



**Draft**

**MINUTES OF THE QUALITY COMMITTEE**

Friday 26 September 2014, 14.00-16.00  
21 Bloomsbury Street, London

**Present**

Mary MacLeod, Chair of Quality Committee  
Ian Butler, Cafcass Board Member  
Honor Rhodes, Cafcass Board Member  
Fay Selvan, Cafcass Board Member  
June Thoburn, Adviser to the Quality Committee

**In Attendance**

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive  
Christine Banim, Cafcass National Service Director  
Richard Green, Cafcass National Child Care Policy Manager  
Nicola Blakebrough, Cafcass Corporate Strategist (minutes)  
Sophia Fraser, Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB)

**Apologies**

Stuart Moore, Ministry of Justice, Private Law Policy Lead (Legislation) & Cafcass Policy Sponsor

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Sophia Fraser, FJYPB representative.

Apologies were received from Stuart Moore, Ministry of Justice.

**2. Draft Minutes of the Joint Performance and Quality Committee meeting 12 May 2014**

The minutes of the joint Performance and Quality Committee meeting on the 12 May were agreed as an accurate record.

**3. Action Log, Forward Planners and Matters Arising**

The Committee reviewed the action log and the Chair requested that the results of the follow up audit of SEC casework, which was completed by NIS in June 2014, be circulated. It was noted that all other actions are completed or on track.

The Committee reviewed the forward planner and noted that the items 'Tools used for internal auditing of the quantum of work graded as good; not met; outstanding' and 'Learning & development half year analysis' have been moved to the November meeting due to the demands of the September agenda.

There were no further matters arising.

Action 1: The National Service Director to circulate the results of the follow up audit of SEC casework.

#### **4. Terms of Reference**

The amendments to the Terms of Reference were agreed.

It was further agreed to amend the wording within the Preamble to make explicit that the risk to children is not derived from Cafcass' work but rather is an inherent risk from the situations they are in.

Action 2: The Corporate Strategist to amend the Terms of Reference and return to the Committee Chair for her agreement.

#### **5. Progress on Quality Improvement**

##### Ofsted Action Plan

The National Service Director advised the Committee that good progress is being made against the plan.

The Committee supported proposals to amend the timeframe for achieving the target of 60% Good and 14% Not Met to May 2015 (previously November 2014) acknowledging that achievement of the targets requires continuous and intensive efforts, and more time to embed the higher level of quality. The National Service Director stated that local audits have identified progress towards the target percentage of Good and Not Met work; and also outlined that the bar has been raised as to what is expected from Good which will have sustainable benefit. For example, even if quality of work is good but contains spelling errors, the work will not be passed as met.

##### Audit Reports - A5 Private Law and London Safeguarding Letters

The Committee reviewed the A5 Private Law Audit and London Safeguarding Letters Audit Reports and stated that it was comforting to see how stringently audits are being conducted and robustly benchmarked. The National Service Director said that staff see audit as part and parcel of the way we work and service areas are engaged in self-audit through monthly dip sampling of cases and individual coaching.

The Committee agreed that caution needs to be taken on over interpreting improvement due to the small number of samples within the audits. The Chair asked whether the result of Ofsted's case audit would have been different if the case samples had been higher. The National Service Director was confident that had a higher sample been reviewed the results would be the same.

The Committee acknowledged that there is in-house training for report writing and agreed to give information to the CEO about a project that may be of interest run by the Royal Literary Fund to improve writing skills. The Fund provides a fellowship to an established writer to offer tuition to individuals within an organisation.

#### **6. Private Law Development Work**

The Chief Executive presented the Private Law Pathway Project draft Evaluation Framework. The Project will cover a range of pilots which have been endorsed by the MOJ and which are due to be launched by our minister, Simon Hughes, in October 2014. Projects will be run by Cafcass initially for six months, from October 2014, with a likely 6 month extension to allow for the data to be collated and for decisions on national roll out to be taken. The Committee noted that the pilots will be delivered within existing resources which has been made possible by the current drop in the number of private law applications.

The Chief Executive stated that the pilots may lead Cafcass into taking on different kinds of work and that Cafcass is the only national organisation in a position to do so if the approach became policy.

The Board expressed support for the pilots but took the view that the draft Evaluation Framework focusses more on process than it does on impact and outcomes; and that the Framework should set out realistically how data is to be analysed.

The National Service Director stated that the MOJ's analytical team is working with Cafcass to finalise the Evaluation Framework. The Committee agreed that the Research Governance Sub-Committee should have sight of the amended Evaluation Framework for comment.

The Committee also noted that evaluation tools used within the Australian screening model (Doors) can be made available.

**Action 3:** The National Service Director to share the revised Private Law Pathway Project Evaluation Framework, once finalised, with the Research Governance Sub-Committee.

## **7. Child Protection Policy and Reports**

### Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Domestic Homicide Reviews

The National Child Care Policy Manager presented the quarterly paper which sets out the statistics relating to notifications made to Cafcass of deaths and serious incidents. He advised the Committee that: the notifications of child deaths and serious incidents has steadily risen and remains high and notably so in respect of deaths within public law cases; the child deaths reported are not all maltreatment related and they also include young people suicides; Cafcass is notified of child deaths irrespective of whether the child is known to us.

It is unclear to what extent the substantial rise in SCR is attributable to Local Safeguarding Children Boards' (LSCBs) decision-making regarding whether the SCR criteria are met and/or to a rise in the number of child deaths where maltreatment is known or suspected. The rise is putting demand on Cafcass resources; however we now have more trained staff available to complete Individual Management Reviews (IMRs).

### Individual Management Reviews (IMRs)- Learning and actions taken

The Committee reviewed the paper which summarises the four substantial written submissions to individual Serious Case Reviews for the period April to June 2014 together with their learning points and actions.

### Annual Safeguarding Report

The paper provides a succinct overview of the safeguarding activities of Cafcass, and of the work of the Quality Committee during the period April 2013 to March 2014.

The report was agreed by the Committee subject to two amendments relating to the inclusion of recently-published Ofsted data regarding the number of SCR initiated as a result of serious harm and to how poor practice, revealed through SCR, has been addressed through a number of mechanisms including training, action plans and mentoring.

The Committee noted that the membership of the Research Governance Sub-Committee needs to be confirmed.

Action 4: The National Child Care Policy Manager to amend the annual safeguarding report and submit to the Committee Chair for her agreement.

## **8. Research Programme**

### Programme Update

The National Child Care Policy Manager presented an update on the progress of current research projects.

### Research – Governance Framework

The Committee acknowledged the Research Governance Framework as a helpful paper.

The Committee requested that the Research Governance Sub-Committee consider the development of ethical guidelines to be applied in situations where research applications are received from an institution that does not have its own ethics committee.

The Committee proposed that Honor Rhodes should offer to meet with Nuffield, together with the National Child Care Policy Manager, to explore whether and how Cafcass might contribute to shaping research into family justice.

Action 5: The Research Governance Sub-Committee to consider the development of ethical guidelines to be applied in situations where research applications are received from an institution that does not have its own ethics committee.

Action 6: Honor Rhodes and the National Child Care Policy manager to offer to meet with Nuffield, to explore whether and how Cafcass might contribute to shaping research into family justice.

### Three weeks in November

The National Child Care Policy Manager stated that the research has been published internally and externally with some press coverage. The Committee acknowledged this as a good piece of work.

## **9. Review of the Strategic Risk Register – Risk in Casework**

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the nature and level of risks derived from Cafcass' casework, which sit within the strategic risk register.

The Committee agreed that risk in casework should give consideration to the impact of the Private Law Pathway Project in terms of diversion of resource. The reduction in private law applications means that we currently have the capacity to undertake this work; however the risk may increase if applications rise.

Action 7: The analysis of risk in casework to be reviewed, giving consideration to the new Private Law Pathway Project and the impact of that project in terms of diversion of resource.

## **10. Children and Families Feedback**

The National Services Director presented a paper on Children and Families Feedback and stated that the FJYPB is reviewing learning from complaints submitted by children and young people and will present findings to the Operational Management Team bi-annually. She also stated that ECMS will be utilised to capture data on 'child inclusion' i.e. where children see the judge or the child's voice is heard through proceedings (through drawings/your voice) and data will be evaluated.

The National Child Care Policy Manager stated that the follow up Service User Survey has just completed its field work and an update will be presented at the next Committee meeting.

Action 8: The Corporate Strategist to add the Service User Survey to the forward planner.

### **11. Inspection of Cafcass offices by FJYPB**

The National Service Director presented a report on the FJYPB inspection of Cafcass offices and advised that the inspection programme has been effective, resulting in improvements being made. Going forward the FJYPB Peer Reviews will be used as vehicle for improving quality of office space. The National Services Director confirmed that all offices will be subject to follow up audits to ensure the recommendations made by the FJYPB have been completed

### **12. Any Other Business**

The Chair stated that this is Ian Butler's last meeting and thanked him for his valuable contribution to the Quality Committee and the Research Governance Group.

#### **Date of the next meeting:**

21 November 2014, at 2pm

### **Action Summary**

Action 1: The National Service Director to circulate the results of the follow up audit of SEC casework.

Action 2: The Corporate Strategist to amend the Terms of Reference and return to the Committee Chair for her agreement.

Action 3: The National Service Director to share the final version of the Private Law Pathway Project Evaluation Framework with the Research Governance Sub-Committee.

Action 4: The National Child Care Policy Manager to amend the annual safeguarding report and submit to the Committee Chair for her agreement.

Action 5: The Research Governance Sub-Committee to consider the development of ethical guidelines to be applied in situations where research applications are received from an institution that does not have its own ethics committee.

Action 6: Honor Rhodes and the National Child Care Policy manager to offer to meet with Nuffield, to explore whether and how Cafcass might contribute to shaping research into family justice.

Action 7: The analysis of risk in casework to be reviewed, giving consideration to the new Private Law Pathway Project and the impact of that project in terms of diversion of resource.

Action 8: The Corporate Strategist to add the Service User Survey to the forward planner.