



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on 23 October 2015

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. [Item exempt from disclosure under section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as it was intended to stimulate the free and frank exchange of views on confidential issues for the purposes of internal deliberation. This exemption is set out below.*]
2. [Item exempt from disclosure under section 36]
3. [Item exempt from disclosure under section 36]
4. [Item exempt from disclosure under section 36]
5. We will be taking the strategic work forward over the next few months, once today's Board discussions are concluded. The work streams will also be an opportunity for some of the 176 staff on the Cafcass Talent Management Programme to be involved in a way which stretches their development and supports our policy to distribute and deepen leadership strength within Cafcass. I am working with our HR service to identify suitable opportunities, starting with the managers on the programme for whom it has been hardest to find enough opportunities. This has also been constrained by how busy they have been. Another possible opportunity is to support the implementation of viable improvement suggestions coming out of Board member visits to local areas, where there are national implications (also see separate report on this agenda).
6. Within Cafcass, all programmes for 2015/16 are on track and are being regularly reported to the committees of the main Cafcass Board. This is a considerable achievement considering the extra pressure most of our teams are under as a result of sharply rising demand, especially in public law (see 7 below). An example of a programme which is improving performance and which will be an important part of our future remit is the project in a small number of teams to complete private law reports in an average of 4-6 weeks after the first hearing, rather than the current average of 10-11 weeks, which in itself is also an improvement over historic levels.

- Demand for our service is still rising. The trend in public law is continuously upward. Private law levels are rising but they are still below the pre-LASPO (changes to legal aid) level:

Public law care: Between April and September 2015, Cafcass received 6,031 care applications. This figure is 12% (634 applications) higher than the same period last year and 14% (728 applications) higher when compared to the same period in 2013. In September, we received a total of 979 new care applications. This is the highest number of new application received for the month of September. See the 5 year trend for the month of September below.

Care applications received					
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Sep	844	879	843	913	979

Private law: Cafcass received a total of 18,578 private law cases between April and September 2015. This figure is 15% higher (2,427 cases) than the same period last year and 28% lower (7,335 cases) when compared to April to September 2013. Demand in July 2015 saw the highest number of new cases received in a month for the last 17 months. During September we received 3,094 new private law cases which is higher than last September. See the 5 year trend for the month of September below.

Private law cases received					
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Sep	3,718	3,632	3,799	2,828	3,094

- We have revamped the caseload weighting having listened to staff feedback and that is showing added pressure on staff which marries with the high demand levels set out above.
- The first Area Quality Review (AQR) within Cafcass using a refreshed methodology took place in early October with good overall findings and strong learning points. This methodology focusses as much on the outcomes of our work and its quality as it does on procedural and policy compliance.
- The Cafcass HR and Organisational Development Director will be leaving to join the BBC on 1 February 2016. Between now and then, he will put in place further building blocks such as the framework for a Strategic Pay Review from 2016 onwards, aimed at ensuring practitioner pay does not fall behind the mean for our

sector: achieving a further reduction in the cost of agency staff: signing off all of our revised HR policies with the trade unions: and completing a Workforce Development Strategy, which will in future be led by the Director of Strategy.

11. A small number of externally-based individuals who could potentially add value to specific aspects of our work over the next few years have been identified. Possible roles for them are as co-opted members of the Board, as members of a professional reference group for the Executive or as members of task groups on programmes linked to the Work of the Strategic Innovations Task Group, which itself reports to the Board. This item is for discussion at the Board today in order to gauge the views of Board members.
12. The pilot whereby we arrange and administer drug and alcohol testing in the Bristol family court is continuing until March 2016, pending a decision about whether a national roll out of the testing regime is affordable. We are twin tracking the steps needed for closure of the scheme as well as those needed to roll it out, such as a possible tender process early next year.
13. We are on track to roll out DNA Testing nationally, either from December 2015 or January 2016.
14. Many of the cases we have been involved in since the last Board meeting have been high profile within the media e.g., radicalisation cases: declaration of parentage cases: international cases; and some new medical cases.
15. Our new finance system, E5, goes live imminently and is part of our modernisation process and progress towards full digitisation.
16. We continue to win awards and to be in for more. For example, last week we won the Public Sector Security Project of the Year in the Computing Security Awards. We have also been short-listed for four awards at the National Social Worker of the Year awards on 27 November: - Social Worker of the Year (we hold this year's award): Student Social Worker of the Year; Team of the Year: and Employer of the Year.
17. The whole organisation is involved in fund-raising through CAF-LON over the coming months. This is positive for the organisations we raise money for and for building stronger teamwork within Cafcass.

Anthony Douglas CBE, Chief Executive
18 October 2015

Appendix 1: MoJ ALB Leaders presentation [withheld as this information does not belong to Cafcass]

*[Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act](#) relates to the prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs:

Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, disclosure of the information under this Act—

(b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit—

(i) the free and frank provision of advice, or

(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or

(c) would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs.

Some sections of the Chief Executive's report are intended to stimulate free discussion at the Board meeting about current issues within the organisation. These relate to confidential or live issues which are not yet public or finalised. In these cases it has been decided that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Compromising the safe space for developing ideas and debating issues would damage the effective working of Cafcass which is a public body necessary to the effective working of the family justice system. This outweighs the public interest in transparency and accountability of the activities and topics discussed, which are disclosed where possible.