April and 9 June 2016, some seven weeks.
2. It has been a relatively quiet period, which reflects the fact that it is the start of the new financial year. However, policy activity related to family justice reform will accelerate between the end of June and the summer recess. I will keep Board members updated about this. In this respect, I have held a number of meetings with the senior judiciary, senior civil servants, senior managers in partner agencies and the Chair of the Family Justice Board, including one joint meeting where the Chair of Cafcass and myself met with the Chair of the Family Justice Board and the President of the Family Division.
3. The Assistant Director of Policy for Cafcass attended an interesting conference in the Hague about online dispute resolution services at which the Ministry of Justice were also present. I have attached her note of the conference for Board member interest at Appendix 1.
4. Along with other Arms-length bodies (ALB's), we are working with the Ministry of Justice on their medium-term financial plan, particularly our indicative budgets for 2017/18 through to 2020/21. The methodology used is the same as last year, so we are familiar with the process. The current timescale for decision making about 17/18 budgets is December 2016.
5. Demand for our services in May was lower than in April and was as follows:

Public law care

- Cafcass received a total of 1,141 care application in May 2016.
- This represents an overall **19.8% increase** (April and May this year compared to last).
- The care applications received in May 2016 are 6.6% (80 applications) less than May 2015. However, a similar trend was seen last year in 2015-16 where the demand dipped in May but the following month (June 2015) there was a 21% increase.

- Based on the average applications received in the first two months of this year, we predict an overall increase of **11% for 2016-17**. This also matches the current MoJ forecast.

Private law

- Cafcass received a total of 3,270 new private law cases in May 2016.
 - This represents an overall **19.9% increase** (April and May this year compared to last).
 - The new cases received in May 2016 are 6.9% (243 cases) less than May 2015. However, a similar trend was seen last year in 2015-16 where the demand dipped in May but the following month (June 2015) there was a 20.8% increase.
 - Based on the average applications received in the first two months of this year, we predict an overall increase of **8% for 2016-17**. This also matches the current MoJ forecast.
6. A new Children and Social Work Bill was introduced in the Queen's Speech in May. The Bill will include measures to boost adoption rates by requiring courts and social workers to take account of a child's need for stability up to the age of 18: extending personal adviser support for care leavers up to the age of 25: requiring councils to consult on and publish a local offer for care leavers: establishing a new specialist regulator for social work: improving the way lessons are learned from serious child safeguarding cases; and allowing local authorities to pilot new, innovative approaches to children's social care, subject to an affirmative resolution in Parliament for each approved pilot.
 7. Discussions continue between Ofsted, MoJ and ourselves about the format and methodology for our next Ofsted inspection, due in 2017/18. No significant changes are likely, apart from slightly fewer inspector days and a greater reliance on Ofsted scrutiny of our self-assessments. This is in line with sector-wide developments in inspection. We are making clear progress with our 'Towards Outstanding' programme, both at CMT and OMT. The Ofsted commentary about their visit to ourselves and 4 local authorities to assess our practice leadership model is attached at Appendix 2.
 8. Similar to the joint work we did on Special Guardianship Orders and section 20 arrangements for looked after children, I am working with ADCS on sector guidance for children placed at home with their parents on Care Orders (placements with parents). In a significant number of local authorities, this group of children constitute between 10% and 15% of their total number of looked after children. Many of this group are in care through risk averse planning both by local authorities, ourselves and courts, so stepping down the level of concern in those cases is an important adjustment for children and families. We have already used an accelerated procedure in court for the proposed discharge of Care Orders in some local areas and examples of this faster procedure will be part of the national guidance.
 9. I have been working with the senior judiciary, MoJ and the Welsh Government on a new Practice Direction for children's involvement in family court cases. A final

version is expected to be submitted to the Family Court Rules Committee on 13 June. 2016.

10. I am a member of the DfE-led expert Working Group on Permanence, and I've carried out considerable work on the new Knowledge and Skills Statement for social workers about permanence practice and planning.
11. A small number of staff on our emerging Talent Programme will have a development opportunity to join the MoJ Transformation Programme Shadow Board, which involves being sounded out about approaches to culture change and programme management within the MoJ.
12. A small number of staff will have a development opportunity to be a Partner in Practice with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to support their child safeguarding improvement programme in the 12 populated Overseas Territories, following the critical Wass report into a child abuse case in one of the Territories. This is part of the infrastructure strengthening work in the Territories which is a UK Government priority. I am working with the Chief Social Worker on this and also with a small number of other individuals.
13. I have done a fair amount of media work in the period covered by this report with more planned. This reflects considerable interest in the family justice system, prompted by individual cases, about which more is being reported.

Anthony Douglas CBE
Chief Executive

3 June 2016