



## CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Board Meeting on Wednesday 10 October 2018

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

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1. Demand continues at a high level with small increases in the rate of new private law applications and small decreases in the rate of new public law applications. The most significant shift is the much larger increase in open cases, particularly open private law cases – open to us on caseloads and open in the courts – see the box below. This adds considerably to the pressure felt around the organisation, in every team.

#### Open Stock

Overall, we had **33,624** total open cases at the end of September 2018, a **1.2% increase** (396 cases) on August 2018, but a significant increase of **14%** (4,137 cases) compared to September 2017 (29,487).

Within this:

- There were **10,375** open care cases at the end of September 2018, a **slight decrease** (36 cases) from the 10,411 in August 2018, but an increase of **4.2%** (415 cases) on the 9,960 open in September 2017. The trend for open care stock has been static for the last 6 months, remaining between 10,200 and 10,500; the highest being in June 2018 (10,468)
- For private law, there were **20,991** open cases at the end of September 2018, an increase of **2.2%** (456 cases) on the 20,535 in August 2018, but a significant increase of **20%** (3,491) on the 17,500 open in September 2017. There is a continued overall increasing trend.

In terms of our active cases, active stock levels have seen an increase of **11.9%** in the last 12 months (October 2017 – September 2018).

2. We continue to predict a balanced budget for the current financial year. Uncertainties persist about the level of pay award we will be able to make this year but we have budgeted for the maximum we consider right and proper to pay, which is in line with the average pay award in our sector this year. We continue to discuss the safe minimum budget we need in 2019/20 with MoJ.
3. The intensive development work on our new Child Impact Assessment Framework (CIAF) has now completed and the framework will be presented to the Board at their seminar on 9 October and will be launched to stakeholders at an event on 10 October

to which several Board members are signed up. The Framework will then be implemented gradually, the aim being to train all practitioners in its effective use by 31 March 2019.

4. We continue to work on problem-solving the current issues in the family justice system through our membership of the national family Justice Board and all 40 local Family Justice Boards in England. In addition, I am a member of the national Adoption and Special Guardianship Board and our Assistant Directors sit on the Regional equivalent Boards. This is allowing us to develop a greater awareness and understanding of pressure points and reasons for underperformance as well as how and why some agencies and local systems are improving. However, we are still as a system better at analysis and diagnosis than the implementation of well thought through and evidence-based targeted actions.
5. A separate note has been sent to members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee after we were issued with a reprimand by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) in relation to data breaches. This has happened after breaches which were previously classified as non-reportable (to the ICO) before the implementation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) on 25 May, have now become reportable. A full report will be submitted to ARAC on 19 December after we have carried out a fundamental review of current safeguards to see in what further ways they can be improved.
6. We will be responding to the current consultation on reform of divorce law. This is attached as Appendix 1. The deadline to respond is 12 December and a draft will be circulated to the Board for comment in late November. We will take particular interest in what the proposed 6 month 'cooling off' period will mean for children.
7. We have been short listed for the Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Award (out of 1237 entries) + other awards such as the National Service Director being short-listed for Leadership Excellence in this year's Guardian awards and being shortlisted in the Recruitment category for the Children and Young People Now Awards.
8. I am now in my notice period – 6 months from 1 October until 31 March. I have attached my work programme for those last 6 months as Appendix 2 for information and comment. The recruitment process for my successor is now well underway with interviews being held on 5 December.

**Anthony Douglas CBE**

Chief Executive  
3 October 2018

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Reducing Family Conflict Consultation
- Appendix 2: Final 6 Month Work Programme