



Draft

**Cafcass Quality Committee Minutes
Friday 15 September 2017, 14.00 - 16.00
21 Bloomsbury Street, Bentham Room and Charles Dickens Room**

Present

Fay Selvan, Chair of Quality Committee (via video conference)
Caroline Corby, Cafcass Board Member
Paul Grant, Cafcass Board Member (via video conference)
Stuart Smith, Cafcass Board Member (via video conference)
Deep Sagar, Cafcass Board Member
Joanna Nicolas, Cafcass Board Member

In Attendance

Anthony Douglas, Cafcass Chief Executive
Christine Banim, National Service Director (via video conference)
Sarah Parsons, Assistant Director (Learning and Development)
Alex Kemp, Head of Practice, National improvement Service
Neville Hall, Assistant Director
Monika Sukthankar, Practice Supervisor
Grace Egbewole-Adereti, Cafcass Board and Corporate Support Assistant (Minutes)
Elizabeth Morrison, Cafcass Information Assurance Officer

Apologies

Nicola Blakebrough, Cafcass Board Secretariat
Richard Green, National Child Care Policy Manager
Professor Simon Hackett, Adviser to the Quality Committee
Stuart Moore, Private Law Policy Lead (Legislation) & Cafcass Policy Sponsor, Ministry of Justice
Anji Owens, Assistant Director

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Anji Owens, Richard Green, Stuart Moore, Simon Hackett and Nicola Blakebrough.

2. Draft Minutes from the Quality Committee 3 March 2017 and Joint Quality and Performance Committee meeting on 2 May 2017

The minutes of the Quality Committee Meeting on 3 March 2017 were reviewed. The Committee requested that an amendment be made to reflect that the Committee had discussed that the Chief Executive consider running a survey for judges, to understand how often judges agree with recommendations from Family Court Advisers (FCA's). The Chief Executive informed the Committee that findings from the various case feedback mechanisms

in place would continue to be developed rather than a separate piece of research being undertaken and that an update on this would be provided to the Committee.

The meeting minutes of the Joint Quality and Performance meeting on 2 May were agreed as an accurate record.

Action 1: An amendment would be made to the 3 March Quality Committee meeting minutes to include that the Committee had discussed that the Chief Executive consider running a survey for judges in order to understand how often judges agree with recommendations from Family Court Advisers.

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. Ofsted Readiness

The National Service Director presented the report on Ofsted readiness. The report sets out the preparatory work for the upcoming national inspection by Ofsted and the potential key lines of enquiry, which include evidencing child impact and the way in which the voice of the child is heard; national consistency; and the thresholds for grades within the Quality Impact Assessment. It is anticipated that the inspection will take place in Quarter 3 or 4 of 2017-18. The inspection will follow the same methodology as the Cafcass national inspection of 2014.

The Committee commended the report and discussed whether anything more could be done to improve the quality of case recording and planning, which was identified as an area for improvement in internal auditing. The Committee was informed that while we have high standards for case recording and planning, high demand at times has affected the timeliness of recording. On a separate note, it was agreed that an anonymised sample of direct work with children, such as drawings and letters to judges would be brought to a future Quality Committee meeting for information and discussion.

The Chair noted that Cafcass' tools on the subject of the child's wishes and feelings would be of interest and agreed that these would be circulated to the Committee for information. It was also agreed that an item about how to use the different tools available in the myCourtroom application would be presented at a future Board meeting or seminar.

Action 2: An anonymised sample of direct work with children would be brought to a future Quality Committee meeting for information and discussion.

Action 3: Cafcass tools regarding the child's wishes and feelings would be circulated to the Committee for information.

Action 4: An item about how to use the different tools available in the myCourtroom application would be presented at a future Board meeting or seminar.

4.1 Thematic Audit – Child Sexual Exploitation and Radicalisation

The Assistant Director presented the report on the themes and learning from recent Area Quality Reviews (AQRs) and thematic audits which included the child exploitation thematic audit.

The Committee commended the good audit results and agreed that the programme of thematic audits is a valuable piece of work which evidences how we respond to new challenges and demonstrates the complexity of work being undertaken.

The Committee discussed the AQR process and the collaborative nature of the process. The Assistant Director assured the Committee that the AQR process is positive and that local managers and teams are involved and engaged throughout the process.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report.

4.2 Presentation – Update on the Child Exploitation Strategy

The Assistant Director presented an update on the work completed under the Child Exploitation Strategy. The Assistant Director noted that the original child sexual exploitation strategy has evolved into a Child Exploitation Strategy which now includes trafficking and radicalisation.

It was noted that a Child Exploitation steering group has been established to develop and monitor the action plan and overall strategy. The steering group is supported by a network of Child Exploitation Ambassadors and Champions who have a good awareness of local practice issues, and that information is now available to staff through knowledge alerts and eLearning modules.

The Committee discussed whether the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) have contributed to the Child Exploitation Strategy. The Assistant Director confirmed that the FJYPB have assisted with designing tools for working with children and the Assistant Director will consider if the FJYPB could offer any further input.

The Committee queried what measures are taken to prevent child trafficking when families are leaving the UK during court proceedings. The Assistant Director reassured the Committee that use of the National Referral Mechanism is in place to tackle this issue. The Committee was also informed that law enforcement agencies abroad are increasingly aware of the issue. It was agreed that the Operational Management Team would discuss how Cafcass can disseminate Child Exploitation findings into the wider sector and report back to the Committee.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report.

Action 5: The Operational Management Team would discuss how Cafcass can disseminate Child Exploitation findings into the wider sector and report back to the Committee.

5. Parental Alienation – Practice Presentation

The Assistant Director responsible for learning and development and a Practice Supervisor gave a presentation about parental alienation which included two case examples. The Assistant Director stated that the definition and scale of parental alienation remains controversial and that the accompanying report provided a summary of the history and reasons for this controversy. The subject presents many challenges and dilemmas in the family courts and specifically for Cafcass, for example in accurately identifying parental alienation and distinguishing it from other forms of post separation parent-child relationship difficulties.

The Assistant Director informed the Committee that Cafcass is developing a High Conflict Practice Pathway which is inspired by the Domestic Abuse Pathway and will guide FCAs through high-conflict cases. The Cafcass Positive Parenting programme is also being

developed as a structured intervention designed to reduce emotional harm to children in appropriate cases and to reduce the length of protracted proceedings where the court process itself compounds the level of conflict. It was agreed that the evaluation report of the Positive Parenting programme would be presented to the Committee once the programme finishes in 2018.

The Practice Supervisor gave an oral overview of two case examples featuring parental alienation. It was noted that there is difficulty in knowing the prevalence of alienating behaviours in the family justice system as there is no fixed and agreed universal definition and because data is not routinely captured.

The Committee discussed the role of Cafcass in raising awareness about the issue of parental alienation within the sector and it was agreed that an item about how Cafcass' work and research projects into parental alienation might impact on the wider Family Justice sector would be presented to the Quality Committee in September 2018. The Committee noted that there was a concern about the danger of pathologising the normal swings of emotional behaviour that children and adults experience while under stress, though Cafcass has and continues to develop tools to address these concerns.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director and Practice Supervisor for their report.

Action 6: The evaluation report of the Positive Parenting programme to be presented to the Committee once the programme completes in 2018.

Action 7: An item about how Cafcass' work and research projects into parental alienation might impact on the wider Family Justice sector would be presented to the Quality Committee in September 2018.

6. Serious Incident Notifications and Submissions to Serious Case Reviews

The Assistant Director presented the Serious Incident Notifications (SIN) and Submissions to Serious Case Reviews (SCR) to the Committee. During the 6 month period Cafcass received 15 notifications of child deaths where maltreatment was known or suspected. Of the notifications reported, one was confirmed as an SCR and three Local Safeguarding Children's Boards have requested scoping information to inform their decision about whether to initiate an SCR.

The Committee discussed whether there was a requirement for the SIN and SCR report to be presented to the Board. It was agreed that the Quality Committee provide full scrutiny of the report on behalf of the Board however that the Board and Committee Chairs would review the arrangement at the next Chairs Conference Call and discuss whether the report should be made available to all Board Members.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report.

Action 8: The Board and Committee Chairs to review arrangements regarding scrutiny of the SIN and SCR report.

7. Strategic Risk Register

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that there were no changes to report in relation to the nature and level of risks within the Strategic Risk Register where the Quality Committee has lead assurance.

8. Exceptions Report

There were no new exceptions to report.

9. Any Other Business

The Committee acknowledged that the intention behind today's agenda of having fewer items in number but which are scrutinised and discussed in more depth had worked well.

There was no further business.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: Friday 1 December 2017, 14.00 – 16.00

Actions Summary

- Action 1: An amendment would be made to the 3 March Quality Committee meeting minutes to include that the Committee had discussed that the Chief Executive consider running a survey for judges in order to understand the value they place on recommendations from Family Court Advisers.
- Action 2: An anonymised sample of direct work with children would be brought to a future Quality Committee meeting for information and discussion.
- Action 3: Cafcass tools regarding the child's wishes and feelings would be circulated to the Committee for information.
- Action 4: An item about how to use the different tools available in the myCourtroom application would be presented at a future Board meeting or seminar.
- Action 5: The Operational Management Team would discuss how Cafcass can disseminate Child Exploitation findings into the wider sector and report back to the Committee.
- Action 6: The evaluation report of the Positive Parenting programme to be presented to the Committee once the programme completes in 2018.
- Action 7: An item about how Cafcass' work and research projects into parental alienation might impact on the wider Family Justice sector would be presented to the Quality Committee in September 2018.
- Action 8: The Board and Committee Chairs to review arrangements regarding scrutiny of the SIN and SCR report.