

## **Discussion Paper for the Board Meeting on 7 February 2014**

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

In the period since the last Board meeting on 6 December 2013, the following developments are noteworthy:

1. At the time of writing, the national Ofsted inspection has not yet been announced. It will be carried out in the current business year i.e., by 31 March. Inevitably, this will be an organisation-wide preoccupation throughout its 4-5 week duration.
2. A review of corporate policy and strategy began on 29 January. It will be completed by early March, to help me to determine which additional role/s and capacity we need nationally. Recruitment to the role/s will then take place. The focus of the review is on service development and engagement with the various external policy networks in our sector.
3. Discussions are being held in the next few weeks with the Ministry of Justice policy team about our remit letter for 2014/15, including any Key Performance Indicators for Cafcass in addition to those determined for the whole system by the national Family Justice Board and signed off by Ministers on that basis.
4. All development work we need to carry out in order to play our full part in the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 has been completed. This includes full involvement in the final version of the Public Law Outline (PLO) and development work via local Family Justice Boards (LFJB's). We have continued to work jointly with ADCS on how social work practice (ours and local authorities) can adapt to the extra demands of the revised PLO, especially with fewer experts being instructed in cases.
5. Transition work with the Ministry of Justice continues, with MOJ officials making visits to Cafcass teams and offices. The Chair and myself are having introductory meetings with senior officials and Ministers, starting in mid-February. The framework agreement with DfE has been signed off, and a similar agreement with MOJ is close to being finalised without any problems. The general principles of the agreed 'lift and shift' transfer are being complied with. March will be a shadow month for sponsorship purposes, so that any day to day operational issues that crop up can be understood and resolved in advance of the actual transfer on 1 April 2014. Board recruitment will start in April 2014, with an expectation of completion in the late summer or by 1 October at the latest.
6. Positive joint scoping work is underway with HMCTS, identifying the potential for linked data inputting and a joint data base as part of our Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) development. The aim is to save duplication and to increase efficiency. Whilst the timescale for such work is 2 years, we are going in the right direction together.
7. Our response to the consultation on the Child Arrangements Programme is attached. This will replace the current Private Law Programme from late April 2014. The Private Law Working Group, chaired by Mr Justice Cobb, has re-

convened to finalise the programme. No particular problems are identified for Cafcass at this stage. The major challenge in private law cases remains the additional professional time of Cafcass practitioners being taken up with the increased numbers of litigants in person, and the consequential impact this is having on the way cases are having to be conducted. We are aiming to find as many operational solutions and adaptations as possible and we continue to discuss the policy implications of this with the Ministry of Justice.

8. A programme to deepen service user engagement, staff engagement and public engagement will be outlined and taken forward at the Board seminar on 6 February 2014 and at the Open Board meeting on 28 March 2014.
9. A research project to assess how well care plans are being implemented (after 18 months) has been scoped and agreed with ADCS. I am meeting with the Outgoing and incoming ADCS Presidents in February to scope our joint work programme for the next 12 months, which is likely to include joint guidance on secure accommodation, a national escalation policy for cases of concern, and guidance on consistently timely response times for the return of the safeguarding checks we request in private law cases.
10. My schedule of visits in 2014 to offices, team meetings, Service Area Meetings and team/service area development days has been published on the intranet. This schedule is co-ordinated with the schedule of Board visits, so that teams are neither ignored nor overwhelmed.
11. The timescale for the forthcoming London accommodation moves has slipped by a few weeks due to legal and IT delays, but the moves will still be made within the current business year i.e., by 31 March. Future Board meetings can either be held at the new Cafcass Head Office in Bloomsbury, Central London or in the Ministry of Justice at 102 Petty France.
12. Along with our procurement manager and our commissioning and partnerships manager, I have met with the Cabinet Office team responsible for Social Impact Bonds (SIB's) to assess the scope for an SIB for pre-court services in private law cases. We are assessing the viability of such a framework over the next few months.
13. The Management Effectiveness Review has now been completed. An action plan is being developed and then the review and action plan will be disseminated together. This work complements the Board Effectiveness Review and the actions plans will be taken forward together.
14. As an extension to our contract with the Guardian newspaper, we are part sponsoring the Guardian International Forum for Social Workers. This will support our own improvement work and our sector-wide improvement work. It will also enhance our influence in the wider social work profession. Social workers from around the world will be able to share experiences and best practice. This is the first large scale worldwide hub for social workers. It builds on the very successful teachers' network and other managed professional networks and communities of interest. It is being launched on 1 March on World Social Work Day. Our financial contribution to set up costs is circa £50,000 and is being met from existing budgets for 2013/14. No financial commitment has been made for 2014/15.



15. We successfully implemented the pay award for 2013/14 in January 2014.
16. The College of Social Work (TCSW) have agreed to work with us with a view to them endorsing our front-line training programmes through their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) endorsement scheme. This will be a component part of the Cafcass University development.
17. The first annual Cafcass lecture will be given by Sir James Munby, President of the High Court Family Division, most likely in the summer months.
18. Finally, I attach our Commissioning Strategy for 2014-16 (appendix 1), which pulls together a range of existing documentation into one place.

**Anthony Douglas**  
3 February 2014