



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE
Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 26th January 2018
Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

In the last 12 months (Calendar year 2017 compared to the calendar year 2016) percentage changes for demand are: -

- **6.5%** higher for new Private Law cases; and
 - **-2.5%** lower for new Public Law (S31 Care) applications. However, when Public Law (non-care) cases are added, new case demand for total Public Law *increases* by **1%**. A large number of other case types are included in this category including various types of adoption cases. Around 40% of Public Law (non-care) cases are either Discharge of Care Orders or standalone Supervision cases.
- Based on current levels of demand, it is probable that the current levels of change are maintained until the end of the financial year.
 - Although Q1 and Q2 2016/17 returned the highest ever levels of care application demand, the quarterly levels have since plateaued and the trend has been stable, albeit at this much higher level, since Q4 2015/16.
 - Private Law demand has continued to steadily increase since Q1 2014.
 - In their last quarterly forecast (end of Q2 2017-18) the MoJ have forecast a **+4.3%** increase in new public cases and **+5.5%** increase for new private law cases for the 2018/19 financial year. Our projection is in line with this.

Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) areas are measured primarily on the duration of public law cases and also the number of ongoing cases ('outstandings') in the local area. Sustained rises in demand along with other system pressures (including a lack of judicial resources to hear family cases) have contributed to increases in overall family justice system pressure. In 2017 the large majority of LFJB areas saw a slight deterioration in performance against these key measures.



In the last 12 months (calendar year 2017 compared to calendar year 2016), our average monthly levels for new demand has been: -

- **1,181** new Public Law (S31 Care) applications per month during 2017. This is compared to an average of 1,211 during 2016) and 1,017 per month two years ago (2015). The overall decrease in 2017/18 so far can be largely attributed to low levels of new applications received in April 2017 and December 2017. There was a comparatively low number of working days in each of these months due to bank holidays. This is important to note as the numbers do not signify any service-based impact on the number of applications, it is more technical.
- In Private Law, we have averaged **3,523** new cases per month during 2017). This is compared to an average of 3,309 during the previous year (2016), and 3,060 per month two years ago (2015).
 - 3,847 new private law cases were received in October 2017. This was the largest total for a calendar month since October 2013.
 - The decrease in new cases experienced during Q3 is attributable to December 2017 returning the lowest number of new cases since January 2015. As with public law, the months of April 2017 and December 2017 saw comparatively lower levels of demand for Private Law for the same technical reason.

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 sufficient assurance to satisfy 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 level of demand and the rising number of cases in the system with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The extra financial resources given to us in 2017/18 has supported increased recruitment and closed some of the gaps in the workforce. Discussions are underway about our 2018/19 budget.

3.2 The Chief Executive has agreed with the President of the Family Court Division 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.

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.

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 higher demand, volumes of cases and the associated extra pressure. 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 Along with increased recruitment, IT innovations continue to boost our workforce capacity. The use of Skype for meetings, general communication and training continues to be embedded and is 'business as usual' across much of Cafcass now. This helps to save time, travel and also supports staff engagement through better communication. The new PLR self-assessment format and methodology asks staff to feedback on their confidence in using IT so that targeted support can be provided at an individual level.
- 3.6 Electronic tools to support managers in the allocation of new work are now available and continue to be developed. Further enhancements have been made to these following feedback from staff during Q3. These tools provide managers with a significant range of information to enable them to fully consider appropriate workload management of individual staff. All frontline social work managers have attended specific training regarding the use of analytics.
- 3.7 The new electronic Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) are now embedded with 95% of our eligible/available social work staff having completed a self-assessment and PLR since the new system launched in September 2017. The self-assessment provides a mechanism 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. Feedback from staff and managers has been overwhelmingly positive and further enhancements to the system and associated analytics are planned for 2018.
- 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 Adviser 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. Between August and October 2017, 90 Family Court Advisers attended a series of 12 productivity workshops, facilitated by an improvement manager, IT trainer and HR health & wellbeing officer. The training was titled, 'Providing a timely, productive and responsive service to children'. Feedback from the process was positive and more importantly there were assessed improvements in both the quality of work and productivity in 70% of this targeted group of staff.
- 3.10 Our focus on leadership and staff engagement continues. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is well embedded. One-to-one support is available for staff via Health and Wellbeing officers. A range of health promotion and prevention 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 & Wellbeing 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. We have also implemented a new online recruitment system that makes applying for jobs by applicants, shortlisting and interview arrangement easier and faster. This has achieved significant success in increased 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 offered jobs and also commencing their posts more quickly.

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).

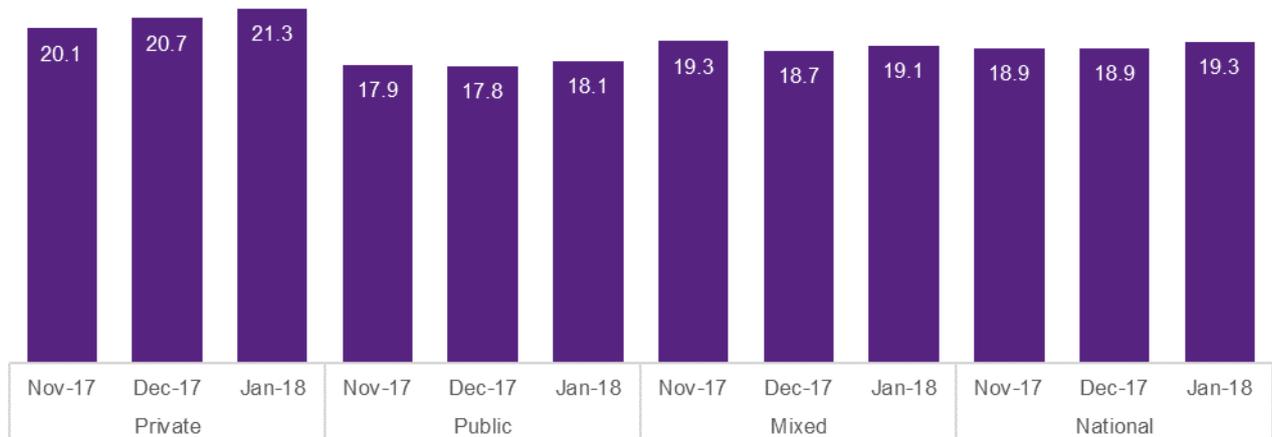
- Our employed social work staff numbers have increased by **108.4 FTE** since 31 March 2017, with a further **38.6** employed new starters accepting an offer and due to join us. A further **47** employed vacancies are being recruited to. As at December 2017 we have an employed social work FTE of **1,282.8** compared to 1174.4 on 31 March 2017 (an increase of **9.2%**).
- In addition to the above, to address capacity quickly on budget release, we have increased social work agency staffing significantly since March 2017. There are currently **152** agency social work staff (an increase of 45 since 31 March 2017) and we remain committed to using only high-quality agency workers, reflected by the average tenure of **48.6 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 private 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 **182** as at 31 December 2017 (from 159 on 31 March 2017).

5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

5.1 Demand for services continues to increase with overall national open caseload (stock) levels have risen by **4%** in the last 12 months.

5.2 In recent months, average active caseloads have 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 and possible disturbances to work due to the festive break. In January 2018, the average active caseload for a FCA is **19.3** cases, historical data tells us that this figure was around 21.4 in April 2017 (therefore a decrease of 10%).

Average Active Caseload by FCA Workload Type

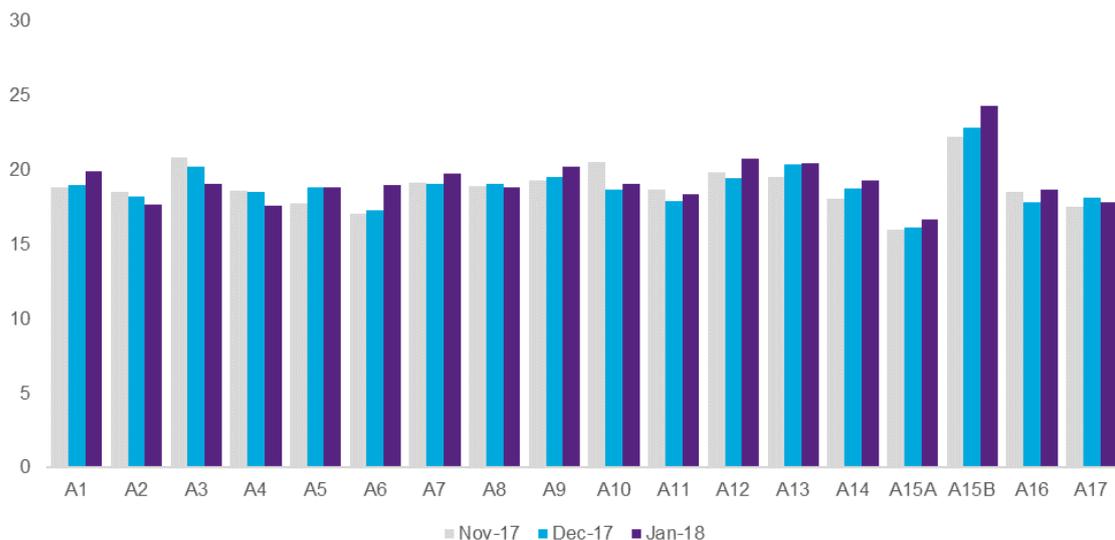


5.3 Along with increased recruitment, we have managed the pressures of demand on our staff to keep social work attendance levels as high as possible. Current sickness levels are positive at **8.3 Average Working Days Lost (AWDL)** for the past 3 months (12 days in the same period last year). non-social work sickness was **13.1 AWDL** for the past 3 months (13.3 for the same period last year).

5.4 Cafcass staff turnover remains low at **12.7%** 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 which have remained fairly static over the past three months against the context of increasing demands for service.

Adjusted Active Caseload (FCA - Non-EIT)



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 applications and the volume of cases in the system continue to rise or if recruitment becomes more difficult.

Christine Banim,
National Service Director
9th January 2018

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Definition</u>
AWDL	Average Working Days Lost
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)