



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY COURT ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE**  
**Paper for the Cafcass Board meeting on 23 January 2019**  
**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%** year to date (April to November 2018), this includes:

- **9,399** new care applications between April to November 2018, this is a decrease of **2%** (196 applications) on the same period last year, and 5.3% (521 applications) lower than the same period in 2016-17.
- **3,447** new non-care public law cases were received between April to November 2018, this in an increase of **1%** (35 cases). When compared to the same period in 2016/17, it is an increase of 10.4% (327 cases).
- **29,799** new private law cases between April to November 2018; this is **2.9%** (834 cases) higher than in the same period in 2017 and 9.2% (2,500 cases) higher than the same period in 2016-17.

**Current trend and forecast:**

- The trend for new Care applications has been level for the last 24 months.
- S31 care & supervision application Duration for Q2 2018-19 is currently at an average of **31 weeks**.
- **48.5%** of care and supervision applications were completed within 26 weeks (Q2 2018/19).
- **62.6%** of care applications gave less than seven days' notice before the first hearing.
- Private law demand continues to increase. There is only a partial understanding nationally and locally of the drivers behind the private law increases, and the extent to which they will drive any future increases. Recent demand levels have seen a steep increase, for example we received 4,111 new cases during November 2018, this was **9.7%** (364 cases) higher than November 2017 and the highest November demand since 2012.
- **26%** of private law applications received in the last 12 months had less than the four to six weeks to the first hearing from application, which is required under the Private Law Pathway.
- 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 based on historic data has been revised at **+3.6%** (+4.8% for private law and +0.8% for public law) increase for 2018-19 and **+2.6%** (3.4% for private law and 0.7% for public law) increase for 2019/20.

**1 AIM AND PURPOSE**

- 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 officers provide 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 the continuously rising demand with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The budget secured for 2018/19 continues to be challenging against the rising demand but manageable and we need to achieve the same position in 2019/20 and in subsequent years.
- 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. Cafcass managers now chair 14 LFJBs, one third of the total number in England. They seek to find and embed 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 effective.
- 3.3 High demand for our service is managed through the effective centralisation of key tasks through 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 the 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 ongoing digital C100 (private law applications) pilot with HMCTS and MOJ.
- 3.4 We continue to support innovation to try and influence reforms in the Family Justice System. The Cafcass Model Office supports several pilots, currently with a focus on private law reform. The Support with Making Child Arrangements pilot ran in Manchester throughout 2018 and is now being evaluated to inform Cafcass and MOJ next steps on attempting to divert more low risk cases into alternative dispute resolution. The Co-Parenting Hub is also being trialled as a digital option for parental education and online negotiation towards a Parenting Agreement. For high risk cases, Cafcass' Positive Co-Parenting Programme is being piloted as a structured twelve-week programme for 16.4 cases. The National Commissioning Team are testing a shorter version of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme, for cases involving lower-threshold domestic abuse. A further pilot has also just started to streamline the allocation of FCAs in Section 7 cases, so the child can be seen at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.5 The use of IT innovation continues to sit at the centre of increasing our workforce capacity in driving savings through the reduction in both travel and the need for face to face meetings where appropriate. It is now normal for a significant part of contact to be undertaken via Skype including meetings, training and contact with external organisations.
- 3.6 The system for Performance & Learning Reviews (PLRs) launched in September 2017 and is fully embedded with staff. Compliance remains within target, with **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 support required to maintain or improve well-being, quality and productivity. Further enhancement has been introduced to the tool with even more improvement planned for April 2019.
- 3.7 Quality of work remains consistently high despite the demand pressure. We are exceeding targets for case file audits graded as Requires Improvement and Outstanding in the last 3 months: the Requires Improvement target of 7% is currently **4%**; the Outstanding target of 10% is currently **12%**. Compliance also remains high with **89%** of eligible practitioners having had at least two case file audits in the last three months, just short of the 90% target. Intelligence still indicates that morale is remains good for most staff, but some areas remain under significant pressure with the relentless volume of work and that this can have an impact on staff energy levels.

3.8 Detailed work to ensure that the high quality of work is being maintained continues through the work of the National Improvement Team. A rolling programme of audit has included a recent thematic audit of quality thresholds and an area quality review of our Manchester teams (A3).

#### 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 December 2017 and November 2018, Cafcass employed **318** new staff.

- As at 30 November 2018 we had an employed<sup>1</sup> social work FTE of **1,366** in line with the overall recruitment plan. Agency social workers reduced from 79 in March 2018 to **30** in November 2018. In the current financial year, we have converted **61** of the best agency talent to permanent positions.
- Cafcass Associates colleagues 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. The overall pool of Cafcass Associates workforce has decreased to **119** as at 1 December 2018 (from 124 on 1 April 2018).
- We also encourage retiring staff members to consider continuing to offer their experience and expertise as bank workers.

#### 5 CURRENT SOCIAL WORK CAPACITY

5.1 Demand for services continues to increase with overall national open caseload (stock) levels increasing by **16.3%** in the last 12 months. Average active caseloads have shown a *marginal increase* which can be attributed to the ongoing rises in private law demand. At the start of December 2018, the average active caseload for a Family Court Adviser was **21.2 cases**, although there is local variation.

5.2 Our electronic tools to support managers in the allocation of new work provide a detailed range of information to enable the appropriate workload management of individual staff. We continue to transform our already sophisticated analytics to provide accessible and detailed information about staff caseloads and activity with a brand-new report launched in November 2018 to managers using Microsoft PowerBI. This gives a new, simplified, way for managers to oversee the detail of FCA case demands. The new report is also available via smartphones and is the first of a number tabled for rollout this financial year.

5.3 We continue to manage the pressures of demand by supporting staff to maintain attendance levels as high as possible. For the period September to November 2018, social work sickness levels were higher (**9.3** average working days lost) than for the same period in 2017 (8.0 average working days lost). This does represent some lost capacity in this period but most sickness remains related to physical illness.

5.4 Staff turnover for the 12-month period ending November 2018 remains low at **9.0%** for Cafcass' social work staff, compared to a national average of around 15% for local authority children's services social work staff.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

## **6 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

6.1 Activities within the Workforce Development Strategy are providing support and learning to colleagues which can mitigate some of the potential impact of increased workloads and pressure. This includes:

- Developing our People: learning plans at organisational, team and individual level with a focus on providing learning at the point of need. The National Training Plan identifies delivery of learning priorities for the financial year which have included specific training for public and private law, improved onboarding and induction for new staff and use of Practice Experts for specific case types such as Transgender children and Gangs and County Lines.
- A new electronic learning management platform was implemented in September 2018 which provides improved user and management experience and value for money. This platform supports the aim to curate relevant and up-to-date content that is easy for staff to find when they need it.
- Health and wellbeing support around the holistic model continues with a range of workshops, webinars, blogs, learning and research papers available to staff. Use of the 1:1 consultations to the Health & Wellbeing team continues to grow, supporting individuals with a range of health-related issues and enabling them to remain productive at work. We have moved to the MOJ Employee Assistance Programme provider in December and activity to promote this change and the range of services available continues.
- Good practice across the organisation development portfolio has been recognised through external award successes and through requests from other organisations such as Cafcass Cymru and Public Health England.

## **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.

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20 December 2018

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                 |
|----------------|---|
| 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) |