



Cafcass Strategic Delivery Plan: Year Two (2021/2)





Overview

our work in year two focuses on the following key themes:

- **Connected and inclusive relationships** in our work with children and families, and in all our wider work.
- **Renewal through Covid-19** so that we restore workloads and productivity to at least pre-pandemic levels and take the opportunity to rebuild services drawing our learning from new ways of working.
- **Improve outcomes for children** by reviewing our practice model and working with our partners to deliver reforms and better evidence the difference they make.
- **Develop and sustain our workforce** and build a working environment that takes forward positive ways of working developed through the pandemic and supports wellbeing.

In developing our work programme for year two to support these themes, we have identified four priority areas of work which will together set us on the path to the transformed service we want to see for children and families. These are longer term building blocks which will extend beyond the end of the current strategy period in 2023, but we need to start them now so that we build firm foundations for the future.

1. **Launch and embed Together with children and families:** a new practice framework to hold children and families at the heart of our practice and to promote strengths-based practice, respectful relationships, clear analysis and decision-making in all we do. This framework will reinforce and bring alive the new values and culture we want all those we work with to experience.
2. **Child-focused private law:** an updated operating model for private law that supports new ways of working through the recovery of the family justice system, delivers improvements for families experiencing domestic abuse, and anticipates more fundamental reform being tested in the private law pathfinder and pilot programme.
3. **Workforce Matters:** we will deliver a strategy to attract and retain brilliant people into a Cafcass that has the right size, shape and capability for us to deliver the future services anticipated by public and private law reforms.
4. **Digi-Cafcass:** We need a new digital strategy to extend the range of activities we conduct with children and their families, and with our staff and partners, in a digital rather than physical or manual form.



Practice

(Led by Director of Operations)



DPI Practice-led

We need to build stronger relationships and trust so that we can better understand children's and families' experiences and ensure these are clear in our case plans and reports to court.

To achieve this we will:

- Introduce new **practice quality standards** for public and private law.
- Undertake a review of the **supervision arrangements and management spans** within social work roles and implement the recommendations.
- Deliver the actions identified in our **Domestic Abuse Practice Improvement Plan**.

DP2 Feedback informed

We need to listen and learn better when we have got things wrong.

To achieve this we will:

- Strengthen the ways we invite and act on **feedback from children & families**, starting by local managers inviting feedback from children and families as part of our local case file audit process. We will ensure all children know we value their feedback and understand the different ways they can give it to us during and after our involvement in their family.

DP3 Learn & improve

We want to show great ambition to improve through visible action to embed our best practice and tackle those areas where we need to strengthen.

To achieve this we will:

- Deliver our updated **National Improvement Plan** following our Ofsted Monitoring Visit, connecting actions at national and local level.
- Introduce the **Families Forum**, building on the development work in year one. Specifically, we will recruit, induct and start work with our inaugural Family Forum members, collate learning from their experience, and demonstrate how that learning has been heard and acted on in practice.
- Complete review of our **Complaints Framework** and set out a plan to implement recommendations.

People

(Led by Director of Resources)



DP4 Reward, Recognition, Recruitment & Retention

Without our people we are nothing. We need them to feel respected and valued which ever part of Cafcass they work for and whatever their background.

To achieve this we will:

- Deliver key components of our **Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy**, focusing in particular on enhancing our reputation as an exemplary employer and addressing some of the structural factors affecting the supply of social workers.
- Develop and pilot a new **leaders and managers development programme**.
- Develop our **talent management programme** to ensure it provides opportunities to staff from all backgrounds and professions in Cafcass, including by extending the **Cafcass Academy**.
- Publish our new **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy** (brought forward from year 1) and produce our first annual equalities report.
- Introduce an **annual staff survey** and wider staff engagement through think-ins and events.

DP5 Efficient & effective systems & resources

Our people need work environments that are safe and support their wellbeing, and the information and resources to do their best work.

To achieve this we will:

- Commence a programme of work to **digitise our historic paper archive** as part of our work to improve access to records later in life.
- Find out from staff what concerns they have about their wellbeing and use this to check we have the **fullest possible range of support and resources** to help them, developing new resources where we identify gaps.
- Develop our estate: while we had always planned to take a fresh look at our office condition and locations, the pandemic has changed how we work so much that we need now to rethink the **purpose of our office estate too**.

DP6 Lines of sight

We need effective leadership and oversight so that our delivery programme is focused on activity that makes a difference to children's outcomes.

To achieve this we will:

- Deliver a new **practice framework** which builds on enhanced and more **meaningful analysis of management information** and deeper insights from practice.

Partners

(Led by Director of Strategy)



DP7 Manage Demand

We must focus our attention on risk to children and keeping the system balanced on quality and throughput.

To this end we need to:

- Create thinking space to exercise professional judgement through our work to manage demand through the development and implementation of a **prioritisation protocol** that will protect our Family Court Advisers from unsafe caseloads and restore management and supervisory capacity to prevent a deterioration in the quality of practice and decision-making that could have a detrimental impact on the lives of children.
- Work with partners to develop a **coordinated recovery plan** to tackle the backlogs and delays that have built up during the pandemic, while at the same time introducing measures that will improve the experience of children and families experiencing domestic abuse.

DP8 Accountable for Outcomes

We need to share and use our knowledge, so our partners have a better collective understanding about which children's outcomes are not being best served by our decision or approach, and what action we need to take to improve.

To this end we need to:

- Continue our work to develop **harmonised national and local datasets**, drawing on case management data from Cafcass, the courts and local authorities to improve collective local diagnosis and implement local strategies for reducing delay, prioritising the most urgent cases, and improving outcomes. In support of this work, we will strengthen the interface between HM Courts & Tribunal Service and Cafcass case management systems, and to improve capture of information to support equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Strengthen and broaden our engagement with partners, initially by establishing a new **Partners Forum** as part of wider work to share what we are doing with key partners, to understand how we are seen externally, and identify opportunities to collaborate.

DP9 Family Justice Reform

We need to agree with partners a reform programme that redesigns the system so it supports children and families to achieve sustainable change, alongside an approach and pace of delivery that is manageable for practitioners.

To this end we need to:

- In line with recommendations of the **Public Law Working Group** report, we will develop a public law version of our child impact assessment framework to provide a clearer framework in public law and support appropriate interprofessional challenge about the use of pre-proceedings, rationales for decisions to issue proceeding and strengthened care plans for children.
- We will work in **partnership with Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)** to examine support for Care Orders at home, minimising the use of experts and revisiting the principles from the Children Act 1989, including the 'no order' principle.
- We will develop an updated and child-focused operating model for private law that supports new ways of working through the recovery of the family justice system, delivers improvements for families experiencing domestic abuse, and anticipates more fundamental reform being tested in the private law pathfinder and pilot programme.