



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. The 4 months since the last Board meeting in June have been a time to draw breath after the intensity of our national Ofsted inspection, and to start to plan for 2015-2020 with our new sponsoring Department, the Ministry of Justice. My Board report will cover that process, and also trends in demand for our work and how we have responded to that. Finally, I will update the Board on some specific future developments such as the IT re-procurement process, concluding with some miscellaneous items which are in my view significant.

Demand trends and analysis

2. Demand levels this year are more volatile, in both public and private law. In two of the last recorded months – July and September – care applications were the highest ever recorded for that individual month. Private law applications remain well down compared to a year ago. Whilst the long-term underlying trendlines in both public and private law are less dramatic than recent year on year figures, forecasting future trends with any confidence is becoming harder. Trends in related sectors have been equally dramatic recently e.g., the 40% reduction in child maintenance applications since the process changed in June this year and a £20 application fee was introduced, and the 40% drop in Placement Orders in the last 9 months which is bound to have a knock-on effect on the number of children being adopted from care this year and next year.
3. Various reviews have been commissioned to understand current demand and performance trends, so as to understand the root causes. An example is reviews of the Public Law Outline (PLO), some lines of enquiry for which are:
 - To understand the reasons for the reduction in Placement Orders and an apparent higher bar for assessments and care plans, which whilst delaying some cases, is often good for children – if final decisions are more evidence-informed. Linked to this is an increase in applications to revoke Placement Orders seen in our data, probably caused by more parents attempting to apply to revoke an Order before their child is adopted, and the difficulty in finding adoptive parents for many older children, children with extra needs and sibling groups.
 - To understand the reasons behind the increase in the use of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and to investigate whether they are more subject to placement disruption which is being reported by many local family justice systems.
 - To understand why average case duration in nearly half of local authorities in England is starting to rise again, having previously fallen dramatically.
 - To understand why the use of experts is starting to rise again.
4. These trends do not in any way invalidate the achievements under the PLO of resolving the majority of cases much more quickly in children's interests. There are many examples of outstanding pre-proceedings practice in local authorities which in turn enables courts to appropriately make a final Order within a few

weeks. The data on Placement Orders is also not straightforward to interpret. In a review by seven local authorities of placement applications, 85% of recent applications were successful and in reasonable timescales. The trends identified need to be understood though and worked through if success in implementing the PLO is to continue.

5. An example of caution in interpreting the private law data as far as the impact on Cafcass is concerned is that we are being asked to carry out work on a number of private law cases which have been highlighted for review by judges but which have not come through our own early intervention team and process and so are not recorded as applications. We have also had some difficulties with capturing all data in the migration from CMS to ECMS over the last few months, although most glitches have now been fixed. We are currently analysing whether the duration of s7 cases and Rule 16.4 cases is increasing, and if so, why.

Work with MOJ on the 2015-2020 period (and the 2016-20 Spending Review)

6. The first stage of this work is to assess which national programmes could make a positive difference to the numbers of private law cases being diverted from court and to the way cases are handled within the court process under the Child Arrangements Programme. Simon Hughes will be announcing the outcome of this work during October, including the pre-court pilot programme aimed at strengthening out of court pathways for separating parents to access and use: extra support for mediators, by offering them a safeguarding advisory service; and piloting the greater involvement and inclusion of children and young people in the court process, subject to this being appropriate for them.
7. Another agreed programme is the potential national roll out of the substance misuse and DNA testing pilot being undertaken in Avon and Somerset. This is going well so far. It is being evaluated in February 2015 and we have agreed to fund a roll out if this is the decision taken. Costs can be absorbed within existing resources and this would be a major contribution by us to MOJ strategy.
8. We are undertaking two pieces of work with local authorities as improvement partners, one to improve an IRO service, the other to provide more general advice and support through a local manager being seconded for six months on a 4 day a week basis. This work is supported by MOJ and DfE and will help us to understand if one of our post-2015 remits could be to offer improvement services where we have the expertise to agencies within Central Government and to agencies outside, such as local authorities. We have to assess the capacity issues and whether the business cases to start providing services on a full cost recovery basis could make a significant contribution to our future savings targets. This issue is dealt with more fully in the item on the confidential agenda about our potential future remits.

Innovation Board

9. In order to meet future financial challenges in the next Spending Review (SR) period (2016-20) we will have to innovate, in the same way all other public sector organisations are being required to innovate in order to meet future challenges. The Cafcass Innovation Board is being re-worked in order to identify and deliver innovations, all of which need considerable lead-in time. The terms of reference

and parameters of the re-vamped Board are set out in Appendix 1 of my report. The chair and Vice Chair will be core members of the Board. The Board will be supported by an Innovation Project Development Board, chaired by the Director of Resources. An example of an innovation from within the organisation is a proposal to develop an app for children put forward by one of our Service Managers, who is now on the implementation team. This would allow children to understand the court process and how it will work in advance, to reduce the risk of it being an intimidating process.

Management Effectiveness Review

10. Progress with implementing the Management Effectiveness Review is attached as Appendix 2. No particular difficulties are foreseen with the overall implementation of this programme.

Changes to the Cafcass structure

11. Changes to the Cafcass structure are being dealt with in the confidential section of this Board meeting as individual staff are named and affected. The papers have been sent to Board members in the usual way.

Remit letter

12. Our remit letter for 2014-15 is imminent (from MOJ) and will be sent to the Chair of the Board. The likely key targets are set out in Appendix 3.

Practice improvement

13. Two evaluation reports are attached as Appendix 4 and 5, one about pre-proceedings work in public law in Liverpool and one in Lincolnshire. These Cafcass Plus programmes show a positive benefit for children and families. Consideration will be given over the coming months to whether we develop a pre-proceedings capacity in every local service area. This work will be done within the workstream about potential future remits.

IT re-procurement

14. Key activities since the last Board meeting are:
 - Both the PID (giving the direction and scope of project) and Sourcing Strategy (setting out the guiding principles for re-procurement) have been written and signed off by CMT and the Innovation Project Development Board. Key elements of these are as follows:
 - Specification of key business benefits:
 - Enable an increasingly mobile workforce to continue to develop and deliver an exceptional service to Cafcass service users.
 - Ensure continued investment in IT in support of business outcomes, as recognised by Ofsted.
 - Increase ease of working with other government departments, especially MoJ.
 - Realign service and KPI levels to current business need.

- Realign disaster recovery and business continuity to current business needs.
- Ensuring the Flex Transformation Project Lessons Learned document has been reviewed and planning adjusted to take these in to account.
- Devising a procurement process that will meet the requirements of both the Government Digital Service and the Crown Commercial Service.
- Design options that fully explore the scope for:
 - WAN options (including removal).
 - Install wifi in all offices to reduce office fit out and dilapidation costs and ongoing maintenance.
 - Smart devices: voice/email and internet hot spot Business benefit of moving the data only SIMs from a laptop/tablet into a telecoms contract and staff having one device, with one SIM contract.
 - BYOD (Bring your own device) or CYOD (choose your own device).
 - Telecoms: remove VoIP fixed line telephone and replace with a unified messaging systems (possibly go mobile-only with the exception of the call centre).
- Possible single sign-on to multiple vendors systems including cloud-based applications.
- The programme will run under a number of procurement, contractual and technical principles. These will be based primarily on Cafcass operational business need, but some are also guided by national government and industry norms, which have changed substantially since Cafcass was last in a position to refresh its technical infrastructure.

15. Consultation with key stakeholders:

- We are currently working closely with officials at the MOJ, Cabinet Office and the Crown Commercial Service and have also been in discussions with HMT who are also exiting the Fujitsu Flex Contract before Cafcass and learning lessons from their procurement which will help us move forward.
- We have also been in discussions with our auditors PwC and have asked them to provide assurance to the work on the current plan given the significance of change to Cafcass. A risk log is in place containing information about the risks, their analysis, countermeasures and status and monitored through our PMO to ensure any appropriate steps are taken when required.
- An initial technical review workshop has been held to begin the process of considering risks and benefits of different technical and contractual options.
- Both Project SIROs (Rob Langley and Anji Owens) are due to meet Mary MacLeod and Geoff Bush (Board members with lead roles on this) on the 23rd October prior to the Board Seminar, with Julie Brown.

16. Key next steps:

- Commencement of the design specification phase
- Planning the project in detail

Miscellaneous

17. Finally we have been short-listed for 4 Awards at the annual Social Work Awards ceremony in late November – employer of the year: team of the year: team leader of the year; and social worker of the year.

Anthony Douglas CBE
Chief Executive

17 October 2014

Key Documents:

Appendix 1: Revised Innovation Board Framework

Appendix 2: Management Effectiveness Review

Appendix 3: Draft remit letter 2014/15 (not for publication or onward distribution)

Appendix 4: Liverpool pre-proceedings evaluation report

Appendix 5: Lincolnshire Cafcass Plus report