



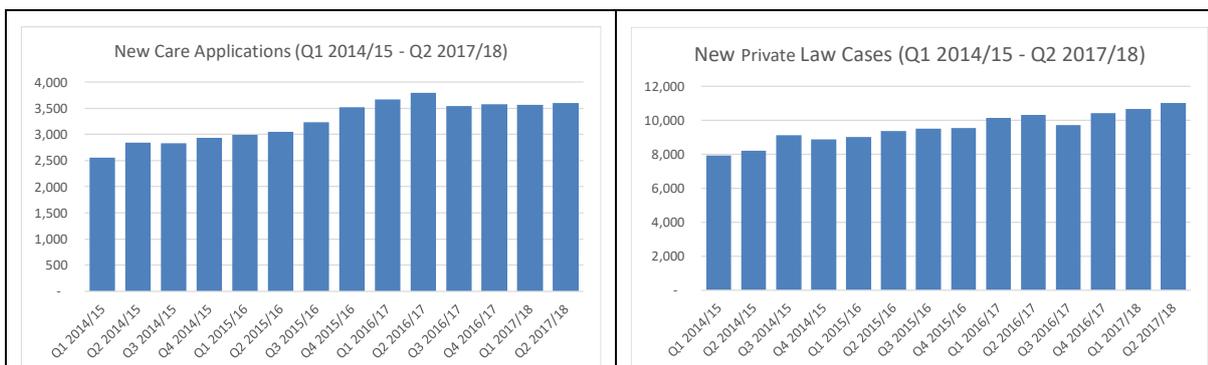
CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 20th October 2017

Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

1. Overall annual demand for service has risen in both Public and Private Law.
2. In the last 12 months (October 2016 – September 2017 compared to October 2015 – September 2016) percentages are:-
 - **0.4%** higher for new Public Law (S31 Care) applications; and
 - **5.7%** higher for new Private Law cases



3. In the last 12 months (October 2016 – September 2017 compared to October 2015 – September 2016) our average monthly levels for new demand have been:-
 - **1,190** new Public Law (S31 Care) applications per month. This is compared to an average of 1,185 the previous year (October 2015 – September 2016) and 984 per month two years ago (October 2014 – September 2015).
 - June 2017 saw the largest ever demand for a calendar month with 1,326 new section 31 care applications received.
 - In private law, we have averaged **3,478** new cases per month in the last 12 months (October 2016 – September 2017). This is compared to an average of 3,291 during the previous year (October 2015 – September 2016), and 3,029 per month two years ago (October 2014 – September 2015).
 - 3,851 new private law cases were received in June 2017, this was the largest total for a calendar month since August 2013.

1 AIM AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 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

- 2.1 To consider if the actions taken by Cafcass officers provide assurance in the Board's governance role.

3 KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER

- 3.1 The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) continue to discuss the rising demand with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The extra financial resources in 2017/18 has supported increased recruitment and closed some of the gaps in the workforce.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive has been working with the President of the Family Court Division to implement guidance that limits Family Court Advisor (FCA) time at court and numbers of reports produced, without compromising the quality of the work and outcomes for children.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive, CMT, and the senior Operational Management Team (OMT) are all fully engaged and contributing significantly with the MoJ to achieve reforms in the Family Justice System. The gateway pilot in Private law, referenced in the Chief Executive's report, has been given ministerial agreement.
- 3.4 Every Assistant Director continues to work 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.
- 3.5 We have continued to use IT Innovations to support 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.
- 3.6 New electronic tools to support managers in the allocation of new work are now available and continue to be developed directly in consultation with our managers. These tools provide managers with a significant range of information, including data from our workload weighting tool, to enable them to fully consider appropriate workload management of individual staff.
- 3.7 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 to improve quality and productivity.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 All Family Court Advisor 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. Recent national training on improving productivity has been extremely well received. This training was directed towards the 103 least productive Family Court Advisors (FCAs), and was aimed at giving them tools and skills to relieve pressure on completion of work.
- 3.10 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.

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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.

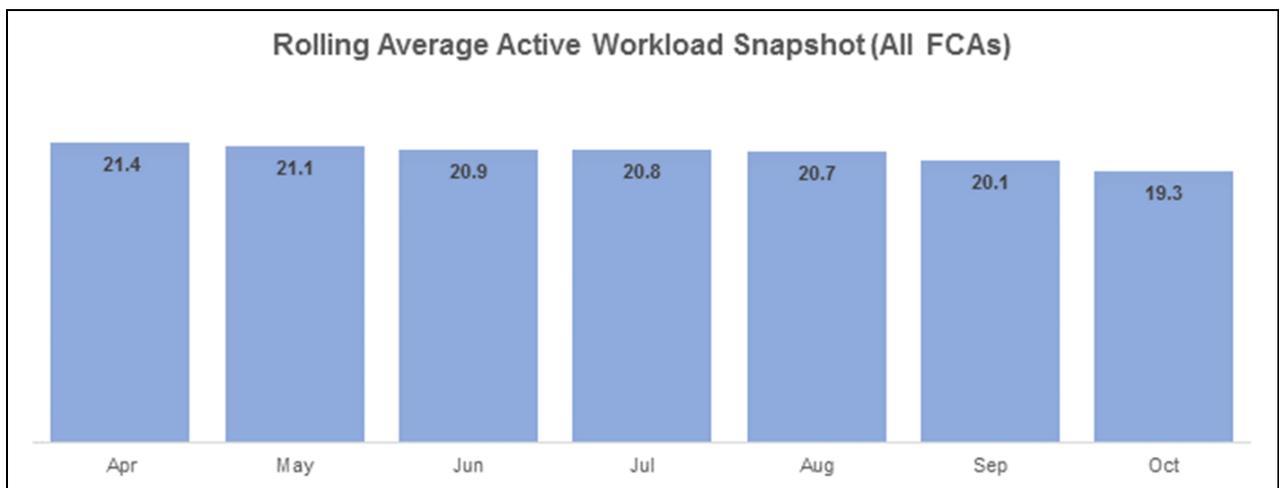
4 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK RESOURCING

- 4.1 Earlier this year, CMT 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 is ongoing. A revised 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 evidenced 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 Cafcass Associates (previously known as self-employed contractors).
- Our employed social work staff numbers increased by **55.6 FTE** since 31 March 2017, with a further **63 new starters** accepting an offer and due to join us, and a further **77 vacancies** being recruited to. As at October 2017 we have an employed social work FTE of 1,230 compared to 1174,4 on 31 March 2017.
 - To address capacity quickly on budget release, we increased social work agency staffing significantly since March 2017. There are currently **165** agency social work staff (an increase from 110 from 31 March 2017) and we remain committed to using only high-quality agency workers, reflected by the average tenure of **42 weeks**. Our current recruitment activity will coincide with the reduction of agency staff numbers and we will convert some of the best agency talent to permanent positions.
 - Cafcass Associates work across both public and provide law and can be deployed to the service areas most in need, providing an experienced and flexible additional workforce. We also encourage retiring staff members to consider continuing to offer their experience and expertise as bank workers, thereby retaining key skills, and this is proving to be a popular choice. This overall pool of non-agency flexible workforce has increased to **203** as at 30 September 2017 (from 159 on 31 March 2017).

5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

- 5.1 Demand for services continues to increase and overall national open caseload (stock) levels have increased by **4.8%** in the last 12 months.

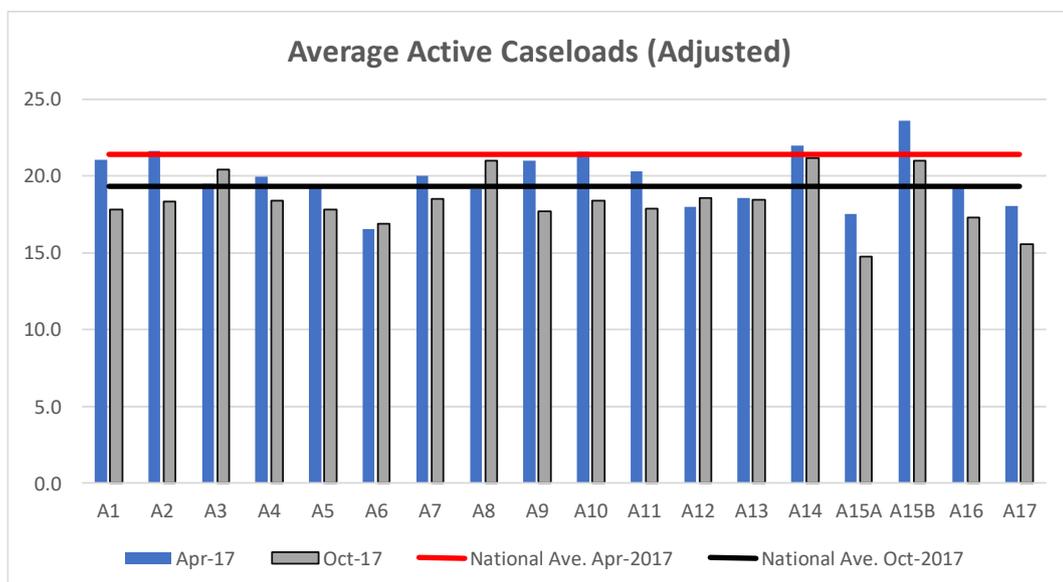
5.2 Alongside the increased number of open cases, the national average active caseload of our staff has fallen to **19.3 cases**¹ as at the end of September 2017 compared to nearly 21.5 in April 2017. The positive trend in active caseloads has coincided with the period of enhanced recruitment activity.



5.3 Along with increased recruitment, we have managed the pressures of demand on staff in keeping sickness levels low, at **7.2 Average Working Days Lost** for social work staff and **8** days for non-social work staff.

5.4 Cafcass staff turnover remains low at **11.9%** for social work staff compared to a national average of around 16% for local authority children’s services social work staff.

5.5 The impact of increased capacity and improved productivity is reflected in the localised picture of current active caseloads where reductions have been seen in 15 of our 18 service areas since April 2017.



¹ The caseload figure is based on active cases that require work and are adjusted by the FTE of the individual staff member.

6 BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS

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

7 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

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

8 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 The risk of not being able to allocate work remains, if the applications continue to rise and recruitment becomes more difficult.

Christine Banim,
National Service Director
5th October 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 Adviser
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 (now Cafcass Associates)