



CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE

Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 10 October 2018

Demand Levels and Resourcing

KEY POINTS

Cafcass' total new case demand, including all Public Law (care and non-care) and Private Law, has increased by **2%** (April to August 2018), this includes:

- **5,881** new care applications between April to August 2018.
- **18,324** new private law cases between April to August 2018; this is 2.6% (471 cases) higher than in the same period in 2017. We received 4,018 new cases during August 2018; this is 10.5% (383 cases) higher than August 2017. Monthly private law demand in August 2018 exceeded 4,000 for the first time since July 2013.

Current trend and forecast:

- Care applications quarterly have been at a level trend since Q3 2016/17.
- Duration is currently at an average of 31 weeks.
- 48.3% of care applications were completed within 26 weeks (Q1 2018/19).
- 48.8% of applications gave less than seven days' notice.
- Private law demand has seen an increasing trend. There is limited understanding of the drivers behind the private law increases, and the extent to which they will drive future increase, apart from the obvious points to make such as alternatives to court being less attractive options to many litigants who want to win their case and the fact that court remains a cheaper option than many alternatives like mediation, if you need more than 2-3 sessions to resolve a dispute
- 28% of private law applications had less than the four weeks to first hearing from application which is required under the Child Arrangements Programme.
- In their last quarterly forecast (end of Q2 2018-19), the MoJ have projected -0.5% for new public law cases and +2.2% for new private law cases for the 2018/19 financial year. Our forecast remains the same at +2% for public law and care and +3% for private law.

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 provides sufficient 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 rising demand with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The extra financial resources in 2017/18 supported increased recruitment and closed some of the gaps in the workforce. The budget secured for 2018/19 is challenging against the rising demand but remains a safe minimum budget

3.2 The Chief Executive, CMT, and senior Operational Management Team (OMT) are all fully engaged and contributing to achieve reforms in the Family Justice System. 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. Significant effort is being put into updating the existing national agreement with the judiciary, to take account of current trends and recent research. Finding local solutions e.g. 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 ensuring First Hearings, are The subject of continuous multi-agency discussions.

3.3 High demand for our service is managed through the effective centralisation of key tasks within the high performing National Business Centre, including initial screening, work allocation and PNC (Police National Computer) checks. A high volume single call centre that handles between 1,000-1,500 calls a day eliminates demand at local level and provides a high quality and reliable service. Digitised central post and document management removes the need for high volume local administration. Work is underway to further streamline centralised processes including the digital C100 (private law applications) pilot with the HMCTS and MOJ, which is now making significant progress

3.4 We continue to support innovation to try and influence reforms in the Family Justice System. The Making Child Arrangements pilot based in Manchester is now approaching conclusion. The aim is to reduce the workloads through the court in the context of rising numbers of applications, and to improve outcomes for children and their families by ensuring sustainable agreements. The final evaluation report is being drafted, with joint MOJ and Cafcass write up due for sign-off in December to be shared with the Minister for Cafcass to help inform any future direction.

3.5 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 organisation. This sees a direct impact on the saving of time, travel, and direct staff engagement through enhanced communication.

3.6 New smartphones (iPhone) were activated for all staff in July 2018 providing better functionality to support mobile and remote working. Along with the roll-out of mobile apps to support productivity, work is underway on the development of mobile dashboards and reporting to help reduce bureaucracy and support productivity.

3.7 The system for Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) launched a year ago is fully embedded with staff. Completion remains within target, 90% of eligible practitioners having had a PLR within the last three months. The system prompts a self-assessment to be completed by the Family Court Adviser ahead of every PLR. This helps to target support consistently to all employees, with a strong focus on well-being. The system aggregates all available data on

performance, learning, quality assurance audits and self-evaluation and then pinpoints any support required to maintain or improve well-being, quality and productivity.

3.8 Quality of work remains consistently high despite the demand pressure. We are exceeding targets in both Requires Improvement and Outstanding work: the Requires Improvement target of 7% is currently 5%; the Outstanding target of 10% is currently 15%. Our temperature gauge from several factors tells us staff morale is still good, but that staff are beginning to feel tired and in some areas are under significant pressure with the relentless volume of work.

4 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK RESOURCING

4.1 Supporting the strategy of Forward Recruitment, every service area works with HR and Finance to predict future leavers, and early recruitment to fill those posts is ongoing. An established online recruitment platform is one of the ways that we have made the application process more effective. This continues to achieve significant success, with the number of applicants continuing to rise and applicants being offered jobs and commencing their posts more quickly. Between September 2017 and August 2018, Cafcass employed 366 new staff compared to 274 in the period September 2016 to August 2017.

- As at 31 August 2018 we had an employed¹ social work FTE of 1,348 in line with our overall recruitment plan. Agency workers nationally reduced from average 62 to 45. In the current year we have converted 60 of the best agency workers to permanent positions.
- Cafcass Associates (formerly self-employed contractors) 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. The overall pool of Cafcass Associates has increased to 188 as at 31 August 2018 (from 162 on 30 April 2018).

5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

5.1 Demand for services continues to increase with overall national open caseload (stock) levels increasing by 13.5% in the last 12 months. Average active caseloads have shown a marginal increase which can be attributed to the continuous rise in private law demand. During September 2018 the average active caseload for a Family Court Adviser was 20.9 cases, although there is local variation.

5.2 Electronic tools to support managers in the allocation of new work continue to be improved, providing a detailed range of information that enables the appropriate workload management of individual staff. An additional electronic tool was developed in August 2018 to offer managers even more insight on the localised pressures related to the increasing demand for private law.

5.3 We continue to manage the pressures of demand by supporting staff to maintain attendance levels as high as possible. For the period June to August 2018, sickness levels were higher (9.5) than for the same period in 2017 (7.2). This does represent some lost capacity in this period but most sickness is still related to physical illness.

5.4 Staff turnover for the 12-month period ending August 2018 remains low and has decreased further to 9.0% for Cafcass' social work staff, compared to a national average of around 15% for local authority children's services social work staff.²

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

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

6 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Staff continue to be supported by a flexible organisational learning plan. A range of different learning programmes is available, which targets specific groups of staff. The National Training Plan identifies priorities for learning activity for this financial year, including mental health training for Family Court Advisers and increasing the use of technology (such as Skype, webinar and video) to deliver learning. Specific development programmes are also available for distinct groups of staff, including managers, practice supervisors, colleagues at the National Business Centre, and Business Services colleagues across the organisation.

6.2 The Health and Wellbeing strategy is firmly embedded in the organisation. The Health and Wellbeing (H&W) team continue to deliver workshops on a commissioned basis for teams, and development days alongside the H&W core training programme.

- We continue to raise awareness around mental health. Cafcass has joined the MoJ's *Mental Health Allies* network. To date, six staff members have attended this training and are now part of the network.
- Further external recognition for the Cafcass' Health and Wellbeing offer is evidenced by the fact that our 'Holistic Health & Wellbeing Strategy: 'Optimising Wellbeing' has been shortlisted amongst the final five entries of the Health and Wellbeing category in the Civil Service Awards 2018. This achievement is made more remarkable by the fact that a record 1,237 applications were received for this award. A letter from the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary is attached.
- Support for Cancer at Work continues with the launch of a Cancer buddies scheme so that colleagues affected by cancer can support each other on an individual basis. Cancer at Work workshops for teams also now available.

7 BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN AND SERVICE USERS

7.1 All the actions taken are ensuring that children and families have continued to receive a timely and quality service.

8 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

8.1 The organisation has received a budget settlement to sustain frontline staffing levels.

9 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 The risk of not being able to allocate work remains if the applications continue to rise and recruitment/staff retention becomes more difficult.

Christine Banim
National Service Director
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Acronym	Definition
ALB	Arms Length Body
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
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
H&W	Health & Wellbeing
HMCTS	HM Courts & Tribunals Service
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
PNC	Police National Computer
S31	Section 31
S7	Section 7 Report
SEC	Self-employed contractor (now Cafcass Associates)