



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on 1 March 2013

Secretary of State's Prospective Key Performance Indicators for Cafcass for 2013-14

1. AIM AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Board about the Secretary of State for Education's prospective Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Cafcass for 2013-14

2. RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION FOR THE BOARD

- 2.1 The Board is asked to consider the proposed KPI's for 2013/14 and to make any points it wishes about them to DfE so they can be considered when constructing the 2013/14 remit letter for Cafcass.

3. SHORT SUMMARY

- 3.1 Each year, the Secretary of State includes within the Cafcass remit letter a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the forthcoming year. It appears likely that all four of the current 2012-13 KPIs will be retained for a further year. The current set comprise:

- Public care cases allocated to a Children's Guardian at month end (KP1) (current target level – 97%);
- Average working days to allocate a Children's Guardian to a care case (KP2) (current target level - >3 working days);
- Private law cases allocated to a Cafcass Officer at month end (KP3) (current target level 97%); and
- Private law "section 7 reports" filed by agreed date (KP4) (current target level 97%).

- 3.2 In accordance with the indication set out in the 2012-13 remit letter, an additional quality-related KPI is in prospect for 2013-14. This is expected to be focused on the percentage of public law care cases where Cafcass is cited, by case-managing judges in public law care cases, as the main cause of delay.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The prospective set of KPIs for 2013-14 follows the long-established pattern of maintaining a significant degree of continuity from year to year in the set of KPIs. The current KPIs focus on measuring the speed/completeness of allocation of cases and the timeliness with which (private law) reports are filed.

- 4.2 The prospective inclusion of the fifth, new measure marks a change of approach for two main reasons. The first is that the data would be drawn from a source external to Cafcass, namely the HMCTS Case Monitoring System (CMS). The second is that the assessment of the impact of the work of Cafcass children's guardians would be based on a judicial assessment, rather than one that is made by Cafcass managers.
- 4.3 Though the HMCTS CMS has been in operation since April 2012, robust baseline data are not currently available. It is expected that this will become the case early in 2013-14, so a target level for 2013-14 is likely to be established by the end of September 2013. Early indications are that we do not feature as a significant cause delay in cases. We will be interrogating the baseline case data in cases where we are held responsible to ensure such a judgment is factually accurate, and where it is, to take any necessary remedial action.
- 4.4 Cafcass is collating a range of information it has on the quality of its work, and this will be published as an Annual Quality Account, by September 2013. The development of this bundle of measures, including service user feedback, the results of Ofsted inspections and internal audits and other information which contributes to an evidence base about the quality of Cafcass services, will be kept under review by the Cafcass Quality Committee. Discussions with the sponsor Department about the robustness of the Quality Account as it is developed will be held.

5. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 5.1 The emphasis placed by successive Secretaries of State and the Cafcass Board on strong performance against a set of KPIs has been pivotal in inculcating the wider organisation with a strong focus on performance, far beyond the terms of the narrow set of KPIs that are in place in each year. The revised set of 2013-14 KPIs is likely to continue to underpin the current strong focus on interrogating performance information, with a view to identifying and resolving any deficiencies that may be identified and thus maintaining and improving performance.

6. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

- 6.1 Both the continuing KPIs and prospective new KPI are focused on areas of activity which, if successfully carried out, are likely to ensure the effective exercise of Cafcass' statutory functions of providing advice to the family courts, in the welfare interests of children who are the subject of proceedings.

7. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

- 7.1 It has been the universal practice of Cafcass' sponsoring Secretaries of State to set KPIs (and their linked target levels) at the same time as Cafcass grant-in-aid is determined, with both forming core parts of the annual remit letter. This has enabled the required target levels to take account of the level of financial resources that the Secretary of State of the day has decided to provide. Thus, the target levels for 2013-14 have not been included in this paper, but only the current 2012-13 levels.

8. RISK ANALYSIS

- 8.1 As was the case in 2009-10, when there was a 36% increase in the number of public law care applications received by Cafcass, compared to 2008-09, there is the risk that unforeseeable changes in case demand, or in the nature/complexity of casework, may again occur in future. If this happens, concerted, family justice system-wide mitigating actions will be needed to absorb the extra workload.

9. DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

- 9.1 The continued use of a balanced set of KPIs, spanning the bulk of Cafcass' work, maximises the prospect that children who are subject to all types of family court proceedings can gain proper access to Cafcass' services.

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13 February 2013