



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE
Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 23 March 2018
Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

Year to date (**April 2017 to February 2018**) comparing the demand in the same period the previous year; the percentages for demand are: -

- **-2.5%** lower for new Public Law (S31 Care) applications; and
 - **4.9%** higher for new Private Law cases.
 - The total for all new case demand has increased by **3.7%**.
- Based on current levels of demand it would be expected that the current levels of change are maintained until the end of the financial year.
 - Quarterly levels have been at a fairly level trend since Q4 2015/16.
 - Private Law demand has continued to return an increasing trend since Q1 2014.
 - In their last quarterly forecast (end of Q3 2017-18) the MoJ have forecast **+1.7%** in new public cases and **+6.8%** for new private law cases for the **2018/19** financial year.

Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) areas are measured primarily on the duration of public law cases and also the number of ongoing cases ('outstanding') in the local area. In the latest snapshot there has been a significant year on year increase nationally for these measures. A majority of LFJB areas experienced a deterioration against Key Performance Measure (KPM) aspirations during Q3. 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.



Year to date (**April 2017 to February 2018**) our average monthly levels for new demand has been: -

- **1,179** new Public Law (S31 Care) applications per month during last 12 months. This is compared to an average of 1,209 during the same period previous year (2016-17) and 1,051 per month two years ago (2015-16). 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.
 - The 1,201 new applications received in February 2018 is the second highest monthly total for a February on record and 4.3% (49 applications) higher than February 2017.
- In Private Law, we have averaged **3,503** new cases per month during the current financial year to date). This is compared to an average of 3,339 during the same period previous year (2016-17), and 3,095 per month two years ago (2015-16).
 - The 3,154 new cases received in February 2018 is the second lowest monthly demand for the current financial year and 5.4% (179 cases) lower than February 2017.
 - The decrease in new cases experienced during the last 3 months is attributable to low demand in February and particularly 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 a comparatively lower level of demand for Private Law.

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. However, discussions continue to look at our budget provision for 2018/19.
- 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 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 'Support with Making Child Arrangements' pilot (Manchester gateway pilot) in private law, referenced in the Chief Executive's report, was given ministerial agreement and commenced in January 2018. The aim is to reduce the caseload of the court in the context of rising numbers of applications, and to improve outcomes for children and their families by ensuring sustainable agreements.

- 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 Innovation with our support to frontline practice via Cafcass' Model Office continues. Following a full evaluation, Cafcass' National Psychology Service offers an opportunity for practitioners to discuss a specific high risk or complex case with a clinical psychologist over the telephone. The service aims to enhance risk assessment skills and improve professional confidence. The service can also be used by managers to support team or individual development needs. An evaluation of the impact of the service found that 95% of FCAs asked said the service increased their confidence in assessing risk.
- 3.6 Along with increased recruitment, the use of IT innovation continues to sit at the centre of increasing our workforce capacity. The use of Skype for meetings, general communication and training continues to embed and is 'business as usual' across much of the business. This sees a direct impact on both the saving of time, travel and also direct staff engagement through better communication. The new PLR self-assessment asks staff to feedback on IT confidence so targeted support can be provided at an individual level.
- 3.7 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, further enhancements have been made following feedback from staff during Q3. These tools provide managers with a significant range of information, including workload 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 during Q2, Q3 and Q4.
- 3.8 The new electronic Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) are now embedded with 98% of our eligible/available social work staff having completed at least one self-assessment and PLR since the new system launched in September 2017. As at 14 March 2018 over 3,914 self-assessments had been completed of which 3,322 are from social work staff. 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.
- 3.9 Learning and Development (L&D): There are a range of different learning programmes available that target specific groups of staff. The Management Development Programme supports front-line managers in the critical role they play in managing increased demand. During 2017/18 we undertook a review of which managers have completed all relevant management development training and managers have since booked on any relevant courses to ensure they have completed this. There is a full programme of workshops running through 2018/19.
- 3.10 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. We have since been able to track the impact on attendees and we have noted that after the training there was an increase in productivity and quality of work.

- 3.11 Practice Supervisors are being developed both nationally and locally with workshops focussing on their roles supporting the Quality Assurance of casework and coaching family court advisers to improve performance
- 3.12 The Emerging Talent Programme and development around strengths is available to all staff. Data shows that the Emerging Talent staff outperform national figures for throughput, quality, attendance and learning.
- 3.13 Schemes such as apprenticeships and the graduate development programme are providing opportunities to recruit talent and to offer the opportunity for existing staff to gain recognised qualifications via the Apprenticeship Levy.
- 3.14 Our focus on leadership and staff engagement continues. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is well embedded, continuing our award-winning approach to supporting the health and wellbeing of our workforce through a range of collaborations: One-to-one support is available for staff via Health and Wellbeing 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.
- Launch of a new holistic model of wellbeing for performance, which is informed by the latest research in physiology, psychology and neuroscience; this model brings together our Health & Wellbeing (H&W) approach to link wellbeing and performance.
 - Macmillan at Work – co-creation of a bespoke workshop to equip managers to support staff affected by cancer and developing a pool of trainers for this purpose across the organisation.
 - Mental Health First Aid – 18 accredited mental health first aiders and delivery of three workshops to managers to increase awareness of and reduce stigma around mental health. Many of our first aiders are undertaking further local initiatives.
 - British Dyslexia Association – delivery of workshops on the impact of dyslexia at work.
 - Mindfulness pilots - August – October 2017 an evidence-based mindfulness intervention tailored to the specific needs of our Family Court Advisors was developed by the Health & Wellbeing Officers. The focus is on increasing awareness of the benefits of mindfulness practice, developing the knowledge and skills of a range of mindfulness-based techniques and suggesting healthier behaviours. Process outcomes were measured in both groups, using a brief questionnaire. Feedback is overwhelmingly positive.
 - 45 H&W sessions delivered to approximately 900 staff members. These sessions covered several topics including Mental Health Awareness, Resilience; Mindfulness; Productivity; Posture and Movement and Optimising Wellbeing for Performance.
 - 135 colleagues have received individual, expert support via referrals to the in house 1:1 support service.
- 3.15 There has been external recognition for the Cafcass' Health and Wellbeing offer, with us having been shortlisted for three national awards:
- HR Distinction Awards 2018 – Category 'Holistic Approach to Wellbeing.' (WINNER)
 - Reward & Employee Benefits Association REBA Awards 2018 – Category 'Mental Health Strategy.'

- PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards – Category ‘Improving productivity through better work life balance’ (winner to be announced in April 2018)

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 commencing their posts more quickly.

4.2 We continue the use of our flexible workforce and every service area is now using Cafcass Associates (previously known as self-employed contractors).

- Our employed social work staff numbers have increased by **151.2 FTE** since 31 March 2017, with a further **12.7** employed new starters accepting an offer and due to join us, and a further **31** employed vacancies being recruited to. As at February 2018 we have an employed¹ social work FTE of **1,325.6** compared to 1174.4 on 31 March 2017 (an increase of **12.9%**).
- In addition to the above, to address capacity quickly on budget release, we increased social work agency staffing during the financial year. In line with the recruitment plan to increase employed Family Court Advisers, we have now reduced the number of agency social workers from 152 in the last reporting period to **104** in March 2018. We have also converted some of the best agency talent to permanent positions, in the last 12 months **59** agency social work staff have been converted to permanent positions. We remain committed to using only high-quality agency workers, reflected by the average tenure of **57 weeks**.
- 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 **184** as at 28 February 2018 (from 159 on 31 March 2017).

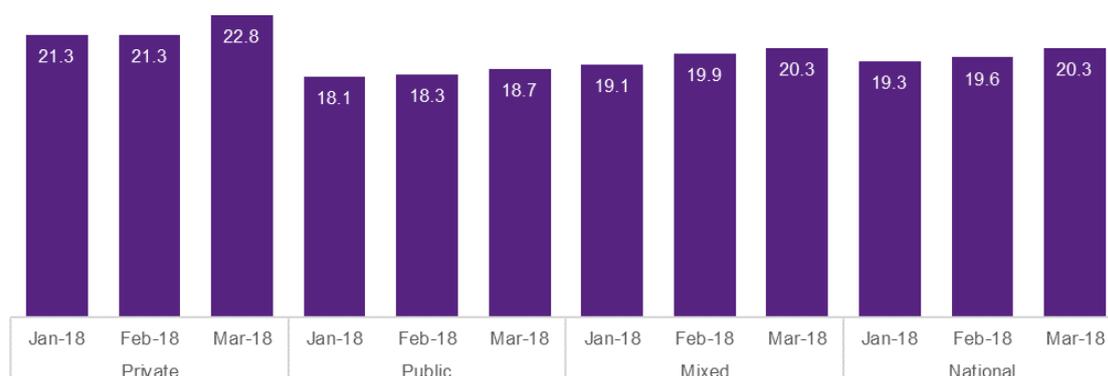
5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

5.1 Demand for services continues to increase with overall national open caseload (stock) levels increasing by **10.6%** in the last 12 months.

5.2 In the last three months, average active caseloads have shown a marginal increase which can be attributed to the ongoing record Private Law demand. In March 2018, the average active caseload for a FCA is **20.3** cases, historical data tells us that this figure was around 21.4 in April 2017, therefore a decrease of 5%, which follows the increased recruitment activity during Summer 2017.

¹ ‘Employed’ refers to staff with Cafcass contracts of employment and excludes all flexible workforce staff.

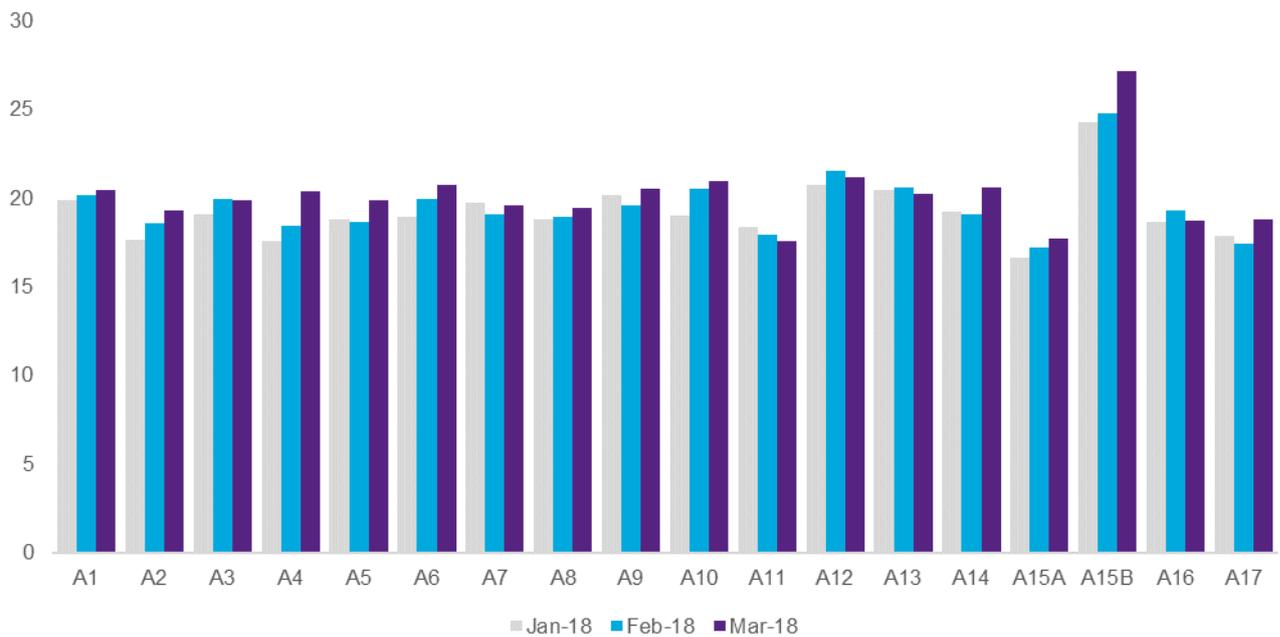
Average Active Caseload by FCA Workload Type



- 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 higher than the same period last year at **11.4 Average Working Days Lost (AWDL)** for the past 3 months (10.5 days last year). Non-social work sickness was **13.5 AWDL** for the past 3 months (11.2 for the same period last year). Due to seasonal sickness, absence levels are generally higher at this time of year.
- 5.4 Sickness as a percentage of employed FCA capacity reduced to **3.78%** for the 12-month period (March 17 – February 18) compared to 4.74% for the previous year (March 2016 – February 2017). In FTE terms, this equates to **42.67 FCAs** and 51.23 FCAs unavailable for case allocation due to sickness in these periods.
- 5.5 As at February 2018, a combined total of **2.2 FTE** was unavailable for workload allocation due to miscellaneous reasons and a combined FTE of **32.18** were provided workload relief in recognition of court duty work across the organisation.
- 5.6 Cafcass staff turnover remains low at **11.2%** for social work staff compared to a national average of around 15% for local authority children’s services social work staff.²
- 5.7 The impact of increased capacity and improved productivity is reflected in the localised picture of current active caseloads which have remained in-line with national trends over the past three months against the context of increasing demands for service. Comparing March to January, notable decreases can be seen in A11 and A13 whilst A4 and A15B show a significant increase.

² Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-work-workforce-2017>

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 the applications continue to rise and recruitment becomes more difficult.

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National Service Director**

16th March 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)