



**Cafcass Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Friday 26 January 2018, 12.30 to 14.30**  
**21 Bloomsbury Street, London**  
**Draft**

**Present**

Baroness Claire Tyler, Chair of the Board  
Fay Selvan, Board member and Chair of the Quality Committee  
Francis Plowden, Board member and Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee  
John Lakin, Board member and Chair of the Performance Committee  
Caroline Corby, Board member  
Deep Sagar, Board member  
Paul Grant, Board member  
Joanna Nicolas, Co-opted Board member

**In attendance**

Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive  
Julie Brown, Director of Resources  
Christine Banim, National Service Director  
Rebecca Barrett, Interim Head of Communications  
Melanie Carew, Head of Legal Services  
Elizabeth Gibby, Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice  
Advone Katsande, Family Justice and Young People's Board Representative  
Andrew Willcox, Family Justice and Young People's Board Representative  
James Hyde, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (for items 12 & 13 only)  
Hilary Barrett, Assistant Director (for items 12 & 13 only)  
Nicola Blakebrough, Corporate Strategist  
Grace Egbewole-Adereti, Board and Corporate Support Assistant

**Apologies**

Stuart Smith, Board member

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked staff for their hard work and contributions to the Open Board Meeting that morning. The Board noted that the meeting had been informative and positive. The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) presentation was commended and it was suggested that the graphics of the FJYPB logo could be updated to ensure it feels contemporary. It was agreed that the stakeholder attendance list would be shared with Board members after the meeting.

Apologies were received from Stuart Smith.

Action 1: The stakeholder attendance list for the Open Board meeting would be shared with Board members.

## **2. Draft Minutes from the Board Meeting on 20 October 2017**

The minutes of the Board Meeting on 20 October 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **3. Action Log/Matters Arising**

The Board discussed the action that 'the Chair of the Quality Committee would work with the FJYPB regarding how children can be properly supported and represented in children's complaints to Cafcass'. The Chair of the Quality Committee confirmed that she had attended the FJYPB meeting on 9 December 2017 and the Assistant Director had agreed to review the complaints procedure for children.

There were no further matters arising.

## **4. Report from the Chair**

The Chair reported to the Board as follows:

- The Chair attended the Coram event 'Abuse and Violence against Children' on 20 November 2017.
- The Chair met with the Director General of Justice Courts and Policy Group at Ministry of Justice on 11 January 2018.
- The Chair attended the Cafcass Board Strategy Group meeting on 19 January 2018.
- The Chair had attended various national and parliamentary events on mental health and children's social care issues.

The Chair informed the Board that she would attend a Royal College of Psychiatrists joint conference with National Association of Head Teachers on 30 January as the keynote speaker, and would make a small number of Board visits in her final months as Chair.

## **5. Report from the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive informed the Board that demand in public law has continued to plateau or show a slight decline month on month albeit at a high level and with the stock of cases in the system still increasing. Demand in private law is still on an upward trend. These continuously high demand pressures have led to a projected overspend in 2017/18 of £0.5m, mostly due to the transitional costs of using agency staff whilst filling vacancies with permanent staff. Constructive discussions are taking place with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) regarding the potential in-year deficit and the 2018/19 budget.

The Board were informed that the new Minister for Cafcass (Lucy Frazer) had been asked to sign off the Manchester pilot (Support with Making Child Arrangements Pilot) which supports the early resolution of private law cases.

The Chief Executive noted that the sector-led Care Crisis Review, facilitated by the Family Rights Group, continues to take evidence and that we continue to be core participants in this review.

The Chief Executive noted that the new Director of Strategy, Teresa Williams, would be starting on 1 March 2018 and would be taking forward strategies that would be mentioned later in the meeting.

The organisation was awaiting the call from Ofsted regarding the imminent inspection.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report.

## **6. Report from the Family Justice Young People's Board**

The Chair welcomed Advone Katsande and Andrew Willcox, representatives of the FJYPB who presented highlights from their regular updating report.

- The FJYPB have set their key priorities for 2018, which will help shape the FJYPB's work plan and strategy for the year. The annual review and priorities would be launched in January 2018 and would feature in the Cafcass External Newsletter.
- The FJYPB have taken a lead role to develop greater involvement of children and young people in the family justice system in Wales and met with Ben Eaton and Matthew Pinnell from Cafcass Cymru to agree a joint workplan for 2018/19.
- The FJYPB have started planning and preparation for the annual Voice of the Child 2018 conference, which will take place on Tuesday 24th July 2018 in either Manchester or London.
- The FJYPB attended a Women's Aid round table meeting last October 2017 to help develop a strategy for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The FJYPB are recruiting for new members. Recruitment opened on 18th December 2017 and the deadline for all applications is 28th February 2018.
- The FJYPB recently delivered two training events for mediators from Relate in North London in December 2017 and for National Family Mediation (NFM) earlier in November 2017.
- Following recommendations provided by the FJYPB, a Yorkshire Children's Centre have collaborated to develop their "buzz my feeling" boxes which will be going in NACCC's online newsletter spotlight in January.
- The Board are now supporting the development of a training package for HMCTS staff about supporting child witnesses and children meeting judges.
- the FJYPB have developed a training video on the impact of domestic abuse of children and young people. The next step is to undertake the final editing before it is distributed.

The Board discussed Ministerial attendance at the annual Voice of the Child (VOTC) conference and agreed that it would be positive to see more Ministers in attendance. It was agreed that Government Ministers would be invited to attend the next FJYPB conference.

The Chair thanked the FJYPB representatives for the report.

Action 2: The Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice would inform Government Ministers of the timings of the next VOTC conference.

## **7. Reports from ARAC, Performance and Quality Committees**

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC):

The Chair of ARAC informed the Board that the Committee had last met on 4 December 2017 and had reviewed the Internal Audit progress report. To date all internal audits in 2017/18 have received a substantial assurance rating.

The Chair of ARAC noted that the presentation from Cafcass' External Security Advisor had provided a reassuring perspective on cyber security within the organisation. The Chair also noted that the Information Assurance Officer would be presenting a deep dive on data breaches to the March ARAC meeting.

The Board queried whether there was a standard operating practice that could be used to reduce the number of data breaches that occurred because of referrals where information was missing or filled out incorrectly, particularly in relation to Private Law applications. The Board were informed that there was an operating practice but that incorrect information is being received on the initial applications. It was suggested that service users could verbally reiterate their addresses during telephone interviews to reduce the number of errors. It was noted that the 'deep dive' exercise would look at avoidable breaches. The Chair noted that she would be attending a Public Chairs forum event on 2 February and would feedback any relevant information about this issue.

#### Performance Committee:

The Chair of the Performance Committee informed the Board that the Performance Committee had last met on 4 December 2017. The Committee had noted that the National Family Justice Board had not met since March 2017 and that the date of the next meeting was still pending due to a decision on chairing responsibilities. The Board acknowledged that there is no statutory basis for these meetings however they felt strongly that the meetings should continue.

The Performance Committee had reviewed the performance report and were impressed with the resolve of staff to cope with demand and agreed to review information on the Wiltshire area at their next meeting after concerns regarding case duration times slipping.

The Performance Committee had received a Corporate Services Presentation from the Communications team. It was also noted that Board member Nickie Aiken had her final meeting.

The Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, MoJ, requested that her job title be amended in the Performance Committee meeting minutes.

#### Quality Committee:

The Chair of the Quality Committee informed the Board that the Quality Committee had last met on 1 December 2017. The Quality Committee reviewed the Serious Incident Notifications and Submissions to Serious Case Reviews, particularly cases in relation to gang-related violence. It was agreed that a Practice Expert would be considered to help in this area.

The Chair noted that an action related to a thematic audit on whether quality of work is related to length of employment had not been included in the meeting minutes and asked that this would be corrected.

The Board Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for their reports.

Action 3: The job title of the MoJ representative would be amended in the 4 December Performance Committee meeting minutes.

Action 4: The Quality Committee meeting minutes would be amended to include the action point related to a thematic audit on whether quality of work is related to length of employment.

## **8. Finance Report**

The Director of Resources reported that overall spending levels at the end of the year are forecast to be a circa £0.5m overspend. This is due to the rapid increase in the pace of recruitment into the organisation and transitional costs of using agency staff before vacancies could be filled by permanent staff and the fact that it takes new permanent staff around 3 months to pick up a full caseload.

It was confirmed that the full amount of gated release had been provided to the organisation. The Corporate Management Team would be meeting to discuss the overspend and to take actions to mitigate the budget pressure whilst maintaining performance and KPIs.

The Board were informed that it is not anticipated that the overspend would undermine next year's position. The Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, MoJ, noted that Cafcass had a positive track record of managing public money which would put them in a good position going forward.

It was agreed that the costs of temporary and full time staff would be considered at a future meeting.

It was agreed that the Board would be provided with monthly updates in respect of the projected overspend.

Action 5: The costs of temporary and full time staff would be considered at a future meeting.

Action 6: The Board would receive monthly updates regarding the projected overspend.

## **9. Demand Levels and Resourcing**

The National Service Director informed the Board that overall annual demand for services has decreased in Public Law and increased in Private Law. In the last 12 months (calendar year 2017 compared to calendar year 2016), percentages are -2.5% lower for Public Law (S31 Care) applications; and 6.5% higher for Private Law.

Allocation of cases continues to be an issue in some services areas, such as Newcastle, Hertfordshire, Nottingham and Staffordshire. However, KPI's and quality of casework are being maintained.

The Board noted that average active caseloads had been reducing as a positive benefit of the increased recruitment activity and new staff building up caseloads. The most recent snapshot shows a slight uplift in caseload figures which can be attributed to the ongoing record increases in Private Law demand. In January 2018, the average active caseload for a FCA is 19.3 cases, compared to 21.4 in April 2017.

The Board queried why the level of staff sickness was lower for social work staff, than non-social work staff. This was due to flexible working arrangements and that social work staff could work around minor illness which otherwise would have prevented them from travelling to an office base, whereas most non-social work staff are office based.

The Chair thanked the National Service Director for the report.

## **10. Strategic Risk Register**

The Chief Executive and the Director of Resources presented the Strategic Risk Register and reported that all but one strategic risks are considered to have a residual rating of amber. It

was suggested that the impact of pilots could be considered as an additional risk and that this would be looked at in further detail when the new Director of Strategy comes into post.

## **11. Communications Strategy 2018-20**

The Interim Head of Communications presented the Communications Strategy to the Board and noted that it would cover the period 2018-19. The Communications Strategy is linked to the organisations strategic objectives and focuses on campaigns which will target the three key groups: service users, stakeholders and staff members. The Communications Strategy focused on two campaigns; external and internal. The internal campaign would focus on how to make internal communications most helpful to busy staff carrying out complex work. The external campaign seeks to promote a greater understanding of the work we do.

The Board were informed that the Communications team were looking to promote widespread use of social media for staff and Board members. The Board indicated its wish for more focus to be placed on external communications and agreed to advocate for the organisation to promote awareness of its positive work.

It was suggested that the graphics used in the organisation's logo would be reviewed and made more contemporary.

Action 7: The Interim Head of Communications would review the graphics used in the Cafcass logo.

## **12. Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2017-20: 6 month update**

The Head of Human Resources and Assistant Director presented the report on progress and developments made against the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy in the last six months. The D&I Strategy has three overarching themes: Child Impact, Inclusive Employer and Staff Diversity and good progress has been made in terms of the identified actions within each of these three strands.

Work to date includes the FJYPB Top Tips and analytical tools. Diversity Champions have also been engaged with the project and work is underway to provide staff with information via virtual staff networks from early February.

Delivery of the D&I Strategy relies heavily on Diversity and inclusion champions to be responsible for cascading information to colleagues. It was noted that while the D&I Strategy had a rich base of information to work from, the dashboard should be reviewed to check that it was representing elements of diversity in a proportionate manner. The Board agreed that this would be reviewed by the Head of HR and Assistant Director. The Board also requested that the action plan should clearly set out the quantified targets, rather than be limited to processes.

It was noted that the number of males in management positions was disproportionate to the overall number of male staff in the organisation. The Board were informed that the gender split was indicative of the nature of the profession and this is a sector wide issue. The Board recognised this but agreed that there was no room for complacency and that appropriate positive action should be taken to try to increase the number of male social workers.

The Board expressed concern over the number of black and minority ethnic (BME) grievances raised and the amount of male grievances raised, with 28.6 per cent of BME staff leaving as a result of dismissals. The Board were reassured that whilst the numbers were small, the issue will be looked into and reported back to the Board.

The Board agreed that it would consider the most prominent points raised regarding staff diversity (e.g. gender, BME) at the March meeting. The Board were pleased with the

increasing use of metrics on staff diversity and expressed its wish to revisit these metrics on a regular basis.

The Chair thanked the Head of HR, Assistant Director and Board Member Caroline Corby for the report.

Action 8: The Head of HR and Assistant Director would review whether the dashboard accurately represents elements of diversity in the diversity strategy.

Action 9: The Board agreed that it would consider the most prominent points raised around staff diversity (e.g. gender, BME) at the March meeting.

### **13. The Workforce Development Strategy 2017-20: 6 month update**

The Head of HR presented the report outlining progress and developments made against the Workforce Development Strategy in the last six months. The four key strands of development include the recruitment of high quality staff in significant numbers to ensure manageable workloads, reducing levels of sickness absence and high performance against organisational key performance indicators. The Board commended the report and were informed that this would continue to be provided on a biannual basis.

The Board were informed that 50 per cent of staff who attended a staff workshop on how to improve productivity provided positive feedback about the course. It was agreed that the syllabus for the course would be shared internally.

It was noted that while the D&I Strategy went some way in providing a detailed view of the organisation's makeup, the low number of male staff was not present in the Workforce Development Strategy as an area of improvement. The Head of HR would ensure that an action is included in the Workforce Development Strategy Action Plan.

The Chair thanked the Head of HR for the report.

Action 10: The internal staff workshop syllabus to improve productivity would be shared with the Board.

Action 11: The Head of HR would update the Workforce Development Strategy in relation to the low numbers of male staff as an improvement area.

### **14. Any Other Business**

There was no further business.

#### Actions Summary

Action 1: The attendance list for the Open Board meeting would be shared with members.

Action 2: The Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, MoJ would inform Government Ministers of the timings of the next VOTC conference.

Action 3: The job title of the MoJ representative would be amended in the 4 December Performance Committee meeting minutes.

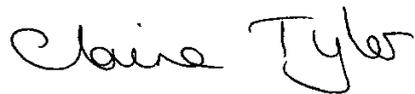
Action 4: The Quality Committee meeting minutes would be amended.

Action 5: The costs of temporary and full time staff would be considered at a future meeting.

Action 6: The Board would receive monthly updates regarding the projected overspend.

- Action 7: The Interim Head of Communications would review the graphics used in the Cafcass logo.
- Action 8: The Assistant Director would review whether the dashboard accurately represents elements of diversity in the diversity strategy.
- Action 9: The Board would consider five main points regarding the Diversity strategy to discuss at the March Board meeting.
- Action 10: The internal staff workshop syllabus to improve Cafcass productivity would be shared more widely with staff.
- Action 11: The Head of HR would update the Workforce Development Strategy in relation to the low numbers of male staff as an improvement area.

**Minutes Approved by the Board Chair, Claire Tyler, 23.03.18**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Tyler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.