



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Discussion Paper for the Board Meeting on 13 September 2013

BOARD SUPPORT AND PLANNING

KEY POINTS

- A more structured approach to Board agenda setting and forward planning is proposed
- A role description for the Board Secretary role is attached
- Chairs of the Board and committees will meet three times a year with the Chief Executive to oversee and review these arrangements

1. AIM AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ensure Board and committee agendas are well aligned with strategic developments and sensible sequencing of performance reporting
- 1.2 To ensure all Board members are well supported in their work
- 1.3 To ensure delivery of the Board action plan (following the Board Effectiveness Review) is well supported
- 1.4 All of these aims and objectives to be facilitated by the Board Secretary role and a new Board office.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION FOR THE BOARD

- 2.1 To consider whether the proposals meet Board needs going forward.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Chairs of the full Cafcass Board (the Chair of the Board also chairs the Performance Committee), the Quality Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met with the Chief Executive to review the performance of all three committees, including their interface with each other. Improvements to Board support and planning were identified, as follows:

- Board members should be more engaged in agenda shaping and setting
- The Board should focus primarily on strategic developments, with the monitoring of performance mostly delegated to the 3 committees, within the framework of exception reporting back up the Board
- Forward planning for the Board and its committees should be kept under more active review and focus

- 3.2 The following operating model is proposed for discussion by the Board:

- 3.2.1 Establishment of a more defined Board secretariat in the National Office, with clear roles and continuity

- 3.2.2 An administrative cycle operating on a *two monthly* basis where the Chairs and Board Secretariat review the forward agenda for the meetings in the next quarter in line with paragraph 3.2.3 below.

- 3.2.3 Board and Sub Committee Chairs holding a conference call with the Board secretariat to review forward agenda, matters arising or outstanding from the last cycle and any other issues of relevance to Board Members, specifically the following:
- a. matters raised for the attention of the Board directly by individual Boardmembers
 - Matters raised for the attention of the Board by the Executive
 - b. An update on consultations opening on which the Board may wish to commission a paper and to review options on positions
 - c. Events (internal and external) that may be of interest for Members attendance
 - d. Matters arising from updates to the Strategic Risk Register
 - e. Matters arising from update to the 2013/15 Cafcass Strategic Plan
 - f. Matters arising in relation to key stakeholders: DfE, MOJ, Ofsted
 - g. New matters arising in the following priority areas:
 - i. Fulfilment of the annual remit letter
 - ii. Long term planning including demand management
 - iii. Progress with succession planning
 - iv. Policy review and development
- 3.2.4 Documents to be up to dated and available to the conference call:
- Strategic Risk Register
 - National Business Plan
 - Corporate calendar
- 3.2.5 Summary of decisions and forward plan changes, including commissions for new/further work to be circulated to attendees within 2 working days and a revised forward plan published within 5 working days
- 3.3 It is proposed at this stage these arrangements are put in place and managed initially through the Corporate Management Team until they are established and assessed by the Board as meeting their requirements. Thereafter the management can be returned to the Corporate Support Service.
- 3.4 In addition, the cycle and order of committees and Board meetings is being reviewed taking account of the Standing Orders of the organisation. This is particularly to ensure that Committees meet no later than two weeks prior to the Board so that matters arising of concern to the Board can be raised in a timely way with any necessary work carried out in between the committee meeting and the Board meeting.

4. CONTRIBUTION OF THE REPORT/PROPOSAL TO DELIVERY OF THE 2013/15 CAFCASS STRATEGIC PLAN

- 4.1 By improving the support to the Board and its Committees and Board forward planning, it is intended that the Board's strategic work and its performance scrutiny will benefit.

5. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 5.1 This paper proposes a change in arrangements to provide the Cafcass Board and its Committees with better support to enhance its functioning. This is also in line with the outcomes of the Board Effectiveness Review which is the subject of a proposed action plan elsewhere on this Board agenda..

6. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

- 6.1 The delivery of safe, high quality and timely services remains a priority for service delivery. An appropriate division of strategic and operational business between the Board and its Committee will ensure opportunities to improve our work in this area are maximised.

7. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Delivery of these revised arrangements will take place within existing resources.

8. RISK ANALYSIS

- 8.1 Risks to delivery of strategic and operational objectives are kept under careful review by the Board and its Committees through the monitoring and reporting of progress towards milestones and completion of actions, assigned to named individuals.

9. DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

- 9.1 Ensuring that Equality and Diversity are central to all our work remains a key operational priority. An appropriate division of strategic and operational business between the Board and its Committee will ensure opportunities to improve our work in this area are maximised.

10. COMMENTS FROM THE HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 10.1 No additional comments required.

11. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 11.1 No additional comments required.

**Anthony Douglas,
Julie Brown
2 September 2013**

Board Secretary – Role Description

General Responsibilities

Ensuring that accurate and sufficient documentation exists to enable authorised persons to determine when, how, and by whom the board's business was conducted. The Secretary records minutes of meetings, ensures their accuracy, and availability, proposes policies and practices, submits various reports to the board, maintains membership records performs other duties as the need arises. Assists in the planning and scheduling of items of business of the Board and its Committees in consultation with the Chairs of the Board and Committees.

Specific Duties

Minutes

The secretary is responsible for ensuring that accurate minutes of meetings are taken and approved and ensures that a signed approved copy is maintained in the corporate records.

Custodian of records

The secretary ensures that the records of the organisation are maintained and made available when required by authorised persons. These records may include founding documents, lists of directors, board and committee meeting minutes, financial reports, and other official records. Keeps a record of all policies approved by the Board.

Communication

The Secretary ensures that proper notification is given of directors' and members' meetings. The Secretary manages the general correspondence of the Board and its Committees except for such correspondence assigned to others.

Meetings

The Secretary provides items for the agenda as appropriate. The secretary records meeting minutes as described above. Maintains and monitors a calendar of important dates for the organisation.