



Draft

Cafcass Quality Committee Minutes

Friday 3 March 2017, 14.00 - 16.00

21 Bloomsbury Street, Bentham Room and Charles Dickens Room

Present

Mary MacLeod, Chair of Quality Committee
Caroline Corby, Cafcass Board Member
Paul Grant, Cafcass Board Member
Fay Selvan, Cafcass Board Member (via video conference from Manchester)
Stuart Smith, Cafcass Board Member (via video conference from home)
Deep Sagar, Cafcass Board Member (via virtual meeting room)
Professor Simon Hackett, Adviser to the Quality Committee
Joanna Nicolas, Adviser to the Quality Committee

In Attendance

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive
Helen Watson, Cafcass Director of Strategy
Christine Banim, National Service Director (first hour only)
Stuart Moore, Private Law Policy Lead (Legislation) & Cafcass Policy Sponsor, Ministry of Justice
Michael Radley, Cafcass Practice supervisor
Liam Orme, Cafcass Head of Internal Audit
Sarah Parsons, Cafcass Assistant Director
Emily Halliday, Cafcass Assistant Communications & Policy Officer
Grace Egbewole-Adereti, Cafcass Board and Corporate Support Assistant (Minutes)
Elizabeth Morrison, Cafcass Information Assurance Officer

Apologies

Richard Green, Cafcass National Child Care Policy Manager
Nicola Blakebrough, Cafcass Board Secretariat

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that Sarah Parsons would be attending on behalf of Christine Banim. Apologies were received from Richard Green and Nicola Blakebrough.

2. Draft Minutes from the Quality Committee 2 December 2016 meeting

The minutes of the Quality Committee Meeting on 2 December 2016 were agreed by the Committee as an accurate record.

3. Action Log Matters Arising

The Committee reviewed the Action log. All actions were noted as having been completed or on track.

There were no further matters arising.

4. Practice Update Report

4.1 Good Practice Initiatives

The Practice Supervisor gave a presentation on good practice initiatives drawing from a case study involving a family whose involvement with the police and local authority was the result of domestic abuse concerns. Cafcass completed a section 7 report on the family following a Fact Finding Hearing, where 5 allegations were considered. The results of the study identified that the evidence gathered through the Fact Finding Hearings were circumstantial and had not thoroughly considered environmental factors affecting the family. The Practice Supervisor highlighted the benefits of using the domestic abuse tools in preparing section 7 reports to add depth to findings, strengthen practice and focus on the experience and wellbeing of the child.

The Committee discussed the weighting given to tools applied and queried the way that issues raised with Fact Finding Hearings are dealt with in court. The Practice Supervisor stated that the need to use tools stems from identifying whether a case is lacking information in representing the child's view, at which point, practitioners would liaise with their managers for further guidance in the application of tools. It was agreed that the case study would be used as part of the review of the guidance given to practitioners on Fact Findings hearings.

The Committee welcomed receiving presentations from direct practice and asked for this to be a feature of future meetings to ensure that the Committee was well informed about practice and safeguarding. It was agreed that presentations would be included in future agendas. The Committee also suggested that the Chief Executive would consider running a survey for judges, to understand how often judges agreed with recommendations from Family Court Advisers (FCA's).

Action 1: It was agreed that presentations regarding practice would be included in future Committee agendas.

Action 2: The case study would be used to review guidance given to Family Court Advisors on Fact Findings Hearings.

4.2 Serious Incident Notifications and Submissions to Serious Case Reviews

The Chief Executive presented a report on Serious Incident Notifications and Submissions to Serious Case Reviews. Of the 24 cases reviewed by the National Improvement Service following the notification of a serious incident, Cafcass were notified of 3 child deaths of children known to Cafcass, but were not asked to contribute towards any Serious Case Reviews.

The Committee noted that the lessons learnt from good practice are implemented through the supervision of day-to-day practice as well as through training. The Committee suggested that the report should swap the order of the table items recording child deaths so that 'children known to Cafcass' preceded 'current/ past Cafcass involvement' to clarify the chronology.

5. Exceptions Report

5.1 Learning and Development Update

The National Service Director presented a report on learning and development, noting that the amount of time available to staff is considered when designating which courses are mandatory for staff. The Committee were informed that the current learning and development programme for all frontline practitioners includes three mandatory classroom based training sessions covering case work; interview and communication skills; and risk and harm; and one e-learning course covering legal context and court skills. New staff members would be expected to complete their mandatory training within the first 6 months. It was noted that the level of compliance within timelines for mandatory training has dipped slightly, due in part to Cafcass' transition to e-learning. The National Service Director assured the Committee that increased pressure on staff resulting from the rise in public and private law cases is also taken into consideration. In light of these considerations, the deadlines for the completion of mandatory training are weighed against existing levels of pressure placed on staff and deadlines may be extended to help accommodate the rising demand placed on staff.

The Committee noted that safeguarding training would be considered a priority for all practitioners.

5.2 Research Governance Committee Update

The Director of Strategy presented an update from the Research Governance Committee. The Committee welcomed the work of the Research Governance Committee and the range of studies undertaken and planned. The joint work with the Nuffield Foundation in establishing a strong body of research and raising the profile of research available within the family justice system helps enormously to promote the available research to a wider audience and to impact on policy development within the family justice system.

The Committee discussed how the Family Justice Young People's Board's (FJYPB) can contribute to the research into outcomes. It was noted that the FJYPB are working with an Assistant Director (Carole Goodman) and a Board Member (Fay Selvan) is keen to assist in taking forward the work to seek and learn from child and parent user feedback.

The Committee discussed how research can both positively impact the work of staff and how staff can be involved in research and audit. Various suggestions were explored including asking the FJYPB to input into the research programme and incorporating updates into the learning monthly newsletter; producing research highlights to make research findings more available; and building on the strong base that already exists to establish Cafcass as a pioneering social care research organisation. The Director of Strategy agreed to consider suggestions made by the Committee.

The Committee discussed Cafcass' research and data on recurrent proceedings and noted that Cafcass' work has had a positive influence on the wider system as several local authorities are running innovative projects in this area of work. The Committee requested that the Research Governance report be circulated to the Board.

Action 3: [The Research Governance report to be circulated to the Board.](#)

5.3 Ministry of Justice Area Quality Review Audit Report

The Head of Internal Audit presented a report on the Area Quality Review (AQR) Audit, explaining that the overall objective was to provide management with an opinion on the adequacy, effectiveness, and reliability of controls operating over AQRs. The overall opinion was moderate and highlighted some weakness regarding the consistency of action plans. There is however a clear management response to address these weaknesses.

The Committee discussed the processes in place to ensure quality assurance and noted that the Operational Management Team (OMT) track and follow up each AQR and any subsequent action plans. The Committee discussed whether it needed more assurance in regards to the follow up of AQR action plans and to act as a positive addition to the review process. The Chief Executive agreed that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) would consider ways of providing agile and focussed assurance to the Committee on the learning from AQRs.

Action 4: CMT to consider ways of providing agile and focussed assurance to the Committee on the learning from AQRs.

6. Strategic Risk Register

The Chief Executive presented the Strategic Risk Register and reported that Cafcass would likely secure the required safe minimum budget from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). Cafcass are currently spending in line with the assumed allocation and consequently have been able to increase resources. The Chief Executive reported that the budget may be known in two weeks however the MOJ are still allocating funds into their own budget.

The Committee praised the environmental analysis within the Strategic Risk Register. The Committee acknowledged the decline in KPI 4 which measures the proportion of section 7 reports that meet their agreed filing times, which decreased to 96.7 against a target of 97%. This risk remains under close review by CMT.

7. Any Other Business

A member of the Committee reported that during a recent team visit concerns had been raised regarding the telephone interview process and confidentiality, i.e. that the practitioner cannot be 100% sure whether the service user is alone or is possibly being coerced. The Assistant Director stated that the practitioner are aware of this risk and are trained at recognising indicators of coercion, such as tone of voice and hesitancy.

The Committee acknowledged that the Chair of the Quality Committee would be leaving in April 2017 and this would be her last Quality Committee meeting. The Committee thanked her for all the work she has done for Cafcass, praising her efforts in helping to raise the standard of quality in the organisation.

8. Forward Plan

The Committee requested that the forward plan should include all meetings for the year ahead.

Action 5: The forward plan to be updated to include all meetings in the year ahead.

There was no further business.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 2 May 2017, 11.00 – 13.00

Action Summary

Action 1: It was agreed that presentations regarding practice would be included in future agendas.

- Action 2: The case study would be used to review guidance given to Family Court Advisors on Fact Findings Hearings.
- Action 3: The Research Governance report to be circulated to the Board.
- Action 4: CMT to consider ways of providing agile and focussed assurance to the Committee on the learning from AQRs.
- Action 5: The forward plan to be updated to include all meetings in the year ahead.