



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE
Paper for the Board meeting on 15th June 2017
Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

- Overall annual demand for service has risen in both Public and Private Law.
- In the last 12 months (June 2016 – May 2017 compared to June 2015 – May 2016) percentages are:-
 - **8.4%** higher for new Public Law (S31 Care) applications; and
 - **6.5%** higher for new Private Law cases
- In the last 12 months (June 2016 – May 2017 compared to June 2015 – May 2016) our average monthly levels for new demand have been **1,202** new Public Law (S31 Care) applications per month. This is compared to an average of 1,108 the previous year (June 2015 – May 2016) and 947 per month two years ago (June 2014 – May 2015).
- In private law, we have averaged **3,409** new cases per month in the last 12 months (June 2016 – May 2017). This is compared to an average of 3,200 the previous year (June 2015 – May 2016) and 2,870 per month two years ago (June 2014 – May 2015).

1. AIM AND PURPOSE

To share with the Board for information and assurance the steps being taken both corporately and operationally to manage demand and support the workforce.

2. ACTION FOR THE BOARD

To note the report and the steps being taken and to keep the issues under regular review.

3. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 3.1 Over a period of months, the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources discussed with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) the need for extra financial resources in 2017/18. This resulted in extra budget being granted to support the gap in workforce capability arising through the demand pressures set out in this report, which have been regularly reported to the Board. Recruitment has now commenced for an additional 34.5 social work staff in line with the 2017/18 budget allocation.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive is working with the President of the Family Division to produce guidance that limits Family Court Advisor (FCA) time at court and the numbers of reports produced, without compromising the quality of the work and outcomes for children (refer to appendix 1 of the Chief Executive's report).
- 3.3 Assistant Directors are working with District Family Judges (DFJs) and Local Family Justice Boards (LFJBs) to ensure local systems respond collaboratively and constructively to the increased demand. For example, local protocols about court attendance by guardians, to reduce time wasted in court, work with local authorities (LAs) on defining the urgency of

care applications, and to ensure First Hearings are effective. The National Service Director pulls this work together monthly at the Cafcass Operational Management Team.

- 3.4 We have continued to use IT Innovations to support a saving in FCA time. IT training continues to be provided through Webinars, making IT more accessible and time-efficient, thereby supporting staff to use the technology to its full potential; to date over 1000 staff have accessed training in this way.
- 3.5 New Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) have been put in place to ensure better and more targeted support consistently to all employees; this has been achieved by aggregating all available data on performance, learning, quality assurance audits, and self-evaluation. The new PLR is used to pinpoint support required in order to improve quality and productivity.
- 3.6 Learning and Development (L&D): the Management Development Programme supports front-line managers in the critical role they play in managing increased demand. We have recently developed a managers' self-assessment tool which will be built into the PLR to target and assist managers with key training and coaching opportunities.
- 3.7 All FCA programmes have consistent messages embedded to promote doing things that make the most difference and using our expertise to best effect, building confidence to make safe decisions with more targeted information.
- 3.8 Our focus on leadership and staff engagement continues. The Health and Well-being Strategy is well embedded. One-to-one support is available for staff via Health and Well-being officers. A range of health preventative measures are available through this strategy and there is a strong development focus on Working in a High Pressure Environment, and this will complement the e-learning on stress and mindfulness that has been running throughout the year.
- 3.9 We are implementing Mental Health First Aid Training for Staff (using Time to Change champions) which will give us a number of qualified Mental Health First Aiders. Alongside this, training for all managers is being provided, with supporting resources.
- 3.10 We have appointed a Health & Well-being officer with a Health Psychology Master's degree to facilitate greater support and resources around mental health and resilience. In addition we are launching a "Mindfulness Coach" course so that we will have a number of mindfulness coaches internally who can then support colleagues in this area, and further e-learning courses on "Growth Mind-set/Positive Thinking" and Time Management courses are being developed.

4. CURRENT SOCIAL WORK RESOURCING

- 4.1 Earlier this year, the Corporate Management Team agreed a strategy of Forward Recruitment. Every service area has worked with HR and Finance to predict future leavers in 2017/18, and early recruitment to fill those posts has started. A different and innovative recruitment strategy has been put in place, using a range of different methods of advertising and promoting the use of CVs and LinkedIn. This has shown significant success in applications and appointments particularly in some of the hard to recruit to areas. The number of applicants continues to rise and the improvements in the recruitment process is supporting applicants being confirmed into post quicker.
- 4.2 We continue the use of our flexible workforce, recruiting to increase numbers, and every service area is now using self-employed contractors (SECs). SECs work across both Public and Private Law and they can be deployed to the service areas most in need. We are encouraging staff members who are retiring to consider continuing to offer their experience and expertise as bank workers, and this is proving to be a popular choice: numbers of bank workers increased by 11% in the last year. We continue to use high

calibre agency staff where the need arises and have consistently throughout the year engaged an average of 84% nationally.

- 4.3 Cafcass uses a workload weighting tool to monitor workloads. Recently the points weighting has been reducing for staff as we bring increased staffing levels. Nationally FCAs hold an average of 20 cases.

5. **BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS**

- 5.1 All the actions taken are ensuring that children and families have continued to receive a timely and quality service.

6. **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

- 6.1 The organisation has received an increased budget to meet the workforce gap.

7. **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 The risk of not being able to allocate work remains, if applications continue to rise and recruitment becomes more difficult. At present, we are not predicting this scenario will materialise but it will be kept under continuous review.

Christine Banim,
National Service Director
6th June 2017

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Definition</u>
CMT	Corporate Management Team
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DFJ	District Family Judge
ECMS	E-Case Management System
FCA	Family Court Advisor
IT	Information Technology
L&D	Learning & Development
LAs	Local Authorities
LFJB	Local Family Justice Board
LinkedIn	Worldwide professional network
MIS	Management Information Systems
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
OMT	Operational Management Team
PLR	Performance & Learning Review
S31	Section 31
SEC	Self employed contractor