



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**  
**Paper for the Board Meeting on 15 June 2018**  
**OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

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**KEY POINTS**

- Our Ofsted inspection in March 2018 resulted in an overall finding of 'outstanding', achieved by only three other organisations in children's social care. The report is attached at Appendix 1
- The attached Action Plan (at Appendix 2) contains the service improvement actions being carried out to meet Ofsted's 4 minor recommendations. This will be sent to them after the Board meeting.
- The organisation will now ensure we maintain the level we have reached and take steps to further improve so that all aspects of front-line practice reach the 'outstanding' level. This has never been achieved by a social care organisation.

**1. AIM AND PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To formally report the outcome of the March 2018 Ofsted inspection to the Board.
- 1.2. To formally report the action plan resulting from the inspection to the Board.
- 1.3. To outline the next steps with Ofsted and the next steps for practice improvement.

**2. ACTION FOR THE BOARD**

- 2.1. To note the report, action plan and next steps and to suggest additions and improvements.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. We improved our rating between the last inspection in 2014 and the 2018 inspection. In short, we went up from good with outstanding leadership and achieved an overall rating of 'outstanding'. However, whilst national and local leadership were outstanding, both public and private laws were rated good with outstanding features. This shows us clearly where we need to further improve.
- 3.2. Achieving outstanding in every aspect of practice has never been achieved before e.g. no organisation in children's social care has ever received an 'outstanding' rating for 'help and protection'.
- 3.3. The next step with Ofsted is that they will meet with us in August 2018 to discuss future visiting and inspection arrangements. This is likely to be in line with their new inspection regime for local authorities – the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services Framework (ILACS). The main features of this are annual engagement meetings and possible focussed

visits for 2-3 days about specific issues over the next few years, with a full re-inspection being four years away, in 2022 (unless Ofsted receives intelligence between now and then about concerns which they feel warrant an earlier inspection).

- 3.4. We will also receive a visit from Ofsted's newly appointed National Director for Social Care, to discuss the steps we took to achieve an outstanding rating for leadership. Ofsted are doing this for all organisations rated as outstanding for leadership.
- 3.5. Our Action Plan following the inspection is attached as Appendix 2. It will be straightforward to achieve.
- 3.6. As we did before after the 2014 inspection, we will now aim to consolidate the level we have reached and to identify over the next few months the additional operational strategies we need to put in place to continue on our improvement journey. Two examples of work in progress likely to lead to further improvement are:
  - The develop of new private law pathways, to be called Child Arrangement Pathways, which will build on the improvements we have made via our Domestic Abuse Pathway by adding two new pathways, one for high conflict, the other for parental alienation. The impact of one or more of these factors on the individual child will then be subject to a child impact analysis. This assessment framework is likely to improve the overall quality of assessments.
  - The app we have developed which is currently being trialled in one of our local teams, will enable children and young people to communicate with their practitioner throughout the life of their case, rather than in one off meetings and visits. This will enable a richer quantum of information and intelligence about children's needs: will be empowering for children and young people if we carry out the work well and sensitively; and should result in a deeper level of analysis and recommendations to courts. The app will be initially used in private law cases where we are the primary safeguarding agency.

#### **4. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER**

- 4.1. There are bound to be significant changes and challenges to the organisation in the years ahead, which the Board and Executive must oversee to ensure there is no drop in our level or in practice leadership and standards.
- 4.2. The Board and Executive need to be clear about their level of ambition in respect of further practice improvement and the time and resources that have been needed and will continue to be needed. This will be especially relevant in budget setting discussions year on year. So far, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have been extremely supportive of a high level of ambition which matched that of the Cafcass Board and Executive.

#### **5. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS**

- 5.1. The Ofsted report is positive about the benefit and impact of our work. It gives us a strong platform for further improvement.

#### **6. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

- 6.1. There are no specific final implications arising from the report, the action plan or the next steps.

#### **7. RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1. Continued demand pressure always pose a risk to further improvement as all time and resources are spent on completing basic tasks. However, we demonstrated continuous improvement between 2014 and 2017, also at a time of rapidly increasing demand, so we will seek to maintain that track record, especially by finding ways of improving the quality of work without spending more time on the average case.

## **8. DIVERSITY ANALYSIS**

- 8.1. A specific recommendation in the Ofsted report was about recording in court reports when 'issues of diversity are not relevant to the application'. In the Cafcass Operating Framework, a framework for relevance is set out, based on vulnerability or a diversity factor being prominent or pivotal for the child in question. By implementing this action, our diversity practice will be stronger. We will do this in a way which does not simply make wooden statements in every report, but defines the relevance or not of a specific characteristic or factor.

**Anthony Douglas CBE**

Chief Executive

**5 June 2018**

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Ofsted Inspection Report, March 2018

Appendix 2: Cafcass Ofsted Action Plan