

Cafcass Public Board Meeting

Chief Executive and Corporate Management
Team Overview

8 November 2023



The next 40 minutes.....



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice

1. Our operating context: Data
2. Prioritisation update
3. Best for children – case progression
4. Quality assuring practice: Quarter 2 overview

Part 2: And in other news...

1. Successes in the reporting period (including an overview from our Principal Social Worker)
2. Learning and improvement - Domestic Abuse
3. Department for Education practice pilots
4. Private law – internal change programme

Part 3: People & Workforce

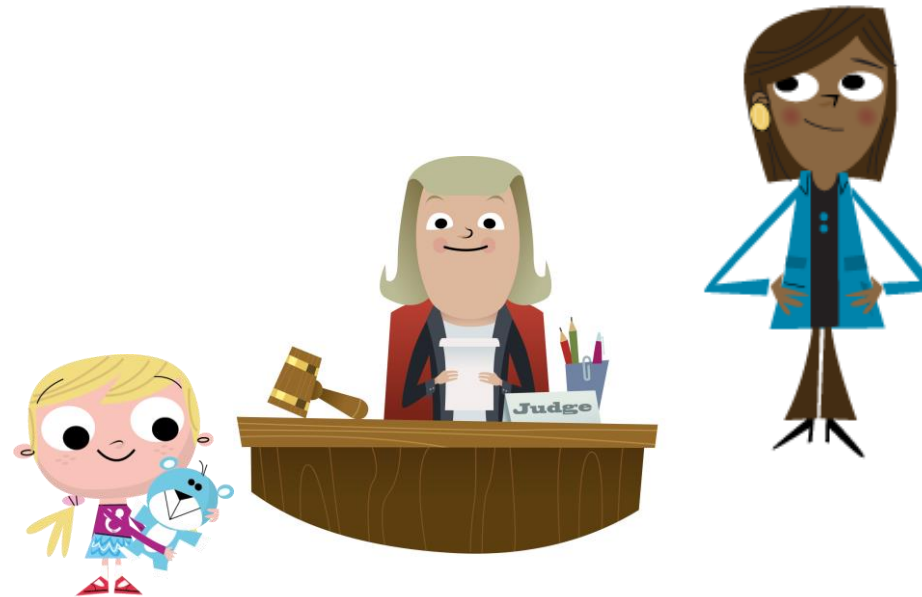
1. Pay and benefits
2. Staff survey 2023
3. Workforce overview and update
4. Awards and recognition
5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Part 4: Improvement in the next period

1. Public Law Improvement Programme
2. Public Law Outline relaunch – update
3. Private Law improvement Programme
4. Launch of 'Ambitious for children'



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Our operating context: Data (1)



- **Overall demand** for the first two quarters (April to Sept 2023) when compared to the same period in 2022-23 has **reduced by 1.2%**. We are receiving **c219 new applications every working day**.
- This represents a **reduction of 3.6% in new public law cases** (667 fewer children) and **if only s31 care and supervision applications are considered, these have decreased by 7.8%** (642 children).
- **Private law** has also marginally decreased by 0.2% new case (162 fewer children), however, **the number of section 7 orders received has increased by 9%** (879 more reports)
- As of 1 October 2023, there were **30,752 children's cases open to Cafcass** representing **50,077 children**; compared to last year at this time (1 September 2022) there is a reduction of -8.2% / -2,737 children's cases / -4,604 children. We continue to support **~1.9k more children than before the pandemic** (March 2020)
- **The duration of closed children's cases remains high. S31 Care & Supervision Applications 44 weeks** (+8 weeks), **Private Law (WTFH) 12 weeks** (+3 weeks), **Private Law (WAFH) 61 weeks** (+22 weeks), **R16:4 109 weeks** (+36 weeks)



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Our operating context: Data (2)



- For public law there are **4,305 children** (2,097 open children's cases) open 52+ weeks, of whom **704 children** (326 children's cases) have been in proceedings lasting 100+ weeks. 21.5% care and supervision children's cases closed in less than 26 weeks
- For private law there are **8,038 children** (5,129 open children's cases) open 52+ weeks., of whom, **3,341 children** (2,120 children's cases) have been in proceedings lasting 100+ weeks.
- **91.8% of our work is allocated to operational service area teams**, 2.8% awaits allocation on duty, 4.2% is overseen in Post Assessment Hubs (awaiting a hearing) and 1.2% are overseen in Allocation Hubs in areas with active prioritisation. **This is how we balance the responsibility to see the children most at risk of harm most quickly, protect social work caseloads and manage additional open work.**
- **Average S7 Filing times are to timescale agreed with the court in 98.7% of the work.**
- **c37% have an extension agreed** to complete the work before the listed hearing or to avert the need for an addendum report



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Prioritisation update



1. In process of **de-activation across Greater Manchester (A3)** (intended for end November) **and Norfolk/Norwich court area (A14)** (intended for end December) as a result of the partnership effort to stabilise the 3-way balance in demand, the additional work generated by delay and capacity.
2. **Remains active in the Suffolk/Essex court area (A14)** due to enduring challenges in demand, the additional work generated by delay and ongoing challenges in capacity across the area
3. **Activated in private family law across the Greater London area (3 courts) (A15b)** due to an increase in demand and significant challenges in capacity across the local system, including the retention and recruitment of Family Court Advisers.

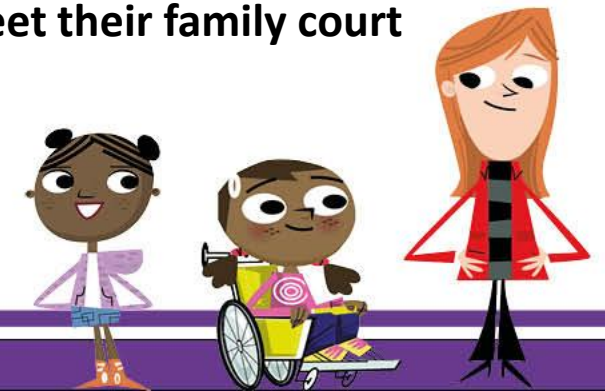


Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Best for children – case progression



1. A **case progression programme for private family law cases**, under the leadership of a Head of Process Improvement and a small case progression team.
2. The **rationale for this programme** is first and foremost to make sure that **children are not in active family court proceedings longer than they need to be**
3. In making this a priority, we also aim to **improve the timeliness of closure of children's cases**, in part through better receipt of court orders and the reconciliation of data between Cafcass and HMCTS about which cases remain open
4. Intention also to **increase the transfer of children's cases to the Post-Assessment Hubs** where ordered work has been completed, the report has been filed with the court and the hearing is more than 6 weeks ahead
5. **Caseload benefit for Family Court Advisers and their managers** as cases transfer or close so that children who still require their support can be prioritised and **new work can be allocated**
6. **Greater consistency in the application of practice standards for children waiting to meet their family court adviser (duty)** and provision of a **single point of contact for them**



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Quality assuring practice: Quarter 2 overview



1. National audits judge that in **73% of children's cases sampled, practice is good or better**
2. **1274 (229 – Early Intervention Team (EIT), 598 – Public, 447 – Private) local audits were carried out in quarter 2**
c50% completed collaboratively with the FCA.
3. Emerging themes include:
 - ***Children are heard and supported to understand what is going to happen, although recorded work needs to reference more consistently how and when we share recommendations***
 - Work is ***enabling positive change, reducing uncertainty and providing a resolution***
 - ***33% (425) of audits noted delay*** for children, but in only 0.2% (2) audits did the auditor judge that the FCA had not considered the impact of delay for the child, this was supported in all moderations.
- Our latest thematic audit on public law which focused on the impact of long running work, shows
 - ✓ evidence of ***good child engagement***, such as increasing use of letters to children
 - ✓ a ***strong correlation between thorough risk assessment and good outcomes for children***
 - ✓ a ***clear timetable set out for the child in the Assessment and Child's Plan, reduces duration of proceedings*** by five weeks on average



Part 1: Demand, performance and operational practice:

Quality assuring practice: Quarter 2 overview (2)



3. Feedback themes include:

- ✓ *Appreciation from both parents and children about introductory, staying in touch and goodbye letters*
- ✓ *Mixed feedback about our understanding domestic abuse – some positive and some telling us the abuse wasn't fully understood. fathers tell us that 'indirect contact' recommendations are unhelpful*

4. Complaint themes include:

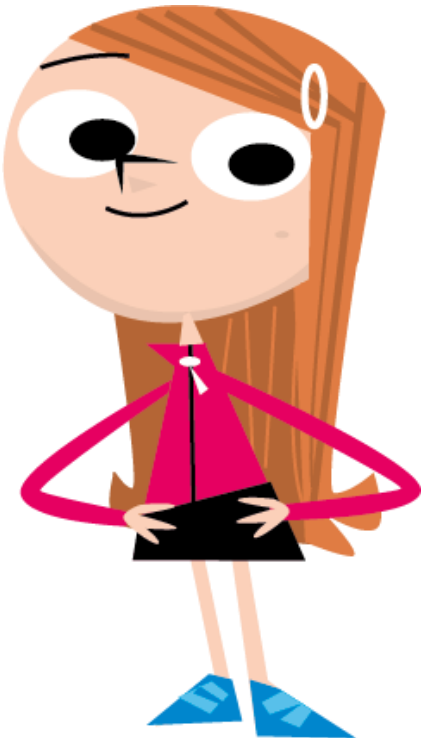
- ✓ *how we manage our work (not filing on time, not responding to communication from families) and factual errors (wrongly spelt, or incorrect names in reports)*
- ✓ *how FCAs assess domestic abuse, and no consideration of Practice Direction 12J reflected in the assessment or analysis. Themes from children's complaints are that they don't feel listened to or feel that their wishes and feelings are not reflected in the report*

5. Significant incident themes include:

- ✓ **103 Significant Incident Reports received in Q2 2023-4 and 19 Child Record Reviews.** Learning includes, the analysis of parents or carer's history, the use of judge that fact-finding hearings and their impact on safe recommendations/outcomes for children

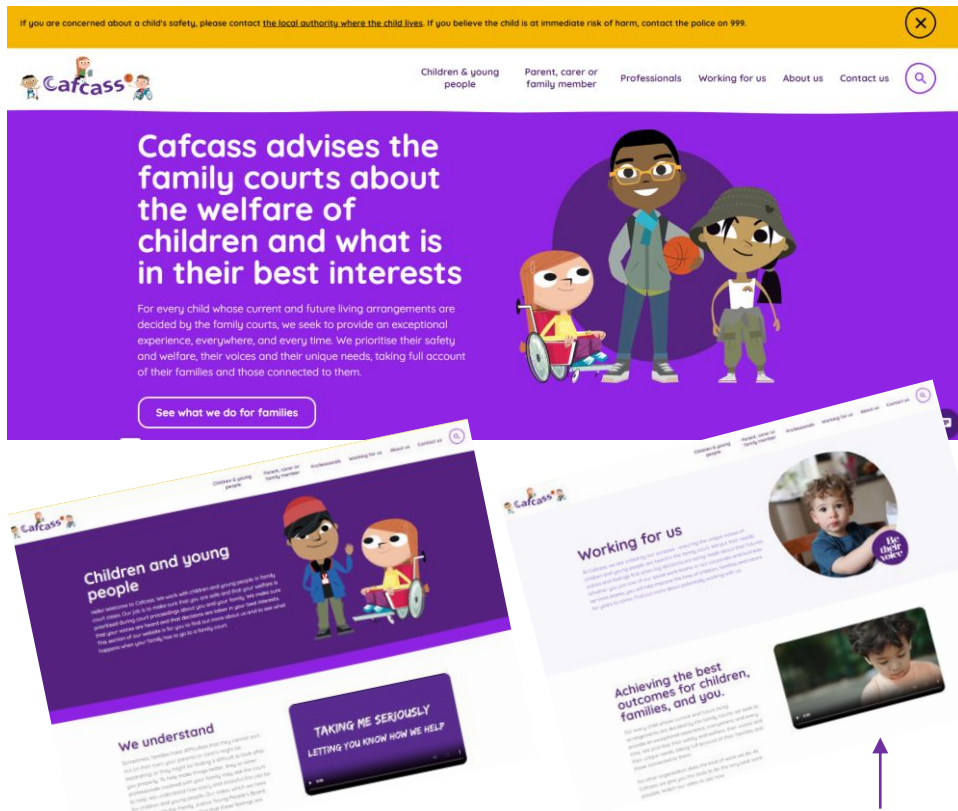


Part 2: And in other news...



Part 2: And in other news... Cafcass website

It's very engaging visually.
Love the 'dynamic' photos
that load as you scroll.



The careers page- 43rd most visited page on the old site, the new 'Working for Us' page is the 4th most visited.

*We cannot compare the overall number of visitors to the old site with the new site due to a change in our cookie policy resulting in significantly fewer people accepting our analytics cookies.

- We successfully launched the new Cafcass website on 25 September
- Feedback and early indicators on the site's effectiveness are encouraging:
 - Surveys of those visiting the old and new sites, show overall satisfaction with the site has improved from 3.5 to 4.4 out of 5.
 - 18% improvement amongst those surveyed saying that from the information on the website, it is clear what Cafcass does and 10% improvement for those saying that information is easy to read and understand.
 - Web analytics* show that there has been an almost 75% increase in people returning to the site more than once.
- The quotes on this slide are verbatim comments received from website visitors as part of the recent survey.

Vibrant, clean and
easy to navigate

The design is bright and
inviting for children



Part 2: And in other news...

Successes in the reporting period: London children and families hub



27 September, we opened the new Cafcass London office at 70 Gray's Inn Road



- ✓ **Design intention: Best for children, best for enabling the best work to happen**
- ✓ Feedback from children and families visiting the new facilities (**223 visits since the opening in mid September**) has been overwhelmingly positive with much praise reserved for the new child-friendly spaces around the building



Part 2: And in other news...

Private law – internal change programme



Why change? Cafcass is responding to feedback from children & families, engagement with our staff, learning from significant incidents, and evidence from pathfinders, president's private law working group & new ways of working.

Our ambition is to improve the experience of private law proceedings for children and families by:

- ✓ providing the right response to help children at the right time
- ✓ enabling early engagement with children
- ✓ giving priority to applications where the welfare and safety of children is at risk
- ✓ reducing duplication of effort & children and families having to tell their story more than once
- ✓ making early referrals to appropriate services
- ✓ helping to secure timely family justice.

Our timeline

Sept -
Nov 23

Internal review
of previous
children's cases

Dec 23
- March
24

Detailed process
design &
appointment of
internal change
team

Jan -
March
24

Further internal
testing

Feb -
May
24

Engagement with
local family justice
partners, and
children & families

June
24

Launch of full pilot



Part 2: And in other news...

Successes in the reporting period: Practice week 2023



Practice week 2023!!

- Third one this year! Opportunity to come together, to **pause and to think about what we have achieved and what we still need to do to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and their families** in public and private law proceedings
- We prioritise Practice Week as a **whole organisation**
- **Guest speakers** included the Family Justice Young People's Board, Family Forum, Baroness Diana Barran - Minister for the School System and Student Finance, Professor Eileen Munro – Cafcass Board Member, SafeLives, Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse and Laughology
- Our **practice framework 'Together with Children and Families'** was again a major focus – 'from knowing – to doing – to being'
- **Feedback overwhelmingly positive**, about the investment in training, the seriousness of the focus on children and the complexity of our work
- Planning for Practice Week 2024 is already underway.



Part 2: And in other news...

Successes in the reporting period: Practice week 2023



A week in numbers



A record breaking
1151 of you joined the
live event to open
Practice Week 2023 -
Ambitious Together!



12,257 attendance
across events
21 hours of learning
16 hours of connecting
and reflecting together



796 at the Closing
Event - Ambition in
Action



Part 2: And in other news...

Learning and improvement – Domestic Abuse



NATIONAL PRIORITY: Domestic abuse practice improvement plan	SPOTLIGHT PRIORITY: Private law improvement programme	Domestic Abuse Practice Reference Group
Safeguarding letter – what does good look like?	Most delayed private law children (8,100 over 52 weeks of whom 3,300 over 100) - start with places with greatest proportion of these children	Safeguarding letter – what does good look like?
Learning from significant incidents - alienating behaviours	‘I am here too long’ – rule 16.4 work – Public Law Outline (PLO) design, Together practice model and new pathfinder flow	‘Taking me seriously’ – making safe recommendations about contact for children with their parents and family
Starting work at Cafcass – Induction and applying learning from the Domestic Abuse training programme	Once and done – addendum reporting and returning children’s cases	Relationships matter (part 1) – What life is like for me (including seeing me early in proceedings) Relationships matter (part 2) -Good information and communication
Assessing children’s needs: Using specialist practice materials	‘Taking me seriously’ – making safe recommendations about contact for children with their parents and family	Learning from significant incidents - alienating behaviours
Understanding risk and harm – the connection between assessment and recommendations (including the relevance and analysis of safeguarding checks)	Relationships matter (part 1) – What life is like for me (Including seeing me early in proceedings) Relationships matter (part 2) - Good information and communication	Sounding board choice – a priority agreed with SafeLives to support practice improvement
Practice reflection: Thinking about and acting if court orders do not reduce or increase the risk of harm to children	Variation in private law proceedings – private law mapping programme and Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) improvement plans	

Part 2: And in other news...

Department for Education practice pilots – update



1. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education to put in place **'test and learn' pilots aimed at reducing delay for children**. These pilots are a priority for the national Family Justice Board overseen by ministers
2. **Second pilot to test a facilitated meeting between the child's social worker and the child's guardian before the first Case Management Hearing (CMH)** is taking place in 25 local authority areas. The aim of the meeting is to share the local authority rationale for making an application, to understand the work to prevent the need for an application to the court and to discuss the timetable to reaching a decision for the child within 26 weeks – including the completion of assessments and the use of additional experts.
3. **A pilot to test the 'readiness' of the local authority to make an application to the court is planned for 3 areas of the country**, Manchester, Kingston Upon Hull, and Truro. Advocates will consider a checklist of what should have happened and what should be in place at the first advocates' meeting, again prior to the first CMH.
4. **A pilot to test the need for additional experts is planned for 3 areas of the country**, West London, Newcastle, and Milton Keynes. Advocates will consider a checklist of the costs and benefits to the child of appointing an additional expert(s) at the first advocates' meeting, again prior to the first CMH.
5. **A pilot combining 'readiness' and additional experts will take place in a further 3 areas**, Liverpool, Nottingham, and South Wales.



Part 3: People & Workforce



Part 3: People & Workforce

Pay and benefits



- **Business case for maximum pay award** achievable under the Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance 2023/24 was approved in August 2023. Following the conclusion of our consultation process with Trade Unions, we are able to make the award in November 2023.
- The award is a baseline 4% for all staff with the balance of the overall pay award covering the cost of pay progression and other small changes to pay scales. These include **structural benefits to our pay**, arising from recent increases in pay bands 1- 4 for the increase in the **national minimum wage** and the **creation of the new Assistant Service Manager roles** which came into effect from 1st April this year.
- **Civil Service one-off payment of £1,500** to staff who were in our employment last year and up to £73,000 salary was also been made in August 2023
- **Testing of multi-day court hearing expense claims, and the opportunity to earn additional income through fixed price work continue**



Part 3: People & Workforce

Staff Survey 2023



- Overall **high engagement – 84%** completion
- **Very good overall scores, particularly high in categories evaluating how it feels to be in their team and their managers' support**, which is an indicator of the positive influence of our values and ‘Together’ culture.
- We are continuing to work on 3 national priorities with **2 new national priorities** for 2023-2024: **induction and leadership visibility – holding the best interest of our people at the heart of what we do.**
- **Top line results have been shared** and discussed with Leaders/Managers at a **dedicated event in September**
- **All staff live event, led by the Executive team**, held in October to present and discuss national results
- **Local action plans, proprieties and themes**, to complement national priorities, are being developed through local discussions until the **end of the year when new local plans will be required**

Category	SW	CBS
How I feel about working for Cafcass	79	82
How leaders manage and communicate change and strategic priorities	68	77
How I feel about my manager	88	88
How it feels to be in my team	89	90
How my work environment feels	69	71
My Wellbeing	77	84
Social Work Health Check	75	N/A



Part 3: People & Workforce

Staff Survey 2023



Significant progress with the three national priorities from last survey:

Pay, reward, workloads and professional development

Pay and Reward	Professional Development	Workloads
Action: negotiating a positive pay award this year and maximising our existing pay and expenses framework	Action: Design and implement new career pathways and broaden access to wider programme of professional and management development	Action: retain additional permanent staff , reduce the level of open children's cases, set limits on the number FCA's can hold and implement post assessment hubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wellbeing Days• Buy and Sell Annual Leave• Enhancements to expenses and allowances• Flexible working• £1,500 pro rata non-consolidated additional payment• Refer a friend programme• Achieved a remit for the maximum pay award achievable under the Civil Service Pay Guidance 2023/24, and we are in discussions with unions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talent pathway for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues• Work is under way for a new career & learning pathway for Social Workers• Work is underway for Corporate and Business Services career & learning pathway• Management Standards have been produced for both Social Work and Corporate and Business Services and were launched in May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress regarding reducing workload for most Family Court Advisers• Resources have grown to accommodate additional work and priorities across a number of corporate and business functions• New Assistant Service Manager roles created to help support Family Court Advisers and management oversight.• Discussions with external partners about delay and backlogs ongoing• Working towards the commitment to move to average of 20 active children's cases for Work after the first hearing Family Court Advisers.



Part 3: People & Workforce

Workforce overview and update: Quarter 2, 2023



- **Challenges to recruit and retain people remain in specific parts of the country**
- **Locum social workers remain at 2.7% of the national workforce** - significantly lower when compared to most local authorities
- **Overall turnover for social workers remains on an upward trend at c16%**
- In the year to September 2023, **sickness absence for social workers** is 5.6% which is an increase from June 2023 when it was 4.8%. Over 80% of sickness absence for social workers is due to long term absence. There are variations in levels and trends across the country.
- **Employer Identity** work is continuing to progress - **‘Be their Voice’ films** have been launched with engaging careers pages on the new Cafcass website. We have also had a presence at Community Care Live delivering a Masterclass
- **Cafcass won the ‘Employer Award’ at the Children and Young People’s Awards and silver for ‘supportive employer’ at the annual social work awards**



Part 3: People & Workforce

Awards and Recognition



Shortlisted as finalists (**winners**) in:

Children & Young People 21/10/23

- Safeguarding Children Award
- **Employer Award**
- **Partnership Working – FJYPB**

Social Worker of the Year 3/11/23

- Supportive Social Work Employer of the Year
- **Lifetime Achievement**
- Student Social Worker of the Year
- **Newly Qualified Social Worker of the Year**

Children and Young People Now 23/11/23

- The Public Sector Children's Team Award

Family Law Awards 27/11/23

- Family Law Workplace of the Year

Internal (May – October 2023):

- Values e-cards: **159**
- Work Anniversary e-cards: **71**
- Employee Appreciation & Career milestone e-cards: **626**
- Monthly Nominations: **73**
- **Quarterly celebrations events**
 - o 19th April
 - o 4th August
 - o Next one: 10th November 2023
- Annual Recognitions: **97** nominations across **7 individual** and **2 team** categories. Annual recognition event was held on 10th July 2023 and there were 101 attendees.

External nominations:

Children and Young People – **3**

Social Worker of the Year – **7**

Family Law Awards – **1**

Children and Young People Now – **2**



Part 3: People & Workforce

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2023/2024



Performance against current priorities

- **Level 2 accreditation achieved with Carers UK**, through the significant efforts of our Carers Network and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, next stop Level 3!
- Significant work completed for our **recruitment campaigns to attract diverse talent** and extend the engagement of **recruitment allies**
- **Changes to HR systems** now live to enable colleagues to display their pronouns and now a priority to maximise what our people record about their diversity
- **Managers continue to sample hello and goodbye letters** to children and assessing their **use in every Quality And Impact (QAI) audit**
- **Positive Action Talent Pathway** – now complete for its first year with evaluation to CMT in Autumn, Brilliant Leaders cohort 2 programme started in September 2023
- **Employee Advocacy diversity networks** continue to support members to share their perspectives so that they are considered in strategic initiatives, including employer identity and attraction, staff induction and recognition/awards
- **Learning and Engagement activities** since the July Board meeting include directorate/service 'think ins', EDI sessions during Practice Week and wide range of learning linked to events in diversity calendar



Part 3: People & Workforce

and our diversity wheel
for use in
our work with
children!!!



Part 3: People & Workforce

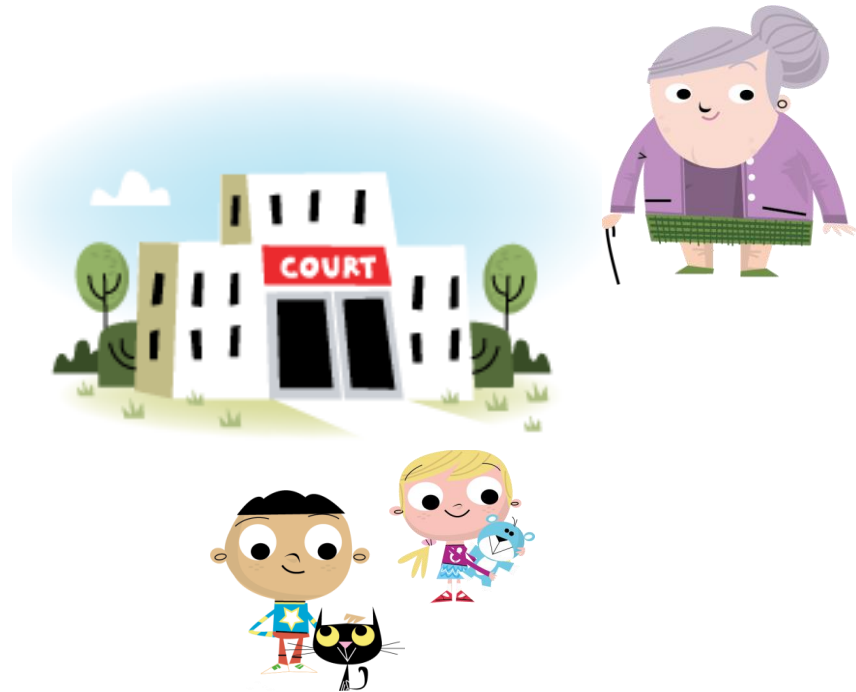
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2023/2024 (3)



- **Next Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group 13 November 2023**
- **Final review of progress and impact against 4 strategic EDI objectives**
- **Consider initial recommendations from EDI Leads on priorities for next year**
- **Agree format and timetable to consult key stakeholders to confirm year 2 priorities**
- **Evaluation of talent pathway programmes**
- **Extending thinking on Diversity to include socio-economic background**



Part 4: Improvement in the next period

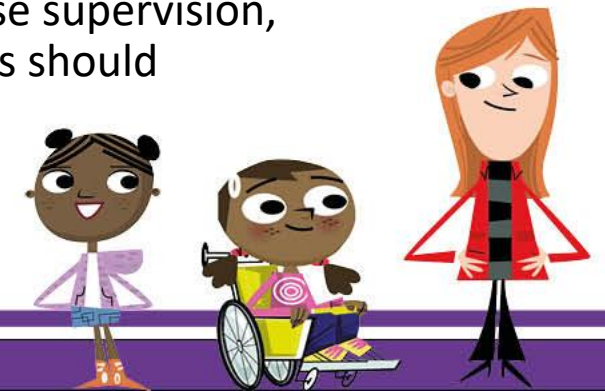


Part 4:Improvement in the next period (1)

Public Law Improvement Programme



1. **12 original workstreams, 5 moved to 'business as usual' under the governance of the Performance & Quality Committee** (*Public Law Practice Quality Standards, Management Quality Standards, and Local Area Mapping Programme, Training & Learning, and Termly Case Discussions*)
2. 7 remaining workstreams within the Programme:
 - Applications for **Deprivation of Liberty Orders** – internal research, use of the Practice Quality Standard.
 - Practice Quality audits finding a significant increase in **management oversight of delayed proceedings** and appropriate actions taken to get a decision for the child
 - **Seeing and engaging with children** and in person at a consistently high level, with recorded reasons for not seeing children. **The workstream is refocused on seeing children in delayed proceedings**
 - While audits show good performance overall, our National Director has prioritised learning from significant incidents and therefore the quality of **assessment where infants have been physically harmed** remain a priority under the programme
 - While practice quality audits show a significant increase in the use of situational case supervision, including the **triggers for supervision**, the national director has determined that this should remain a priority under the programme



Part 4:Improvement in the next period

Public Law Outline relaunch – Cafcass commitments



1) 26 weeks – a statutory requirement so we must intervene to minimise delay

- ✓ *Internal supervision prior to 26 weeks and timetable on child's record with review*

2) The no-order principle – in our collective mind

- ✓ *Children's Guardian asked to add their final analysis where it is known*

3) The use of additional experts

- ✓ *Audit to report on Cafcass recommendation and rationales for experts*

4) Pre-Proceedings and understanding whether the threshold for proceedings is met - why this order and why now?

- ✓ *Court templates updated to focus on 26-week timetable, analysis of Pre-Proceedings work and the no order principle. Assessment and Child's plan requires review of timetable and explanation to children*

5) Guardian's recommendations are shared with child and response is included in report

- ✓ *Reporting to court templates now include a section on recommendations and the child's view in response*

6) Local arrangements to make every hearing count

- ✓ *Senior managers in operational service areas are working with Judicial and HMCTS colleagues to find ways of working that reduce and minimise the impact of delay on children*



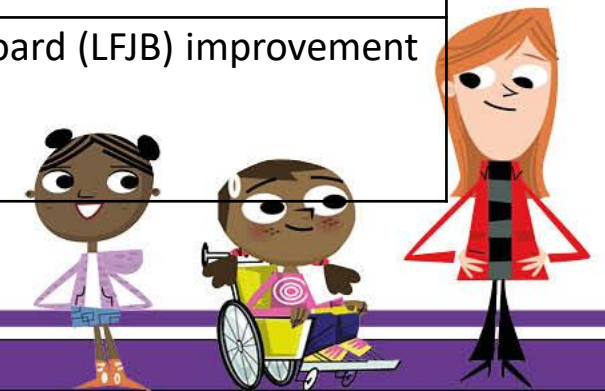
Part 4:Improvement in the next period

Private Law Improvement Programme



Private Law Improvement Programme

- 1. Most delayed private law children** (there are 8,100 children in proceedings over 52 weeks of whom 3,300 over 100) – we are working to support courts to conclude these proceedings, starting with places with greatest proportion of these children
- 2. ‘I am here too long’ – rule 16.4 work** – A model of practice for children subject to rule 16.4 (appointment of a Children's Guardian in private law proceedings) which involves the court timetabling the proceedings to a final hearing from the outset and where Cafcass works ‘restoratively’ with the family wherever possible
- 3. Once and done** – addendum reporting and returning children’s cases. There has been a stable figure of c.30% of all s.7 assessments resulting in addendums - our intention is to reduce the % where Cafcass contribute to this by starting work for the child as early as possible and completing comprehensive assessments
- 4. ‘Taking me seriously’** – making recommendations which are likely to be safe and beneficial about family time for children with their parents. This includes considering our practice in relation to indirect arrangements and shared living arrangements.
- 5. Relationships matter (part 1) – What life is like for me** (Including seeing me early in proceedings) **Relationships matter (part 2) -Good information and communication**
- 6. Variation in private law proceedings** – private law mapping programme and Local Family Justice Board (LFJB) improvement plans
Including variation in timescales and rates of ordering across the country



Part 4:Improvement in the next period

Ambitious for Children: our new strategic plan 2023-2026



- **LAUNCH TODAY !!!!!!!**
- First annual report of progress to be included in our **Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24**
- Builds on the firm foundations we laid in '*Sustaining Excellence*' our previous strategy 2019-23.
- It is largely a continuation of existing priorities – all 9 are further developed
- Specific about **what exceptional means for children in practice, people and partners** based on their feedback, our learning and the further improvements we need and want to make
- Our **ambition is about doing the best for children consistently- 'Everywhere'**
- Clear **success measures**

