



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on 1 March 2013

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. This update report covers the period from the last Board meeting on 7 December 2012, to the end of February 2013. I also look ahead to the main issues for us in 2013/14 and to early planning for 2014/15.
2. As the q3 budget update report on this agenda sets out, we expect to balance the budget this year, with a risk of a small underspend within the usual tolerance limits. A provisional budget has been set for 2014/15 and all possible steps taken to ensure spend as the year starts is affordable within the month by month profile. We have made all required savings for 2013/14, as agreed by the Board in previous reports during 2012/13. However, we have not yet been notified of our 2013/14 budget by DfE so planning has been less clear than in previous years. We have been working closely with DfE to ensure that the potential for sudden unpredicted change with adverse operational consequence is minimised.
3. We have started budget planning for 2014/15, including building up a savings programme step by step. The first step has been the development of a scheme to employ modern apprentices as part of an updated business support strategy. This will deliver savings of circa £50,000 and will be the subject of a Board report at the 22 March Board meeting. We also have to take into account the likely difficulties in the 2015/16 budget across the public sector, as this will now be a one year settlement rather than a new 4 or 5 year comprehensive spending review.
4. We are planning a series of service reviews in the first quarter of 2013/14 (April – June), which will be brought together in July. This will be followed by an implementation programme in the run-up to the start of 2014/15. The current 9 month Transformation Programme, *Closer to children*, send in September 2013, and progress on this is attached as Appendix 1. All major change programmes will be managed coherently and regularly discussed with the Board in advance as well as throughout implementation.
5. Service reviews include business support, use of self-employed contractors (including market shaping), use of enhanced practitioners including progression criteria for advanced social workers, and an updated workforce strategy. As part of the work to strengthen corporate governance and capacity at the national level, a national workforce plan and an operational risk register are also being produced, overseen by the new Corporate Management Board, which meets six weekly in a cycle which directly feeds into Board meetings. A map of how the various executive, Board and relevant external Boards and committees interface with each other is attached as Appendix 2. A new corporate support service is being put in place to provide future support to the Board and the Executive.

6. Good progress continues to be made on performance, as the regular Performance report on the 1 March agenda illustrates. This report was scrutinised at the Performance Committee on 25 January. We are also actively working on the national Family Justice Board, its sub groups and in all Local Family Justice Boards, 10 of which we chair and 5 of which we sponsor. I will be giving evidence in the w/b 4 March to the Education Select Committee in its scrutiny of the new Children and Families Bill. An update on the family justice reforms will be provided to the Board on 22 March. Most crucially local performance and quality continues to hold up and, on the basis of most audits, to show continuous improvement. An example of the national structure working well and flexibly is the way in which some of our strongest local Early Intervention Teams around the country have taken on London early intervention cases to support the London service and the improvement measures we are taking there.
7. We have one more Ofsted report this year, in A17 (Kent), during March. The last inspection of A14 (East Anglia, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire) during February, went well. The report will be placed on our website as well as Ofsted's website when it is published in mid-March. We are also working on our response to Ofsted's proposed revised methodology for 2013/14 and beyond. Our response is due with them by 12 March. Our submission will include the issues identified by the Quality Committee on 28 January and the issues identified at the meeting held by a senior HMI with our Young Peoples Board on 21 February. Ofsted inspectors are also coming to April's meeting of the Quality Committee to consult on our future programme. Even though this is outside the consultation period, we have been assured that they will take all comments made and views expressed into account.
8. Our Young Peoples Board, who are also the Young People's Board for the family justice system as a whole, met with the Cafcass Minister, Edward Timpson, on 12 February and with Mr Justice Ryder, the judge in charge of modernisation, on 21 February. Recruitment to the Board has been healthy and the Board is now taking on a significantly expanded number of commissions.
9. We are working with researchers from the University of Exeter, who have been commissioned by the Ministry of Justice, to examine the impact of the rise in litigants in person in private law cases. The research is taking place in 5 court areas and researchers are meeting with our practitioners and other key people. We are also assessing the impact of more litigants in person on our use of professional time, in our Greater Manchester service. A sample group of practitioners and business support staff will record the time they spend substituting for legal advice.
10. I have personally endorsed Frontline, the new programme to accelerate suitable graduates into social work, modelled on Teach First. We have committed a small amount of staff time to teaching on the summer school programme for Frontline being planned.
11. We have almost completed our first Service User survey pilot, carried out in Essex, of children, young people and parents in recently competed private law cases. The results will be evaluated before the surveying methodology is assured by Professor June Thoburn, the Board's Special Adviser on practice issues. Following this, the survey will be repeated in all teams on a rolling programme. This programme is set out in more detail in the report on this 1 March Board agenda on what we know about the experience of service users

when they use our service and the family courts. The survey user methodology will be presented to a meeting of the Quality Committee before it is rolled out.

12. Our Talent Management Strategy was launched on 26 February. This has been the subject of a Board seminar and full involvement. Background papers are available for scrutiny.
13. Our Health and Well being Plan is being launched on 6 April, initially with a two year contract and commitment. Background papers have been sent to the Board separately and are also available for scrutiny.
14. Individual and team scorecards (performance cards), shown to the Performance Committee on 25 January, will be operational in May 2013. We are receiving considerable external interest in our work on organisational developments like scorecards and in our performance management programmes.
15. Updates to our Operating Framework are being made, and will be discussed at the next Head of Service conference on 7 March and then at the Board on 26 April, or at a Board seminar.

Anthony Douglas CBE

Chief Executive

22 February 2013.