



2022-2023

Annual report and accounts

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HC 92



Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

Annual report and accounts 2022-23

For the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraph 12(3) of Schedule 2 to the
Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

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Introduction and overview



1.1

Foreword from the Chief Executive and Chair of the Board

We present this year’s annual report as we launch our new strategic priorities for 2023-26. The operating context in which this is happening, and which characterises the reporting year, is one of improved organisational stability and continued recovery from two turbulent and highly disrupted Covid–19 pandemic years. This improving practice and leadership environment is enabling and supporting increasing confidence in our ambitious strategy for the next three years – ‘to provide exceptional experiences for children, everywhere and every time’.

At the centre of this next phase is a leadership commitment to consistently effective practice in all operational service areas, defined by the things that are important to children and their families – starting and finishing with trusted relationships in which life-lasting and difficult recommendations are made to the family court.

As in previous reports, however, we want to start by paying tribute to our colleagues at Cafcass, who continue to inspire and impress us in their unwavering commitment to children and the family courts, in their willingness to innovate and improve practice and in their resilience as professionals and individuals. This has been another challenging year for them.

The pressure on us as an organisation through the pandemic and beyond with 13,000 additional children in open cases since April 2021, is steadily reducing. That number stands now at c5,000, and social work caseloads have reduced on

average to pre-pandemic levels or lower, though the challenges of case duration, additional reporting requirements and staff turnover remain. In some parts of the country, demand for Cafcass services is not reducing¹, staff turnover runs at 15% and case durations exceed the national averages of 46 weeks in public law proceedings and 61 weeks in private law. For managers and practitioners operating in these conditions, resilience and commitment are tested to their extremes.

Our account to you this year is therefore a combination of focused further improvement in the quality of our practice and continued pressures. In order to continue to recover and to improve practice, we set ourselves more demanding tests for the year in respect of:

- how well we safeguard children and promote their welfare in proceedings
- how well we lead and influence practice through our management oversight and supervision

¹ Compared to 2021-22 the following operational service areas have seen an overall increase in public law case demand in 2022-23: Greater Manchester (A3), West Yorkshire (A5), Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and Dorset (A6) and Cheshire and Merseyside (A9). In the same period, Coventry and Northampton (A13) has seen an overall increase in private law case demand. The only operational area to see an overall increase in both law types in this period was Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (A11).

- how well we support the wellbeing of our dedicated staff
- how we influence the family justice system as it continues to prioritise and reduce delay for children in proceedings.

The Ofsted report following their focused visit of January 2023 gave a highly positive account of their findings in these specific areas. The detail is set out in section 2.7, but it is important to celebrate and note in this introduction that inspectors found that despite the significant impact of high demand, senior leaders had sustained and improved the focus on children’s safety and welfare and that we had a comprehensive understanding of, and influence in, the national system on the management of delay for children in family law proceedings. Critically, they reported that the effectiveness of social work practice remains strong and continues to improve. When they spoke to colleagues, they found staff who enjoy working at Cafcass and who feel well supported and led by their managers. The inspection findings mirrored our own annual self-assessment and confirmed that our priorities and the associated national plan continue to target the right areas for development and further improvement. Section 2.4 of this report describes in detail the findings from our evaluations and oversight of practice.

Supporting our people remains a key strategic priority. This year has been one of our most challenging on record for staff turnover – particularly for our social work colleagues. We have prioritised wellbeing initiatives, employee benefits, reward, recognition and management development. We pride ourselves on offering more and better management oversight and supervision for the complex work that we undertake.

However, while our 8% vacancy rate remains lower than that of the local authority sector, we have lost our competitive pay

advantage in some parts of the country. The report at section 2.3 sets out our priorities in this regard and our commitment to secure the best possible pay award within the civil service pay framework in this and future years. Further, the report describes our intention to evidence the strongest possible case to government for structured and more sustainable investment in career development and learning.

Partnership and collaboration are key indicators of success or failure in the family justice system. In this reporting year, we have continued to enjoy strong partnerships with the Judiciary, with local authorities and with our government sponsors at the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education. Focusing specifically on measures to reduce delay for children and developing new ways of working to support families early in proceedings through the Pathfinder courts in Dorset and Wales, we are pleased with progress in respect of both. Our new strategic plan prioritises our further investment in the work of the Pathfinder courts and also our continued commitment to reduce delay for children in both public and private law proceedings. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners and sponsors for their support and encouragement.

The Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB) remains central to our work at Cafcass – influencing our practice, our decision making and our culture. FJYPB members, all young people up to the age of 25 and with personal experience of family proceedings, attend and partner with us at many events, including the Cafcass Board, where they influence strategy and policy. Our new practice reference board, overseeing the improvement work for children and families who experience domestic abuse, is also to be jointly chaired by a FJYPB member from autumn 2023.

Seeking out and listening to children, their families and those who have experienced family law proceedings, has been a key strategic priority for three years. In this reporting year, we have received more feedback than ever before and our Family Forum (now 21 members) is an established and significant influence in our work.

The messages from children are clear – *“share our wishes, feelings and opinions with the court, include our words in your reports or, better still, enable us to talk with the judges in our proceedings. Make sure you explain to us what you have learned about our lives and how this influences the recommendations you will make to the court – even if we don’t agree, understanding helps us to manage the decisions that are made. Introduce yourselves to us, tell us who you are and how we will work together. Tell me what happens at the end of proceedings. You are here for a short time – the decisions that the court make, last for a lifetime”*. Our learning from this feedback is set out in section 3 of the report. Securing feedback, listening, learning and changing in response continue as leading priorities for the next strategic planning period.

The duties assigned in statute to Cafcass in respect of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare in family law proceedings, require skilled practitioners, experienced managers and leaders and an organisation with strong corporate governance and support for these responsibilities to be discharged effectively. We are fortunate that we have these things in place as this report will attest. Our executive leadership team and non-executive Board both remain ambitious, mutually supportive, stable, and effective, helping us to govern well. Our thanks are extended to directors, to Board members,

to our operational and corporate leaders and managers for all that they do to support us, our colleagues and of course the children, families and carers we are here to serve.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.



Jacky Tiotto

Jacky Tiotto
Cafcass Chief Executive



Sally Cheshire

Sally Cheshire CBE
Cafcass Chair

Foreword from the Family Justice Young People's Board

The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) continues to influence policy and practice across the family justice system in the best interests of children and young people in family proceedings. We work closely with our sponsor Cafcass to promote the voices and unique experiences of children and young people.

The FJYPB feature in the 'Taking me seriously: letting you know how we help' animated video which provides an explanation to children and young people about who Cafcass are and how they'll support them and their families.

"I felt like our voices and us as the FJYPB members were being valued so much." (Hannah)

"The feeling of being a part of something that will benefit families during stressful times really made me feel contented." (Oliver)

During the Ofsted focused visit to Cafcass, we shared our ongoing contribution of the child's perspective to a wide range of national Cafcass activities, including recruitment, practice improvement and policy. Our feedback following office inspections included recommended improvements around the resources provided to encourage a visiting child or young person to feel welcome and comfortable at a vulnerable time in their lives. We have added to our range of Top Tips with a quick guide to Cafcass' Together Practice Framework.

One of our continued objectives is to encourage staff throughout Cafcass to apply the values of the practice framework, Together with Children and Families, in all aspects of their work and to keep children at the heart of all they do. The FJYPB contributes directly to each Regional Performance Board, ensuring the focus remains on the best outcomes for children and young people. FJYPB members challenge practice staff on direct work with children and young people during focus groups.

Delay was the theme of the in-person Voice of the Child Conference in July 2022. Cafcass has led on our challenge endorsed by the President of the Family Division, which was not to normalise delay for children in family proceedings. This key message and the impact of delay on children and young people has influenced lots of partner organisations across the family justice system. Cafcass has embedded into practice the expectation that children and young people are to be informed of any possible delays and that they are kept updated. The FJYPB has been able to monitor the work undertaken by Cafcass to reduce delay. We have been kept informed and updated via meetings, emails, and regular attendance at the Cafcass Board meeting. Cafcass has valued our insight into

keeping children and young people updated on delay in their proceedings.

The FJYPB has supported the development of the Cafcass 'Hear to Listen' freephone feedback service for children and young people and reviewed the feedback forms for children and families to use. 'My Cafcass Journey' has been redeveloped to ensure that the child is at the centre of subject access requests. We have also supported the use of introduction and goodbye letters for children and young people to develop their understanding of who is representing them at court and to let them know when they are no longer involved.

The theme of the 2023 Voice of the Child Conference was *Building relationships: Exploring what children and young people need to enable them to build trust and best able to participate in their family court proceedings in the context of delay*. We focused our conference on the significance of building trust to support understanding and good communication, helping children and young people understand delay, feel involved in their proceedings, be seen and 'kept in the loop', and build relationships that reduce anxiety and develop trust. As representatives of children and young people, we want professionals to **start** with the child, **stay** with the child, and **end** with the child.

The FJYPB looks forward to working with Cafcass on a range of projects for 2023-24 including:

- Developing a children's version of the Parenting Together plan
- Resolving complaints so that children and young people feel listened to
- Working with children in care councils.
- Safe contact from a child or young person's perspective in private law proceedings
- Sharing recommendations so that we understand and influence decisions made on our behalf about our futures
- Developing a FJYPB website
- Opening the new Cafcass children and families practice hub office in London.
- Produce an overview for children and young people of all the professionals who may be involved in their lives in public law
- More meetings with ministers.



Our statutory responsibilities

Cafcass is the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. We independently advise the family courts in England about what is safe for children and in their best interests.

We work with almost 144,000 children annually whose future is decided by the family courts by providing a service that prioritises their safety, their voices and their needs, taking into full account their families and those who are connected to them. We operate within the law set by Parliament (Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000) and under the rules and directions of the family courts. Our role is to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- give advice to the family courts
- make provision for children to be represented
- provide information, advice and support to children and their families.

We may be asked by the court to work with families in two main areas:

- **private law**, including arrangements for children after parents have divorced or separated. In these children's cases, a Cafcass social worker will be appointed by the court to act as a family court adviser (FCA). Their job is to provide information to the court about what is needed for a safe decision to be made about arrangements for who the child lives and spends time with and what is in their best future interests.

- **public law**, including care applications where a local authority has serious concerns about the safety or welfare of a child. In these children's cases, a Cafcass social worker will be appointed by the court to act as a children's guardian. Their job is to work alongside the local authority to make sure that the plan for that child is in their best interests and will secure a safe outcome for them.

Cafcass is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, accountable to the Lord Chancellor, Secretary of State for Justice. As Accounting Officer, our Chief Executive is responsible for advising on appropriate objectives and targets agreed with our sponsor department, making regular assessments on risks and progress, intervening where necessary and making an annual report to Parliament. She is responsible to the Cafcass Board on the effective discharge of our responsibilities, giving them assurances about performance, effectiveness and the management of public money. Cafcass also has a responsibility to contribute to wider government objectives relating to children, working especially closely with the Department for Education.

We are inspected by Ofsted, under His Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) duty to inspect as set out in sections 143- 145 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

We develop and publish our own strategic plan that describes what we are aiming to achieve. We report on our progress in the performance section of this report.

Our Chief Executive is supported by three directors and two deputy directors. Our Corporate Management Team (CMT) is accountable for the leadership of the organisation and is in turn accountable to the Cafcass Board. CMT is assisted by a range of internal boards and groups set out in the accountability section of this report.



Performance and impact report



2.1

Operating context

Cafcass has stabilised following the pandemic and we have spent this reporting year looking to the future. We have dedicated ourselves to leading an internal change and practice improvement programme which holds us to higher standards and more demanding tests in several key priority areas.

These include:

- how well we safeguard children and promote their welfare in proceedings
- how well we lead and influence practice through our management oversight and supervision
- how well we support the wellbeing of our people
- how we influence the family justice system as it wrestles with persistent and damaging delay for children in proceedings.

In 2021, our focus was on sustaining organisational stability, holding children at the centre of our thinking and securing our achievements in practice made prior to the pandemic. Despite being the busiest year in Cafcass' history, Ofsted commended us for our "sustained and improved focus on children's safety and welfare". In 2022, we focused on our recovery priorities, committing to relationship-based practice, respectful use of authority and values oriented to good experiences for children and their families in proceedings. This was made possible through the development of our new practice framework – 'Together with Children and Families'.

We reported last year that we judged ourselves sufficiently resilient to further stretch and make improvements to our frontline practice. We aimed to be an organisation that eagerly seeks and learns from feedback, and we wanted to evaluate the impact we were having on children and their families in a more structured way. The Ofsted inspection visit in January 2023 found that practice had continued to improve, as had our focus on the safety and welfare of children. They found too that we had strengthened our arrangements for management oversight and supervision of practice with a visible impact on the quality of our practice for children.

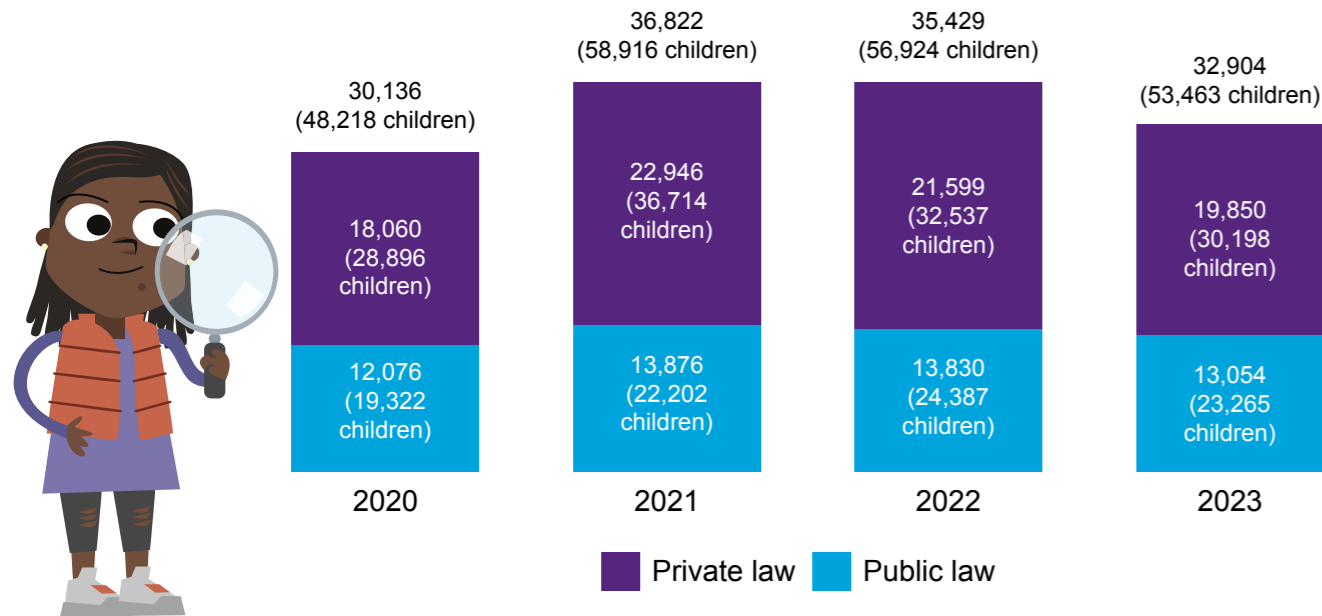
Over the past two years, our work has laid the foundation for us to do more and better for all children and families who need support from Cafcass. Our strategic intention for the next three years (2023-26) is that all children will receive an exceptional service from us, in every encounter, every time, regardless of where they are in England. Our leadership, resources, and oversight will all be focused on achieving this ambition.

We are proud of the positive Ofsted inspection visits and confident in our continued ability to lead practice change, to implement our practice quality standards and to make more consistent the management oversight of practice. However, the year has still presented challenges as we have continued to manage **high workloads, longer case durations** and **increased staff turnover**.

Demand has been reducing steadily over the year and is 10.9% lower (c11,189 children) when compared to the same period before the pandemic. Despite this, the additional demands arising from the elevated volume of open work remain, given significantly longer case durations and reduced throughput.

As at March 2023, there were 32,904 (53,463 children) open cases. This represents a 10.9% higher number of children (c5,250) when compared to our March 2020 snapshot. The end of year levels of open children’s cases between 2019 and 2023 are set out visually in Fig 1 below.

Figure 1: Snapshot of open cases and children April 2019 - March 2023



Delay for children as a result of longer case durations is now the single most pressing issue for the family justice system. The average length² of public law care and supervision proceedings during the latest reported quarter (Q4 – January to March 2023 compared to the same period in 2020, the period prior to the pandemic) is 46 weeks (+10 weeks), private law (work to first hearing) 13 weeks (+4 weeks), private law (work after first hearing) 61 weeks (+22 weeks) and R16:4³111 weeks (+38 weeks).

There are **two issues that arise from the high numbers of open cases and long case durations.** The first is the **significant impact on children** in all proceedings.

For these children, there is at best continued uncertainty, but at worst, there is increased harm and risk of harm, disrupted childhoods, schooling, and friendships. For non-resident parents, there is often less or no contact with their child, which would otherwise be beneficial provided there are no concerns about the child’s safety and welfare. This means that any sense of a secure future is put on hold. For too many children in public law proceedings adoptions are threatened, important and emotionally needed time spent with brothers and sisters is disrupted, school places are lost and planning for their futures is restricted.

² The figures in brackets are the increased duration when compared to January - March 2020 and therefore pre – pandemic.

³ Rule 16.4 cases are defined by the joining of a child as a party to proceedings.

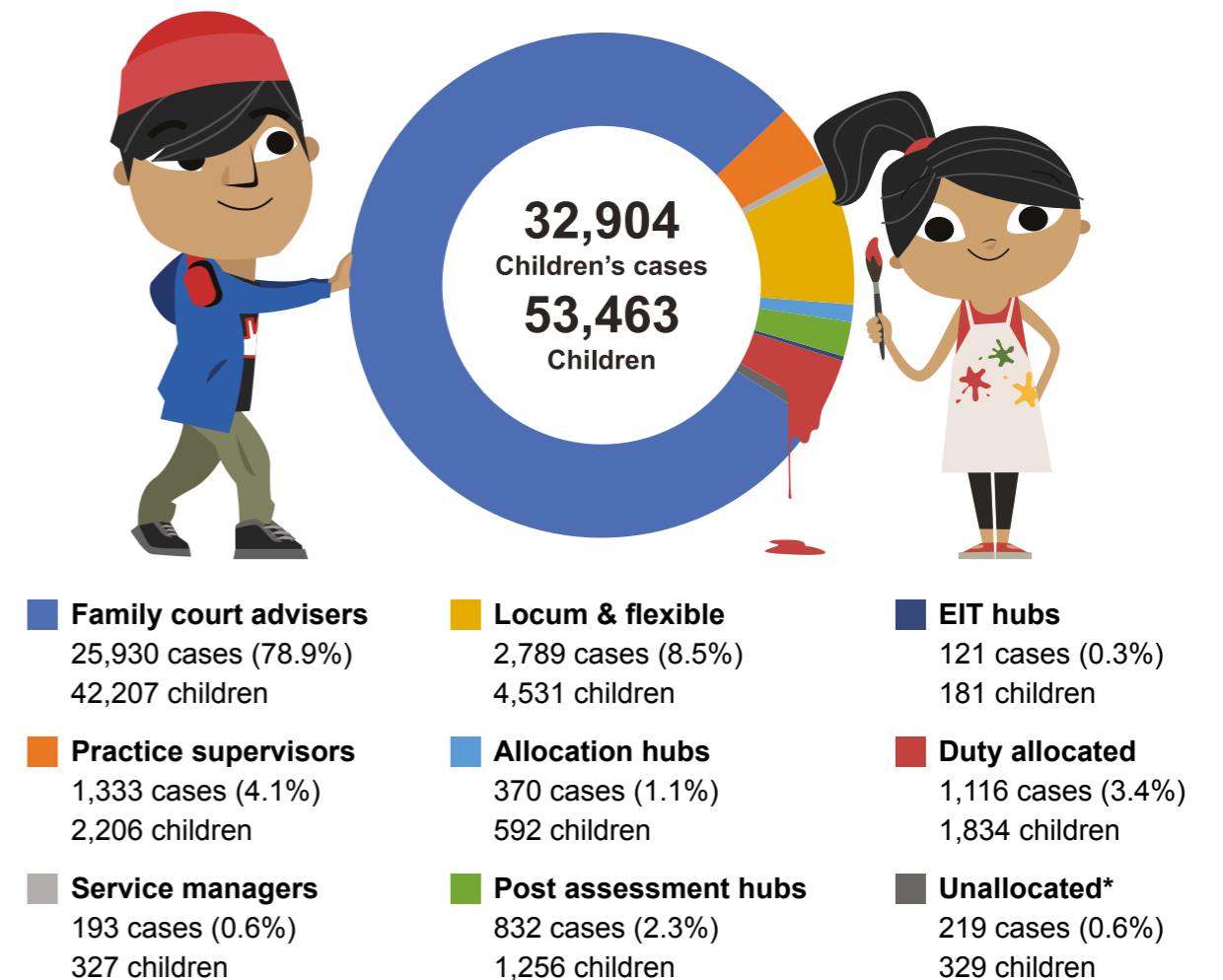
The second issue arising from the continued high work volumes and durations is that longer proceedings generally require more work from family court advisers and managers as assessments become out of date by the time of the hearing.

Conversely, if the report is written and filed closer to the hearing (often months away from the time of application), then there is a risk that the child is not seen quickly or often enough in the early stages of proceedings. This is an organisational priority which is the subject of repeated and relentless planning and oversight, including the use of the Cafcass prioritisation protocol where this is judged necessary to enable the highest risk work to be completed effectively by practitioners and managers with manageable caseloads and effective oversight.

The 2022-23 reporting year, described more fully in later sections, has been characterised by our **continued efforts to protect and reduce the pressure on frontline practitioner caseloads in order to maintain and further improve the quality and impact of their practice.**

We have achieved this by holding more private law children’s cases on duty and in hubs. This is done either through an allocation hub process (in operational service areas where the prioritisation protocol is active) and/or in post-assessment hubs, where children’s cases are held once the assessment is completed, and the report is filed but a court hearing is yet to be listed or is listed some months ahead. Figure 2 below sets this out visually.

Figure 2: Children’s cases by allocation type (31 March 2023)



* Received at National Business Centre and with the intake team for allocation to regions in 24 hours

No matter how much or how well we focus on protecting the practice environment and caseloads, once the court orders Cafcass to be involved, it becomes our responsibility to prioritise the safety and welfare of all children involved in proceedings. **The consequences are stark.** With c5,250 more children (now the third year in succession of a heightened number without a **proportionate** increase in operational staff), the pressure on FCAs and managers remains.

Despite this, through our dedicated focus on enhancing the practice and leadership conditions for our people, including measures to protect frontline caseloads, and through the efforts of our partners, we have returned overall average caseloads to a level lower than in March 2020, 20.3 in work after first hearing teams and 37.7 in work to first hearing teams. However, there are operational service areas where FCAs have not benefited from the same reductions. **55%** of FCAs are carrying 20+ cases which, although being **7.4%** less than in March 2020, remains too high. The impact this has on managers in local areas is also significant and requires constant review. Their capacity to oversee work and support the further improvements that we require has been reduced directly because of the higher volumes of open work and the length of time each child's case is open.

The volume of open work allocated to practice supervisors has to be rebalanced and safely reallocated to FCAs in the year ahead and as their caseloads allow, to enable us to restore and increase management capacity. This will enable the increased management oversight and supervision improvement priorities to be implemented, though in some areas where demand, capacity or ways of working are causing additional pressure, this may take longer to realise.

As a result of the leadership ambition of our National Director of Operations and Chief People Officer, we successfully implemented the programme to reconfigure our operational management arrangements in April 2023. In addition, we invested in raising the capability of managers through the development of management fundamentals, management quality standards and through significant new investment in management development.

Nevertheless, the impact of increased staff turnover can be seen across the whole organisation. Turnover for our social work colleagues is 15.0% and for our business and corporate services colleagues is 12.0%. While lower than the turnover in local authorities, it is higher than Cafcass' established norm of 9% a year prior to the pandemic. The impact of this, and the actions we are taking to mitigate the impact, is set out in section 4.2 'Our people'.

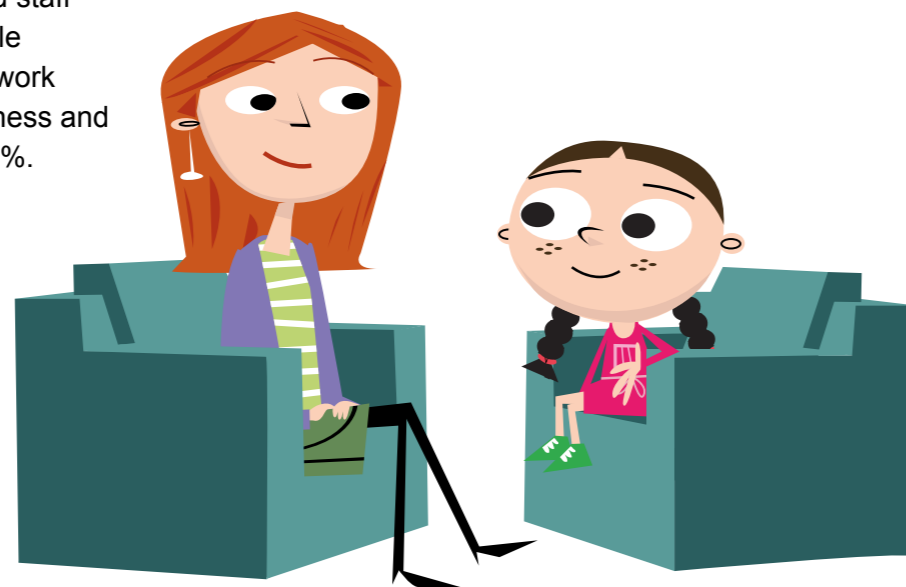


Figure 3: Employee starters and leavers in the financial year 2022-23

	Leavers	Starters	Difference
Social work - managers	17	6	-11*
Social work - FCAs	229	244	15

	Leavers	Starters	Difference
Corporate & professional - managers	7	9	2
Corporate & professional - staff	59	72	13

	Leavers	Starters	Difference
Manager total	24	15	-9
Other staff total	288	316	28
Total	312	331	19

* While more social work managers have left than started, due to internal promotions, overall Social work management capacity has increased by seven headcount staff.

We are very proud to report that, despite these continuing pressures in our operating context, Ofsted reported in January 2023 that our staff feel valued, protected, safe, and well supported by their managers and by practice supervisors, who help them to manage demand and prioritise their work. Our staff told inspectors that despite the challenges, they like working for Cafcass. Prioritising our people, their wellbeing, professional development and working environments remain core elements of our strategic plan in the next three-year period.

Commissioned services

Cafcass commissions and co-ordinates the delivery of court ordered support services for families in private law proceedings on behalf of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ); namely the **Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP)**⁴, the **Improving Child and Family Arrangements service (ICFA)**, **Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPP)**⁵ and **DNA paternity testing**.

Separated Parents Information Programme (SPIP)

During 2022-23, **20,019** parents or carers completed a SPIP, a **1.9% decrease on the previous year (20,405)**. Throughout the year, 23,623 parents have been referred or have been ordered by the family court to attend a SPIP, a 2.0% reduction compared to 2021-22.

Our contracted providers delivered 97.8% of the four-hour group-based programmes remotely, with feedback from parents and providers remaining very positive. 98% of participants who gave feedback (16,429) said that they had a better understanding of what children need most from parents and how conflict affects them. 96.7% report that they had a

⁴ Now re- launched as Planning Together for Children.

⁵ This programme is no longer commissioned by Cafcass on behalf of MoJ – see main text.

better understanding of how to move forward and what their next steps are.

Time between a referral and a parent or carer attending a course was 16 days, a reduction from 18 days in 2021-22. In September 2021, in agreement with the MoJ and the courts, we trialled making the programme available before the first hearing, provided initial safeguarding checks did not identify any risks that would make a referral inappropriate. The number of FCA recommended referrals (as opposed to court ordered) rose from 2.4% (480) in 2021-22 to 6% (1,411) in 2022-23.

In July 2021, the MoJ agreed to recommission SPIP as the existing contract was coming to an end. Cafcass has been leading on the re-design of an updated and enhanced offer to support separated parents in private law court proceedings. The new resources for families have been co-designed with children and parents following a research and evidence review and consultation with over 200 stakeholders. In April 2023, the SPIP course was replaced and enhanced by the new Planning Together for Children course. The one-off SPIP workshop (4 hours) was replaced by the Planning Together for Children course, which is made up of self-guided online modules (1-1.5 hours), a facilitated group workshop (2.5 hours) and access to a new, interactive online parenting plan. Since launching Planning Together for Children in April 2023 to replace SPIP, we have seen the number of FCA recommended referrals, following their initial safeguarding checks, increase to 20%.

Planning Together for Children uses a wide range of examples to represent the diverse nature of families. The interactive feature of the new parenting plan allows parents to complete the plan online and agree on the key issues for their child/ren in a collaborative way. The new course materials

highlight the negative impact parental conflict and separation have on children and provide many exercises, tips and examples for parents to reflect on to improve their relationship.

Improving Child and Family Arrangements (ICFA)

ICFA is a service to help children spend time with a parent when this is safe, beneficial, and sustainable, but the family are finding it difficult to agree and arrange this on their own. **During 2022-23, the service had 1,762 referrals, a 14.1% increase when compared to 2021-22 (1,544).** ICFA work, which is tailored to the needs of each family, takes place over a few weeks. In feedback from FCAs, 80% found that the service was contributing to the best outcomes for the children (up from 74% last year). 85% of FCAs said communication with the service provider was excellent (42%) or good (43%). 57.5% of families accessing the service reported an improvement in communication once the intervention was completed. Half of all referred families think the service helped them to agree a parenting plan.

Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPPs)

We were key contributors to the MoJ review of DAPPs, as recommended by the MoJ Expert Panel on Harm in the Family Courts. The review concluded in December 2021 that a system-wide re-design of domestic abuse assessment and support services would be required to meet the needs of a wider range of families in family court proceedings. The impact of the pandemic created delay in developing an alternative model of delivery for perpetrator interventions, further erosion of provider capacity to deliver face-to-face programmes (much of which did not and has not reopened) and increased delay for children

waiting for decisions about safe family time. In addition, there was no facility under procurement rules for Cafcass to further extend existing contracts, having already exhausted the flexibilities allowable during Covid-19.

In this context and following careful consideration about the impact on children and their families, we were unable to continue to commission the programme on behalf of the MoJ. Our rationale was accepted in April 2022 and referrals ceased in June 2022. Provision under the current contracts has ended and all participants where a programme had been ordered, have completed what was required of them. The MoJ has not yet published a timeline for the re-design of domestic abuse assessment and support services to replace DAPPs. We are members of the working group led by the MoJ to consider what an alternative programme would offer.

Practice guidance for FCAs in the absence of DAPPs was first issued in May 2021 with updates in April and July 2022. This guidance has now been incorporated into our Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance and reinforces the need for clear, well-reasoned account of past harm and a full

analysis of the risk of further harm. Where the court had previously considered the provision of a DAPP, FCAs are asked to use the five-stage approach to assessment and analysis that is set out in the Domestic Abuse Practice Pathway, supported by the practice principles set out in our Together Practice Framework and our practice and management quality standards.

DNA testing

The number of orders made by courts for DNA testing in private law cases for 2022-23 remained at the similar levels as in 2021-22. DNA Legal, our contracted provider, has processed an average of 27 court orders per month. Our guidance to courts remains and orders are only made where this is critical for the progression or conclusion of children's cases and/or where there would be significant risks to safe contact if the test is not made.



2.2

Our year in numbers



How many children?

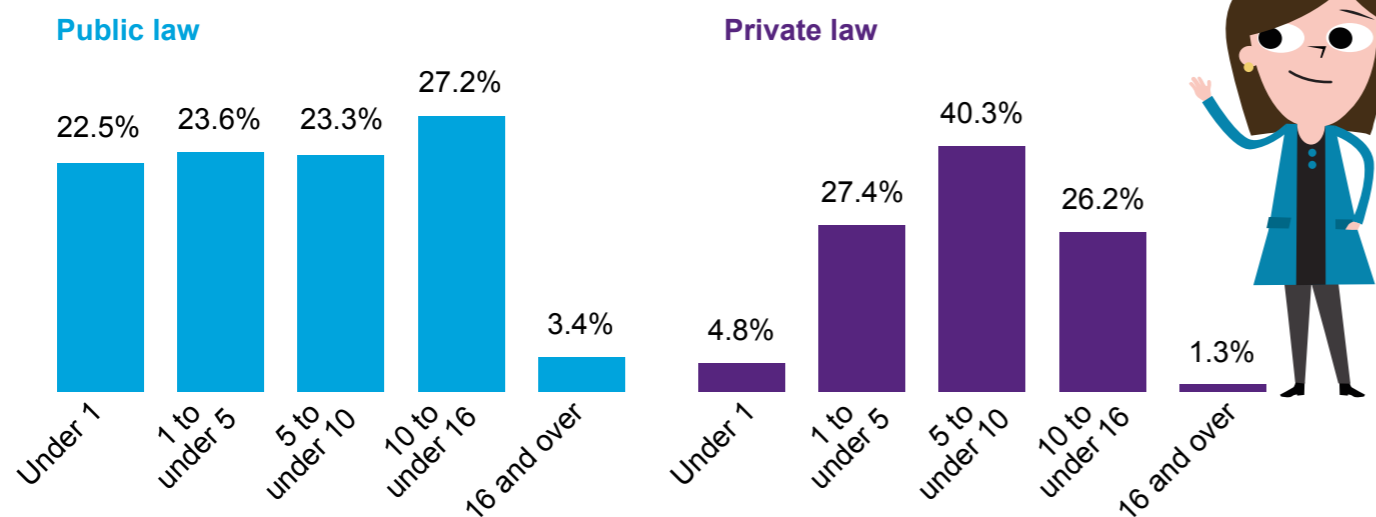
During 2022-23 we worked with a total of **143,469 children and young people**, a decrease of 7,949 children (-5.2%) compared with the previous year. Approximately **a third (46,371) of the children we worked with were in public law proceedings and two thirds (97,098) were in private law proceedings.**

We worked on **16,227 (for 26,142 children) new public law cases** in this reporting year which is a decrease of 1.7% compared to the previous year (285 fewer children's cases, 656 fewer children). **70.0% (11,366 children's cases, 19,095 children)** of total public law cases **included a lead application that was section 31 care**, which is where a child is placed in the care of a designated local authority with parental responsibility being shared by the parents and the local authority. The number of care applications has decreased by 0.3% on last year. We worked on **40,307 new private law cases (for 61,404 children)**. This is a decrease of 3.3% when compared to the previous year (1,376 fewer children's cases, 2,344 fewer children). Of the total private law cases, **80.7%** (32,537 children's cases, 49,839 children) contained a lead application relating to who the child lives or spends time with.

Who are the children?

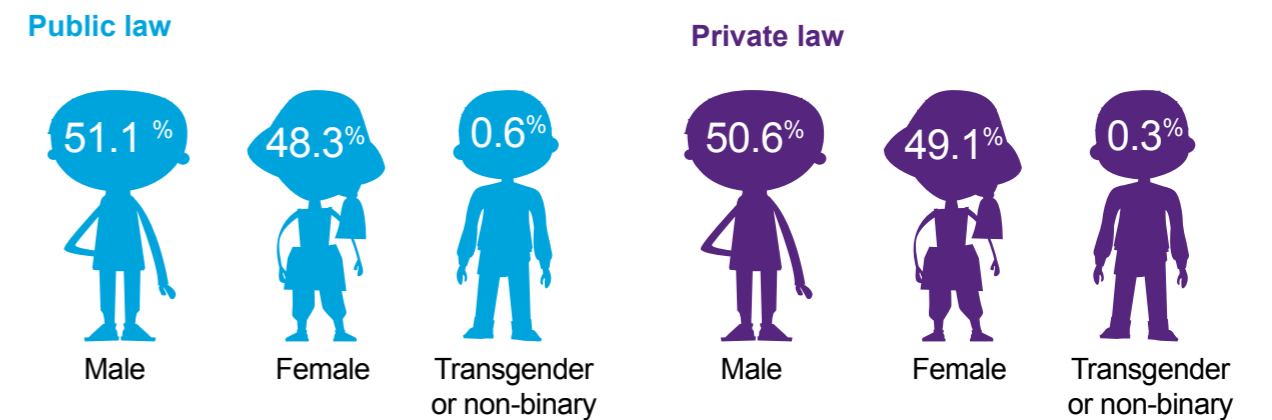
The age profiles of children and young people in public and private proceedings are different, and when compared to the age profile of all children in England. In general, children involved in public law proceedings are younger, with nearly half (46.1%) aged five years or under. More than one in five children (22.5%) involved in public law proceedings are infants under the age of one year. This proportion is similar to last year and is substantially higher than in private law proceedings (4.8%) and in the wider population.

Figure 4: Age profile (in years) of all children with whom we worked in 2022-23, by type of proceedings.



Children in both public and private law proceedings are slightly more likely to be boys than girls which is in line with the national population of children where the ratio of boys to girls is greater than 1:1 for ages up to 25. The children with whom we work have the option to tell us if they prefer to identify as being gender neutral, non-binary, or transgender in addition to preferring not to say. 0.6% of children in public law and 0.3% of children in private law preferred to describe themselves in one of these ways. This is an increase on last year when the equivalent figures were 0.4% (public law) and 0.2% (private law).

Figure 5: Gender identity of children with whom we worked in 2022-23, by type of proceedings.

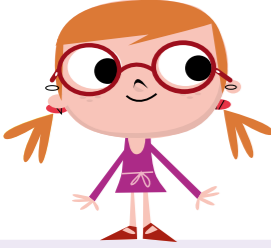


We have continued to improve the way we ask children about their heritage and how this is recorded and analysed as part of their child's plan. As of 31 March 2023, ethnicity was recorded for 94.2% of children in public law proceedings (compared to 96.4% in 2021-22); and 83.4% of children in private law proceedings (compared with 86.6% in 2020-21). Children without a record are likely to be those in newer proceedings with whom we have not yet undertaken direct work, and this is why recording levels tend to be lower for children in private law. Compared to the national population of children, those in family court proceedings are more likely to be of mixed/multiple ethnic background (10.5% compared with 4.3% nationally).

In public law proceedings, Black, African, Caribbean and Black British children are slightly over-represented compared to their incidence in the national population (5.2% compared with 4.6%), while children of mixed/multiple heritage are the most over-represented (11.2% compared with 4.3% nationally). Asian children are under-represented in public law proceedings (4.0% compared to 9.1%).

In private law proceedings, children of mixed/multiple heritage are the most over-represented compared to their incidence in the national population (10.2% compared to 4.3% nationally). As with children in public law proceedings, Asian children are also under-represented in private law proceedings (7.1% compared to 9.1%).

Figure 6: Heritage of all children with whom we worked in 2022-23, by type of proceedings and compared to the national population of children.



	Children in public law proceedings	Children in private law proceedings	All children worked with	National population comparison (Census data based on all children)
All children with whom we worked	46,371	97,098	143,469	
Known ethnicity total	43,665 (94.2%)	80,953 (83.4%)	124,618 (86.9%)	
Asian / Asian British	1,872 (4.0%)	6,887 (7.1%)	8,759 (6.1%)	9.1%
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	2,423 (5.2%)	4,087 (4.2%)	6,510 (4.5%)	4.6%
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	5,178 (11.2%)	9,881 (10.2%)	15,059 (10.5%)	4.3%
White - all (British + other)	33,709 (72.7%)	58,808 (60.6%)	92,517 (64.5%)	80.9%
White - British	31,270 (67.4%)	54,224 (55.8%)	85,494 (59.6%)	
White - other (including Eastern European)	2,439 (5.3%)	4,584 (4.7%)	7,023 (4.9%)	
Arab	181 (0.4%)	533 (0.5%)	714 (0.5%)	
Other ethnic group	302 (0.7%)	757 (0.8%)	1,059 (0.7%)	1.1%
Where ethnicity is not known total	2,706 (5.8%)	16,145 (16.6%)	18,851 (13.1%)	
Prefer not to say	3 (0.01%)	208 (0.2%)	211 (0.1%)	
Not known (including no record and refused)	2,703 (5.8%)	15,937 (16.4%)	18,640 (13.0%)	

Of the 143,469 children with whom we worked in 2022-23, we have recorded information with respect to disability or condition for 110,195 children (76.8%) which includes no reported disability or condition.

14,219 children (12.9%) with whom we worked in 2022-23 had at least one disability or condition recorded, this is below the national average of 16.5%.

These records are updated as part of ongoing case recording, the fields are not mandatory or subject to any medical verification. On this basis, there may be some children's records where this detail is not included as we may not have been made aware.

Figure 7: Recording of longstanding health conditions or disability for children with whom we worked in 2022-23 (a child may have multiple recorded disabilities), by type of proceedings and compared to national data⁶.

	Children in public law proceedings	Children in private law proceedings	All children in proceedings	National comparison
Total children with whom we worked	46,371	97,098	143,469	
Percentage of children worked with for whom we have recorded information with respect to disability or condition (% of all children)	35,534 (76.6%)	74,661 (76.9%)	110,195 (76.8%)	9,000,031
Recorded condition(s)	5,217 (14.7%)	9,002 (12.1%)	14,219 (12.9%)	16.5%
Autistic spectrum disorder	1,633 (4.6%)	4,128 (5.5%)	5,761 (5.2%)	12.3%
Hearing impairment	124 (0.3%)	230 (0.3%)	354 (0.3%)	1.5%
Moderate learning difficulty	1,204 (3.4%)	1,397 (1.9%)	2,601 (2.4%)	15.4%
Physical disability	162 (0.5%)	238 (0.3%)	400 (0.4%)	2.5%
Social, emotional and mental health	743 (2.1%)	555 (0.7%)	1,298 (1.2%)	17.4%
Speech, language and communications	289 (0.8%)	386 (0.5%)	675 (0.6%)	21.5%
Visual impairment	78 (0.2%)	122 (0.2%)	200 (0.2%)	0.9%
Global development delay	336 (0.9%)	215 (0.3%)	551 (0.5%)	
Other difficulty/disability	1,841 (5.2%)	3,067 (4.1%)	4,908 (4.5%)	3.6%
Record shows no longstanding condition or disability	31,235 (87.9%)	69,864 (93.6%)	101,099 (91.7%)	83.5%
Percentage of children worked with for whom we have no recorded information with respect to disability or condition	10,837 (23.4%)	22,437 (23.1%)	33,274 (23.2%)	

How busy was the year?

In 2022-23, overall demand for new children's cases was **2.9% lower** compared to 2021-22 with reductions in both public (-1.7%) and private law demand (-3.3%).

2022-23 demand was 56,534 children's cases featuring 87,546 children.

In private law proceedings during 2022-23, Cafcass received **20,479 requests for Section 7 reports** (inclusive of 6,650 addendum reports), a decrease of 7.0% / c1,500 reports compared to last financial year.

During 2022-23, **R16.4⁷ appointments decreased by 21.0%** compared to the previous year and were 42.0% lower than 2019-20 (pre-Covid-19) which was a record year for those appointments. R16.4 cases closing in the most recent reportable quarter, (Q4 2022-23) took on average **111 weeks** to complete (+38 weeks compared to pre-pandemic durations)⁸.

As at the end of March 2023, Cafcass was working with **32,904 open cases** with future known work **featuring 53,463 children**. The number of open children's cases has remained largely static for most of the reporting year, with reductions in the more recent months set out visually in Fig 8.

As at March 2023, **the volume of public law cases with further work required was 13,054 (23,265 children), which is 5.6% lower** than the same period last year, but **8.1% higher than March 2020 (pre – Covid-19)**. Public law cases represent 39.7% of total cases with future known work.

As at March 2023 **the volume of open private law cases with future known work was 19,850 (30,198 children), which is 8.1% lower** than the same period last year but **9.9% higher than March 2020 (pre – Covid-19)**. Private law cases represent 60.3% of total cases with future known work.

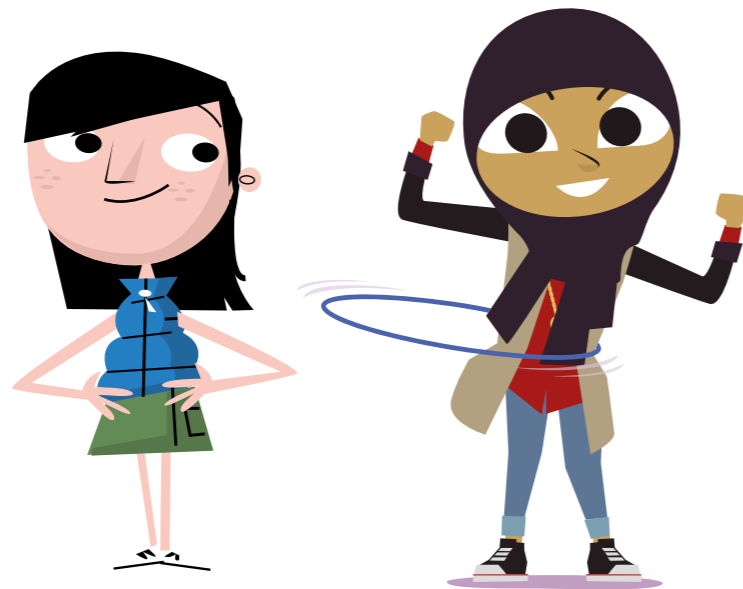
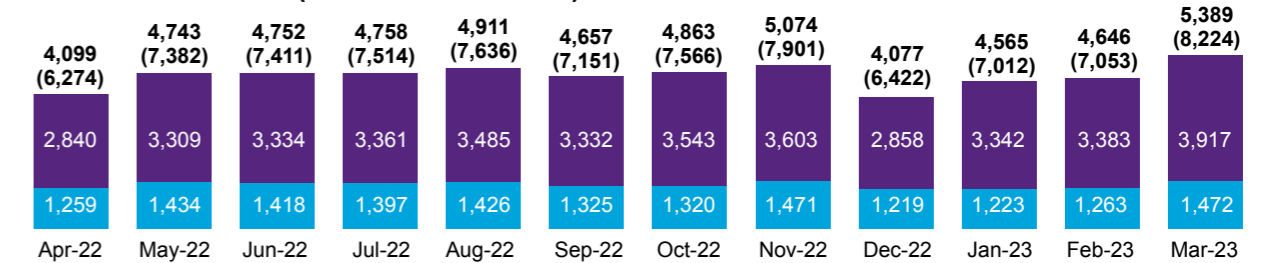
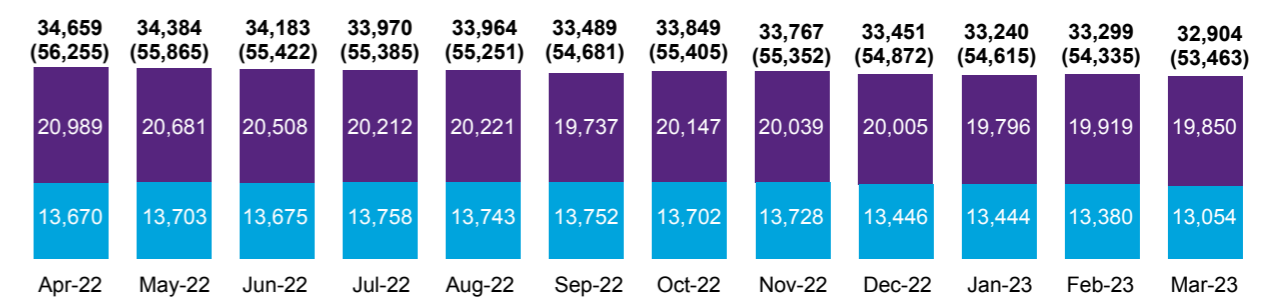


Figure 8: Demand shown through number of new and open child's cases and the number of children.

New case demand (number of children) 2022-23



Open cases (number of children) 2022-23



Private law Public law

At the end of March 2023 caseloads were +9.2% (c5,300 children) higher than pre-pandemic levels. At the most acute point of the pandemic in April 2021, we reached 38,185 open cases (c61,200 children) – 26.7% higher than before the pandemic.

Compared to the period before March 2020, **S31 cases in proceedings are now open for approximately an additional 10 weeks and for private law cases that go beyond first hearing, an additional 22 weeks.**

In total 25% of work has been open for longer than 52 weeks. In public law this is 19.3% (c5000 children) of children's cases and in private law it is 28.8% (c8,900 children) of children's cases.

Care & Supervision Applications: Average durations are **46 weeks⁹**. This is a reduction of one week compared to last year (Q4 2021-22) and an increase of **10 weeks** compared to the period prior to Covid-19 (Q4 2019-20). 21.9% of S31 applications are now completed within 26 weeks; compared to 20.3% compared to 2021-22, still lower than the 34.3% in the period prior to Covid-19 (Q4 2019-20).

⁷ Appointment of a children's guardian in private law proceedings to conduct the proceedings on behalf of and in the interests of the child.

⁸ Cafcass measures the duration of its involvement with children on a quarterly basis by cases closed in that period. The reported period is Quarter 4 (January - March 2023) compared to Q4 2019-20 (January - March 2020) the period immediately before the Covid-19 pandemic.

⁹ Cafcass measures the duration of its involvement with children on a quarterly basis by cases closed in that period. The most recent period is Quarter 4 (January - March 2023).

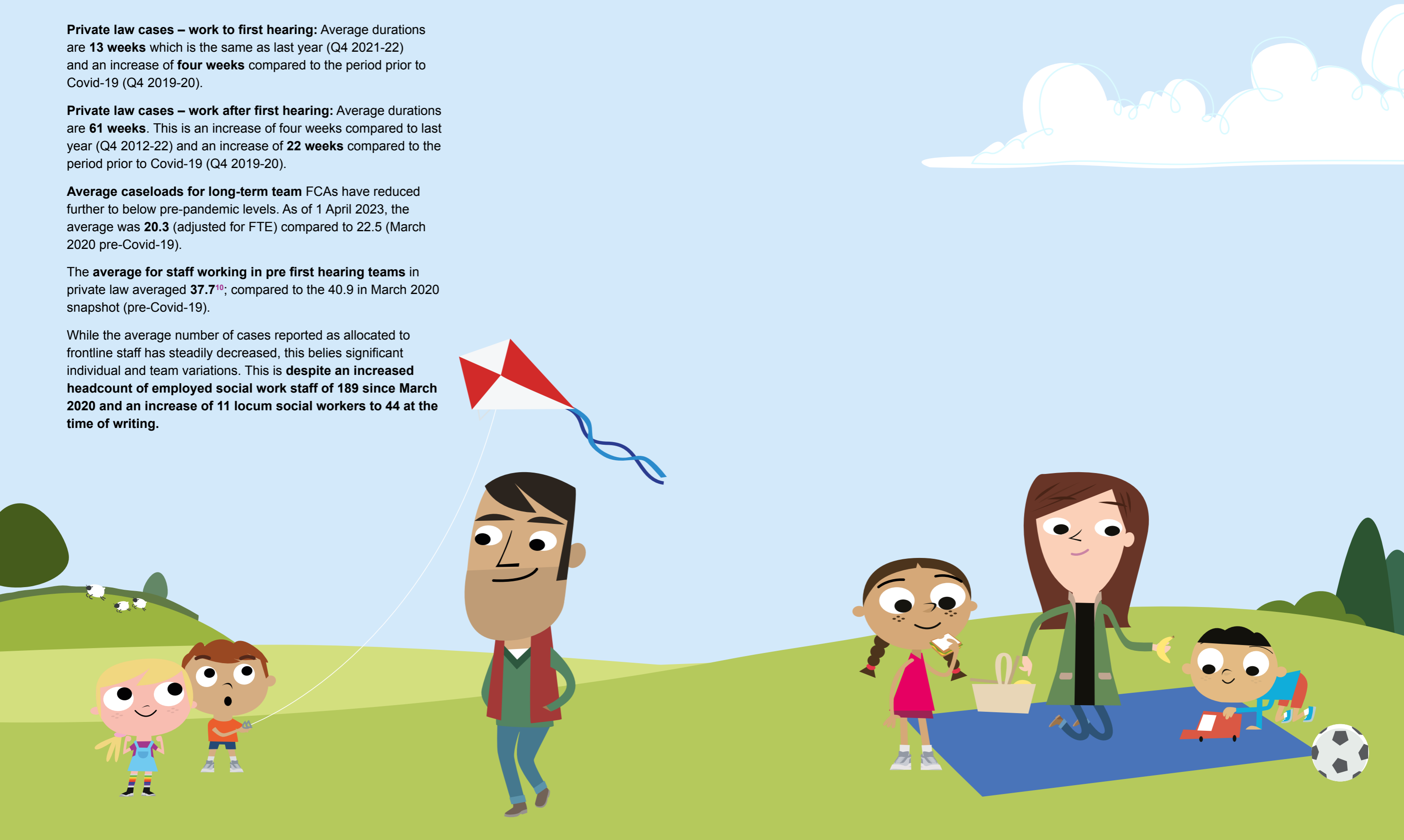
Private law cases – work to first hearing: Average durations are **13 weeks** which is the same as last year (Q4 2021-22) and an increase of **four weeks** compared to the period prior to Covid-19 (Q4 2019-20).

Private law cases – work after first hearing: Average durations are **61 weeks**. This is an increase of four weeks compared to last year (Q4 2012-22) and an increase of **22 weeks** compared to the period prior to Covid-19 (Q4 2019-20).

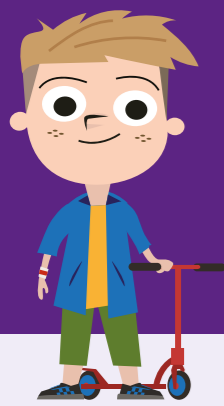
Average caseloads for long-term team FCAs have reduced further to below pre-pandemic levels. As of 1 April 2023, the average was **20.3** (adjusted for FTE) compared to 22.5 (March 2020 pre-Covid-19).

The **average for staff working in pre first hearing teams** in private law averaged **37.7¹⁰**; compared to the 40.9 in March 2020 snapshot (pre-Covid-19).

While the average number of cases reported as allocated to frontline staff has steadily decreased, this belies significant individual and team variations. This is **despite an increased headcount of employed social work staff of 189 since March 2020 and an increase of 11 locum social workers to 44 at the time of writing.**



¹⁰ Adjusted to remove outlier Service Areas with inflated workloads due to local working practices.



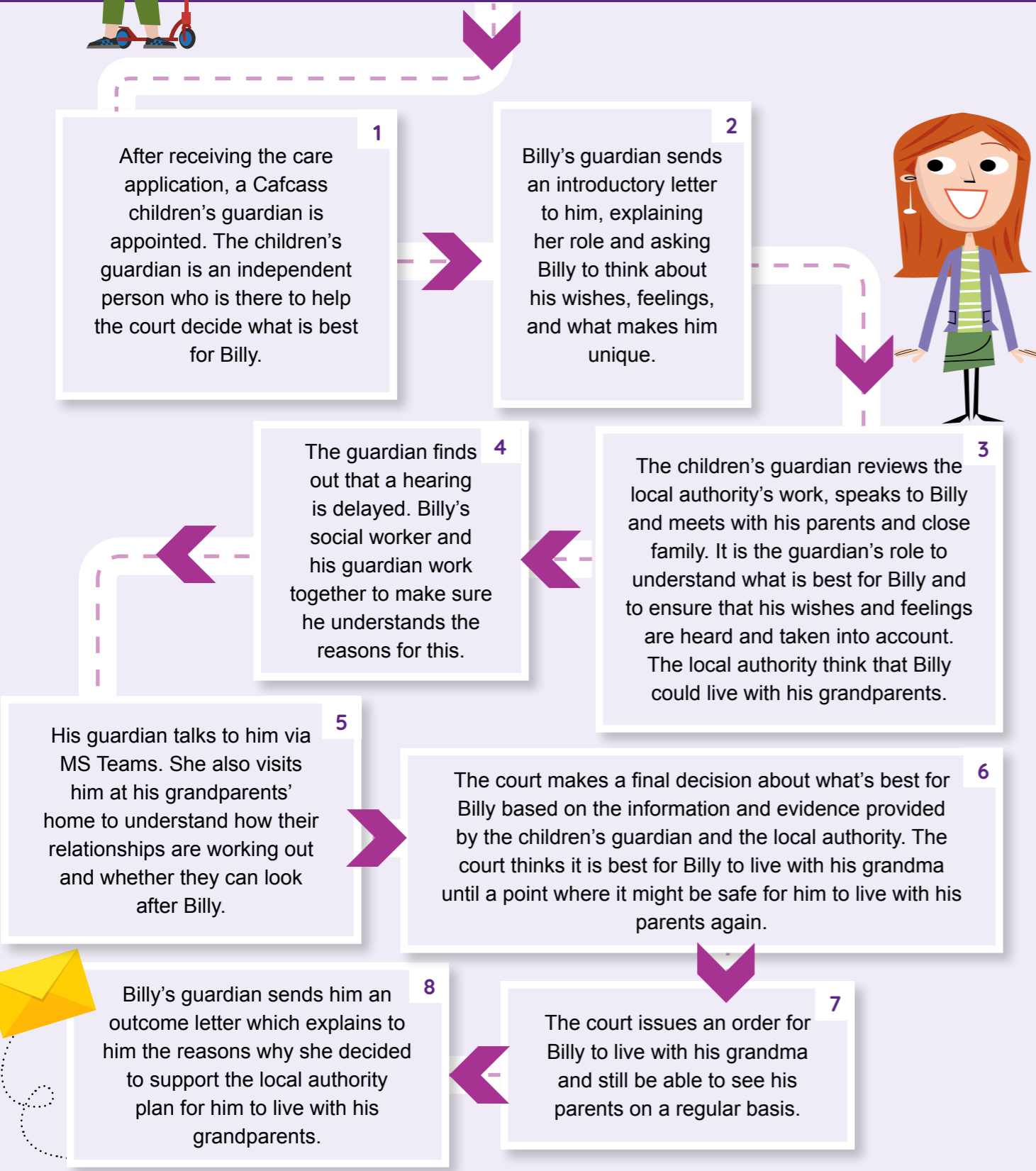
A child and family journey through public law

*Billy is 10 and lives with his mum and dad. The local authority has judged that Billy cannot be kept safe with his parents and have made a care application for him to be looked after by the local authority.



A child and family journey through private law

*Ben is 12 years old and lives with his mum. His dad has applied for a child arrangements order because he has not seen Ben since their separation three months ago. He has asked the court to make an order for Ben to spend alternate weekends with him because Ben has said to him that this is what he wants.



*The child's journeys contain elements that feature in our public and private law cases but are illustrative only and not based on one particular child or case.



Our ambition: strategic priorities

A three-year strategic plan 2019-23

Nine strategic delivery priorities 2019-23 (DP=Delivery priority)

Practice	People	Partners
<p>DP1 Quality, impact and effectiveness of practice: improve the quality of relationship-based practice, quality assurance and evidence of our impact.</p> <p>DP2 Acting on feedback: heighten the importance of feedback, seek it more often and makes changes to improve how children and families experience us.</p> <p>DP3 Focused improvement from our learning: act on learning from complaints and serious incidents and lead practice improvements for 10 local and national priorities.</p>	<p>DP4 Attract, retain and engage people: recruit, develop and retain skilled people for our future needs, including more diverse talent.</p> <p>DP5 Modern child-first working environment: so people can do their best work with and for children.</p> <p>DP6 Leadership and governance: determined, kind and evidence based leadership that enables change and improvement as well as celebrating best practice.</p>	<p>DP7 Manage demand in private law: testing new ways of working early in proceedings, being efficient with social work time and identifying what an improved experience for children and families looks and feels like.</p> <p>DP8 Insight for recovery: to ensure we focus work with partners, families and children on what will make the most difference as we recover from the pandemic.</p> <p>DP9 Leadership of reform: close and senior partnership to lead agreed and visible reform, recovery and improvement.</p>



Strategic plan 2019-23: The progress we have made

Practice	People	Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Together: our new practice framework – implementation well progressed ■ Practice Quality Standards in public and private law – launched and in place ■ Domestic Abuse Action Plan – in place with first year review ■ Feedback Strategy launched and complaints process for adults and children under review ■ Family Forum established with work plan ■ Partnership with FJYPB strong and influential ■ Hear to Listen and My Cafcass Journey services – designed for children ■ National improvement plan: 5 practice priorities and 5 leadership priorities – local and national dimensions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workforce strategy and employer identity in place and used for recruiting ■ Leadership and management quality standards – developed and to launch ■ Annual staff survey – embedded and to repeat ■ Equality Diversity & Inclusion Strategy launched with quarterly steering group review ■ Talent Pathway for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff – three new programmes ■ Digital strategy including new website design ■ Estates strategy: new office design concept, implemented in first offices ■ New Performance and Accountability Cycle, quality assurance and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Influenced focus on recovery & delay for government’s family justice board ■ Testing new approached in private law: MoJ Pathfinder and internal testing on Cafcass engagement early in proceedings ■ New Planning Together for Children programme and resources (revised and renewed separated parents information programme) ■ Improved data to understand national trends and local variation ■ Prioritisation protocol evaluation ■ Working with HMCTS** on improvements to information sharing and portal builds. <p><i>** His Majesty’s Court and Tribunal Service</i></p>

Building on our strategy for sustaining excellence 2019-23

Our Strategy for 2019-23 set out the work we needed to do to sustain and improve our effectiveness in respect of our social work practice, the professional environment for our people and in the collaboration and shared work with our partners. Our intentions were described in nine delivery priorities which addressed the challenges we identified in 2019-20 and during the last two years, were adjusted to manage the pressures presented by the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The issues we prioritised included:

- Continued increases in new applications, especially in private law, and increasing concerns – raised by children and families about the impact of the resulting delays on their wellbeing.
- Rising demand for additional assessment, advice and input from Cafcass and other professionals which contributed to our frontline practitioners carrying unsustainable caseloads.
- We wanted to improve the quality, impact and consistency of our work with children and families, including increasing the volume of practice that we judged to be good or better.
- We wanted to develop a single unifying model of social work practice, prioritising trusted relationships and respectful use of our authority – including a set of values that could apply to anyone working at Cafcass in any role. In other words, a change programme, highly ambitious about the importance of children’s experiences of us, their best interests and both their and their families’ need to understand our recommendations to the family court.
- We wanted to rebalance the raised expectations in practice, with more management capacity to oversee and provide more consistent supervision for our complex work.
- We were hearing feedback from children and families about their perceptions and experiences of an antiquated and adversarial family justice system in which they did not feel heard, and which did not connect them to wider sources of advice and support that could help them.
- We were concerned about the regional variation in the experiences of children and families in local court areas in respect of public and private law proceedings.

- We were determined to make further improvements in our leadership, our frontline practice and in our business and corporate services arrangements in order to consolidate and stretch beyond the findings of the 2018 Ofsted inspection, which judged Cafcass to be outstanding.

Our strategic ambitions for the three years, 2019–23, were reframed significantly by the pandemic. Sustaining our effectiveness became the single priority so that we could continue to offer children and families the support of a family court adviser despite lengthening case durations, record levels of open work and highly restricted arrangements to meet in person with families and children. The pressures of social distancing on face-to-face working and court hearings resulted in higher than ever numbers of open children’s cases in the family justice system. For Cafcass, this meant we were working with an additional 13,000 children when our open children’s cases peaked in April 2021.

Our focus over the last three years has therefore been to protect, sustain and build on the improvements we had made to practice prior to the pandemic.

During the first year, 2020-21, we prioritised organisational stability during a period that was the busiest in Cafcass’ history. We worked intensively and collaboratively with our family justice system partners to secure additional investment and develop new models of working – including the prioritisation protocol – to enable us to prioritise the safety and welfare of the most vulnerable children while protecting frontline caseloads.

In our second year, 2021-22, we were in a position to consider what recovery might need to look like as we committed to a significant culture change programme, made possible by the development of our new practice framework – ‘Together with Children and Families’. At the heart of

this approach is a new relationship-based model of practice based on kindness, respect and trust. It prioritises listening and understanding children’s experience, using clear and respectful language, and providing opportunities for them to listen to, influence and understand the reasons for the recommendations we make to the family courts.

By the third year of our strategy (this reporting year), we judged we were sufficiently resilient to further stretch and improve our frontline practice. This involved strengthening our management oversight and supervision of practice, alongside much clearer expectations about what good looks like for children and families. We accomplished this through the introduction of our practice quality standards in public and private law, as well as our management quality standards for use by all leaders and managers.

Ofsted has carried out two focused visits to Cafcass during the last strategic plan period: in April 2021 and January 2023. The theme of the most recent visit was ‘managing demand’, the preceding visit’s theme being, ‘the effectiveness of demand management and the effectiveness of practice in the context of the pandemic’.

In the most recent visit, Ofsted reported that the quality of social work practice remains strong and continues to improve. Senior leaders were said to know the service extremely well, evidenced in the comprehensive self-assessment submitted to Ofsted in accordance with the inspection framework for Cafcass.

In both inspections, despite the significant impact of the high demand, senior leaders were judged to have sustained and improved the focus on children’s safety and welfare. Ofsted reported that we had led and developed creative and highly effective strategies in collaboration with key national and regional partners to continue to deliver

high-quality services to children, families and the family courts. They described senior leaders as having a comprehensive understanding of the pressures across the family justice system and the associated impact of delay for children. They found proactive leadership in respect of management oversight and supervision and were impressed with the commitment and drive at Cafcass to improve children’s experiences and lives.

Our priorities since both inspections have been reviewed and revised. Those for 2023-26, that are at the heart of this document, incorporate the learning and action we are planning in response.

How our progress has shaped our ambition for 2023-26

Despite the pressures of the last three years, we have made significant progress in reducing the national average caseloads to levels lower than in March 2020 and improving our quality of practice. We have built firm foundations to raise our ambition for children as we commit to provide an exceptional experience for every child, everywhere, every time.

In defining exceptional, we have listened to children and families about the basics they think everyone should expect from us and these are set out in each main section – PRACTICE, PEOPLE and PARTNERS - of our strategic plan.

We have been careful to balance the need to strive for the best and the need for a manageable pace so that our people can continue to work with kindness and compassion. We know that offering an exceptional experience is only possible when the fundamentals are in place. From our own assessments and feedback from Ofsted, we are confident that exceptional experiences are within reach.

Practice

- While the number of **new** children's cases is reducing (there were 10.9% fewer applications in the year 2022-23 compared to 2019-20), **the number of open children's cases has increased**. At the end of March 2023, there were 32,904 open cases involving 53,463 children. This represents a 10.9% (5,250 children) increase when compared to the start of the pandemic in March 2020, **but is a substantial reduction compared to the peak in April 2021** when we were working with an additional 13,000 children in 38,185 open children's cases (a 26.7% increase in children's cases on the pre-pandemic position).
- **Average caseloads are now lower than in March 2020:** 20.3 in work after first hearing teams; and 37.7 in work to first hearing teams (compared to 22.5 and 44.5 respectively pre-pandemic). However, there are operational service areas where FCAs have not yet benefited from these reductions. 55% of our FCAs are still carrying 20+ open children's cases which is the level at which will enable and promote the relationship-led practice that is a fundamental requirement of our practice framework.
- Despite these challenges, **we have maintained our performance against key national indicators**. This means that we are able to allocate the children at highest risk within the timescales required, and to file over 98% of reports to the courts in the timescales agreed. That said, there are challenges in some areas about how quickly we can allocate a child's case to an FCA, and this has resulted in an increase in the number of children waiting to meet their FCA for the first time. Those lower risk children's cases are held on duty or in an allocation hub (in areas where the prioritisation protocol is activated) overseen by a service manager. 7.1% of open children's cases

are currently allocated held on duty or in a hub.

- **Our feedback strategy introduced more proactive approaches to seeking feedback from children and families**, developed in partnership with the FJYPB. Our Family Forum, a group of parents and carers with experience of family court proceedings and who are wanting to work closely with us, give advice and feedback about how we can be more effective in making a positive difference. Both the FJYPB and the Family Forum played an active role in shaping our revised approach to handling complaints in 2022.
- **The quality and impact of practice with children and families** has continued to improve, evidenced in feedback, our cycle of practice quality audits and quality assurance data. In the practice quality audit undertaken in December 2022, the proportion of work judged good or outstanding was 73% compared to 63% in 2020. We have raised the bar for rating practice as good or outstanding, drawing on our learning from our best practice, research, and reviews of significant incidents. We aim to increase this further through our operational service area improvement programme led by the National Director and Deputy Director of Operations.

Our **practice ambition** is therefore to provide all children with an exceptional experience of their engagement with us, everywhere and every time. We will do this by providing their family court advisers or children's guardians with the management support, supervision and oversight they need to make effective and consistent use of our practice framework and associated practice aids.

People

- **We have prioritised improving the visibility, capacity and capability of our leaders and managers**. A significant review of management capacity in 2021 resulted in a reconfiguration of arrangements that was implemented in April 2023. All new managers are benefiting from mandatory training, mentoring and peer support.
- We have reviewed and **enhanced our wellbeing support arrangements and other employee benefits** to sustain and support our people. These now include four wellbeing days each year, and a network of 90 wellbeing champions who help to support colleagues and promote wellbeing in their areas.
- **We introduced a wider range of reward and recognition options to celebrate the work of colleagues** – for example through e-recognition cards and 'employee of the month' awards based around excellence in demonstrating our Together values and going the 'extra mile' at work. We also negotiated and promoted a range of pay and reward benefits and flexibilities – for example relating to expenses reimbursement, introducing a premium fuel allowance and early introduction of the National Living Wage, to help colleagues manage the additional financial pressures associated with the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.
- We updated our **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy with more explicit objectives**, each of which is led by the Chief Executive or an Executive Director.
- **We have managed increasing staff turnover**, which for our social work colleagues is 15% and for our business and corporate services teams is 12%.
- **We improved our insight into what makes people come to us, stay with us or leave us** by widening our

mechanisms for staff engagement and feedback. Securing the maximum pay award possible within the civil service pay rules and the business case for a career and learning development framework are urgent priorities for the first year of our new strategy.

- We have used these insights to develop **a more compelling identity – Be Their Voice – and to be an employer of choice for children's social workers**. This new campaign is already in use in more targeted recruitment programmes and areas where we are finding it harder to recruit. This helped us maintain a social work vacancy rate (8.3%) that is lower than the average in local authorities (20%) and we ended the 2022-23 year with a similar number of employed social workers, compared to the end of March 2022.
- We took the first steps in introducing **clearer opportunities for career progression by prioritising the creation of our Social Work Academy** to develop and retain our own talented social workers especially in harder-to-recruit areas; the introduction of increased capacity for social work management oversight and supervision; and through a new Talent Pathway for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues.

Our **people ambition** is therefore to provide the leadership, professional development and working environment our people need. We will invest in career and learning pathways, maximise our reward, recognition and wellbeing offer and build capability to drive efficiency, further improvement and system reform.

Partners

- Delay for children as a result of longer case durations is now the single most pressing issue for the family justice system.** The average length of public law care and supervision proceedings is 46 weeks (+10 weeks compared to March 2020), and private law work after first hearing is 61 weeks (+22 weeks compared to March 2020). This is clearly unsustainable for children and their families given the significant impact it has on their lives and planning for their futures. Delay therefore remains a priority in this strategy and urgent for at least the first year.
- We have been developing our data on court outcomes,** starting with an analysis of what happens to children at the end of public law care proceedings. This work has identified that in just over a third of section 31 care proceedings, but with significant local variation, children remain or return to the care of their parents. The availability of this information will, we hope, enable family justice partners, together to examine the nature and purpose of those proceedings and to consider the impact and benefit for children in respect of action intended to safeguard and promote their welfare.
- We introduced and evaluated our prioritisation protocol** to maintain timely allocation of public law and high-risk private law children's cases, to maintain safe caseloads for FCAs and to restore capacity for management oversight and supervision of the quality of practice and ensure a contact point for families waiting to meet their FCA. This evaluation received very positive feedback and has enabled us to maintain this option for use in areas where the pressures in the family justice system locally or our own internal staffing capacity impact on Cafcass' ability to allocate public law and high-risk private law cases in accordance with required timescales and local social work caseloads.
- Following the report of the MoJ Expert Panel on Harm in the Family Courts, **we invited a range of partners to join our Learning and Improvement Board to develop and share in the oversight of our domestic abuse action plan.** Progress has been the subject of three annual case quality practice audits and the board concluded in June 2023, being replaced by a practice reference board whose function is to continue to support our improvement planning and practice learning.
- We also worked with partners on the design and implementation of the **MoJ private law Pathfinder courts** in Dorset and North Wales. This is testing an earlier offer of support to families in private law proceedings and where domestic abuse is known or alleged. In this model, Cafcass (and Cafcass Cymru) provide a more comprehensive approach to both initial information gathering and the provision of a fuller Child Impact Report earlier in proceedings. In this pilot, we are more likely to see children before the first hearing which will also help us with the design and thinking about our own internal private law change programme, prioritised in the new three-year strategy.
- On behalf of the MoJ, we **re-designed and commissioned a new 'Planning Together for Children' programme** and associated information resources (building on the previous Separated Parents Information Programme). This programme supports parents to think about the needs of their children first when they are working out how they can parent together when they are separating and/or they are living apart. Some 23,500 parents each year were referred or ordered by the family court to attend the previous programme, and our intention is that this new resource is offered to more parents and earlier in proceedings.

Our **partner ambition** is therefore to continue to collaborate and to work together on system recovery, specifically delay for children in proceedings. It is also to seek the views and perspectives of partners on improving children's and families' experiences of proceedings and associated support services.

Figure 9 sets out the detail of the transition we are making into a new strategic three-year plan:

Figure 9: PRACTICE priorities

Delivery priority 2019-23	Priority programme 2019-23	For strategy 2023-26	
DP1 Quality, impact and effectiveness of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice framework (Together) Management oversight and supervision Public law improvement 	<p>DP1 Further improve the quality and impact of practice – narrow the gap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective management oversight and supervision Embed the consistent use of our Together practice framework materials and aids Improve consistency of our arrangements for the oversight of children who have yet to meet their FCA Public Law Practice Improvement Programme 	
		<p>DP2 Act on feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback strategy Family Forum, FJYPB Learning from complaints 	<p>DP2 Seek out and learn from feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and evaluate our strategy for learning from feedback Act on learning from complaints, compliments, significant incidents
		<p>DP3 Focus improvement from learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice improvement priorities (including practice quality standards, and reward for practice champions and specialists) Leadership improvement priorities 	<p>DP3 Enable the system to support practice - targeted support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement operational service area improvement plans Improve processes for opening and closing children's cases Embed the performance, accountability, and quality assurance cycles

Figure 10: PEOPLE priorities

Delivery priority 2019-23	Priority programme 2019-23	For strategy 2023-26
DP4 Attract, retain and engage people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay and reward (including Employer Value Proposition, updated pay structures, single view of staffing establishment) Management standards and capability, and succession planning Cafcass Academy (including career and qualification pathways, PLR review, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic talent pathway) 	DP4 Attract, retain and engage people
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise our business case to government for Cafcass to have flexibility to set an attractive and competitive pay offer, recognising the social work profession as distinct from the civil service Align our pay and grading structures with our new Career and Learning Pathways for social work and for corporate and business services professionals, which will attract and retain diverse talent, and equip our people to meet our enhanced expectations in delivering excellence for children Revise our operating model in line with practice developments and to drive efficiency, improvement and system reform
DP5 Modern child-first working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital transformation Estates strategy and London/Brighton moves Health and wellbeing strategy 	DP5 Provide a modern child-focused work environment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise revisions to our ChildFirst case management system, supporting performance and management information and working practices to enable exceptional work with families and children Revise and implement an estates strategy that offers children, families and colleagues sufficient in-person engagement and support and which promotes relationship led work alongside modern and efficient online connectivity Prioritise wellbeing, safety and productivity in all our ways of working, policies and guidance, and ensure they are supported by modern technology and records management

DP6 Leadership and governance	DP6 Lead and govern well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital transformation Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Audit and Annual Accounts 2021-22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed our leadership and management quality standards to support and achieve our strategy and improvement priorities Review and revise our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy following an evaluation of the first year so that we can demonstrate meaningful progress Plan succession arrangements for our senior leaders with structures to support our updated operating model and to develop leaders who drive excellence for children and families

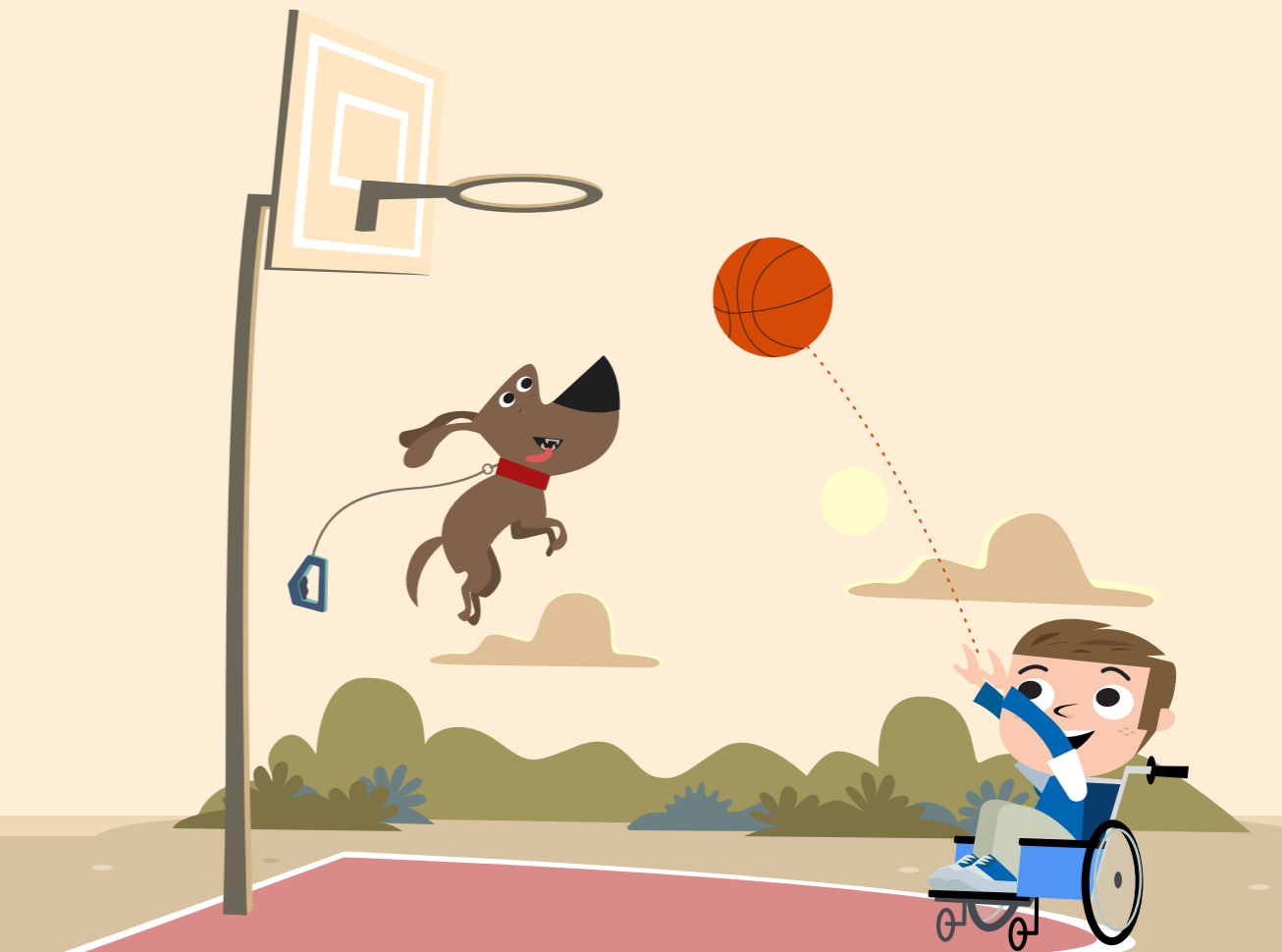


Figure 11: PARTNER priorities

Delivery priority 2019-23	Priority programme 2019-23	For strategy 2023-26
DP7 Manage demand in private law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private law Pathfinder (MoJ) Refocused private law model Reduce pressure at front door (Design low risk/diversion pathway: apply CAP, returning cases, early/modular SPIP) 	<p>DP7 Improve children’s experiences of private law proceedings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate our learning from the Ministry of Justice Private Law Pathfinder in Dorset so that we can identify implications for our revised private law working arrangements Develop and test a revised model for safeguarding checks and work to first hearing in private law Delivery of our Private Law Improvement Programme to reduce delay and improve outcomes for children. This programme includes a focus on strengthened practice with children and families who are experiencing domestic abuse, and a more structured assessment and intervention model for children’s cases where a r16.4 appointment is made
DP8 Insight for recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand local variation (local diagnostics, and methodology for thematic insights) Local recovery models: evaluation of prioritisation protocol, post assessment hub Business analysis and data development (enhanced data capture from Child Plan and ChildFirst) 	<p>DP8 Use our information to reduce delays for all children in proceedings and understand outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to improve our ability to record and report on outcomes for children at the end of proceedings and use this to assess our own progress against our improvement plan and to stimulate joint action with partners Use our enhanced recovery data – developed to support our recovery from the pandemic at national level and now complemented by local dashboards – to support service managers in pinpointing the drivers of delay, to identify consistency in practice and to develop solutions with partners where required Evaluate the impact of the Cafcass Recovery Board in improving outcomes for children and organisational effectiveness

DP9 Leadership of reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System leadership: Family Justice Board (FJB) priorities Judicial Partnership HMCTS shared priorities: portals 	DP9 Work with others to improve family justice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a new partners’ strategy to ensure our local and national partnership work delivers agreed improvement and change priorities as set out in the FJB priorities and this strategic plan Take action with partners to enable children to understand and participate in their proceedings, in accordance with their age and stage of development Collaborate with His Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service on improving information sharing with the courts, including through the implementation of the new public law, private law and adoption portals



Key performance headlines



How we measure performance

Cafcass works to four key performance indicators (KPIs) which are set in consultation with our sponsor department, the MoJ. These cover our work with families in both public and private law proceedings. For each, we include two types of measure: a measure of the proportion of cases allocated to an FCA; and a timeliness measure. Allocation to an FCA is important because assessment work can only start with a child and family once an individual practitioner has been allocated (although some screening will have happened on receipt of the application). We monitor timeliness because we recognise the impact that unnecessary delay has on children who need safe and stable outcomes as soon as possible.

For both public and private law, the allocation measure is the percentage of 'open' (ongoing) children's cases, taken as a snapshot at the end of each month, that have an allocated Cafcass practitioner: a children's guardian in public law (KPI 1); and an FCA in private law (KPI 3). Our target for both KPIs is for 97% to be allocated.

For public law, our timeliness measure is how quickly a Cafcass practitioner is allocated to a section 31 care case (KPI 2). For section 31 care applications, our target is for allocation within three working days, although in practice we usually need to allocate more quickly than this because the majority (around two thirds) are for urgent first hearings taking place within seven working days.

For private law, our timeliness measure is based on the proportion of section 7 welfare reports filed by the date the court has set (KPI 4). Our target is for at least 97% of reports to be filed by the agreed date.

These headline performance indicators provide assurance in respect of our fundamental delivery objectives: allocating work to family court advisers and filing it on time with the courts. In response to the pandemic, we introduced a more comprehensive set of monitoring indicators, including variation at regional level, which enable us to identify and respond to early warning signs that performance may become compromised. This data covers the throughput and duration of proceedings, as well as more detail on the workload of our social work staff including frontline managers and supervisors, the allocation of work to duty, allocation and post assessment hubs and the effectiveness of practice. It also helps us understand performance against key indicators, such as how quickly we file reports, the sufficiency of management capacity, our ability to allocate work and the capacity we have to quality assure and provide oversight and supervision.

In addition, our assessment of the quality of our social work practice is set out in section 2.5. Our pressure indicators are reviewed fortnightly at our Recovery Board and reported to and scrutinised by our Performance & Quality Committee and, through our Board to the MoJ. Further information about how we provide assurance on our quality of practice is provided in the Accountability Report.

Summary of performance against KPIs

We achieved expected standards against each of the four headline KPIs during the year, although additional indicators (as set out above) continue to show ongoing pressure in our work linked to the impact of the pandemic, in particular ongoing delays and higher case durations.

KPI 1: Percentage of section 31 care cases allocated to a children's guardian - **99.2%**

KPI 2: Working days to allocate a section 31 care case to a children's guardian - **1.6 days**

KPI 3: Percentage of private law cases allocated to a family court adviser – **99.4%**

KPI 4: Percentage of private law section 7 reports filed by the agreed date – **98.2%**

Our KPIs provide an assurance that Cafcass is operating at, or close to, required standards. They are vital sign measures. However, taken on their own they do not fully convey the underlying and significant pressures faced by the organisation and our staff. Additional measures under close and regular scrutiny include:

- **Timeliness of case allocation which has not increased since last year.** While the slowing of allocation can be a factor attributable to increased staff turnover (as allocations are temporarily lower for new starters) it can also be an intentional management action to smooth the impact of new allocations on FCAs.
- **The proportion of cases being allocated on time to children's guardians/FCAs is the same as it was 12 months ago.** This is indicative of continued system pressure and delay.
- **The number of section 7 reports that were filed against the first agreed date is 61.5% for the last**



financial year. This remains broadly unchanged from the 60.1% reported in 2021-22.

The number of requests for extensions to filing date for section 7 reports has decreased in 2022-23 to 38.1% compared to 39% in 2021-22. On average we are requesting extensions for 23.3 days. One reason for this action is the activation of the prioritisation protocol which was active in seven service areas early in the financial year (although by March 2023 this had reduced to two service areas). Activation of the protocol is usually accompanied by an extension to agreed filing times for these reports while less urgent work is held on duty in an allocation hub. Filing extensions have also been impacted by the increased turnover of FCAs and sickness absence. In other cases, the extensions are planned to bring the filing of the reports closer to a revised court hearing date in order to avoid the need for addendum reports and additional hearings. All filing extensions have to be requested and agreed by the court.

- **Maintaining caseloads at manageable levels, means that c2,440 (c3,860 children) children's cases are not allocated to an FCA and are overseen by dedicated social work managers on duty or in hubs.**

Private law children's cases held back on duty or in a hub are triaged for welfare and safety issues by the Early Intervention Team, then at the First Hearing and Dispute Resolution Appointment and then by the allocation manager. To control demand pressures on FCAs and maintain safe caseloads in the context of increases in the turnover of staff and in sickness absence, managers hold back less urgent and lower risk children's cases. The number of cases held in this way increased significantly

through the pandemic but is now reducing. The number and days to allocate work is monitored closely by operational managers and can trigger a 'challenge meeting' facilitated by the National Director of Operations under the prioritisation protocol. A standard operating procedure, based on a review of best practice in holding this work, will be implemented in 2023 to support the consistent application of standards in decision-making, communicating with families and the oversight of new information relating to children in private law proceedings.

Despite improved system throughput, including record levels of judicial sitting days, overall lower court disposals mean that **case durations continue to increase significantly**. Although improved, the current **rate of case closures and disposals is not high enough to bring down the backlogs of work built up through the pandemic**. To continue to protect frontline caseloads, we oversee and manage c1,100 (March 2023) private law children's cases through our duty system, c830 in post-assessment hubs, c120 in Early Intervention Team hubs (open proceedings prior to the first hearing) and c370 in allocation hubs where prioritisation protocols are in place.

- **Close monitoring of caseload levels, which at the end of March 2023, for many staff remain high with c252 (21%¹¹) employed FCAs carrying a caseload in excess of our agreed maximum (above 25 in work after first hearing teams / above 40 in work to first hearing teams adjusted for FTE).**
- **The amount of work held by practice supervisors and service managers as at 31 March 2023 was c2,440 children. This is a consequence of a**

combination of increased staff turnover and sickness and our commitment to protect FCA caseloads.

Many of the children's cases held by practice supervisors are those they were allocated as FCAs before promotion and a decision was actively made to maintain the continuity of social worker for the children. Some children's cases held by service managers also maintain continuity for the child and their family if those managers were working with them as a practice supervisor (practice supervisors have a reduced caseload).

Most of the children's cases held by practice supervisors and service managers are held either prior to substantive allocation to an FCA for a limited period during a period of sickness absence or prior to a new FCA starting work at Cafcass.

Practice supervisor and service manager capacity remains key to maintaining timely allocation and completion of work. In addition to their role in overseeing children's cases on duty, practice supervisors and service managers have been holding high caseloads as the substantively allocated practitioner, in order to help protect the caseloads of our frontline family court advisers.

- As of the end of March 2023, practice supervisors carried an average of 11.0 lead allocations (compared to 12.6 in March 2022). This means the practice supervisor was the main social worker on the children's case. Although there has been improvement, this level still reduces the overall capacity for support and oversight.

- At the end of March 2023, service managers carried on average 3.0 lead allocations (compared to 1.5 in March 2022) **a total of 192 cases / 310 children** (excluding those in hubs) compared to 126 lead allocations in March 2022.

Principal social worker overview 2022-23

Three years have elapsed since the Together Practice Framework was conceived. It was developed within Cafcass and launched in 2021. As Principal Social Worker I have championed Together at every point, because it provides Cafcass social workers with a single unifying framework and language to support them to make the best possible recommendations for children in family law proceedings.

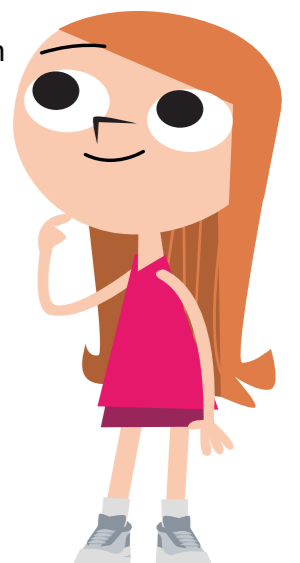
Already during 2022, in the first year of implementation, we began to hear from children and families that when we use the practice elements of the framework well (the introductory letters, the assessment and child's plan, storyboards and moments to explain our thinking), it makes a real and positive difference. We are using this feedback to hold a mirror to ourselves and make an honest appraisal of the impact of the framework so far. That is set out in the 'taking stock' report below.

This year – our second year of implementation - we have heard from children that they feel listened to and know what to expect when they receive introduction and goodbye letters and when we work with them to understand their experiences – specifically considering harm, the impact of harm and the risk of future harm. Some parents have told us that even if they do not agree with our recommendations for their children, they understand why and how we have reached those decisions and they appreciate that. This is our ambition and our professional responsibility.

Given the inherent culture change, we would not expect the implementation of our Together Practice Framework to be complete in less than four years of implementation, but we are encouraged by the evidence of tangible progress. Our progress is set in the context of the challenges in the family justice system that are enduring beyond the pandemic. Delay for children in proceedings remains a serious issue as are the national crises in social work pay and increasing workloads around the country. Despite these pressures, we are strongly motivated to move to consistent implementation of the framework for every child, everywhere and every time in the year ahead.

Cafcass' progress in improving the quality of our practice for children is possible because we are building from a strong base, with a highly skilled (72% of our social workers qualified more than ten years ago) and dedicated workforce, and inspirational and capable leaders. As Principal Social Worker, I see first-hand that Cafcass leaders listen to the social workers who work here. They are determined and driven to improving the environment in which great social work can happen – this includes:

- An extensive and effective national and local audit programme, which includes moderation of audits by heads of practice and audits conducted by senior managers. We use audit as an opportunity to learn on an individual level but just as importantly as an organisation – leaders know about the quality and impact of practice and have a clear sense of what must further improve.



¹¹ On 31 March 2023 there were 1,201 FCAs with allocated children's cases.

- Learning from significant incidents, feedback, and complaints. Taking this seriously while promoting a learning not blaming culture.
- Targeting our improvement and holding ourselves to account for progress against our five practice and five leadership improvement priorities.
- Listening and acting in response to the challenges set by the FJYPB, our Family Forum and from our partners - especially not 'normalising delay' for children.
- Adjusting operational arrangements to increase management capacity while investing in the training of our newly appointed assistant service managers and existing managers.
- Being focussed relentlessly on finding ways to reduce caseloads, while effectively managing children's cases, when it is not possible to immediately allocate to an FCA.
- Prioritising the provision of reflective supervision to support our FCAs in the complex, sensitive and life changing recommendations they make daily.
- Getting the balance right between respecting professional independence and establishing high expectations and accountability, governed by a 'small rule book' of practice requirements, which everyone signs up to because they are committed to it as a way of achieving consistency for all children.

Making improvements in many areas simultaneously can feel to colleagues like there is too much change, and it is happening too quickly. However, my strong sense is that we are now crystal clear on our key priorities, which build on the foundations and impetus of last year and we are now in

a year of consolidation, in which reducing variability is our firm ambition.

To bring to life the progress I am describing, I have selected **three practice highlights** for children this year, showing how each aligns with our strategic operational priorities.

At our first national Learning and Improvement conference this year, we heard directly from a woman who had made a complaint about how Cafcass and the family courts had handled the case involving her three children, who had experienced **domestic abuse**. She spoke powerfully about how she and her children had felt misunderstood and had their experience of coercively controlling behaviour minimised during the original proceeding four years before. She explained that the children were struggling with issues of confidence and poor mental health directly related to what they had witnessed. She described how the decision for shared arrangements for the children between their parents set the course for subsequent proceedings, until her most recent FCA finally looked with fresh eyes at the children's experiences and updated her assessment, based on the Cafcass Domestic Abuse training she had recently attended. Our practice audit, this year on domestic abuse, showed that in 8/10 cases sampled, there was no conflation or minimisation of domestic abuse. In 2020, the findings from the equivalent audit showed this to be lower at 7/10.

During 2022, we worked with external and internal experts to develop our Guidance on Working with **Children and Gender Identity**. The material was tested in practice by FCAs working directly with young people, in public and private law. The result is an excellent resource and we are already seeing the positive impact in feedback from

FCAs. Our diversity wheel is also used to open conversations with children and young people exploring what is special and unique about them. These resources are all playing their part in improving the quality of practice in respect of understanding children's unique characteristics.

The third practice highlight concerns the progress made **in seeing and engaging with children in public law proceedings**. Although children's guardians have always been dedicated to achieving the best outcomes for children in these proceedings, it became apparent in 2020, that we were not able to evidence when they saw children or what use they made of their engagement. This practice has since been transformed, through determined focus on this issue, and linked to the strategic practice priority. 98.0% of children in public law have a current record of being seen, 91.1% of whom are 'seen in person'. The quality of engagement is similarly highly rated in our audits.

Cafcass is a highly ambitious organisation and, as I have already observed, practitioners and leaders are committed to improvement all of the time. In accordance

with the strategic priorities set out in section 2.3 of this document, I will be focusing in the year ahead on:

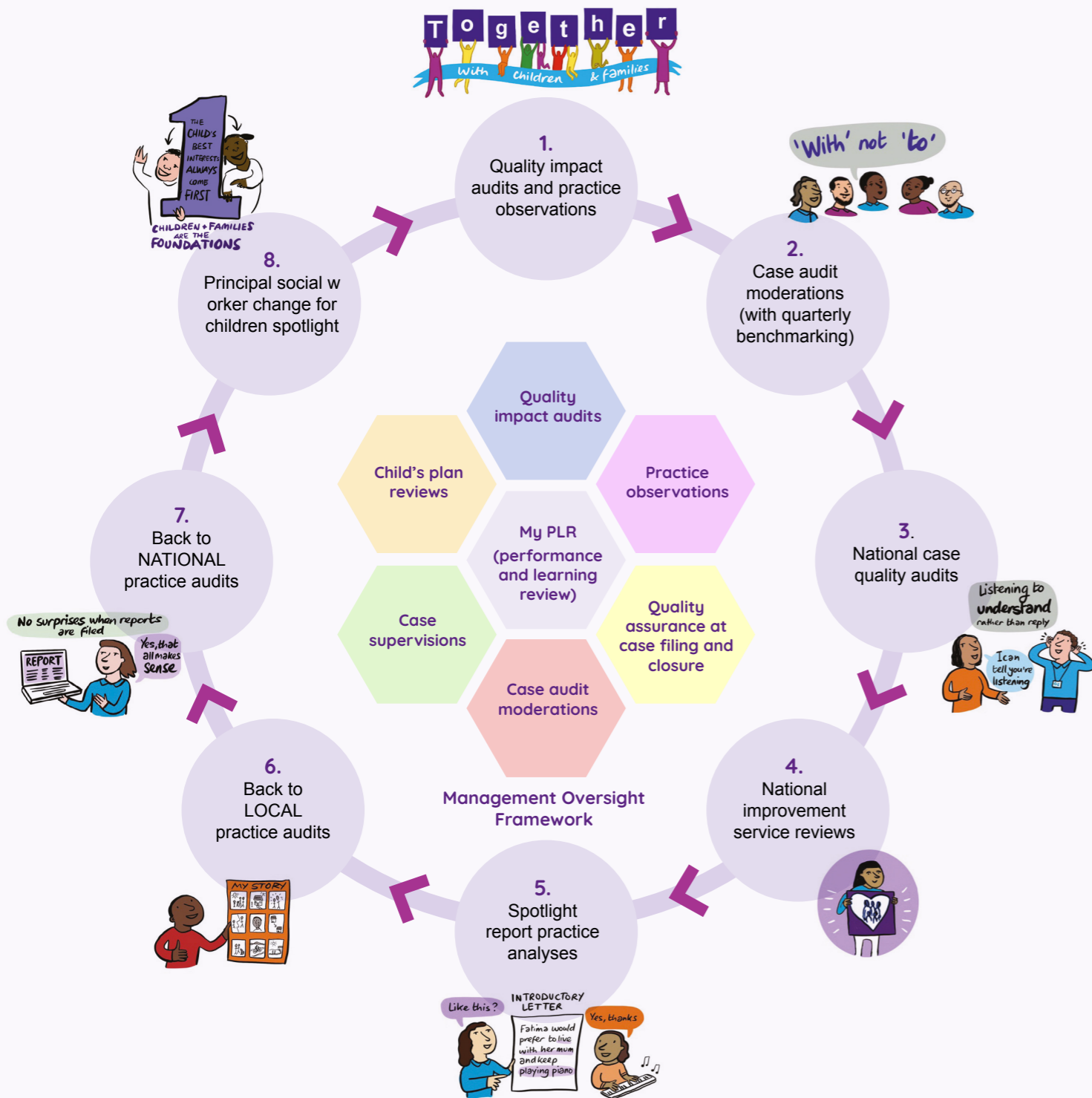
1. Developing and testing a refined **private law assessment model** so that we can advise the court about the next steps in the proceedings, based on the complexity and urgency of the child's situation and in the quickest way possible.
2. Strengthening and modernising our **social work Learning and Development programme**, so that it is more explicitly linked to career progression.
3. Continuing to support leaders to embed the **culture of reflective supervision, oversight and critical reflection**.



What do we know about the quality of practice and how do we know it?

Assuring ourselves about the safety and welfare of children

Figure 12: Cafcass Quality Assurance Framework 2022-24 - showing management oversight processes within the framework



The quality assurance framework and cycle

In May 2022, we launched our quality assurance and impact framework and accompanying revised audit reporting template. The framework sets out our approach to collaborative auditing, including seeking feedback from children and families. It is used as the basis for us to understand our work, the difference we are making to children and plays a vital role in holding ourselves accountable and reporting accordingly.

One aspect of the revisions we made last year was the setting of the expectation in the framework that at least 50% of all audits¹² are undertaken collaboratively, involving a practice discussion with the FCA and with the family. This has now become an established part of our commitment within our practice framework. The auditing process must be carried out with sensitivity, kindness, and a focus on professional reflection, learning, and improvement rather than finding blame.

We made additional changes to our practice assessment and quality assurance processes to ensure consistent use of practice quality standards, grade descriptors, benchmarking, and moderation. Our quality assurance framework set out in figure 12 shows the activity now incorporated into our annual cycle.

The policy and practice expectation

- Operational service managers complete service area practice audits on four occasions per year for each FCA. Two of the four are collaborative with family feedback and FCA's self-assessment on impact before the collaborative audit.

All audits provide the opportunity for reflection and learning. They provide strengths-based feedback and set immediate actions or improvement actions if these are required.

- Managers also complete two practice observations per year, one every six months. Observed practice explores and evidences the transfer of learning into practice and also provides an opportunity for reflection and learning.
- Collaborative audits seek child, family, and other professional feedback to understand the impact of practice.
- Moderation reviews of local practice audits are undertaken for oversight, practice discussion and improvement by operational heads of practice; at three per month.
- Heads of practice attend peer benchmarking sessions led by the National Improvement Service four times a year.
- Professional learning and development from our quality assurance work is taken directly into performance and learning reviews (PLRs) of which there are three per year for all FCAs and managers.

All auditing undertaken by the National Improvement Service is subject to grading as this is an essential mechanism to track progress on improvement plans. In the last year, we have disbanded our local audit grading structure¹² in order to have one clear account of the quality of practice. Grades and progress are used in regional performance board assessments, in improvement reviews, in regular reports to corporate management team, to the performance and quality subcommittee of the Cafcass board and to the main board itself.

¹² Local audit grades are in use for new staff in their probationary period or who are the subject of a performance improvement plan. Where a grading is in use locally, there are learning conversations between the local auditor and the practitioner with clear actions agreed.

Our grade descriptors used in audit (detailed for each grade outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good, and inadequate) help practitioners know what an auditor is looking for and to help auditors to be consistent in respect of:

- the welfare and safety of the child
- the evidence that their wishes and feelings have been heard and expressed and represented
- the clarity of the explanation to them and their families about the rationale and recommendations – expressed in their own words to the court
- the impact and difference we have made to their life.

Quality assurance and impact reporting is provided live to assistant directors and heads of practice alongside a monthly quality assurance and impact report. This includes an assessment of how well operational service areas are performing on the required quality and impact audits, the required volume and quality of audit moderation and what the data is describing in respect of progress against national and local improvement priorities.



2022-23 Quality assurance activity

Local practice audits and practice observations

1

Leaders: *Service managers and practice supervisors*

- **Frequency:** Four audits per year per FCA and two practice observations
- **Purpose: Practice oversight.** Two of the four are collaborative with family feedback and FCAs self-assess on impact before the collaborative audit. Observed practice evidences the transfer of learning into practice, identifies impact and sets improvement actions.
- **During 2022-23, 5,217 audits of child records have been completed nationally and 1,855 Practice Observations have been completed.**
- These tell us about the quality of assessment, how, why and when we see children, and who we speak to who knows the child well. They tell us about how our practice is developing and whether children understand FCA recommendations and the difference letters to children have made. **They tell us about where these practice elements are not present and about the actions and support to improve practice.**

Moderation reviews

2

Leaders: *Heads of practice*

- **Frequency:** Three per month
- **Purpose:** Moderation of local practice audits for oversight, practice discussion and improvement.
- **During 2022-23, 206 moderation audits have been completed.** This helps them to understand the quality of auditing being undertaken locally and to act to improve this where necessary. **30 practice observation and 150 audits of child records have been completed by heads of practice.** They assess good and best practice against the practice quality standards.

National case quality audits

3

Leaders: *National Improvement Service and assistant directors – progress in improvement and performance*

- **Frequency:** Every four months (three per year of 200 cases) with 30% from area QAI as moderation by National Improvement Service
- **Purpose:** Supplements local practice audits with national overview. Improvement priority themes included, and one of three national audits always focused on domestic abuse work. A proportion are collaborative and seek family feedback.
- **600 audits** have been completed by National Improvement Service and a further **186 as part of regional performance boards.** The quality of practice by FCAs in November 2022 was 73% good or better.

National Improvement Service reviews

4

Leaders: *National improvement managers*

- **Frequency:** As directed by National Director of Operations (c30% of internal significant incident reports)
- **Purpose:** Focused case review for learning following a significant incident report where there is probable learning for the organisation.
- **114 Significant Incidents were reviewed** in order to consider local learning and **53 to identify national learning**, which led to changes to policy and guidance such as engaging with and seeing children and working with partners, grandparents, wider family members and professionals.



Regional practice analyses

5

Leaders: Heads of practice, service and improvement managers

- **Frequency:** As directed by operational management team in response to spotlight report scrutiny
- **Purpose:** Targets additional practice scrutiny on areas for improvement in all regions, including collaborative audit and a local learning conversation where specific practice issues identified.
- **Further to spotlight report oversight and discussion, managers were required to review case records for all children under 2 where there was no record of child engagement and take action** accordingly. They were also required to review records of all children between 2 and 4 with no engagement record and again take action accordingly. The impact has been that the number of children with no record of engagement has reduced.

Local practice audits

6

Leaders: Assistant directors

- **Frequency:** One per month
- **Purpose:** Senior regional leadership oversight of practice improvement and learning.
- **74 audits have been completed by assistant directors** providing oversight and progress on improvement plans and actions.

National practice audits

7

Leaders: National Director of Operations, deputy directors

- **Frequency:** Eight each per year prior to performance boards
- **Purpose:** Senior national leadership of practice improvement and learning.
- **15 audits have been completed** by directors and deputy directors to assess and test our quality assurance and the efficacy of the audit process.

Principal Social Worker 'change for children spotlight'

8

Leader: Principal Social Worker

- **Frequency:** Annual
- **Purpose:** Review of evidence in discussion with assistant directors in respect of improved and changed practice making a difference to children throughout the year. Informs annual impact narratives. Includes area director review of sample of introductory letters testing extent to which uniqueness of children is explored and understood.
- **Principal Social Worker change for children conversations**, are due to commence in the autumn 2023.



Auditing the quality of practice

National case quality audit programme

The National Improvement Service (NIS) completes 3 x 200 case record audits a year, which are supplemented through the performance board system with an additional 30% of FCA work being audited for each regional board. This is in addition to the c5,200 local audits and c1,800 practice observations conducted during the year as an integral aspect of our performance and quality assurance programme. Audit reports are provided to the operational management and corporate management teams. The auditing undertaken by NIS provides an independent benchmark to local quality impact audits.

a) Domestic abuse practice quality audits (most recent March 2023)

The Cafcass Domestic Abuse Learning and Development Programme was launched in May 2021, and the Domestic Abuse Learning and Improvement plan was published in June 2021. This followed the first national baseline Domestic Abuse

Audit in 2020. The second national audit in November 2021, was to test the impact of the improvement activity. This was a 200-child record audit of private law practice from every region where domestic abuse was a known or alleged risk.

Our third audit in this reporting year is still the subject of internal clearance arrangements though headline findings show that the overall quality of private law practice judged to be good or better where domestic abuse is known or alleged, is 65%. 28% is judged to require improvement to be good. This is higher than all grading of private law practice in national audits over the last 12 months, which stands at 62% good or outstanding.

In our work with families where domestic abuse was an identified need, we could see:

- In more than three quarters of the work, FCA's strengthened their assessments by making contact with professionals beyond the police and children services, such as schools, nurseries, and substance misuse services. There was also proactive signposting to local specialist services.

Figure 13: National case quality audit grading

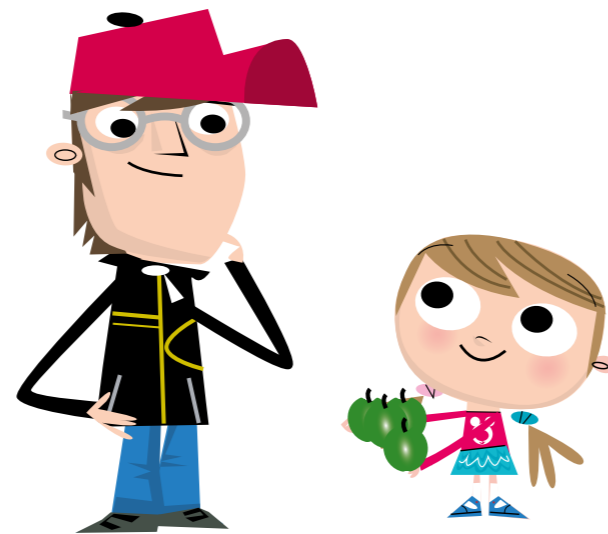
All audits Sept 2021 - Mar 2023	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Domestic abuse 2023 (200 audits)	8.2%	57.1%	28.6%	6.1%
Public law under 2s 2022 (200 audits)	21.0%	50.5%	24.5%	4.0%
Practice quality audit Sept 2022 (200 audits)	17.5%	55.5%	24.0%	3.0%
<i>See rows below for breakdown by law type</i>				
Public law (Sept 2021 - Mar 2023)	19.2%	54.3%	22.7%	3.8%
Private law (Sept 2021 - Mar 2023)	14.9%	47.2%	34.0%	3.9%

- In the overwhelming majority of work, FCAs understood the risk, harm and impact on children of domestic abuse.
- FCAs correctly identified concerns that required safeguarding referrals to be made to local authority children services, including sharing information with a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). Referrals clearly set out the risks posed to children.
- In 80% of work, there was no evidence of practitioners or managers conflating domestic abuse with harmful conflict or minimising domestic abuse as historical.
- The language used by FCAs continues to be thoughtful and sensitive.
- In 93% of records, there was evidence that FCAs were careful not to 'cajole' or pressure the child into spending time with a parent they otherwise did not want to see.
- 79% of work showed excellent child engagement; children were seen, they were receiving letters of introduction, recommendations were being shared with them and goodbye letters were being sent and were setting out for children what would happen next.
- In most records audited, where there was a recommendation for a Fact-Finding Hearing it created further delay for children.
- The use of practice aids to support the FCAs assessment and analysis of domestic abuse is improving. In all the records audited there was some evidence of the FCA considering the use of practice aids or referencing the domestic abuse pathway and/or Child Impact Assessment Framework to inform their evidence-based analysis of domestic abuse.

- FCAs continue to provide safeguarding interviews that facilitated disclosures of domestic abuse.

Next steps for practice

- Continue the work to improve practice once the mandatory Domestic Abuse Learning and Development Programme has been completed. This will involve follow up of actions through individual PLR action plans, group supervision, feedback through collaborative audit, local workshops and local multi-agency events.
- Domestic abuse remains a key practice priority and all operational service areas have improvement plans in place that are monitored through performance boards and six monthly reviews.
- We have entered into an agreement with Safe Lives¹³ to second a colleague from their organisation into Cafcass for 12 months. The aim of this programme is to bring the voices of those with lived experience more directly into our teams and events, to target improvement support where challenges are most evident and to sustain the improvements after the secondment is complete.



- New elements of the domestic abuse training programme are being made available this year, based on learning from significant incidents and feedback, including coercive control, abuse of power, mental ill health and assessing harm and the risk effectively.
- FCAs now have a Domestic Abuse Personal Learning Plan in place aimed at improving practice.
- Increase the use of auditing to understand the impact of our specialist domestic abuse practice materials. This will be supported through use in group supervision of Cafcass national guidance and resources.

All identified improvement actions are accommodated in the public law practice improvement programme and/or our national improvement plan.

b) Public law practice quality audit - children aged two years and under (April – May 2022)

This thematic audit was undertaken in response to internal learning reviews of six children. The children were or had previously been subject of public law proceedings and had been killed or harmed following reunification with their birth families.

A 200-child record (293 children) audit of public law practice from every region was undertaken where at least one child was aged two or under and where there was a 'child need' which included parental substance abuse, domestic abuse, mental ill health, physical abuse or neglect. 25% of the sample were closed children's cases that had an outcome of 'living in kinship care' or 'living with parents'.

71.5% of audits were graded as 'good' or 'outstanding' while 28.5% were graded 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.

In good or outstanding practice, auditors saw the range of competencies expected of a child's guardian reflecting the public law practice quality standards. Work on these records is commenced promptly, the children are seen early and engaged well, there is ongoing scrutiny of assessments/plans and clear rationales for decisions and recommendations.

There is 'strong advocacy' for the child. The strengths identified in family feedback included guardians listening, being fair, honest, understanding, reliable, sensitive, supportive, and approachable, advocating for children and explaining court processes and decisions.

In practice rated 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate', we saw delays in seeing children, less parental engagement, and poor-quality planning. More often, records had inconsistent use of, or no, letters to children and their language was less likely to show understanding of the trauma children had experienced. In some of these records, the child's guardian did not clearly set out their rationales for recommendations, or for recommending or supporting additional expert assessments and remote visits. Learning identified in family feedback included several parents commenting that they wished the guardian had spoken to them earlier, more often or for longer. Two parents made reference to not feeling listened to or understood.

Practice improvements following the audit include:

- Timely allocations of children's cases, based on an assessment of risk to the child.
- Evidencing the scrutiny and rationale for supporting arrangements/plans where children are living with parent(s) or carers who are known to have harmed the child or present a risk of harm to the child.

¹³ A UK wide charity established in 2005 to end domestic abuse.

- Seeing and engaging with babies.
- The quality of the child’s plan – when reviewed by the manager.
- Engaging and communicating with parents or carers.
- The submission of early and subsequent analyses as the basis for collaborative working with the child’s social worker and IRO, and building consensus about the best interests of the child.
- Management oversight and supervision – in line with the required triggers and quality standards for supervision.
- Practice expectations in delayed proceedings – how to remain up to date about what life is like for the child and to understand the impact of delay on their emotional wellbeing.
- Systems development to support management oversight of high-risk arrangements for children (e.g., clearly identifying children living with parents in open active proceedings).

All identified improvement actions are accommodated in the public law practice improvement programme and/or our national improvement plan.

c) National practice quality audit of public and private law work (September – November 2022)

At least one mixed public and private law practice quality audit is undertaken each year to assure the quality of service to children and their families and to understand the progress against our identified practice and leadership priorities. This was an audit of 200 child records selected randomly from each of the 18 operational service areas. The quality of practice by FCAs for children continues to improve. 73% of the practice in this audit was graded good or better. In 2021, this was 70% and in 2020 this was 62%. Also of note is that this improvement

is in the context of marked pressure and a clear raising of the practice definition and expectations associated with work judged as good or better.

Overall, 78% of public law and 64% of private law was judged to be good or better. There are differences in operational service areas and their associated regions.

In good or outstanding work, auditors saw that children were seen and engaged with consistently, with direct work embedded into reports to court. This included drawings, stories and letters to the judge. For older children, auditors saw that their words were directly quoted in reports to court and there was evidence of FCAs asking children where they wanted to meet (for interview). Effective work contained well-articulated judgement, independent information/expert assessments analysed and summarised with clear detail and greater evidence of the domestic abuse pathway and associated practice materials being used.

Recommendations to the family court were aligned with the unique circumstances of families and there was greater exploration of uniqueness and how this impacted their experiences. In work judged to be outstanding, we saw FCAs translating documents (e.g., the welcome letter) to the first language of the family. FCAs took time to understand cultural customs associated with them and clearly explored the day-to-day experience for children. There was greater transparency on child records, with FCAs sharing their recommendations with parents explicitly prior to filing the report. We also increasingly saw FCAs ‘showing their workings out’ within their reports to court and clearly outlining how the recommendations had been reached. Consistently kind and respectful language was recorded on child records, and there was improved differentiation in use of language relating to domestic abuse being experienced opposed to witnessed. There was also greater

recognition of how some lines of questioning could re-traumatise and how this needed to be approached with sensitivity. In public law, auditors saw clear analysis of local authority plans and expert assessments on records. Clear and appropriate liaison with the local authority social workers was clearly recorded.

In work graded requires improvement or inadequate, there needed to be more curiosity and seeking of information from agencies and services known to the family to improve the quality of our assessments. Management oversight needed to create a fuller review of the assessment and child’s plan to ensure FCAs are provided clear guidance and challenged about their developing assessment. Delays were linked to work judged less than good where it was unclear what actions the FCA had taken to intervene.

Practice improvements following the audit include:

- Increase contact with professionals known to children – develop policy on engaging with grandparents, wider family members and professionals to include public law.
- Use mandatory supervision triggers and expect FCAs to seek supervision – spotlight reporting to operational management team.

- Ensure letters to children are used meaningfully – applying expectations in Together for all children.
- Management oversight to assessment and child’s plans so it makes a difference – ensuring the quality for all children.
- Always expect that recommendations are shared – applying expectations in Together for all children.
- Target with additional oversight where there are delays for children - how delay is managed by FCAs and tracked through the quality assurance system, and an additional question to be added to assist with this.
- Increase consistency between law type and operational service areas - targeted support to areas. Provide a breakdown in our reporting system of key practice priority data for operational service areas to further track progress on improvement.

All identified improvement actions are accommodated in the public law practice improvement programme and/or our national improvement plan.



2.5

The quality and impact of business and corporate services on our work with children and families

Our Cafcass business services function consists of 21 teams with a total of 394 staff supporting an efficient and welcoming service to children and families. The work after first hearing and public law business service teams are responsible for developing and using quality processes and systems in support of social work practice. This includes the processing of all child and family data and providing an outstanding service to children and families in all local Cafcass offices. The business services productivity and training team work to provide and sustain efficient systems and technology. The National Business Centre provides a critical front door for families and

children at the start of their proceedings and initiates essential checks to safeguard children and help us to assess any risks to them in the application. Supporting the c97,500 applications and c143,500 children every year, involves corporate and business services teams in handling vast numbers of documents and speaking with many families and children – see Figure 14 opposite. It is crucial that these functions are aligned and fully understand the implications of the practice framework and any associated changes that are required.

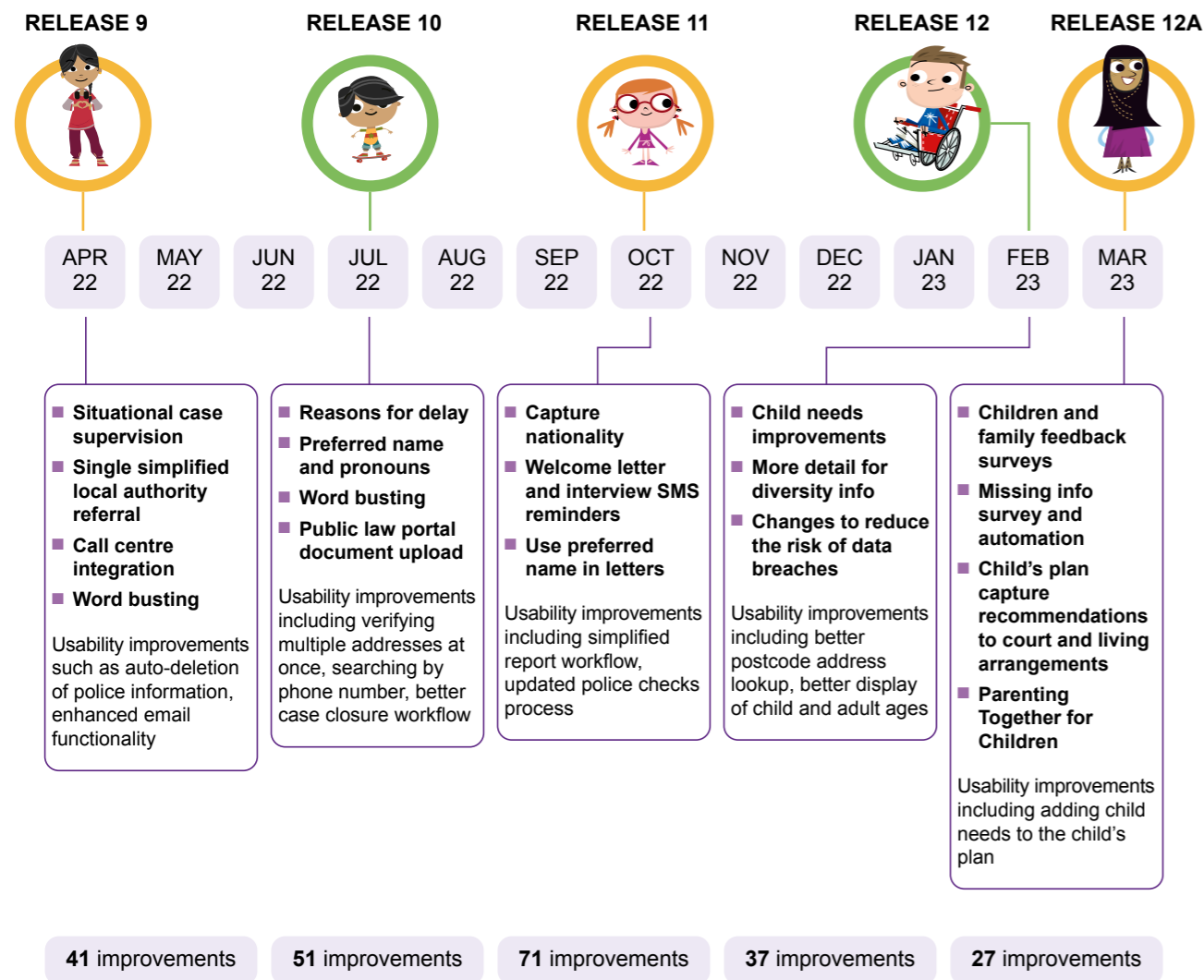


Figure 14:

Team	Response
Cafcass intake team - manage receipt of private law applications into Cafcass.	51,465 applications processed
Public law intake team - manage receipt of public law applications into Cafcass.	16,396 applications processed
Early intervention team - supports the Early Intervention Teams to provide the first safeguarding letter to court.	Cases allocated = 42,850 Cases closed = 41,029
Police national team - the team manage the police safeguarding checks for the organisation level 1 and level 2 checks.	Level 1 checks processed = 58,292 (police national computer system) Level 2 checks requested = 6,948 (police intelligence – no direct access)
Commissioning services support unit - support commissioned services providing Separated Parent Information Programmes (SPIP, now Planning Together for Children) and child contact.	DNA tests requested = 284 SPIP referrals = 24,070
Cafcass associates - self-employed social workers contracted by Cafcass.	Early Intervention Team cases = 3,093 Work after first hearing/public law applications allocated and supported = 2,925
Post exceptions team - receipt of court orders, Level 2 Police checks and local authority checks received by post and by email in Slough (Quadiant).	243,444 documents processed including court orders, safeguarding checks and general correspondence
Call centre - linking all Cafcass local offices via smart phones to the call centre. One Cafcass number for all first contact users.	209,082 calls taken
Customer services team - responding to all complaints received and allocating complaints to customer services managers for investigation and response.	1,223 (adult) 12 (children) 17 (third party) 1,304 - Compliments, including 101 from children.
Subject Access Requests - All Subject Access Requests (SARs) are processed by this team.	34 (children) 493 (adults)

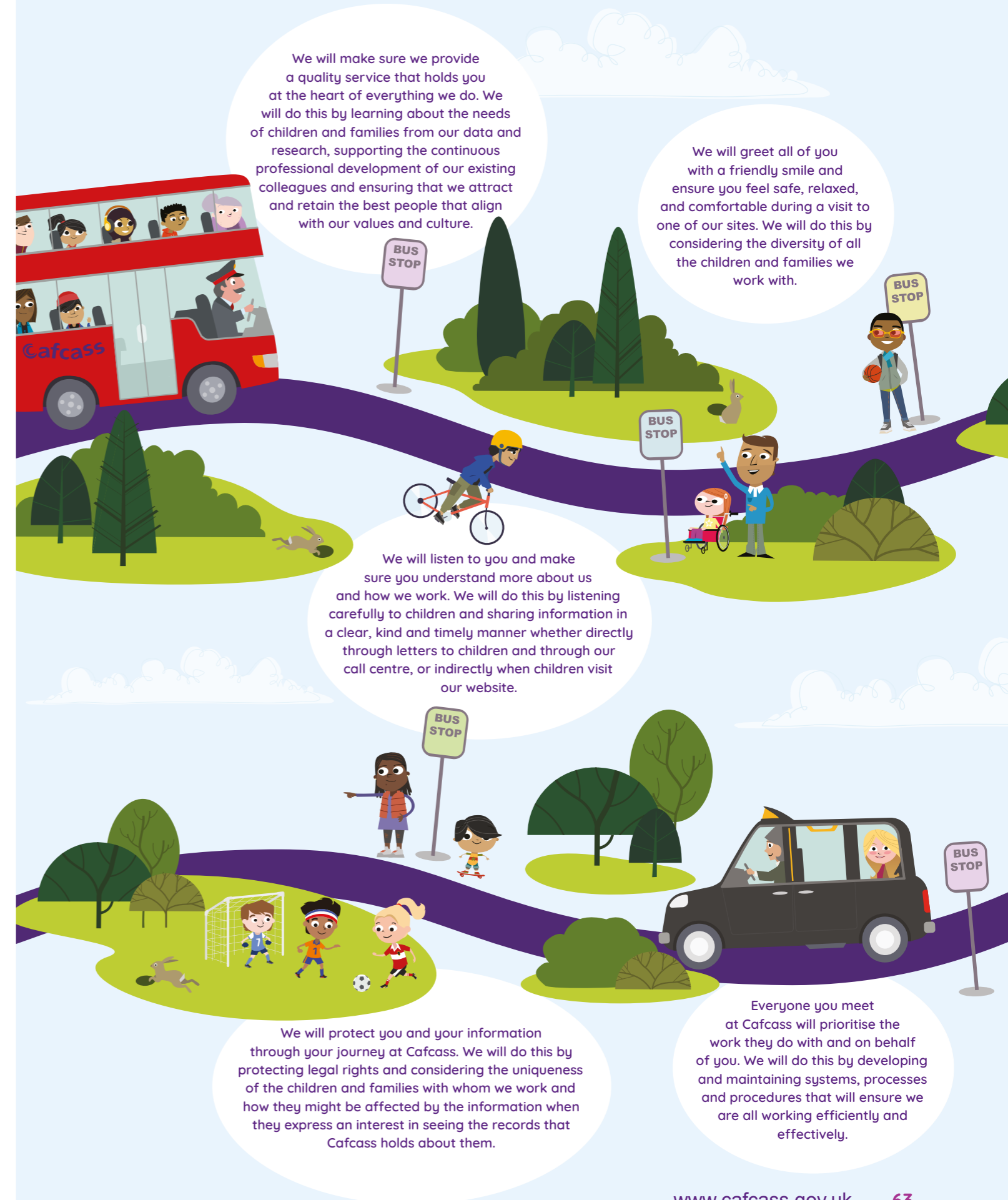
The Cafcass National Estates and Health & Safety team are responsible for the maintenance, design, leases and associated budgets for all of our properties where we meet with children and families. Their main objective is to make sure that our offices provide a welcoming child-focused, safe, and functional space to support the work we do. Our IT team supports and leads the development of our ChildFirst core case management system. They, too, have been at the forefront of leading developments in practice associated with our culture change and the implementation of the practice framework. There are quarterly systems updates and releases all of which reflect our improvement priorities, some of which are set out in figure 15 below:

Figure 15: ChildFirst 2022-23



The priorities for the year ahead in respect of the practice framework are set out for business and corporate colleagues in our 'Together Promises', illustrated in figure 16. Our promise is a set of five commitments from colleagues across corporate and business services teams about how we hold children and families at the heart of our practice. It has been developed with the support of colleagues from across corporate and business services during Practice Week 2022, and also in collaboration with our Together champions, managers, senior leaders from across different Cafcass directorates and the FJYPB.

Figure 16: Together promise - from our business and corporate services teams



Family Justice Young People's Board work programme

The FJYPB has continued to thrive and embrace the many opportunities we have been given. During 2022–23, we set our priorities to focus on our work with partner organisations including:

- **Improve children and young people's participation in their proceedings.**

Focusing on improving the methods of engagement, communication and updates children and young people are provided with during proceedings.

- **Continue to raise awareness of the impact of delay in the family courts on children and young people.**

Informing children and young people of the delay in their proceedings and the reasons, while being kept updated. Challenging everyone we work with to focus on reducing delay further and 'not to normalise delay'.

- **Continue to develop a resource for schools to support children and young people involved in family court proceedings.**

The FJYPB has been creating a resource supported by the Department of Education and the PSHE (personal, social, health and economic education) Association.



During 2022–23 the FJYPB has completed a total of **395** commissions and **196** of those were with Cafcass. Our key projects of work have included:

- **The Voice of the Child Conference July 2022.** The theme was *Impact of delay on children and young people*. Cafcass and wider stakeholders were challenged to reduce delay. The FJYPB receives regular updates from Cafcass on actions taken and their impact. These are the challenge questions that we set as part of this priority. Cafcass uses them in all of its work on reducing delay.

- **Accessible language, communication with children, and sharing recommendations** have remained areas of focus in supporting Cafcass to embed the practice of welcome letters, keeping in touch letters and closure letters for all children and young people. This has been alongside the work to help family court advisers to share their recommendations with children and young people and including children's views on those things that they are recommending in reports to court. The FJYPB was also delighted to create with Cafcass the animated video, 'Taking me seriously: letting you know how we help' for children and young people and explaining what Cafcass is and how they support families. Members had great fun scripting and voicing the characters in the video. We are very much looking forward to completing the whole series of six animations with Cafcass.

CHALLENGE

- 1 How long does 50 weeks feel to you? *Really think about this and put yourself in the child's shoes: how would 50 weeks feel to them?*
- 2 How can you really **get to know** the children and young people you work with and understand the impact delays are having on them?
- 3 How do **YOU explain** the delay to the child or young person? How will you keep them updated? *We all have a collective responsibility for this.*
- 4 **Ask** the children and young people you work with about how the delays are affecting them and take action.
- 5 Think about how **YOU** as an individual contribute to the delays: is that expert report *really* going to add value; are your reports filed on time; is that additional assessment going to really make a difference; is a 16.4 appointment really necessary; Is the case management in proceedings robust enough?
- 6 **THINK:** I putting the needs of the child before the rights of the parent?
- 7 **DO NOT NORMALISE DELAY! ALWAYS** consider the impact this is going to have on the child.



"I really enjoyed helping to make the video, being part of the thinking process made us feel like we had a say in something that reflects many of our experiences. Doing the voiceover was really fun and then seeing the video made me realise how far this video can reach, hopefully to help children and young people who are going through the experiences we did."

Olivia, FJYPB Member

- The FJYPB has worked with Cafcass to improve methods of **feedback and complaints** for children and young people. Feedback is now much more widely promoted and encouraged, and all feedback is collated nationally with FJYPB members able to review so that we can take part in agreeing the changes

that need to be made or the practice that needs to be celebrated.

- The FJYPB has very much enjoyed visiting the newly designed **Cafcass offices** in Birmingham and Brighton. Our influence has meant that these offices have been designed with children and young people in mind. Providing spaces where they feel comfortable to engage with professionals when they may feel very vulnerable. These offices showcase many of the recommendations made by the FJYPB and it is wonderful to see them come to life.



Ofsted focused inspection visit in January 2023

Ofsted undertook a focused visit¹⁴ in January 2023. The inspection was undertaken in accordance with the published framework¹⁵ and was the second such visit in 18 months. The theme of the most recent visit was ‘managing demand’, the April 2021 visit theme being, ‘the effectiveness of demand management and the effectiveness of practice in the context of the pandemic’.

Ofsted inspectors found that despite the significant impact of the high demand, senior leaders had sustained and improved the focus on children’s safety and welfare. They reported that we had led and developed creative and highly effective strategies in collaboration with key national and regional partners to continue to deliver high-quality services to children, families and the family courts.

They described senior leaders as having a comprehensive understanding of the pressures across the family justice system, and what the associated delays mean for children. The report states that “senior leaders have provided for their workforce, an environment in which to thrive. They continue to push forward with national and regional improvement priorities. As a result, despite unprecedented demand, Cafcass continues to meet its statutory responsibilities for children.”

Importantly since their previous visit in April 2021, they observed that the quality of social work practice remains strong and continues to improve. Senior leaders are said to know the service extremely well, as evidenced

in our comprehensive self-assessment to Ofsted, submitted in March 2023.

They were impressed with the commitment and drive of senior leaders and reported that we were able to demonstrate a clear focus on improving children’s experiences and lives. Our prioritisation protocol – developed to manage unprecedented and rising demand during the pandemic – was assessed as highly effective, meaning that those children in situations where risk is greatest (all children subject to public law applications and high-risk private law children’s cases) continue to be promptly allocated to an FCA to start an immediate assessment of their needs. In court areas, where the prioritisation protocol was or is activated, they found our arrangements to hold children’s cases to be focused on their welfare with good oversight and a commitment to provide manageable staff workloads.

Inspectors were positive about our letters sent to children and families, reporting that they help families and children know what to expect, the reasons why there may have been a delay in an FCA being allocated and

they found that most were sensitively and skilfully written to try and help families to understand what is happening. They found that most children are visited at a frequency that is determined by their age and their individual circumstances, they are seen face to face and alone unless there is a clear rational not to. FCAs’ skills at building up relationships with children were observed alongside creative ways of working directly with them to understand their experiences and views and to use these to fully inform assessments and recommendations to the court. Inspectors reported that when children’s views are not given absolute precedence, reports provide a clear rationale for why this is not in their best interest.

During the visit, inspectors spoke to staff who were positive about the new model of practice, implemented during this reporting year. They also found that the practice framework is promoting accountability and consistency of practice, without taking away the independence of court appointed guardians. They were positive about our partnership with the FJYPB and the pivotal role the members have in improving practice. Through sharing their experiences of court proceedings and providing their expert advice, impressive and articulate members were said to have been instrumental in influencing the development of introductory letters at the beginning of proceedings, storyboards, and later life letters.

The theme of the inspection, being how we have been managing demand and its impact on children, meant that inspectors had to consider the significance of delays in the family justice system. They concluded that delayed proceedings in most instances are outside of Cafcass’ control, citing a range of reasons, including a lack of court time, constrained court administrative capacity and local authority delays. The letter of the visit reports staff and managers doing their best to avoid and challenge delay to children.

In respect of our staffing arrangements, inspectors noted the challenges related to pay and workload pressures and reported that despite the best efforts of senior leaders, there are impacts on staff retention in some areas. They noted our work with the MoJ to try to mitigate the impacts of a pay award below that of local authorities in the reporting year.

Ofsted was impressed with the proactive action taken by senior leaders in response to management oversight and supervision. Increased management capacity and a refresh of the management oversight and supervision policy and the quality assurance



¹⁴ Ofsted letter of findings available at <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/2023/02/28/ofsted-publishes-letter-of-findings-following-focused-visit-to-cafcass-in-january/>.

¹⁵ Ofsted inspection framework available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-cafcass-framework>.

framework, they reported, have resulted in improved management oversight overall. Staff described their managers and practice supervisors as easily accessible and supportive. Inspectors found that increasingly, staff are benefiting from more reflective practice and performance learning reviews (PLRs), collaborative audits and from situational supervision at critical points in children's lives. They impressed upon us the need for us to continue to prioritise supervision and oversight of practice, making sure that it is consistently offered and taken up in all operational service areas in accordance with our revised policy.

In response to evidence presented about our quality assurance of practice, inspectors noted that there is extensive audit, practice observations, practice and PLRs, feedback from families and learning from serious incidents. They said that this evidence is providing senior leaders with a high level of insight into the quality of social work practice and most importantly, what impact this is having on children's lives. Further, they reported that senior leaders are continuing to use their influence to tackle delays across the national family

justice system with relevant stakeholders and partner organisations. They identified partnership working as a significant strength with partners overwhelmingly reporting that senior leaders have children at the forefront of their thinking when responding both to internal challenges relating to demand, but also in influencing improvements in the wider judicial system.

Our priorities since the inspection have been reviewed and revised. The strategic priorities for 2023–26, set out in section 2.3, incorporate the learning from and action we are planning in response to the inspection. Our improvement plan has been submitted to Ofsted and we now move forward to prepare for a full inspection in accordance with the published framework.



Sustainability report

Cafcass is committed to sustainable practices which consider our environmental, economic and social impact.

Sustainability Steering Group

We have a Sustainability Steering Group, chaired by the Director of Resources, which monitors our progress and promotes these values within Cafcass.

Scope of report

The data shows our position for 2022-23 using non-financial data available for the calendar year of 2022 up to and including December 2022. Financial data is reported from the financial year 2022-23. This is tracked against a 2017-18 baseline in line with the Greening Government Commitments (GGC) for the period 2021–25.

Cafcass is unable to report data from locations where property owners are not obliged to provide it. Some data is estimated due to the nature of our estate.



Key




● Target met
 ● Target not yet met

Target 1 Reduce our emissions

Overall GGC performance 2022-23 against 2017-18 baseline


Requirement by 2025	2022-23 performance	RAG status	Explanation where not on track
Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 41%	-70%	●	
	-31%	●	
Reduce emissions from domestic business flights by 30%	-51%	●	
Reduce overall waste by 15%	+25%	●	Cafcass holds poor data records for waste due to the nature of the estate, which means the baseline year 2017-18 data is unlikely to be accurate. Due to the nature of the estate with a large number of sites within shared buildings where waste forms part of the buildings charges, we have difficulties in obtaining data in relation to waste. Improvement of data is something being worked towards as a future target.
Landfill waste to be less than 5%	BNA*	●	
Increase recycling to at least 70%	BNA*	●	
Reduce paper use by 50%	-79%	●	
Reduce water consumption	+20%	●	Poor water data records in the baseline year 2017-18 make this difficult to track. We also have a number of sites where we have historically had estimated readings for water consumption which makes this challenging to provide a year on year comparison. It is estimated that due to us now recording water consumption at additional sites that our additional consumption from the baseline year is 20%.

* Breakdown not available

	Indicator	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and travel	Total gross scope 1 (direct) GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)	100	72	80	118	175
Non-financial indicators	Total gross scope 2 (energy indirect) GHG emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)	113	125	127	157	211
	Total gross scope 3 (official business travel emissions) (tonnes CO ₂ e)	957	589	380	2,200	2,210
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and travel	Total emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)	1,171	785	587	2,475	2,595
Non-financial indicators	Electricity (MWh)	568	589	548	629	745
	Gas (MWh)	549	393	418	524	681
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and travel	Other energy sources	0	0	0	0	0
Non-financial indicators						
	Total energy (MWh)	1,116	982	966	1,153	1,426

Notes: We currently report Gas MWh figures at 9 offices - Bristol, Coventry, Nottingham, Peterborough, Plymouth, Reading, Sheffield, Stafford and Swindon.

We currently report Electricity MWh figures at 15 offices - Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Exeter, Lincoln, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Peterborough, Plymouth, Reading, Sheffield, Stafford and Swindon.

Financial indicators		2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Energy and travel costs	Total energy (£000s)	316	206	157	194	176
	Official business travel (£000s)	287	131	20	611	788
	Air travel (£000s)	5	2	0	11	7
	Total travel (£000s)	292	133	20	622	795

Notes in relation to financial indicators for energy.

The figures have been re-calculated for 2017-18 baseline year in comparison to previous annual report figures. This is based on the fact a credit note had been processed for £28,000 which related to previous usage. If credit note added total figure for energy usage for that year would be £125,000 for the sites we directly pay utilities for. In addition, we received financial data from several sites where energy is paid via service charge which had not been previously included.

The figure for 2019-20 total energy has been recalculated based on the inclusion of financial data from several sites where energy is paid via the service charge.

In 2022-23 the electricity cost is higher, reflecting the increase in energy prices and a payment relating to a previous year received from the energy provider.



Target Area 1 Mitigating climate change: working towards Net Zero by 2050

We continue to achieve lower greenhouse gas emissions and are on track to meet our 2025 targets.

We continue to reduce travel-related emissions where possible, through our flexible working policy, our laptops with Microsoft Teams, video conferencing facilities in offices and our encouragement of staff to travel 'sustainably smart'. There has been an increase in business-critical travel in 2022-23 due to travel restrictions easing following the Covid 19 pandemic however this is still well below the 2017-18 baseline.

	Indicator	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and travel	Number of domestic flights	28	6	1	85	103
Air travel	Domestic flights (KM)	17,361	4,128	1,020	52,135	38,676
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and travel	Number of international flights	2	0	0	14	22
Air travel	International flights (KM)	1,780	0	0	83,856	116,186

There has been an increase in flights during 2022-23 due to the recommencement of travel following the Covid pandemic. Travel has been for business-critical reasons and the booking of flights continues to be much lower than during the baseline year of 2017-18.

In our offices where we are directly responsible for our electricity and gas, smart meters are used to ensure accurate billing for utilities. Our expenditure on energy has reduced in recent years. The increase this year reflects staff returning to the offices following the Covid-19 pandemic and is in line with pre-pandemic levels. Cafcass has made a commitment to a Green Tariff – 100% clean/renewable for our electricity for sites where we are directly responsible for utilities.

Flexible working continues to be fully embedded by the whole organisation, and this has resulted in lower emissions within the working environment.



Target Area 2 Minimising waste and promoting resource efficiency


Our waste management data is currently limited due to diverse lease arrangements across our 32 offices. We are aware that the sub-targets within the latest version of the GGC 2021-25 require reporting to be undertaken in a more granular detail in relation to waste and as a result of this we will be reviewing our recycling and waste arrangements throughout the whole estate. This will be reviewed over time as contracts are re-tendered.

Recycling is encouraged in all offices and all confidential paper waste continues to be recycled under a national scheme.

We continue our work to remove single-use plastics, ensuring single-use plastics are only used in the Cafcass estate where no other viable alternatives are available.

Cafcass does not procure food and therefore does not have a corresponding food waste disposal contract.

Target Area 2		2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
	Non-hazardous waste: landfill (tonnes)	0	0	0	0	0
Non-financial indicators (Tonnes)	Non-hazardous waste: reused/recycled (tonnes)	5.66	6.07	11.11	32.10	5.10
Reduced overall waste	Incinerated with energy from waste	0	1.11	0	0	0
	Incinerated without energy recovery	0	0	0	0	0
	Total waste (tonnes)	5.66	7.28	11.11	32.10	5.10

Financial indicators		2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Waste management costs	Non-hazardous waste: landfill (£000s)	9.1	8.1	11	13.1	11
	Non-hazardous waste: reused/recycled (£000s)	2.5	1.2	1.5	3.4	4
	Total disposal (£000s)	11.6	9.4	12.5	16.5	15

Target area 3 Reducing our water use

		2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Non-financial indicators	Water consumption					
	Total water consumption (m3)	1,297	1,288	906	560	193
Financial indicators						
Water costs						
	Water supply and sewage (£000s)	11.2	29.3	22	5	7

Our use of water has remained steady over the last three years. The figures do show a slight increase in 2022, this is related to us now being in a better position to report and reporting on additional sites. Following the deregulation of water companies, we have a plan to tap into the deregulated suppliers to see if any savings can be further achieved. This would allow more in-depth reporting across the estate improving our water metrics.

Target Area 4 Procuring sustainable products and services

Cafcass is committed to meeting the Government Buying Standards (GBS) best practice specifications wherever possible which help deliver sustainable procurement to meet GGC targets.

Whenever we can, we work collaboratively with other public bodies, particularly with our sponsor the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and with the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) which is part of the Cabinet Office. Most of our procurement requirements are channelled through pre-existing public sector framework agreements set up by the CCS. Any requirements which are not covered by existing agreements will go through a competitive process with tenders in excess of £25,000 and will be open to the SME market.

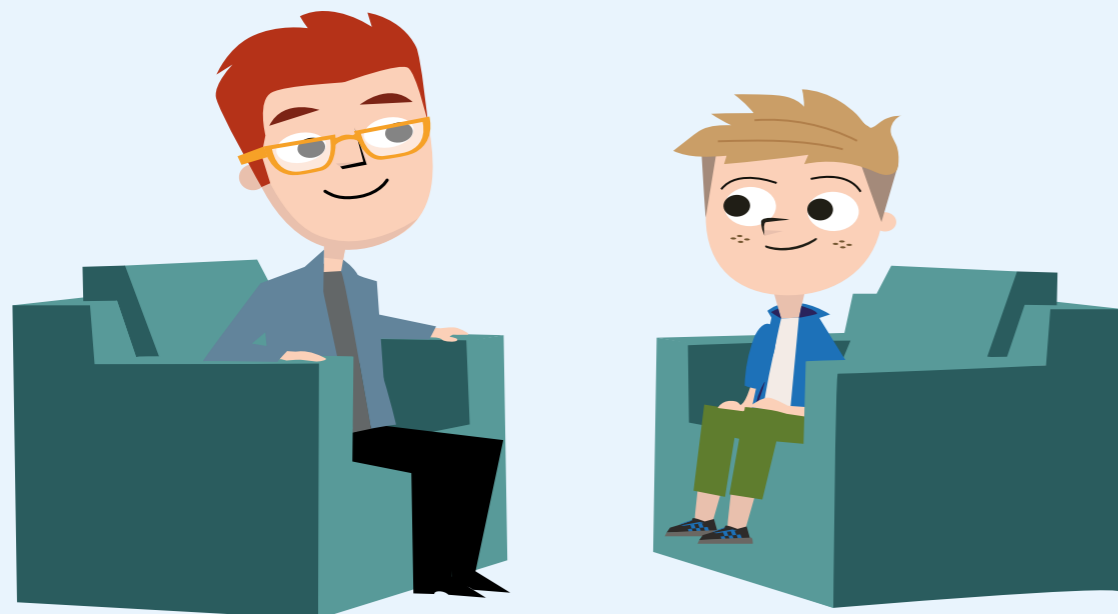
Emphasis has increased within the procurement cycle to consider modern slavery and social values with every procurement undertaken using the social value model with at least 10% of the evaluation criteria dedicated to social value.

In terms of sustainable procurement, we are on track to meet the government target of 33% of procurement spending to reach small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); spend with SMEs for 2022-23 stands at 37% of our spend with suppliers. Please note that our system records SMEs when they are entered into the finance system, if their status subsequently changes this would not be recorded.

Target by 2025	Indicator	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Baseline 2017-18
Reduce paper usage by at least 50%	Paper consumption (reams)	553	951	425	2,487	2,618
Financial indicators						
Paper costs	Paper (£000s)	4	5	0.7	6.8	7

Reduction of paper

We are on track to meet our target for paper reduction. Our use of paper remains constant which we will keep under review. As Cafcass has now digitised the majority of its processes this makes it difficult to achieve further reductions.



Target Area 5

Nature recovery and biodiversity action planning

Nature recovery and biodiversity action planning is not currently relevant to the Cafcass estate as we do not own any open spaces; we consider climate change within the Sustainability Steering Group.

Target Area 6

Adapting to climate change

In response to the updated GGC, Cafcass will be considering the development of a climate change action plan.

We have a Sustainability Steering group chaired by the Director of Resources, which monitors our progress and promotes sustainability values within Cafcass. The group is made up of a cross section of colleagues from all parts of the organisation. In the past year the group has expanded its members to include a wider spectrum of operational staff. The aim of the group is to promote values of environmentally sustainable development and corporate social responsibility in order to inform, inspire and find solutions to the challenges we all face in relation to climate change. The group is currently focused on a plan around embedding sustainability across the organisation.

Cafcass continues to be committed to sustainable practices which consider our environmental, economic and social output.

Target Area 7

Reducing environmental impacts from ICT and digital

Sustainability work in IT has focused on two areas this year.

First, a large proportion of the mobile phone estate was replaced, this was however done after extending the life of the old devices by a further year and on the basis that the new devices will be in use for four years rather than the previous replacement cycle of three years. As part of this activity, 80% of the old devices were successfully recycled.

Second, although Cafcass IT infrastructure is 100% cloud-based, a rationalisation activity was carried out throughout the year to reduce this footprint with 5% less cloud resource being used compared to 12 months earlier. This was done through a combination of optimising times when resources were available and removal of redundant or unused resource.



Financial commentary

In 2022-23 Cafcass received grant funding of £143.535m from the Ministry of Justice. Further to this, Cafcass also received additional non-cash budget to cover its £1.930m depreciation and amortisation cost.

We also drew down from the sponsor separate additional funding of £1.823m for child contact intervention services, which are commissioned and managed by Cafcass.

A summary of how we spent our budget is shown below and further details are provided within our 2022-23 Annual Accounts in section 6.

Total spend reported (£000)		
Staff costs	134,475	79.0%
Self-employed contractors	3,274	1.9%
Agency staff	3,335	2.0%
Depreciation and amortisation	1,930	1.1%
Partnerships costs	1,820	1.1%
Other charges	25,434	14.9%
Total spend reported	170,268	

The Cafcass Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023 shows net liabilities of £12.606m, including the net pension liability of £12.083m. This reflects the inclusion of liabilities falling due in future years which, to the extent that they are not to be met from Cafcass' other sources of income, may only

be met by future grants or grants-in-aid from Cafcass' sponsorship department. This is because, under the normal conventions applying to Parliamentary control over income and expenditure, such grants may not be issued in advance of need.

The pension deficit as at 31 March 2023 has decreased compared with 31 March 2022, principally due to reduced pension liabilities associated with changes in financial assumptions.

The total of trade payables as at 31 March 2023 is £0.903m (£0.536m as at 31 March 2022).

Interest and late payment charges of £0.002m have been paid or claimed by creditors under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 (£nil in 2021-22).

Parliament has voted Grant-in-Aid to Cafcass for the 12 months following the Statement of Financial Position date. Therefore, despite the Statement of Financial Position of net liabilities, Cafcass operates as a going concern.

It is expected that Cafcass will continue to be fully funded and operate as a going concern for the 12 months following the publication date of this Annual Report and Accounts.



What children and families tell us, and what we are doing about it



3.1

Feedback and learning

Cafcass' feedback strategy was launched in June 2022. It sets out our four ambitions:

1. **We routinely seek feedback from children and families.** 136 feedback records have been made since the launch of the strategy in June. We now include feedback forms in our main communications with families at the start and at the end of proceedings. Introduction and goodbye letter templates contain links for feedback including a QR code. New guidance has been issued on their expected use.
2. **We have conversations with children and families as part of our collaborative audit process.** Ensuring the views of the child and family are part of that conversation helps us think about the impact of our work with them. We have 1,333 feedback responses from adults and 160 from children.
3. **Direct feedback from children, for example via our freephone feedback line Hear to Listen and in our direct work app, 'How it Looks to Me'.** These developments enable us to hear more feedback from children and understand what is important to them.
4. **Listen and learn conversations.** We have undertaken 18 conversations with adults and five with children. They are in-depth conversations following a complaint and they take a restorative approach, with the aim of exploring why the person thinks we should have done better. The Family Forum manager facilitates these conversations, and the learning is included in the quarterly learning panel action plan.

Learning from feedback

Our collaborative audits involve conversations and standard questions with families which are reported by the auditor. Each question asks about the extent to which they were happy with our work, and examples include 'did you receive a letter that explained our role?', 'did we listen and understand your wishes and feelings?' and 'were our recommendations shared and did we check you understood them?'

The questions we ask children in feedback (each answered on a scale of 0-5, with the smiley (Figure 17 on the next page) and a prompt about what could have been better:

1. How happy were you that my first letter to you explained my role and how I would work with you and your family?
2. How happy are you that I listened to you?
3. How happy are you that I respected and understood what was special about you and your family?
4. How happy are you that I reported (told the family court) your wishes and feelings in your own words?
5. Please let me know how well I explained my thinking and recommendations to you.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about how well I worked with you and your family?
6. How happy are you that I helped you and your family?

Feedback	Total entries since June 2022	Q1 Avg	Q2 Avg	Q3 Avg	Q4 Avg	Q5 Avg	Q6 Avg
Child	160	4.02	4.49	4.34	4.26	4.17	4.28
Adult	1,333	4.13	4.33	4.28	4.13	3.94	4.03
Professional	265	4.66	-	-	-	-	-

Figure 17:



Our three key messages from children in feedback:

We have heard children talk about how they trusted and liked their social worker, how they liked their honesty, explanations and listening. There are three things that we hear very clearly from children:

- 1. Children tell us they like it when they can tell the judge about their wishes and feelings.** We have included this in the revised Child's Plan this year with the expectation that this information is included in reports to court. Our work to embed Together has also set the expectation for all Cafcass social workers that children should be asked if they want to write to the judge. We see in the feedback that when children have been asked if they want to do this, it means a lot and they talk about feeling that their voice being heard.
- 2. Children tell us they like it when we explain what is happening and what is happening next, when we share our thinking and what we are going to recommend.** Not being clear about our recommendations is a key theme in our complaints from children and in listen and learn conversations, especially when we may need to make recommendations that are different to their wishes and feelings.

In the practice quality audit reported in December 2022, which reviewed 200 children's records, in 74% of records, auditors found evidence of FCAs sharing their recommendations with parents. In 56% of records auditors found evidence of the child's FCA sharing outcomes/ recommendations with children. We have developed guidance for practitioners on sharing recommendations with children this year and reinforced this as required practice. This remains a **leadership priority** in our national and local improvement plans.

- 3. Children tell us they like receiving letters.** When children talk about the introduction letter, they do so with pride. They say they make them feel important, informed and like someone cares about them. In the practice quality audit (December 2022), 47% of records demonstrated good use of introduction and goodbye letters. In a further 16% of records there were 'some well written letters on the record'. We have revised our letter templates this year and set out a requirement that all children will receive an introduction and goodbye letter in 2023. This remains a **leadership priority** in our national and local improvement plans.

Our three key messages from adults in feedback:

- 1. Adults tell us it is important that our thinking is clear and reasoned, that we are clear and transparent and that we share our thinking and our recommendations with them.** When parents do not understand our

reasoning, they feel they have not been treated fairly and that we have not listened. We see examples from our feedback where parents do not agree with our recommendations, but they understand why we made them. In our feedback, through the Family Forum and in listen and learn conversations, we hear feedback about the impact of not being clear about our thinking, and final recommendations in those circumstances can seem like a surprise. Our focus on the use of the assessment and child's plans this year as the foundation for our thinking and analysis should improve how we analyse information and planning for each child, enabling us to be clear with parents how we have come to the decisions we have. Other resources and training to support assessment and analysis, including the impact of bias training to explore with practitioners their own bias and how to check our thinking, are designed and implemented to help practitioners to be as fair and transparent with parents as possible. **The consistent use of the assessment and child's plan** and the analysis and thinking that is required in it, remains a **leadership priority** in our national and local improvement plans.

- 2. We must engage with the people who know the child best to ensure we build a clear picture of what life is like for them and the people and relationships that are important to them.** The policy and guidance developed this year, 'Engaging Wider Family, Grandparents and Professionals' was another area of work that was supported by the Family Forum, developed first in response to complaints from grandparents. We had heard from forum members and complainants who said that had they been engaged in the process that they could have provided some context to the child's life and the relationships that were important to them. This issue was further

identified in learning from significant incidents and in findings from national reviews we have undertaken. The Family Forum co-produced the guidance with us, and one member developed a video on her experience which was shared in a 'practice pop-up session' held to launch the policy. This was used in Practice Week 2022. We launched this policy and guidance in November 2022, and we will be adding an audit question this year to get a better sense of how we are applying this consistently in practice.

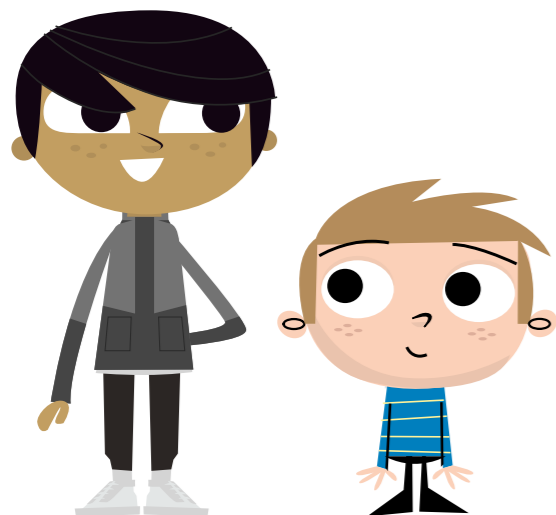
- 3. We need to ensure we understand a child's uniqueness, applying this in how we communicate with families and assess their needs and in our thinking when we make recommendations about their lives.** Our work to ensure we always understand children's daily lives and their unique experiences, is made more important by feedback that this is not always how they feel. We know that we are improving our practice in this regard with the practice quality audit, evidencing that in 71% of records, clear consideration was given to the diverse needs of the child, their uniqueness was acknowledged, and this underpinned the recommendations to the court. Auditors found that in only 4% of records diversity and uniqueness was not considered in some way. We know that we often go above and beyond to adapt how we work to meet the needs of the child and our feedback reflects this. The Family Forum has chosen this as a priority area of work this year to develop some tips for practitioners. Our diversity network has published many helpful resources and we are launching knowledge bites on neurodiversity. This remains a **practice priority** in our national and local improvement plans.

What are we doing or going to do differently in response to this feedback?

- We need to: Lead and make sure that all children receive introduction and goodbye letters.
- We need to: Lead and improve practice so that children and families know what we are thinking and why, make sure our recommendations are shared, with the family and directly with the child and that the court are informed by us in reports. Our final recommendations or analysis should not be a surprise.
- We need to: Consistently use our new policy on engaging with grandparents, wider family members and professionals' policy.
- We need to: Understand a child's uniqueness in our work. This means we think about our engagement with them, and how that happens.

Learning from feedback, complaints and significant incidents

Figure 18 opposite describes the learning cycle and framework that we established last year, and which is now well understood and embedding into our operational arrangements.



Significant Incidents, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews

There have been 258 Significant Incidents Reports (SIRs) in our national Significant Incident Response system during this reporting year.

SIRs are made against established criteria set down in the policy and include, looked after children who are missing, a child death or serious injury, an adult death (including domestic homicide reviews) relating to a child in proceedings, media interest in proceedings, responses to local safeguarding practice and rapid reviews, wasted costs, complex complaints, and judgements published by the family court.

Learning themes in 2022-23

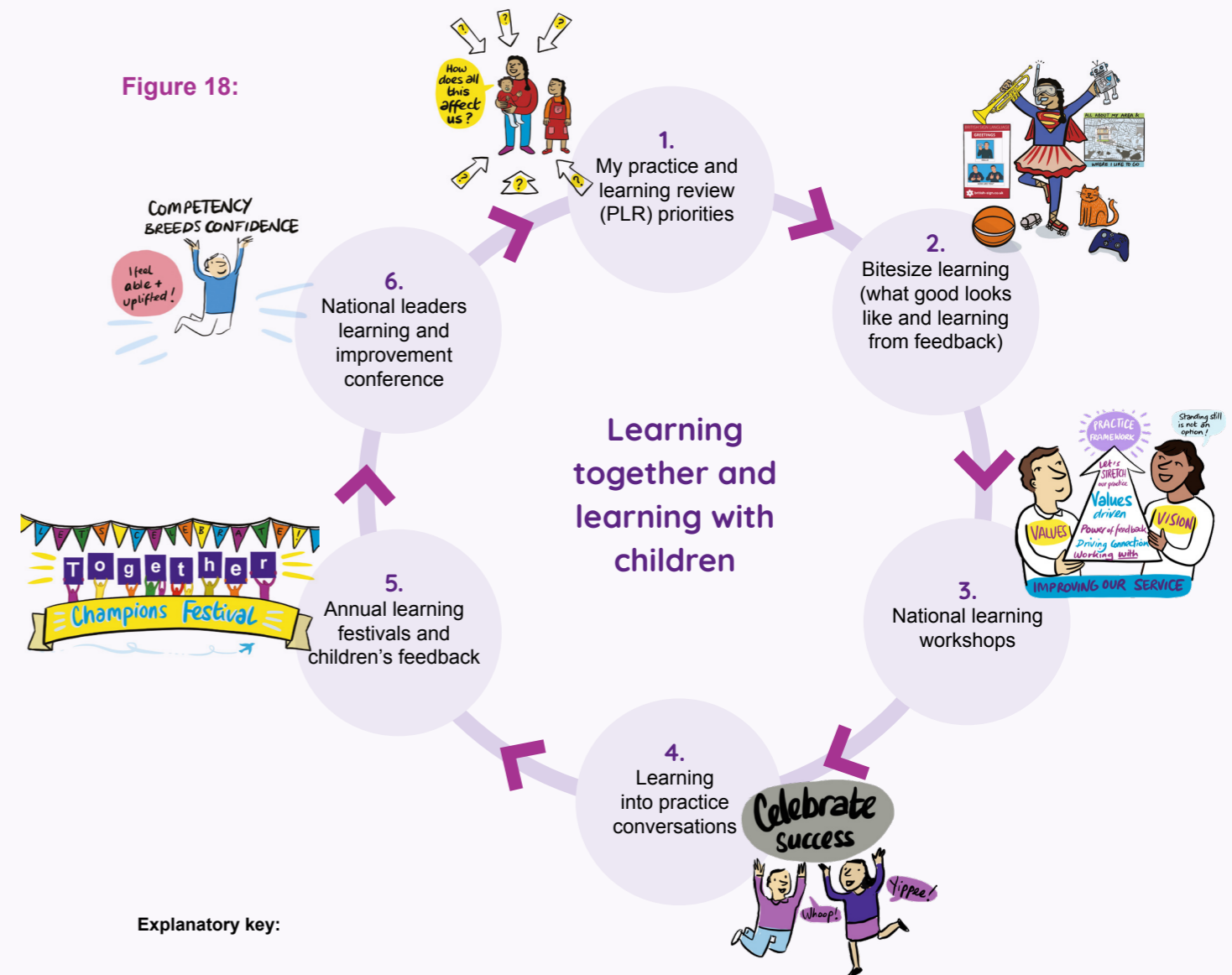
Theme 1 - Engaging with and seeing children

- Seeing children for the purposes of assessment early within the proceedings and to observe them with their parents.
- Evidencing the quality of engagement with and observation of very young children, especially babies.

Action taken: Our seeing and engaging children policy was revised and relaunched at the National Managers conference in March 2023 and includes reference to seeing children early, the purpose of observing very young children and the importance of sending introduction and goodbye letters to infants.

Progress: Since the initial launch of the Engaging with and Seeing Children Policy in 2020, there is a significant improvement in the priority given to seeing and engaging children (97.9%) and seen in person (90.2%), including improvements in the numbers of children under 2 who are seen early in public law proceedings.

Figure 18:



Explanatory key:

1. My Practice Learning Review (PLR) priorities

Leaders: Assistant directors, head of practice and service managers

Frequency: Three per year

Purpose: Everyone working at Cafcass will have a **personal learning and development plan**. Three learning priorities will be selected from our Cafcass wide learning plan, your personal practice/professional reflections and for social work practitioners, a priority drawn from the collaborative audit self-assessment. We will want to discuss how learning has changed practice and we will collate the evidence during the year.

2. Bitesize Learning

Leaders: National operational director, learning and analysis manager, principal social worker and regional assistant directors

Frequency: Annual programme of 10 bites nationally and regionally

Purpose: Combination of in person and virtual learning sessions, supporting learning themes from feedback, serious incidents, complaints and best practice – 'what good looks' like is the style.

3. National Learning Workshops

Leaders: Corporate management team, operational management team and learning and analysis manager

Frequency: Three per year – required

Purpose: Essential learning and development opportunities exploring themes from high profile incidents, repeat feedback from families and children's complaints.

4. Learning into practice conversations

Leaders: Regional managers and improvement managers

Frequency: As agreed by national director at practice and leadership review

Purpose: for regional managers to implement learning in practice from learning workshops in advance of regional learning festivals and children's challenges (one per year).

5. Regional annual learning festivals and children's feedback:

Leaders: Learning and analysis manager with assistant directors, heads of practice and principal social worker

Frequency: One per year per region

Purpose: Regional reflections and presentation of evidence about learning and change practice. In addition, the place to discuss and review improvement priorities for the region in advance of the regional practice and leadership reviews. NIS case audits from serious incidents and learning reviews must influence the festival programme.

6. National leaders learning and improvement conference

Leaders: National operational director, principal social worker, head of NIS and learning and analysis manager

Frequency: One per year

Purpose: Leaders and managers come together to consider the learning and changed practice through the year. This is summarised through performance boards, practice and leadership reviews, case audits, learning festivals and learning conversations. Final preparation for updating improvement plans and impact narratives.

Theme 2 - Management oversight and reflective supervision

- Supervision and management oversight which enables shared reflection and reasoning, particularly in complex case work and associated recommendations.
- The consistent use of the triggers in children's cases requiring management supervision, including where children return to live with parents or carers from whom they were removed, and ensuring there is evidence of follow up and action.

Action taken: Our new management arrangements for practice supervisors (now assistant service managers) are supported by a training programme for all social work managers in respect of supervision skills and restorative leadership. These programmes are designed to support the implementation of the revised supervision policy, with its emphasis on reflective supervision to support analytical thinking and judgement in assessment.

Progress: The national audit of practice in December 2022 showed a notable improvement in FCAs seeking supervision in terms of reunification plans for children in public law proceedings. In 66% of records supervision was recorded and 60% of records also had effective management oversight. In good or outstanding work supervision had a demonstrable impact for children and management oversight was key to ensuring the assessment and child plan met our practice quality standards.

Theme 3 - Analysis of risk of harm and decision making

- Understanding harm and analysis of risk to children in proceedings in respect of

domestic abuse.

- Understanding patterns of behaviour and not minimising domestic abuse to a historic incident.
- Assessing the risk to children returning to live with parents from whom they had been removed, particularly where there are concerns about domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health.

Action taken: The domestic abuse training programme is mandated training for all FCAs and managers. There was a dedicated event led by the Principal Social Worker to consider learning from a complaint (and subsequent review) concerning domestic abuse in proceedings.

Progress: Our national practice audit describes improvement in our domestic abuse practice – in 83% of records there was no evidence of conflation or minimisation of domestic abuse as a risk factor for children. FCAs continue to develop their understanding of the harm caused by domestic abuse, the risks that have to be considered in respect of safe contact and the benefits for children of growing up and sustaining relationships with both parents.

Theme 4 - Engaging with wider family members

- When and how to seek the perspectives and contributions of others who know the child well.

Action taken: The policy on engaging with grandparents, wider family members and professionals was developed with members of the Cafcass Family Forum¹⁶.

Progress: The national practice quality audit in December 2022 provided a benchmark to

measure progress for the next audit in 2023. The audit found that gathering and analysing information from other adults who know the child well was good in 67% of records.

Ombudsman enquiries

In 2022-23, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) completed one investigation which was partly upheld. They did not propose any new investigations and we received 31 enquiries. The partly upheld completed investigation related to work undertaken by Cafcass in 2018-19. The PHSO found we had learnt from the errors made in our case management – and had apologised and reimbursed legal fees and contact centre costs – but our complaint investigation had not done enough to acknowledge the emotional impact of our errors and we made a consolatory payment. During 2022-23, we also responded to 138 enquiries from MPs.

Learning from complaints

We have concluded our review of our complaints and correspondence processes, with a revised policy to launch in Quarter 1 of 2023-24. From 1 April 2023, we had a combined complaints and correspondence function with a new Head of Complaints and Correspondence. Over the next 12 months, we will introduce one system for recording complaints and correspondence and will bring oversight of children's complaints back into a central function with a new post of Children's Complaints Manager. There will be two pathways for adult complaints, early resolution and investigation, which aligns with the Ombudsman's model complaints procedure for government bodies.

During 2022-23, we investigated 1,223 complaints from adults (reduced by 9.4% on the previous year). In addition, we responded to 1,522 concerns through our early resolution process of which 648 were

designated to local managers to work with families to put things right quickly.

We received 1,304 compliments (reduced by 16.4% on the previous year). When we receive positive feedback, it describes our work as making a significant impact on the family and the child, staff behaving professionally, compassionately and going above and beyond, keeping children at the heart of practice.

Emerging themes from children's complaints:

- Thinking about the importance of brother and sister relationships and how brothers and sisters may have different needs and wishes.
- Sharing recommendations and taking time and care to explain them, especially when a child's view is different to ours.
- Making sure children know how, and have the opportunity, to write to the judge in their proceedings.
- Enabling children to raise concerns about a recommendation to spend time with a parent when they are not comfortable with that decision, including being encouraged to see one parent when they do not want to.
- Children not feeling listened to or that their wishes and feelings are well-described in the report, either in the way they say it or what they want to say.

The Cafcass Family Forum

There are now 21 established members of the Family Forum. The main objective is for us to be able to learn from the experiences of adults in proceedings where the quality of our work has been less than good. Forum members are involved in working out with us how we can improve and change in response to their feedback. Forum members meet quarterly as a whole

¹⁶ The Family Forum was established by Cafcass in 2021 to provide opportunities for us to learn and engage with adults in family proceedings where our work has required improvement. Forum members are actively involved in our improvement priorities and the associated processes, guidance and policy changes. We held our first Family Forum meeting in September 2021 and in 2022 recruited further members. Members work with us for two years and there are currently 21 members involved.

group and monthly to progress specific priority workstreams. The Forum Manager chairs the meetings, which are attended by the Principal Social Worker and our Chief Executive.

During this reporting year, the Forum has been working on:

Sharing recommendations - Development of an information sheet setting out information for parents on why and how we share recommendations with children. This was launched in a practice pop-up session with a forum member explaining why this is so critical to families and children in proceedings.

Welcome packs - An animation has been developed for our Cafcass welcome pack. Made in response to forum members explaining that when they come into proceedings, it is frightening for them and that information is mostly inaccessible, the new packs have information written

by parents to help them understand what happens in court and advice on how to work with Cafcass.

Working earlier in proceedings with parents and children - Forum members have developed two sets of top tips for parents on the impact separation has on children and families and how parents can best work with FCAs and other professionals. These are to be made available in our new packs and on our website.

Planning Together for Children - the new arrangements replacing our 'Separated Parents Information Programme' (SPIP) involved Family Forum members in the testing of the course to help make this as helpful as possible for parents.

Engaging wider family, grandparents and professionals' policy and guidance - Forum members helped in the development of content and a video to explore the

importance of engaging wider family members to really understand the child's life and relationships that are important to them.

Listen and learn conversations - These are restorative conversations designed to offer children and adults¹⁷ who have made a complaint to share their experience and for us to gain a greater understanding of what we needed to change and improve in practice.

Domestic Abuse Learning and Improvement Board - One member attends as an expert by experience, contributing to the debate and actions for improvement.



¹⁷ Adults are offered this opportunity if they indicate that they are interested in learning and change beyond the complaint and are able to be constructive in helping us to appreciatively inquire and learn.

Accountability report



4.1

Corporate governance

Directors' report

The Chair of the Cafcass Board is Sally Cheshire CBE and the Deputy Chair of the Cafcass Board is Professor Eileen Munro CBE.

The Board comprises non-executive members, listed below, who have been appointed in accordance with the Membership, Committee and Procedure Regulations 2005.

Cafcass Board membership:

- **Sally Cheshire** CBE Chair
- **Professor Eileen Munro** CBE Deputy Chair
- **Helen Jones** Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- **Paul Grant** Chair of the Performance and Quality Committee
- **Catherine Doran** Chair of the People Committee
- **Mandy Jones**
- **Rohan Sivanandan**
- **Peter Fish**
- **Catharine Seddon**
- **Joanna Nicolas** Co-opted Board member

Register of interests

Board members have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest; a register of interests can be found on our website.

Incidents and breaches for 2022-23:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total number of data incidents investigated	424	454	523
Confirmed breaches	251	321	404
Reported to the ICO	9	8	2

Information assurance

Cafcass agrees that no unauthorised disclosure of personal data is acceptable but acknowledges that the risk cannot be entirely eliminated. There is a commitment from Cafcass, the Board and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to continue the work to focus on mitigation and there are improvements in place to seek to lower the number of data breaches.

In 2022-23, Cafcass recorded 523 data incidents of which 404 were classified as personal data breaches, 302 of which were avoidable. Two of these personal data breaches fell within the legal requirement for reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Cafcass received 56,534 new applications in 2022-23, with a data breach occurring in 0.71% of children's cases. This remains an extremely low number when considering the volume of information processed by Cafcass in its open work and the number of staff handling that information through Cafcass systems.

Monthly communications to the organisation about data protection have resulted in improved awareness and reporting of incidents. The introduction of an internal reporting system has made the process of reporting breaches more accessible and provided better access to data.

Statement of accounting officer's responsibilities

Under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, the Secretary of State has directed Cafcass to prepare for each financial year a Statement of Accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Cafcass and of its net resource outturn, application of resources, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the secretary of State, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis
- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis.

The Principal Accounting Officer of the MoJ has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of Cafcass. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding Cafcass' assets, are set out in 'Managing Public Money' published by HM Treasury.

As far as the Accounting Officer is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which Cafcass' auditors are unaware. She has taken all steps possible to make herself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that Cafcass' auditors are aware of that information.

The Accounting Officer confirms that the annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable. She takes personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.



Governance statement

Cafcass is an executive non-departmental public body for which I, Jacky Tiotto, am the Chief Executive and the Accounting Officer. I am personally responsible and accountable to Parliament for the organisation and quality of the work carried out by Cafcass, including its use of public money and the stewardship of its assets.

There have been no material changes in our governance framework during the financial year. Our governance arrangements satisfy the requirements of the main principles of the code 'Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of Good Practice' that are relevant to Cafcass. I consider our Governance Framework to be effective.

The Ministry of Justice

As a non-departmental public body Cafcass is accountable to our sponsor department, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). We work within the strategic objectives agreed with the MoJ. We agree an annual delivery plan with the MoJ which reflects our statutory duties, our contribution to the MoJ targets, and our plans to deliver efficiency targets.

Regular meetings have been held with the MoJ to allow scrutiny of arrangements. We work closely with the MoJ on policy development, and we contribute in agreed, defined ways to the MoJ policy objectives for the family justice system.

The Cafcass Board

The Board use their expertise and experience to establish the organisation's strategic aims and objectives. Their work is supported by four committees:

1. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: provides assurance to the Board and Accounting Officer on audit, risk and control issues.
2. Performance and Quality Committee: supports the Board in overseeing the performance of services, the quality of casework and the impact of that work on children and families, Cafcass and the courts.
3. People Committee: provides assurance to the Board over the policy and strategy frameworks for the recruitment, retention, reward and development of people.
4. Remuneration Committee: which considers proposals on the remuneration of executive directors and other organisational pay issues of a significant and strategic dimension.

The Board has also established a time-limited Committee to scrutinise the delivery of the public law Improvement Programme and the impact of that work on children, Cafcass and the courts.



The Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB) works across the family justice system to promote the voice of the child in family court proceedings and is integral to the family justice reform process. A representative of the FJYPB attends each Cafcass Board meeting, providing an update about its work and scrutinising and challenging the work of the Board in the best interests of the children and families we serve.

The Board meet on a quarterly basis and meetings are attended by members including co-opted Board members and the Chief Executive and Executive Directors. Representatives of the sponsor department and the FJYPB are invited to attend and take part in discussions. Stakeholders and members of the public are admitted to Board meetings on at least two occasions every calendar year.

The Performance and Quality Committee and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee are mandated to meet on a quarterly basis during the year. In 2022-23

the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held one additional meeting to scrutinise the external audit carried out by the National Audit Office. The People Committee is mandated to meet twice annually. The Remuneration Committee meet annually.

Standing reports provided to the Board at their quarterly meetings cover reports from the following:

- The CEO who, together with directors, provides updates on current performance, delivery of strategy, risk, issues, and successes
- The FJYPB which reports on its work programme and seeks input from the Board on key issues
- Committee chairs who provide key updates from recent committee meetings.

Additional reports during the period have covered:

- Complaints and delivery of improvements including the development and implementation of the new complaints and correspondence function (July 22)

- Planning for and the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit (Feb 23)
- Planning for potential industrial action and development of the contingency plan (Feb 23)
- Key risks within the organisation (Feb 23)
- Delivery of the Strategic Plan and development of the plan for the next three years (Feb 23)
- An update on status of performance and accountability, and improvement plans (Feb 23)
- Development and delivery of the Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22.

Internal management structure

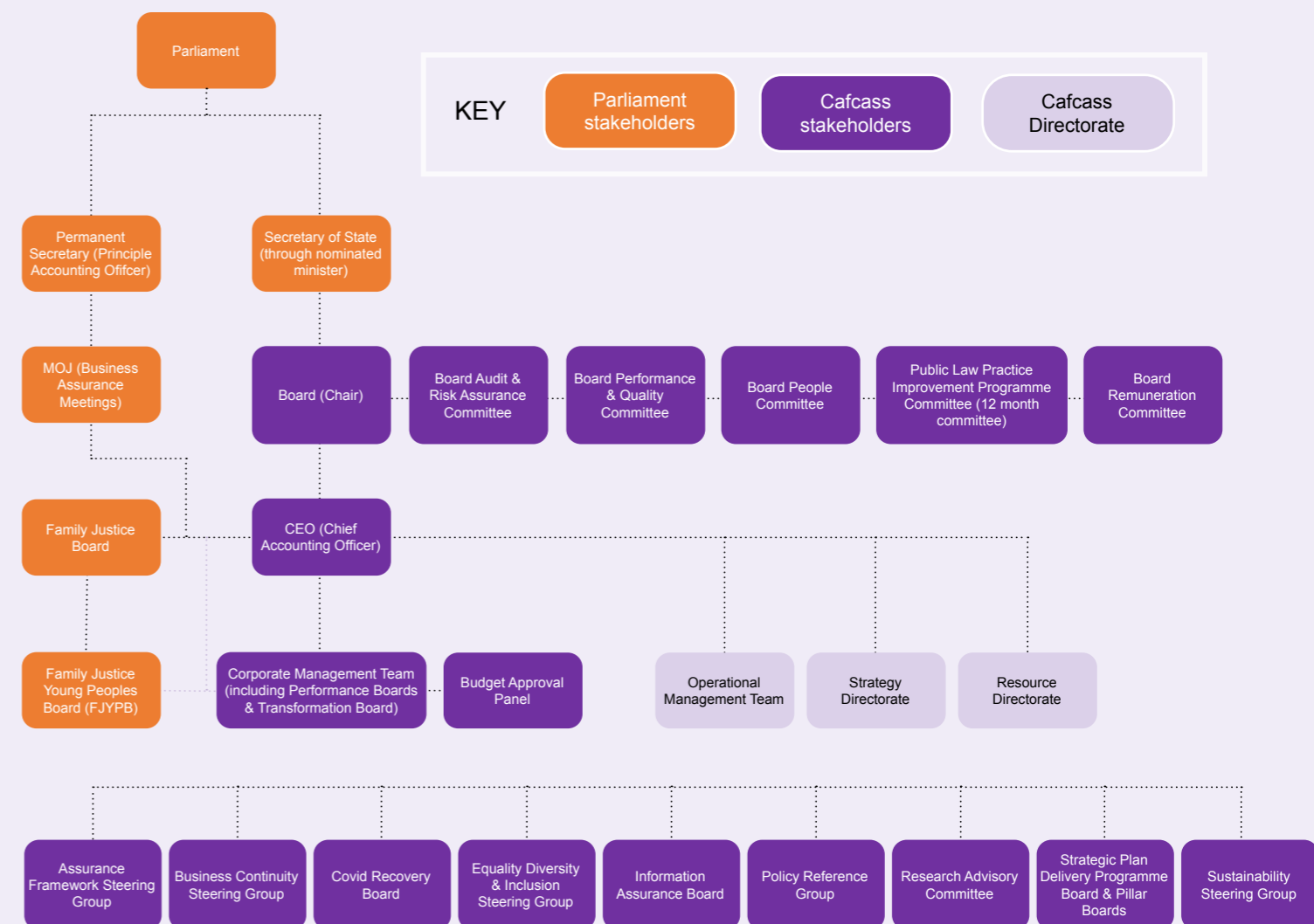
The Chief Executive was supported during the year by three directors, a Chief People Officer, and two deputy directors. Together they make up the Corporate Management Team (CMT): the Director of Strategy, the Director of Resources, the Chief People Officer, the National Director of Operations, the Deputy Director of Operations and the Deputy Director for Improvement and Principal Social Worker.

CMT meet weekly and follow a governance and decision-making cycle which allows discussion in themed meetings and includes

Figure 19: Meetings attended per member of those eligible to attend

Board member	Board meeting	Audit and risk assurance committee	Performance and quality committee	People committee
Sally Cheshire	4 of 4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Eileen Munro	4 of 4	n/a	3 of 4	n/a
Catherine Doran	2 of 4	5 of 5	n/a	2 of 2
Catharine Seddon	4 of 4	4 of 5	n/a	n/a
Helen Jones	4 of 4	5 of 5	n/a	n/a
Joanna Nicolas	4 of 4	n/a	2 of 2	n/a
Mandy Jones	2 of 4	5 of 5	n/a	2 of 2
Paul Grant	4 of 4	n/a	4 of 4	2 of 2
Peter Fish	3 of 4	n/a	3 of 3	n/a
Rohan Sivanandan	3 of 4	1 of 1	n/a	1 of 2
Susan Smith	n/a	5 of 5	n/a	2 of 2
Sophie Humphreys	2 of 3	n/a	2 of 2	n/a

CAFCASS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



a range of senior managers across the organisation in attendance.

The Operational Management Team (OMT) is led by the National Director of Operations. Its membership is made up of the assistant directors, operational heads of practice, and representatives from teams that directly support operational services including Finance, Human Resources and Business Analysis. The OMT meets monthly to manage performance across the country.

Service area meetings take place locally every month in each service area to lead and implement corporate and operational decisions into local actions. Local team meetings complete this cascade structure and process, which includes the learning both from things we could have done better and from best practice. Periodic meetings within the specialist functional teams also take place for the same purposes.

The Directors of Strategy and Resources meet regularly with their managers to review performance across their respective directorates.

We have internal boards and groups which are managed by members of the CMT to ensure that we remain up to date with regulations and requirements in line with good governance principles. These include the Assurance Framework Steering Group, Business Continuity Steering Group, Covid Recovery Board, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Steering Group, Information Assurance Board, Policy Reference Group, Research Advisory Group, Strategic Plan Delivery Programme Board & Pillar Boards, and the Sustainability Steering Group.

The Chair of the Cafcass Board is Sally Cheshire CBE.

During 2022-23, the Board continued to govern and perform its role effectively and Board members continue to work closely with members of the CMT to provide strong leadership to achieve our priorities.

I am confident that the quality of the data used by the Board is robust. All reports prior to submission to the Board are subject to rigorous quality assurance processes by senior managers. The effectiveness of the systems that generate the financial and performance data contained within the reports is evidenced through positive internal audit and inspection results.

We aim to keep reports clear, concise and focused on the purpose of the Board's reviewing. An example of this is our performance report, which provides an overall high-level position and assessment of our performance against our strategic objectives and risks and is aligned with the corporate work programme which drives the actions needed to meet our objectives.

Assurance arrangements

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has oversight of the organisation's governance, risk and internal control frameworks. It receives reports on matters of assurance and oversees the preparation and publication of the financial statements.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee oversees the internal audit programme work and delivery arrangements. The Head of Internal Audit role and internal audit programme are provided through the Government Internal Audit Agency.

In line with our Assurance Framework, we report annually on assurance to the Accounting Officer and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The annual assurance report identifies the internal controls mapped against the three lines of defence (i.e. frontline and management controls, management monitoring and independent/external assurance) and how they are performing. This process is supported by an internal steering group which is chaired by the Director of Resources. The 2022-23 Assurance Report

confirmed that the control environment was adequate and supported the Governance Framework and the services to children and families. Compliance with government functional standards has also been considered in the assurance review. This report also provides a mechanism for identifying areas to be included in the Government Internal Audit Agency audit programme for further scrutiny of the performance of controls.

Assuring our quality of practice

The introduction of our practice framework, our revised quality assurance framework, practice and leadership quality standards and our practice improvement programme has required us to set out again clearly, what is expected in the ways we hold ourselves to account, oversee practice and learn from feedback. In so doing, we have been careful to recognise and respect the appointment of FCAs as independent experts and advisers to the family court. While they are employed by Cafcass, regulated by Social Work England and expected to take full account in their practice of our quality standards, policies and guidance, our relationship is different as an employer to that which is in operation for social workers in local authority children's services departments for example. In seeking to clarify and balance our accountabilities alongside the independent appointment of FCAs by the family court we have, however also sought to be compliant with the MoJ's working protocol with Cafcass. This sets out the clear expectations of the Chief Executive in respect of her responsibility to assure herself about the quality and effectiveness of practice, to review and record that regularly and to intervene where necessary.

We take the time to continuously revise and refine the systems that hold us to account, to assure ourselves that what needs to happen for children and their families in proceedings does happen, to be clear about the role and

function of supervision and management oversight and to formalise and set out the range of quality assurance and learning activities that are undertaken regularly. We have introduced or revised the following frameworks, standards and cycles as part of our assurance system for quality of practice.

Performance and accountability: we have introduced a senior leadership programme of activity to oversee progress and to monitor our strategic priorities and the impact of our annual National Improvement Plan. We have amended the reporting to 19 operational service areas, each of which works to improvement priorities derived from the national plan. Progress is considered at mid-year reviews led by the National Director of Operations, the deputy director of operations and the Chief Executive. The priorities are agreed each year based on our annual self-assessment, regional improvement boards, learning from incidents and spotlight performance monitoring and they are submitted to Ofsted and reviewed with them at our annual engagement meeting or inspections. In addition, a suite of 'best for children' measures have been developed to support the performance oversight of our improvement priorities.

Practice and leadership quality standards: Practice quality standards set out what 'good practice looks like' in the work we undertake with children and families. They are drawn from feedback from children, auditing, children's case recordings, complaints and learning reviews. FCAs and children's guardians are required to self-assess their practice against the standards as the basis for their twice-yearly practice and learning review with their line manager.

The management quality standards build on the tasks and responsibilities set out in the job description for managers, with simplified sections describing the ten most important aspects of the manager role. The

management quality standards are guided self-reflection or self-supervision, rather than detailed or directive practice guidance.

Management oversight and supervision:

this framework is summarised in our Management Oversight and Supervision policy, which sets out the expected frequency of audits and moderations, practice observations, child's plan reviews, and the circumstances in which we advise FCAs to seek situational supervision. Updated this year, it now includes more specific requirements to seek supervision. A 'supervision contract' has been introduced as an integral part of the bi-annual performance and learning reviews. It also covers expectations for case supervision and quality assurance at case filing and closure.

Quality assurance: our revised quality assurance cycle complements our new management oversight and supervision framework. It has introduced formal benchmarking of our moderation audits, a monthly requirement for assistant directors to audit, and an increase in expectations for the number of moderated quality and impact audits undertaken by heads of practice. In this reporting year, we have also ceased local grading of practice audits. Our new arrangement requires national audits to be graded against a new suite of judgement criteria, building on the Ofsted inspection framework criteria and utilising the same range of judgements.¹⁸

Learning together and learning with children:

Our regular practice and learning reviews (now two per year for social work practitioners and for corporate and business services staff) hold learning priorities for all staff drawn from the Cafcass-wide learning plan. These are strengthened by a range of learning activities to help our colleagues apply learning from feedback, serious

incidents, complaints and best practice, and to reflect on the regional improvement priorities and evidence of impact.

Internal audit

Our appointed internal auditors are the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA). There is a strong annual programme negotiated with directors and the Chief Executive. The planned programme of audit work was completed during the year and included three audit reports and an advisory review. **We were awarded an overall assurance of Substantial.**

Cafcass intake team - Rating - Substantial

Staffing (Associates/Bank/Agency) -

Rating - Moderate

Sharing recommendations with Children -

Rating - Moderate

Supervision Rating - Moderate

The Board Effectiveness Review was undertaken as part of the 2022-23 Internal Audit Programme. This review concluded that the requirements of the Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance were being met in full and all required responsibilities were being effectively discharged.

All actions arising from recommendations made by the Internal Auditor are allocated to named officers who are charged with implementation. Medium and high-risk recommendations are also maintained in a central log held within the Members Office. While the named officers are responsible for completion of the recommendation and updating of the central log, the Members Office also seek assurance on completion of the actions. The updated log of recommendations is presented to each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Business continuity planning

Business continuity planning provides assurance of resilience within our processes (such as IT systems) so that we can continue to deliver our services effectively during unexpected disruptive events. Business continuity planning and incident response is overseen by our Business Continuity Steering Group and Incident Management Team, and both are chaired by the Director of Resources.

How we manage risk

Our risk management policy sets out our approach to risk management and outlines our responsibilities in the management of risk throughout the organisational structure, including how risk is escalated.

This includes the responsibility of CMT members (executive directors) who are senior risk owners of strategic risks and responsible for reporting and ensuring changes to strategic risks are reported to CMT, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board.

The risk management function is managed and delivered within the Resources Directorate and the risk management policy is reviewed every three years.

Risk is formally reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board on a quarterly basis and details strategic risks and above tolerance organisational risks and mitigation actions being taken. Organisational level risks are recorded and maintained within the Organisational Risk Register, which is self-regulated, whereby risk owners are responsible for recording and updating on the status of risks as part of the quarterly risk reporting process. The strategic risk report and the Organisational Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board.

The table on the next page shows the quarterly assessment and trend of strategic risks for 2022-23. A review of the strategic risk environment was undertaken during July-August 2022 in collaboration with directors. There was little change in the strategic risk environment. While there was little change in the strategic risk environment, further actions are being taken to strengthen practice aimed at safeguarding the welfare of children.

Internal controls that help manage and reduce risk are monitored through our Assurance Framework and categorised using a three-line of defence model: frontline and management controls, management monitoring and independent/external assurance). Our strategic risk profile at year end was:

Risk to children: The risk to the welfare of children arising from delay in the capacity of many courts to make timely decisions about their arrangements and future was judged a principal risk in 2022-23. Additional measures have been put in place to mitigate this risk, including:

- making reducing delay for children the fifth practice improvement priority in operational service areas' improvement plans
- increased capacity for management supervision and oversight
- triggers for case supervision now include delay
- a practice quality standard on delay
- adjustments to the Assessment and Child's Plan to improve reporting on actions to bring proceedings to a conclusion
- thematic practice quality audit, case sampling and audit

¹⁸ There are four gradings awarded by the national improvement service: Outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good and inadequate.

Quarterly Risk Tracker 2022-23 Q1

Strategic risk	Quarter
	Q1/22
Quality of practitioners' casework	↓
Information assurance	↔
Remit (budget allocation and management)	↓
ISSUE Resources (demand)	↔
Resources (recruitment and retention)	↔
Performance of technology	↔
Leadership (succession planning)	↔
Influencing system change	↔
Reputation	↔
ISSUE Covid 19 pandemic	↓



Quarterly Risk Tracker 2022-23 Q2 to Q4

Strategic risk	Quarter		
	*Q2/22	Q3/22	Q4/22
Risk to children	↔	↔	↔
ISSUE Demand, delay and capacity	↔	↔	↔
Staff retention and attraction	↔	↔	↔
Manageable budget	↔	↔	↔
Digital and technology	↔	↔	↔
Information and knowledge management	↔	↔	↔
Change infrastructure	↔	↔	↔
Reputation	↔	↔	↔

* New strategic themes from Q2/2022

Key: ↔ No change in risk ↓ Decrease in risk ↑ Increase in risk

<p>(Minor) Acceptable level of risk. Risk is managed within the local business area</p>
<p>(Moderate) Risk acceptable but may require monitoring. Consider if additional controls to reduce risk are available (where cost effective and proportionate). May require escalation to next management level for information if deemed to be increasing or guidance on acceptable response/action.</p>
<p>(Significant) Risk exceeds desirable level. Identify additional controls. Requires escalation to next management level for information and guidance on acceptable response/action.</p>
<p>(Critical) Risk exceeds acceptable levels. Identify additional controls to reduce and manage risk and ensure contingency plans are in place. Immediately report to the next management level.</p>

- scrutiny of the most delayed proceedings for children through the operational Spotlight Report
- a closer focus through the cycle of performance and accountability.

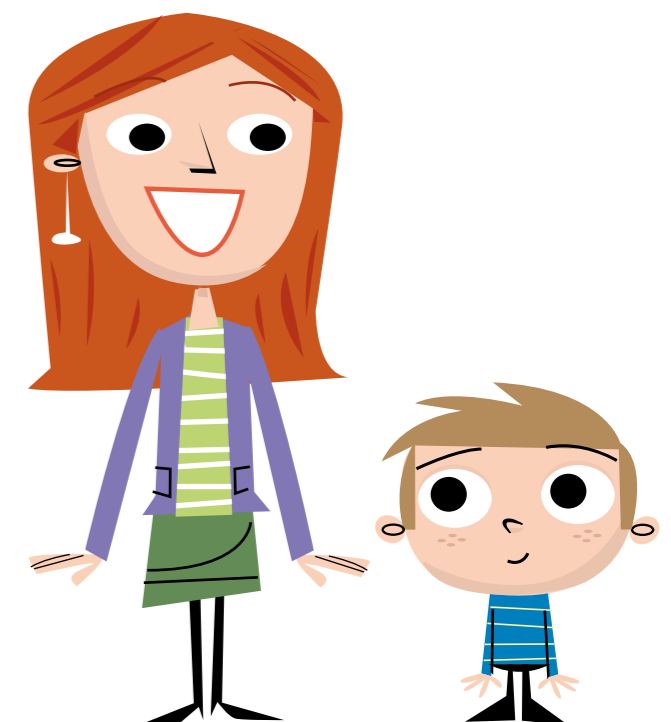
The practice dashboard for FCAs and managers focuses attention on delay for children and action. Learning from practice quality audits and case reviews is disseminated in practice alerts and informs supervision, training, and performance and learning reviews.

Demand, delay and capacity: Demand, delay and capacity have continued to be assessed as a fundamental risk and treated as an issue. Although there has been some reduction in demand for services, this is uneven across the country with some service areas experiencing increases in demand and the duration of children's cases has increased requiring more work (e.g. additional hearings and addendum reports), and staff capacity to take new work has therefore reduced. Prioritisation remains the main alternative to preventing frontline and managers becoming overwhelmed and post assessment hubs are in place in every region to oversee children's private law cases where the assessment is complete, the report filed but there is no hearing for over six weeks. There have been some small gains in removing delay, but progress is slow, pointing to the complexity of issues including capacity across all parts of the system, to be able to close more children's cases at greater pace. The secondary risk of an 'increase in staff sickness and turnover' is considered significant and there has been significant investment in the reconfiguration of operational management arrangements to provide more capacity.

Staff retention and attraction: The residual risk has been consistently assessed as significant during the year. The turnover of social workers has continued to rise for Cafcass as it has for most local authorities

and the secondary risk that 'we are not an attractive and competitive employer' has been impacted by the in-year pay award which was significantly lower than the local government pay award which is a further erosion of previously competitive pay. Mitigation is focused on attraction strategies and there have been some positive gains from the employee value proposition work. Ongoing mitigation will focus on investment in retention via a new reward package and introduction of progression pathways.

Manageable budget: The risk reduced in Q1 to 'minor' on receipt of allocation of budget for 2022-23 which consolidated the additional spending approval into baseline awarded in 2021-22 and was seen as a positive settlement and reflective of the MoJ's continuing support of Cafcass. This, however rose back to 'significant' in Q2 and continued to Q4 due to the secondary risk that programme and contingency costs rise above assumptions and create an overspend. Mitigation continues to be focused on maintaining strong communication routes with the MoJ to keep them apprised of forecast through strong financial oversight and to ensure there is



timely discussion and negotiation. Various arrangements have been put in place to assist staff from the impact of rising inflation such as a temporary increase to fuel reimbursement rates and process for selling leave.

Digital and technology: The risk moved from 'moderate' in Q1 to 'minor' in Q2 and has remained so to Q4. Investment in system development and equipment has continued to be delivered against plans. There are issues with availability of IT equipment in the market generally which are creating longer lead in times, however this has had limited impact on staff and our services. Related supplier key performance indicators continue to be met and customer satisfaction has been maintained at a very high level.

Information and knowledge management: The risk has been assessed as 'moderate' during the year but with a reducing trend in 'likelihood' to reflect a better management of knowledge and well-developed systems for protecting personal information. Although there was some increase in the occurrence of avoidable data breaches in Q1-2, compared to previous year, the levels remain lower since the move to digital first communication following the pandemic. Attention continues to be focused on the risk of failing to effectively analyse, share and exploit available information about the operation of the family justice system, with our partners at local and national level. The development of local and national dashboards, reviewed in our performance and accountability cycle, ensures Cafcass leaders speak with a consistent voice about current pressures and how they can be addressed.

Change infrastructure: The risk has been assessed as 'significant' during the year. The structures for joint planning, decision-making and 'system grip' with partners have improved but are not yet leading to

consistent system wide change. Cafcass is maintaining a clear focus on which elements of the work it will deliver in partnership and which it can take forward under its own volition. Positively, our internal data is being used successfully and starting to influence change, i.e. in reducing r16.4 and through development of actions to prevent or move out of prioritisation.

Reputation - partners & stakeholders: The risk was consistently assessed as 'moderate' during the year. System partners continue to be well informed about changes to Cafcass policy, guidance or approach and there are good internal systems to escalate issues and co-ordinate learning from incidents. A previous rise in complaints was in part an impact of Covid-19 where cases are taking longer to move through the system, however, mitigation is being delivered through a robust review of the complaint policy and structure of management of complaints.

Overall conclusions from the Accounting Officer

I consider that our governance framework has continued to operate effectively with the additional measures outlined in this report. We have continued to prioritise our efforts and directed resources into providing effective services to children and their families. The complexity of the work and the record levels of work staying open longer, creates significant challenges. These challenges are not only in how to maintain the quality of our work with children but also, equally importantly, how we can continue to sustain and ensure the resilience and wellbeing of our staff. In this context, while the governance framework in place is working for now, we will continue to keep this under review.



4.2

Our people: remuneration and staff report

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of our workforce and to set out the pay and benefits received by Cafcass Board members and directors, our pay and pensions policies, details of staff numbers and costs, and our policies to support staff including equality and diversity commitments.

Our people

Cafcass is the largest employer of children's social workers in England. As of 31 March 2023, we had 2,272 employees (2,063 FTE). In addition to the Chief Executive and three directors in post on that date, there were 1,721 social workers and 547 corporate and other professionals. There were 173 contingent workers, including 44 locum (agency) social workers, 117 Cafcass Associates who undertake discrete social work assessments and 12 agency workers in corporate and professional roles.

Social work roles

There were 1,721 social workers in post on 31 March 2023 (1,548.8 FTE), an increase in headcount of 0.7% from the same point in the previous year, although the full-time equivalent total is almost identical. All social work staff are required to be registered with the regulator for social work, Social Work England, and renewal of registration for all eligible staff was completed to the required deadline of 30 November 2022. There were 44 locum staff in social work roles.

Employed social work FTE				
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1,376.4	1,407.5	1,485.1	1,549.4	1,548.8

Turnover

There were 246 social work employee leavers in 2022-23. This equates to a turnover rate of 15.0%, which reflects an increase compared to the previous year (12.5%).

Starters, leavers and turnover			
	Starters	Leavers	% Turnover
Social workers	250	246	15.0

Cafcass has a more stable permanent workforce when compared to the average for other social work organisations. Cafcass' staff turnover rate and agency rate are below the average for social workers nationally and also below that for the average of other organisations rated outstanding by Ofsted.

Age and gender

Social work staff are predominantly female (88.5%) compared to male (11.5%), which is broadly in line with the gender distribution of the wider children's social work workforce. 0.17% of staff are recorded as having completed gender re-assignment.

Gender	Headcount	% of total headcount
Female	1,523	88.5
Male	198	11.5

In 2022-23, 60.2% of Cafcass social work staff were between the age of 30 and 49, with a further 25.0% aged 50 to 59 and 11.7% aged 60 years or older. Cafcass age distribution is therefore significantly older than the wider children's social work workforce and we monitor retirement rates to support workforce forward planning and forecasting.

We have seen a small reduction of -1.4% in the proportion of our social workers aged over 50, compared to last year. The average age of new social work joiners in 2022-23 was 38 years.

Age groups	Headcount	% of total headcount
18 - 29	52	3.02
30 - 39	523	30.39
40 - 49	513	29.81
50 - 59	431	25.04
60+	202	11.74

The qualification of social workers

72% of Cafcass' qualified social workers achieved their initial social work qualification more than 10 years ago.

Time since initial social work qualification	% of total headcount
Less than 5 years	4
Between 5 and 10 years since qualification	24
More than 10 years since qualification	72

Time in service with Cafcass

On 31 March 2023, 51.5% of social workers had been employed for less than five years with us. A further 25.2% had been in post for between five and ten years, with another 23.3% in post for ten years or more. Cafcass social work staff have on average significantly longer tenure than the wider children's social work workforce.

Tenure	Headcount	% of total headcount
Less than 2 years	470	27.3
2 years or more but less than 5 years	417	24.2
5 years or more but less than 10 years	433	25.2
10 years or more	401	23.3

Social work roles

On 31 March 2023, there were 1,906 qualified social workers in the organisation including all employees, senior managers, agency workers and Cafcass Associates.

Of the 1,721 who were employees undertaking social work roles, the significant majority are family court advisers, and these are frontline case holding roles.

Role	Headcount	% of total headcount
Family court adviser	1,397	80.5
Practice supervisor	177	10.2
Service manager / senior service manager	127	7.3
Head of practice / social work qualified senior manager ¹⁹	34	2.0

Social work ethnicity

16.9% of Cafcass social work staff identify as belonging to a minority ethnic group, compared to 17.7% for all Cafcass employees, 24% for the wider child and family children's social care workforce²⁰, and 17% for the wider working age population²¹.

Ethnic origin	Headcount	% of total headcount who have declared ethnicity
Asian - British	11	0.7
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	0.1
Asian or Asian British - Indian	31	1.9
Asian or Asian British - Other	4	0.2
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	16	1.0
Black British	25	1.5
Black or Black British - Black African	48	2.9
Black or Black British - Black Other	5	0.3
Black or Black British - Caribbean	57	3.4
Chinese	2	0.1
Mixed - British	26	1.6
Mixed - Other	11	0.7
Mixed - White and Asian	6	0.4
Mixed - White and Black African	8	0.5
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	28	1.7
Other Ethnic Group	7	0.4

¹⁹ This includes an additional 14 staff who are qualified social workers but who are not undertaking social work roles and not therefore included in previous figures.

²⁰ Children's social work workforce, Reporting year 2022 - (www.gov.uk).

²¹ Working age population - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures (ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

White - British	1269	76.7
White - Irish	33	2.0
White - other	65	3.9
Not declared	67	n/a

Social work disability

10.1% of Cafcass social work staff have a declared disability which is the same as for all Cafcass employees. In comparison, 22% of the working-age (people aged 16 to 64) population report having a disability²².

Corporate and business services

There were 551 staff in corporate and business services²³ roles in post on 31 March 2023 (514.5 FTE), an increase of 3.4% from the same point in the previous year.

Employed corporate and professional FTE				
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
424.1	436.9	466.0	497.8	514.5

Turnover

The headcount of leavers in the preceding 12 months was 66. This equates to a turnover rate of 12.0% which reflects a decrease from the previous year (13.0%).

	Starters	Leavers	% Turnover
Corporate and professional	81	66	12.0

Age and gender

The corporate and professional workforce is predominantly female (79.1%) compared to male (20.9%).

Gender	Headcount	% of total headcount
Female	436	79.1
Male	115	20.9

On 31 March 2023, the majority of corporate and business services staff were in the age range 30 to 49 (55.6%). Younger employees aged 18 to 29 made up 16.5% of the workforce with 28% aged 50 or over.

Age groups	Headcount	% of total headcount
18 - 29	91	16.5
30 - 39	170	30.9
40 - 49	136	24.7
50 - 59	119	21.6
60+	35	6.4

²² Employment of disabled people 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

²³ Including the Chief Executive and three Directors.

Time in service with Cafcass

On 31 March 2023, 39.0% of corporate and business services staff had been in post for less than five years. A further 27.4% had between five and ten years, with 33.6% having ten years or more service.

Tenure groups	Headcount	% of total headcount
Less than 2 years	122	22.1
2 years or more but less than 5 years	93	16.9
5 years or more but less than 10 years	151	27.4
10 years or more	185	33.6

Ethnicity

20% of Cafcass corporate and business services staff identify as belonging to a minority ethnic group. In comparison, the figure for all Cafcass staff is 17.7%, and for the wider working age population is 17%²⁴.

Ethnic origin	Headcount	% of total headcount who have declared ethnicity
Asian - British	9	1.7
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	12	2.3
Asian or Asian British - Indian	28	5.4
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	10	1.9
Black British	2	0.4
Black or Black British - Black African	7	1.3
Black or Black British - Caribbean	16	3.1
Chinese	4	0.8
Mixed - British	3	0.6
Mixed - Other	3	0.6
Mixed - White and Asian	6	1.2
Mixed - White and Black African	1	0.2
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3	0.6
Other Ethnic Group	3	0.6
White - British	375	72.0
White - Irish	6	1.2
White - Other	33	6.3
Not declared	30	n/a

²⁴ Working age population - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts.

Disability

10.1% of Cafcass staff in corporate and professional roles have a declared disability which is the same as for all Cafcass employees. In comparison, 22% of the working-age (people aged 16 to 64) population report having a disability²⁵.

Remuneration

■ Remuneration policy

Cafcass Board members are appointed by the MoJ according to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Membership, Committee and Procedure) Regulations 2005, which sets out all terms of appointment except remuneration, which is determined by the Secretary of State. Board members are statutory office holders and, as such, do not hold a contract of employment. Cafcass Board members are appointed on one, two, three or four-year terms. The remuneration of Cafcass directors is recommended for approval by the Chief Executive to the Remuneration Committee, made up of the Chair of the Cafcass Board and the chairs of each of its committees. The MoJ determines the salary of the Chief Executive. Cafcass salaries are established by considering factors such as relevant external comparator pay levels, internal benchmarks, affordability, recruitment and retention risks, and political sensitivity. There was no change to this policy for the 2022-23 financial year.

■ Service contracts

Cafcass' appointments of directors are made in accordance with the Cafcass Recruitment and Retention Policy. This policy recognises that in order to provide a high-quality service to the children and

families whom we serve, it is vital that we recruit and retain people through fair and open competition who share our aims and values and have the requisite skills and abilities to perform to a consistently high standard. Unless otherwise stated, staff covered by this report hold appointments that are open-ended. Members of Cafcass' Corporate Management Team (CMT) are required to provide four- or six-months' notice to terminate their contract. Early termination by Cafcass, other than for gross misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation by way of payment in lieu of notice, as set out in the individual contract of employment. No such payments were made to senior executives during the year.

■ Remuneration of Cafcass Board members and senior management

Remuneration includes gross salary, benefits-in-kind, and pension benefits (employer's pension contributions). More detail on these is set out on the next page in the remuneration tables.



²⁵ Employment of disabled people 2022.

Single total remuneration figures for Cafcass Board members (subject to audit)

Board members	Salary (£000)		Bonus payments (£000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension benefits (£000)		Total (£000)	
	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
Sally Cheshire CBE	30-35	30-35	-	-	1400	500	-	-	30-35	30-35
Catherine Doran	10-15	10-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Paul Grant	10-15	10-15	-	-	200	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Peter Fish (from 19th April 2022)	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	-
Sophie Humphreys (until 31st October 2022)	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	10-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	10-15
Helen Jones	10-15	10-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Mandy Jones	10-15	10-15	-	-	200	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Professor Eileen Munro CBE	10-15	10-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Joanna Nicolas	10-15	10-15	-	-	800	-	-	-	10-15	10-15
Catharine Seddon (from 19th April 2022)	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	-	-	-	300	-	-	-	5-10 (10-15 annualised)	-
Rohan Sivanandan	10-15	10-15	-	-	200	-	-	-	10-15	10-15

Single remuneration figures for Cafcass Directors (subject to audit)

Directors	Salary (£000)		Bonus payments (£000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension benefits (£000)		Total (£000)	
	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2020-21	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22
Jacky Tiotto, Chief Executive	175-180	170-175	-	-	100	100	23	20	200-205	190-195
Julie Brown, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive	140-145	135-140	-	-	100	100	38	34	180-185	170-175
Teresa Williams, Director of Strategy	130-135	125-130	-	-	100	100	38	36	170-175	165-170
Jack Cordery, Operational Director	145-150	140-145	-	-	100	100	52	82	200-205	220-225

Salary

'Salary' includes: basic salary, London weighting, honorarium, overtime, market supplement (discretionary payment for some posts to aid retention and recruitment), buy-back of untaken annual leave, and Pay in lieu of Notice (PILON).

Bonus payments and performance related pay

Performance related pay (PRP) is based on performance in the year. Targets are set annually and based on overall performance towards the achievements of the business plan objectives (stated below). Threshold performance would result in a PRP payment of no more than 10% of basic salary. Performance below threshold would result in no payment being paid. Cafcass has been moving away from including PRP clauses in new director contracts and therefore no performance related payments were made in 2022-23

PRP awards for Cafcass staff would be determined by the Chief Executive and must be endorsed by the Remuneration Committee. PRP for the Chief Executive would be determined by the Remuneration Committee and the MoJ.

The strategic objectives that are relevant for PRP consideration are to:

- Show continuous improvement in our performance and in the quality of our work.
- Innovate and reform in public and private law, to use our resources to best effect.
- Develop an evidence base that analyses the diversity related needs of children and families and in turn briefs and trains our staff to respond to these changes.

- Continue delivering savings packages required by innovating throughout all front and back-office functions and across organisational boundaries.
- Use our unique position and insight to generate high impact and timely research to inform our own practice and influence that across the family justice system.

Payments to former directors (subject to audit)

No payments were made to any person who was not a director at the time but had been a director of Cafcass previously. Any previous payments to former directors are included in prior years' reports.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any non-cash benefits provided by Cafcass and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. Board members' travel costs to the Cafcass National Office are administered via Payroll/PAYE, which acts as a benefit in kind.

Pension entitlements for directors


Pension benefits are provided by the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF), to which Cafcass makes employer's contributions. Further information on the Cafcass pension schemes can be found in section 2.9 and 4.3, and in Note 1 and Note 22 of the Annual Accounts. The accrued pension at retirement age is the pension earned that the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age.

Cash equivalent transfer value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme (or arrangement) when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. CETVs are calculated within the guidelines and framework prescribed by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that individuals have accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The CETV figure includes the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the pension provider and for which the pension provider has received a transfer payment commensurate to the additional pension liabilities being assumed. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing of additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

The real increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer excludes increases due to inflation and contributions paid by the Director (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement). It uses common market valuation factors for the start and the end of the period. Additional disclosure required per PES (2023) 04, CETV figures are calculated using the guidance on discount rates for calculating unfunded public service pension contribution rates that was extant at 31 March 2023. HM Treasury published updated guidance on 27 April 2023; this guidance will be used in the calculation of 2023-24 CETV figures.

Pension entitlement for directors (subject to audit)



	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at retirement age (£2,500 bands) (£000)	Total accrued pension at retirement age at 31 March 2023 and related lump sum (£5,000 bands) (£000)	CETV at 31 March 2022 (£000)	CETV at 31 March 2023 (£000)	Real increase in CETV after adjustment for inflation and changes in market investment factors (nearest £000)
Jacky Tiotto, Chief Executive	0-2.5 plus 0-2.5 lump sum	15-20 plus 0-5 lump sum	252	292	32
Julie Brown, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive	2.5-5 plus 0-2.5 lump sum	35-40 plus 0-5 lump sum	492	555	47
Teresa Williams, Director of Strategy	2.5-5 plus 0-2.5 lump sum	10-15 plus 0-5 lump sum	136	179	38
Jack Cordery, Operational Director	2.5-5 plus 0-2.5 lump sum	5-10 plus 0-5 lump sum	89	111	20

Compensation for early retirement or loss of office (subject to audit)

No senior managers received any compensatory payments during 2022-23.

Fair pay disclosure (subject to audit)

This shows the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in the organisation as well as the 25th percentile, the median and 75th percentile remuneration of the organisation's workforce. This is based on full-time equivalent salaries.

	2022-23	2021-22
Highest paid director's total banded remuneration (£000)	175-180	170-175
25th percentile	£40,018	£39,035
Ratio	1:4.44	1:4.42
Median total remuneration	£44,616	£43,525
Ratio	1:3.98	1:3.96
75th percentile	£44,715	£43,525
Ratio	1:3.97	1:3.96

Staff have not received performance pay in 2022-23 and 2021-22. Therefore the figures for 25th, median and 75th percentile remuneration, inclusive of performance pay, are the same as the figures disclosed in the table.

The following table compares the annual % change of salary, allowances and any performance pay and bonuses for the highest paid director as well as the average equivalent % changes for the workforce as a whole.

Annual % changes to pay, allowances and bonuses		2022-23	2021-22
Highest paid director	Salary and allowances	2.51%	0.00%
	Performance pay and bonuses	0.00%	0.00%
Whole workforce	Salary and allowances	3.25%	-0.49%
	Performance pay and bonuses	0.00%	0.00%

In 2022-23, nil employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid director (2021-22 was also nil). Remuneration ranged from £14,000 to £180,000 (2021-22 was £13,000 - £175,000). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Staff report

Number of senior civil servant (SCS) equivalent staff

Cafcass has 20 staff who are the equivalent of senior civil servants (SCS): 14 members of the operational management team and six senior managers in corporate teams (this excludes directors, whose remuneration has been set out above).

Salary band	Number of SCS equivalent within band
£70,000 - £80,000	2
£80,000 - £90,000	1
£90,000 - £100,000	5
£100,000 - £110,000	12
Total	20

Staff numbers and costs

Cafcass staff members are subject to levels of remuneration and terms and conditions of service (including superannuation) within the general pay structure approved by the MoJ. An analysis of staff numbers and costs is set out below, distinguishing between staff with permanent contracts, and staff who are flexible, agency, and self-employed contractors. All staff numbers are presented on an actual basis as at the reporting date (31 March 2023) and reflect head count; staff costs are presented on total cost during the reporting period (April 2022 - March 2023).

Staff numbers (31 March 2023 - subject to audit)

Category	Social worker	Other	Total
Cafcass board members		11	11
Corporate staff		164	164
Operational staff	1,629	385	2,014
Employed flexible staff (bank / sessional)	92	2	94
Total employees	1,721	551	2,272
Agency staff	44	12	56
Cafcass associates (active)	117		117
Total flexible workforce	161	12	173
Grand total	1,882	574	2,456

Cafcass pay framework

Cafcass staff are employed on the Cafcass pay scale bands 1-10. Each band has a commencement point and a target point with progression based on an assessment of performance after 18 months in post. The pay scale is underpinned by the Cafcass job evaluation framework. Senior management roles (not including directors) are appointed to spot salaries which are subject to internal and external benchmarking. The Cafcass pay framework does not align with and is not linked to civil service pay grades.

Staff composition – gender, ethnicity and disability

Staff composition groups	Female	Male	Black, asian and minority ethnic	Disability
1. Directors	3	1		1 (25.0%)
2. Senior civil service equivalent (excluding directors)	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	1 (5.3%)
3. Other Cafcass staff	1,941 (86.3%)	307 (13.7%)	381 (17.7%)	211 (10.1%)
Total	1,959 (86.2%)	313 (13.8%)	384 (17.7%)	213 (10.1%)

Staff costs (subject to audit)

	Cafcass board members	Corporate national office staff	Regional staff	Total
2022-23				
Salaries and wages	130,072	9,623,435	78,381,578	88,135,085
Apprentice levy	-	46,955	382,208	429,163
Social security costs	6,318	1,010,300	8,778,390	9,795,007
Current service cost	-	3,946,359	31,799,641	35,746,000
Other pension costs	-	(30,357)	(41,966)	(72,323)
Past pension service cost / (gain)	-	-	13,000	13,000
Total payroll costs	136,390	14,596,691	119,312,851	134,045,932
Less recoveries in respect of outward secondments	-	-	(47,393)	(47,393)
Locum (agency) social worker costs	-	29,853	3,305,591	3,335,444
Other temporary staff costs	-	133,893	342,361	476,254
Self-employed contractors	-	(17)	3,273,965	3,273,949
Inward secondees costs				-
Total staff costs	136,390	14,760,421	126,187,375	141,084,186

Sickness absence data

19% of our workforce have had some level of absence due to Covid-19 during 2022-23 all of which related to individual illness rather than caring for dependents. All forms of sickness absence (including Covid-19) are included in the data below.

Category	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Social workers average working days lost (excluding leavers)	10.7 (8.9)	11.1 (10)	8.7 (7.5)	9.6 (7.7)	9.9 (8.3)	8.7 (7.5)
Corporate and professional average working days lost (excluding leavers)	9.9 (8.9)	9.6 (8.7)	8.3 (7.3)	10.9 (9.1)	8.8 (8)	8.7 (8.1)
Overall average working days lost (excluding leavers)	10.5 (8.9)	10.8 (9.7)	8.6 (7.5)	9.9 (8)	9.6 (8.2)	8.7 (7.7)

Consultancy

There has been no expenditure on consultancy during 2022-23.

Off-payroll engagements

Cafcass conforms to relevant regulations in respect of tax arrangements for all off-payroll appointments and this includes an assessment of employment status as required under IR35. Where workers are engaged through an intermediary, Cafcass undertakes an assessment of employment status for tax purposes and issues the required status determination statement. Where relevant, Cafcass instructs that required deductions for income tax and national insurance are made. Cafcass had previously liaised closely on these matters during 2020-21 with the MoJ and the Government Tax Centre of Excellence in readiness for the changes to IR35 which took effect from April 2021 and have been audited subsequently on the same. There have been no identified instances of non-tax compliant off-payroll engagements as at 31 March 2023 and nil challenges of status determination.

Off-payroll engagements within Cafcass includes agency workers and Cafcass Associates and those that were in post on 31 March 2023 are reported at the beginning of section 4.2. Of those there were 25 engagements that were deemed to be 'high paid'. Cafcass provides more detailed annual reporting to meet the PES requirement through the MoJ. There were no high paid off-payroll engagement in any position with significant financial responsibility.



Exit packages (subject to audit)

There have been no paid exit packages during 2022-23 or in either of the prior two annual reporting periods.

Pension costs

Cafcass participates in the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) scheme and the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The WYPF scheme is a multi-employer defined benefit scheme in which Cafcass' share of the underlying assets and liabilities are identified. The employer contribution rate for 2022-23 was 19.4%. Aon Hewitt Limited are the currently appointed fund actuaries. The contribution rate is based on a combination of future service and the effects of past service deficits and ill health retirements. Employer's contributions to the scheme for the year to March 2023 amounted to £16.762m (costs relating to the voluntary early retirement programme were nil) with 2,461 employees participating in the scheme (2021-22 employer's contributions were £16.158m, voluntary early retirement costs were nil, participating employees 2,364). The last independent actuarial valuation of the WYPF scheme was published on 31 March 2023 and revealed that the scheme was 103.7% funded in relation to past service. That valuation was based on assets and liabilities at 31 March 2022. Following the actuarial valuation, the revised employer contribution rates for Cafcass have been set as follows:

	Contribution rate %	Additional cash contribution
2023-24	19.1%	£Nil
2024-25	18.6%	£Nil
2025-26	18.1%	£Nil

The PCSPS is an unfunded multi-employer defined benefit scheme for which Cafcass is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The scheme's actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following a full scheme valuation. A full actuarial valuation was last carried out as of 31 March 2016 and revised contribution rates applied from 1 April 2019. Full details can be found at www.civilservice.gov.uk/pensions. For 2022-23, employer's contributions of £0.0099m (2021-22: £0.0096m) were payable to the PCSPS at 27.1% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands (band 2 of PCSPS contribution rates). The contribution rates reflect benefits as they are accrued, not when the costs are actually incurred and reflect past experience of the scheme.

Staff secondments and redeployments

As an arms-length body Cafcass employees are public servants but not civil servants and we do not therefore engage in civil service interdepartmental loans. Each year a small number of staff may be temporarily seconded to other roles both externally and internally and we also receive a small number of inbound secondments such as civil service fast streamers.

Number of secondments by headcount:

	Cafcass employee seconded externally	Seconded to Cafcass from other organisations	Internal secondment	Total
Grade				
Business services	1		14	15
Family court adviser	10		5	15
Head of practice			1	1
Service manager			6	6
Specialist staff		5	10	15
Total	11	5	36	52

Average duration of secondments:

Type	Cafcass employee seconded externally	Seconded to Cafcass from other organisations	Internal secondment	Total
Grade	Average of duration in weeks	Average of duration in weeks	Average of duration in weeks	Average of duration in weeks
Business services	52.1		26.3	28.0
Family court adviser	16.1		11.7	14.6
Head of practice			6.6	6.6
Service manager			15.8	15.8
Specialist staff		13.3	27.3	22.6
Total	19.4	13.3	22.3	20.8

Trade Union recognition and industrial relations

Cafcass formally recognises and has a partnership agreement with Napo and Unison, with national partnership meetings taking place quarterly. During the reporting period managers also met with unions on a number of occasions for pay negotiations including a meeting facilitated by ACAS to consider a trade dispute. There have been no instances of industrial action during 2022-23.

Trade Union facility time

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the reporting period	Full-time equivalent employee number
10	8.07
Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	-
1 - 50%	10
51 - 99%	-
100%	-
Summary	Figures
Total cost of facility time	£105,526.92
Total pay bill	£115,014,539
% of pay bill spent on facility time	0.09%

There were no trade union officials with more than 50% of their time allocated to trade union duties. The overall proportion of the pay bill allocated to trade union facility time reduced slightly from the previous year (2021-22 was 0.11%).

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy 2022-25

In July 2022, our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy was published, and this has strengthened our focus. We measure our performance against the four strategic objectives set out in the strategy with oversight from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group. Membership of the group includes our board member lead for equality, diversity and inclusion, staff diversity network chairs and the FJYPB. The steering group provides important challenge and a forum for discussion about progress.



Priority 1: BETTER DATA AND INSIGHT

■ Review of data categories

Following consultation with our staff networks, diversity champions and the FJYPB, we reviewed and updated the options we offer for children, families and staff to share information about themselves. Updated diversity categories in our HR system and ChildFirst were trialled and the necessary adjustments were made to the IT system. The new categories were made live during 2023-24, with FCA and manager showcased during Practice Week in October.

■ Offering the option for colleagues to use pronouns as a means of choosing to share how they identify as an individual

This reporting year, we established a working group to explore how to help colleagues who wish to share their pronouns on their personal equipment. The option to share pronouns electronically has been agreed and they will be shared with staff through a communications campaign during 2023-24. Many of our staff feel that using pronouns, such as she/her, he/him, they/them, is a way to promote diversity, uniqueness and acceptance.

■ Carers' Passport

Through our carers policy, we already offer flexibility to staff who provide unpaid care outside work. In this reporting year we have started to strengthen this support further. Members of our carers network are working with IT and analytics to develop a 'carers' passport'. The passport will be a live document within the HR system enabling carers to share information about the impact of their caring responsibilities with current and future line managers. The passport will act as a valuable conversation aide and help managers to give carers as much information and support as possible.

Priority 2: LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

■ Talent Pathway for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues

This year, our senior leadership team has continued to innovate and invest in staff. This has included a specific focus on supporting colleagues from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. During 2021-22, analysis of our data showed that staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds were consistently underrepresented at line manager level and above. In this reporting year, we launched a 'talent pathway' specifically for staff from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Our Chief Executive, directors and senior managers take an active role in the development and delivery of the talent pathway with many taking up the role of 'senior sponsor.' Every colleague participating in the management and leadership programmes has been allocated a senior sponsor who meets with them individually over the course of the programme and afterwards. The aim is for senior sponsors to share their insight and experience, offer practical suggestions and help the participant access further opportunities such as shadowing and networking.

Priority 3: PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

■ Employer identity and attraction

During 2022-23, equality, diversity and inclusion has been a key element of our employer identity work. We recognise the importance of securing a workforce that reflects the uniqueness of the children and families with whom we work. We have improved the way in which we are reaching out to potential candidates, making sure the value we place on uniqueness is clear. We do this by using creative resources such as videos, blogs and testimonials. We have also made improving the diversity of recruitment panels a priority. All hiring managers are now required to consider the diversity of their panel and all staff involved in recruitment have to complete our updated recruitment and selection training. We have a group of staff and diversity champions who have completed the training to become 'recruitment allies.' Hiring managers have the option to approach a recruitment ally to join their panel. They bring additional insight and lived experience which they can use to support discussion and decision making in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion issues. In December 2022, an analytical dashboard was introduced to help us collect, benchmark and analyse recruitment data. This has the capability to show those who make an application and the decisions of hiring panels. Moving forward, this will improve our understanding of the diversity profile of our candidate pool and help inform focused action.

■ Disability Confident scheme

Our membership of the disability confident scheme and our accreditation as a 'Disability Confident leader' provides evidence of our commitment to improving how we recruit, retain and develop disabled people. In the year ahead, we are looking for a specialist partner to help us to assess how accessible we are for colleagues, families and children with mobility and physical disabilities.

■ Staff diversity networks

During 2022-23, we continued to support and encourage membership of staff diversity networks. They continue to offer a safe and supportive space for colleagues who are connected through shared characteristics, challenges and lived experience. Our staff networks are:

- Ability Matters network
- Carers network
- Faith network
- Kaleidoscope network (Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff)
- Mental Health network
- Pride network (LGBT+ staff)

In February 2023, an additional group was established to support neurodiverse staff. Our staff networks have played an active role in the planning and delivery of a wide range of initiatives, including the monthly staff recognition panel and annual awards, staff induction workshops, launch of the equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and development of our work on employer identity and attraction.

Priority 4: SKILLED AND CONFIDENT PRATITIONERS AND WIDER WORKFORCE

■ Learning and Development

Exploring conversations about uniqueness with young people is one of the key learning resources we have developed this year. Talking to children about race, culture and identity is now a core competency for all managers and staff.

We continue to identify areas requiring more specific focus through deep dives and extended research projects. This year, colleagues from IT have played a key role in assessing the quality of our work with children and families who require translation services because English is not their first language.

■ Mental health

This year we have had a significant focus on promoting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our staff. We have continued to raise awareness about the information and support available through our pool of wellbeing allies and mental health first aiders. The Mental Health network has developed a training package currently being implemented.

■ Diversity Champions

This year we have increased the number of diversity champions and we now have 126 across the organisation. Their partnerships with local management teams have been strengthened and they are now better equipped to ensure their input is responsive to local demographics and needs. Each region has been supported to develop a set of objectives and an associated workplan.

Diversity champions have played a key role in increasing knowledge, skills and confidence of colleagues through presentations, workshops, blogs and local newsletters. They have offered a range of activities to mark events in the diversity calendar, including Black History Month, LGBT+ History Month and Carers Week.

Whistleblowing

Cafcass believes effective whistleblowing is a key component in our strategy to challenge inappropriate behaviour at all levels in the organisation. It is both an instrument in support of good governance and a manifestation of a more healthy and ethical organisational culture. Our whistleblowing policy and procedure is accessible to all staff via our intranet. It provides advice and guidance on the process for raising a complaint and advises on the protection afforded to whistle blowers who raise concerns. The policy explains how these concerns can be raised with relevant senior managers and this includes the ability to raise concerns directly with a nominated Board member. Although there have been no instances of whistleblowing during the reporting period upon which to assess the effectiveness of our whistleblowing arrangements, the policy and procedure are kept under regular review.

Conflict of interest

Our Conflict of Interest policy sets out how we manage conflicts of interest as they arise both in terms of case work and any independent work carried out by Cafcass employees. The policy sets out arrangements to avoid such conflicts including the responsibility of staff to raise these and for managers to consider any action to mitigate and conflict. This applies to all staff. Board members are also required to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Anti-bribery and corruption

Further detail on our anti-bribery and corruption measures can be found on our website.

Management of health and safety

All health and safety issues are overseen and directed by the work of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Steering Group which includes representation from our recognised trade unions. Health and safety incidents are reported quarterly to the OMT including a bi-annual report on any instances of violence toward staff. All incidents and accidents are recorded via an online system which is accessible to all staff. Information on health and safety is available to all staff via the Cafcass intranet and through regular communication to all staff.

Employee consultation and participation

Consultation on organisational change is conducted in line with the Cafcass Management of Organisational Change policy including collective and individual

consultation as appropriate. In addition, Cafcass engages with its workforce through staff surveys and senior management 'leadership live' events. Cafcass also operates a number of staff groups and networks covering matters such as diversity, working carers and health and wellbeing. Through these various channels all Cafcass staff have opportunity to share their knowledge, contribute their ideas and participate in organisational and workforce development.

Impact of EU exit

Previously, during 2020-21 we had communicated with all staff and directly to EU nationals on the importance of application for the EU Settlement Scheme prior to the deadline of June 2021. Since the UK's departure from the EU, we have conducted no recruitment from overseas and have not applied for a sponsor licence. EU exit has not had any measurable effect on Cafcass workforce this year. There have been no impacts on our spending during 2022-23 as a consequence of the EU exit.

4.3

Parliamentary accountability and audit report

This information shows how we have spent the money provided to us by Parliament. It also shows that our annual accounts have been audited.

Our accounts

The Statement of Accounts of Cafcass for the year ending 31 March 2023 has been prepared in a form directed by the Secretary of State with consent of the Treasury, in accordance with the Accounts Direction dated 12 April 2002 given under Schedule 2, paragraph (13)2 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The Accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, who is appointed by statute. The audit fee is £86,000. There have been no non-audit services during 2022-23.

Treatment of pension liabilities

Employees of Cafcass are members of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF), which is funded on a pay as-you-go basis.

A small number of Cafcass staff retained membership of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) by virtue of their earlier employment with one of Cafcass' predecessor organisations.

The amount charged to the staff costs for the PCSPS represents the contributions payable to the scheme in respect of current employees in the accounting period. Contributions are charged on a year-by-year basis in accordance with the requirements of the scheme administrators.

The assets of the WYPF, which is a defined benefit scheme, are held separately from those of Cafcass. The scheme assets are measured at realisable value. Scheme liabilities are measured using a projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liability.

The pension scheme surplus (to the extent that it is considered recoverable) or deficit is recognised in full on the face of the Statement of Financial Position. The movement in the scheme surplus/deficit is split between operating charges (within staff costs) and reserves in the case of actuarial gains and losses. Net interest receivable on pension scheme assets is shown in operating cash flows.

Long-term liabilities

There have been significant changes in the organisation's long-term liabilities due to actuarial gain associated with the pension liabilities.

Long-term expenditure trends

There have been significant changes in the organisation's long-term expenditure trends relating to staffing costs.

Remote contingent liabilities (subject to audit)

There are no remote contingent liabilities.

Losses and special payments (subject to audit)

	2022-23		2021-22	
	£000	Number of cases	£000	Number of cases
Losses statement				
Administrative write-offs	20	1	1	5
Fruitless payments	-	-	-	-
Total value of losses	20	1	1	5
Special payments				
Compensation payments	23	8	38	11
Ex gratia payments	59	8	32	8
Total special payments	82	16	70	19
Total losses and special payments	102	17	71	24

There were £0.102m of losses and special payments charged to the Accounts as at 31 March 2023 (2021-22: £0.071m). The actual cash amount paid in the period was £0.082m (2021-22: £0.071m). These payments were made in accordance with HM Treasury guidance.



Signed: **Jacky Tiotto**
Chief Executive and
Accounting Officer

Date: 11 December 2023

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service ('Cafcass') for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

The financial statements comprise Cafcass's:

- Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023;
- Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Statement of Cash Flows and Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year then ended; and
- the related notes including the significant accounting policies.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in the preparation of the financial statements is applicable law and UK adopted International Accounting Standards.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of Cafcass's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and its net expenditure after interest for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and Secretary of State directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects, the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom (2022). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019.

I am independent of Cafcass in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that Cafcass's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on Cafcass's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for Cafcass is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it is anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other Information

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the financial statements nor my auditor's certificate. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion the part of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions issued under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit have been properly prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000; and
- the information given in the Performance and Impact and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and is in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which I report by exception.

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of Cafcass and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance and Impact and Accountability Reports.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- Adequate accounting records have not been kept by Cafcass or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report subject to audit are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual have not been made or parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report to be audited is not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- maintaining proper accounting records.
- providing the C&AG with access to all information of which management is aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation, and other matters.
- providing the C&AG with additional information and explanations needed for his audit.
- providing the C&AG with unrestricted access to persons within Cafcass from whom the auditor determines it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statement to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view and are prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
- ensuring that the annual report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report, is prepared in accordance with Secretary of State directions made under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.
- assessing Cafcass's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Cafcass will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations including fraud.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud. The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud is detailed below.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud.

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud, I:

- considered the nature of the sector, control environment and operational performance including the design of Cafcass's accounting policies, key performance indicators and performance incentives.
- inquired of management, Cafcass's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to Cafcass' policies and procedures on:
 - identifying, evaluating, and complying with laws and regulations.

- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud; and
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including Cafcass's controls relating to Cafcass' compliance with the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and Managing Public Money.
- inquired of management, Cafcass's head of internal audit and those charged with governance whether:
 - they were aware of any instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations.
 - they had knowledge of any actual, suspected, or alleged fraud.
- discussing among the engagement team and involving relevant external specialists, including actuarial experts, regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, I considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within Cafcass for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition, posting of unusual journals, complex transactions, bias in management estimates and the valuation of the defined benefit pension liability. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), I am also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

I obtained an understanding of Cafcass's framework of authority and other legal and regulatory frameworks in which Cafcass operates. I focused on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of Cafcass. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000, Managing Public Money, employment law, pensions legislation and tax legislation.

Audit response to identified risk

To respond to the identified risks resulting from the above procedures:

- I reviewed the financial statement disclosures and tested to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described above as having direct effect on the financial statements.
- I enquired of management and the Audit and Risk Committee concerning actual and potential litigation and claims.
- I reviewed minutes of meetings of those charged with governance, the Board and internal audit reports; and
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

I communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential risks of fraud to all engagement team members including internal specialists and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

Other auditor's responsibilities

I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies

Comptroller and Auditor General

National Audit Office

157-197 Buckingham Palace Road

Victoria

London

SW1W 9SP

Date

12 December 2023

2022-23 Annual Accounts



Financial statements

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023


	Note	2022-23		2021-22	
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure					
Staff costs	4	134,462		129,844	
Past pension service cost	4/22	13		0	
Total staff costs		134,475		129,844	
Self-Employed Contractors and agency staff	20	6,609		9,148	
Depreciation and amortisation	7/7.2/8	1,930		2,139	
Partnerships	21	1,820		1,901	
Other expenditure	5	19,336		17,248	
			164,170	160,280	
Income					
Income from activities	3/6	(130)		(102)	
			(130)	(102)	
Net expenditure			164,040	160,178	
Right of use interest cost	7.2		74	44	
Pension net interest cost	22		6,154	6,487	
Net expenditure after interest	3		170,268	166,709	
Other comprehensive expenditure					
Net gain on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	7		(14)	0	
Net gain on revaluation of intangible assets	8		(3)	0	
Gain on re-measurement of pension benefits	22		(249,322)	(108,268)	
Total comprehensive net (income) / expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023			(79,071)	58,441	

The notes on pages 139 to 167 form part of these Accounts.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023

	Note	31 March 2023		31 March 2022	
		£000	£000	£000	£000
Non-current assets					
Property, plant and equipment	7	1,485		303	
Right of use assets	7.2	10,528		5,081	
Intangible assets	8	123		37	
Total non-current assets	3		12,136		5,421
Current assets					
Trade and other receivables	11	3,521		4,293	
Other current assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	12	1,895		686	
Total current assets			5,416		4,979
Total assets			17,552		10,400
Current liabilities					
Trade and other payables	13	(4,465)		(3,836)	
Total current liabilities			(4,465)		(3,836)
Non-current assets less net current liabilities			13,087		6,564
Non-current liabilities					
Provisions	14	(2,704)		(2,503)	
Right of use liabilities	16	(10,906)		(4,829)	
Pension liabilities	22	(12,083)		(236,267)	
Total non-current liabilities			(25,693)		(243,599)
Assets less liabilities			(12,606)		(237,035)
Taxpayers' equity					
General reserve			(12,976)		(237,646)
Revaluation reserve			370		611
			(12,606)		(237,035)

The Financial Statements on pages 134 to 167 were approved by the Board on 8 November 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

 **Jacky Tiotto**
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
Date: 11 December 2023

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2023

	Note	2022-23	2021-22
		£000	£000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net expenditure after interest	3	(170,268)	(166,709)
Depreciation and amortisation	7/7.2/8	1,930	2,139
Loss on disposal of assets	5	0	90
Decrease / (increase) in trade and other receivables	11	772	(506)
Increase / (decrease) in trade payables	13	629	(957)
Increase in payables not passing through SoCNE		(34)	0
Non-cash pension current and past service cost and net interest cost	22	25,138	27,568
Increase / (decrease) in provisions	14	201	(255)
Right of use assets movement in provisions not passing through SoCNE	7.2	36	(393)
Right of use interest on lease liabilities	7.2	74	44
Right of use net cash inflow / (outflow) for lease costs and incentives	7.2	22	(12)
Impairments	7/8/10	0	8
Release of revaluation reserve due to impairments	10	0	(3)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(141,500)	(138,986)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	7	(1,258)	0
Purchase of intangible assets	8	(101)	0
Proceeds on disposal of property, plant and equipment		0	45
Net cash (outflow) / inflow from investing activities		(1,359)	45
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grant-in-Aid from parent department for resource expenditure		141,689	139,286
Grant -in-Aid from parent department for capital expenditure		1,846	0
Other grant funding received		1,823	1,540
Right of use repayment of principal on leases	7.2	(1,290)	(1,801)
Net cash inflow from financing activities		144,068	139,025
Total cash and cash equivalents			
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	12	686	602
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	12	1,895	686
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		1,209	84

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity as at 31 March 2023

	Note	General reserve £000	Revaluation reserve £000	Total £000
Balance at 31 March 2022		(237,646)	611	(237,035)
Changes in taxpayers' equity				
Net gain on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	7	0	14	14
Net gain on revaluation of intangible assets	8	0	3	3
Release of revaluation reserve to SoCNE due to impairments	10	0	0	0
Release of revaluation reserve to general reserve due to disposals		258	(258)	0
Net expenditure after interest	3	(170,268)	0	(170,268)
Pension fund actuarial gain	22	249,322	0	249,322
Total comprehensive expenditure		79,312	(241)	79,071
Grant-in-Aid from parent department for resource expenditure		141,689	0	141,689
Grant-in-Aid from parent department for capital expenditure		1,846	0	1,846
Other grant funding received		1,823	0	1,823
Balance at 31 March 2023		(12,976)	370	(12,606)
Balance at 31 March 2021		(320,239)	822	(319,417)
Changes in taxpayers' equity				
Net gain on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	7	0	0	0
Net gain on revaluation of intangible assets	8	0	0	0
Release of revaluation reserve to SoCNE due to impairments	10	0	(3)	(3)
Release of revaluation reserve to general reserve due to disposals		208	(208)	0
Net expenditure after interest	3	(166,709)	0	(166,709)
Pension fund actuarial gain	22	108,268	0	108,268
Total comprehensive expenditure		(58,233)	(211)	(58,444)
Grant-in-Aid from parent department for resource expenditure		139,286	0	139,286
Grant-in-Aid from parent department for capital expenditure		0	0	0
Other grant funding received		1,540	0	1,540
Balance at 31 March 2022		(237,646)	611	(237,035)

Notes to the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023

1 Accounting policies

These Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2022-23 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRoM) issued by HM Treasury. The accounting policies contained in the FRoM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector.

Where the FRoM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the circumstances of Cafcass to give a true and fair view has been selected.

The policies adopted by Cafcass for 2022-23 are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the Accounts.

Please also reference "The statement of Accounting Officer's responsibilities" contained within the Accountability report.

a) Accounting convention

The Accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include assets at their value to the business by reference to current costs. Without limiting the information given, the Accounts meet the accounting and disclosure requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and accounting standards issued or adopted by the Accounting Standards Board insofar as those requirements are relevant. The Accounts are also fully consistent with IFRS.

b) Going concern

Parliament has voted Grant-in-Aid to Cafcass for 12 months following the Statement of Financial Position date.

It is expected that Cafcass will continue to be fully funded and operate as a going concern for the 12 months following the publication date of this Annual Report and Accounts.

Therefore, despite the Statement of Financial Position of net liabilities, Cafcass operates as a going concern.

c) Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment, except for leasehold properties and right of use assets, have been stated at their value to the business using appropriate indices published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Revaluations above the depreciated historic cost of these assets are credited to a revaluation reserve. Any downward revaluation of property, plant and equipment below the asset's depreciated historic cost is recognised when it occurs through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Property, plant and equipment include those assets costing £2,500 or more. Assets valued at less than the threshold are capitalised if they constitute integral parts of a composite asset that is in total valued at more than the threshold. Furniture and fittings are not capitalised but fully expensed in the year of acquisition.

d) Right of use lease liabilities and assets

IFRS 16 provides a single lessee accounting model, requiring lessees to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases, unless the lease term is 12 months or less, or the underlying asset is of low value.

Cafcass as lessee: Scope and exclusions

In accordance with IFRS 16 Leases, contracts or parts of contracts that convey the right to control the use of an asset for a period are accounted for as leases.

Contracts for services are evaluated to determine whether they convey the right to control the use of an identified asset, incorporating both the right to obtain substantially all the economic benefits from the asset and to direct its use. If so, the relevant part of the contract is treated as a lease.

As adapted by the FReM, IFRS 16 has been applied to leases with nil or nominal (that is, significantly below market value) consideration and arrangements for accommodation between Government departments.

Cafcass excludes two types of leases. Firstly, those relating to low value items which it considers as those where the underlying asset would have a cost of less than £3,500 when new, provided those items are not highly dependent on or integrated with other items. Secondly, contracts whose term (comprising the non-cancellable period together with any extension options, Cafcass is reasonably certain to exercise and any termination options Cafcass is reasonably certain not to exercise) is less than 12 months.

Cafcass as lessee: Initial recognition

At the commencement of a lease Cafcass recognises a right of use asset and a lease liability. The assets, to be described as "right of use" assets, will be presented under Note 7.2 Right of use assets.

The lease liability is measured at the value of the remaining lease payments, discounted either by the interest rate implicit in the lease, or where this is not readily determinable, the incremental rate of borrowing advised by HM Treasury. This rate is advised annually by HM Treasury (0.95% for leases recognised in 2022, 3.51% for those in 2023). Where the lease includes extension or termination options, the lease payments will be for the non-cancellable period together with any extension options that are reasonably certain to exercise, and any termination options that is reasonably certain not to exercise. The measurement of lease payments excludes any VAT payable, and irrecoverable VAT is expensed at the point it falls due in line with IFRIC 21 Levies.

The right of use asset will initially be measured at the value of the lease liability, adjusted for: any lease payments made before the commencement date; any lease incentives received; any incremental costs of obtaining the lease; and any costs of removing the asset and restoring the site at the end of the lease.

In the event that a lease has expired but Cafcass remains in occupation with no renewed term pending, such contracts will not be measured or recognised as right of use assets or for purposes of lease liability.

Peppercorn leases (leases with nil or nominal consideration) are measured at their existing use value, with the difference between the carrying amount of the right of use asset and lease liability treated as notional income.

Cafcass as lessee: Subsequent measurement

The lease liability will be adjusted for the accrual of interest, repayments, reassessments, and modifications. Reassessments are reappraisals of the probability of the options given by the existing lease contract, for example where we no longer expect to exercise an extension option; modifications are changes to the lease contract. Reassessments and modifications are accounted for by discounting the revised cash flows: using a revised discount rate where Cafcass becomes or ceases to be reasonably certain to exercise or not exercise an extension or termination option, or the lease is modified to amend the non-cancellable period, change the term of the lease, change the consideration or the scope; or at the existing discount rate where there is a movement in an index or rate that will alter the cash flows, or the amount payable under a residual value guarantee changes.

After initial recognition, the right of use asset will be measured using the fair value model. Cafcass considers that the cost model (measurement by reference to the lease liability) is a reasonable proxy for fair value, in the case of non-property leases, and for property leases of less than five years or with regular rent reviews. For other leases, the asset will be carried at a revalued amount.

The value of the asset will be adjusted for subsequent depreciation and impairment, and for reassessments and modifications of the lease liability. Where the amount of a reduction to the asset exceeds the carrying value of the asset, the excess amount is recognised in expenditure.

Expenditure for each financial year includes interest on the lease liability and a straight-line depreciation charge on the right of use asset over the life of the lease, together with any impairment of the right of use asset and any change in variable lease payments, that was not included in the measurement of the lease payments during the period in which the triggering event occurred. Rental payments in respect of leases of low value items, or with a term under 12 months, are also expensed.

Estimates and judgements

Where a lease is embedded in a contract for services, the amount to be recognised as the right of use asset and lease liability should be the stand-alone price of the lease component only. Where this is not readily observable, a determination will be made by reference for other observable data, such as the fair value of similar assets or price of contracts for similar non-lease components.

Cafcass has determined the lease term by assessing the level of certainty as to whether termination or extension options will be exercised. In making these judgements, reliance has been placed on the professional judgement of estates staff, supported by other business strategies, ongoing business needs and market conditions.

Cafcass has determined that the cost model is a reasonable proxy for fair value in most cases because the rents payable is aligned to open market rates. In the case of longer leases where there are not regular rent reviews, there is a greater chance of divergence between cost and fair value, hence a professional revaluation is appropriate.

Cafcass leases various non-property assets such as vehicles and IT equipment. It has determined that, at the present time, all non-property leases which are not individually low value, are immaterial. Consequently, no non-property leases have been recognised in these Accounts.

Rolling leases judgement

If a lease has expired but Cafcass remains in occupation with no renewal term pending, Cafcass has considered the broader economic situation for each contract to determine whether there is an enforceable period. No such contracts have been recognised in the Financial Statements.

e) Intangible fixed assets

Intangible assets consist of software and website and intranet costs. These have been stated at their value to the business using appropriate indices published by the ONS.

Revaluations above the amortised historic cost of these assets are credited to a revaluation reserve. Any downward revaluation of intangible assets below the asset's amortised historic cost is recognised when it occurs through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Intangible assets include those assets costing £2,500 or more. Assets valued at less than the threshold are capitalised if they constitute integral parts of a composite asset that is in total valued at more than the threshold.

Intangible assets are periodically reviewed to ensure that they have been accurately stated at their value to the business.

f) Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation is provided to write-off property, plant and equipment and right of use assets, and amortisation to write-off intangible assets, on a straight-line basis over their expected useful lives, or for leased assets and right of use assets, over the life of the lease.

Expected useful lives are as follows:

Leasehold improvements	Lease term
Information technology	Five years
Telecoms	Five years
Office equipment	Seven years
Right of use assets	Lease term

g) Pensions

Employees of Cafcass are members of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) which is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It is a funded defined benefit pension scheme.

Contributions are charged on a year-by-year basis in accordance with the requirements of the scheme administrators.

The assets of the WYPF are held separately from those of Cafcass.

The scheme assets are measured at fair value. Scheme liabilities are measured using a projected unit method and discounted at the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liability. The net pension liability is the present value of the defined benefit liabilities less the fair value of the assets. All estimates are performed by Aon Hewitt Ltd, the independent actuary for WYPF and in accordance with International Accounting Standard 19 – Employee Benefits (IAS 19).

The pension scheme surplus (to the extent that it is considered recoverable) or deficit is recognised in full on the face of the Statement of Financial Position. The movement in the scheme surplus / deficit is split between operating charges (within staff costs) and reserves in the case of actuarial gains and losses.

Net interest receivable on pension scheme assets is shown in operating cash flows.

One person from Cafcass staff retains membership of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) due to their earlier employment with one of Cafcass' predecessor organisations. The scheme is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with contributions charged on a year-by-year basis in accordance with the requirements of the scheme administrators.

h) Funding

Grant-in-Aid, used to finance activities and expenditure that supports the statutory and other objectives of Cafcass, is treated as financing and credited to the general reserve, because it is regarded as contributions from a controlling party.

Other grant funding (Contact Services funding) is used to provide grants to Child Contact Centres and is also treated as financing and credited to the general reserve.

i) Income from activities

Income from activities is generated from training, student placements and one-off receipts in the year. Income is recognised on the issuing of an invoice. All income is stated net of VAT.

j) Insurance

Except for comprehensive insurance on contract lease and hire vehicles, Cafcass does not insure but carries its own risks for fire, accidental damage and similar accidents and claims at common law.

k) Accounting for Value Added Tax

Cafcass is registered for VAT. It is unable to recover most of the VAT incurred on expenditure, although a small amount of VAT can be recovered where it is related to the costs recovered in court cases. Expenditure is therefore stated inclusive of any irrecoverable VAT.

l) Financial instruments

Cafcass does not hold any complex financial instruments. The only financial instruments included in the Accounts are receivables, cash, and payables (notes 11, 12 and 13).

Financial assets comprise trade receivable and other receivables. Receivables are recognised at carrying value, reduced by appropriate allowances for estimated irrecoverable amounts.

Trade creditors are short term and are stated at carrying value in recognition that these liabilities fall due within one year.

m) Provisions

A provision is recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when Cafcass has a present legal or constructive obligation arising from past events, and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation.

2 Change of accounting policy

New standards, amendments and interpretations issued but not effective for the financial year beginning 1 April 2022 and not early adopted.

There were no significant changes to the accounting policies, as described in Cafcass' 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts.

3 Analysis of net expenditure and non-current assets by segment

	Operational service areas	Other	Total
	£000	£000	£000
2022-23			
Gross expenditure	101,699	68,699	170,398
Income	0	(130)	(130)
Net expenditure	101,699	68,569	170,268
Non-current assets	1,258	10,878	12,136
2021-22			
Gross expenditure	97,951	68,860	166,811
Income	0	(102)	(102)
Net expenditure	97,951	68,758	166,709
Non-current assets	0	5,421	5,421

'Operational service areas' and 'Other' reflect the structure of the standard monthly management information provided to Cafcass' chief operating decision makers.

4 Staff costs

	Note	Cafcass board members £000	Corporate national office staff £000	Regional staff £000	Total £000
2022-23					
Salaries and wages		130	9,623	78,382	88,135
Apprentice levy		0	47	382	429
Social security costs		6	1,010	8,779	9,795
Current service cost	22	0	3,946	31,800	35,746
Other pension costs		0	(30)	(42)	(72)
Past pension service cost	22	0	0	13	13
Total payroll costs		136	14,596	119,314	134,046
Temporary staff costs		0	134	342	476
Outward secondments		0	0	(47)	(47)
Total staff costs		136	14,730	119,609	134,475
2021-22					
Salaries and wages		114	8,716	73,993	82,823
Apprentice levy		0	42	357	399
Social security costs		5	873	7,882	8,760
Current service cost	22	0	3,914	33,373	37,287
Other pension costs		0	4	(88)	(84)
Total payroll costs		119	13,549	115,517	129,185
Temporary staff costs		0	46	632	678
Outward secondments		0	0	(19)	(19)
Total staff costs		119	13,595	116,130	129,844

Please also reference the 'Remuneration and staff report'.

5 Other expenditure

		2022-23	2021-22
	Note	£000	£000
Outsourced finance and ITC services		7,299	7,608
Accommodation costs		4,106	4,031
Travel and subsistence		2,219	1,365
Office supplies, printing and stationery		932	871
Telecommunications and postage		805	588
Staff related costs		592	531
Interpreters and translators		508	443
Fuel and utilities		402	266
Training costs		379	174
Recruitment costs		359	243
Legal costs		313	456
External audit costs		86	83
Vehicle costs		85	66
Internal audit costs		63	63
Other		892	1,013
Total cash		19,040	17,801
Provisions created in year	14	1,020	986
Provisions no longer required	14	(760)	(1,241)
Movement in right of use assets due to provisions	7.2	36	(393)
Loss on disposal of assets		0	90
Impairments	10	0	5
Total non-cash		296	(553)
		19,336	17,248

6 Income

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Training	130	102
	130	102

7 Property, plant and equipment

	Leasehold improvements	Assets under construction	Information technology and telecoms	Office equipment	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2022-23					
Cost or valuation					
Balance at 1 April 2022	328	0	1,887	22	2,237
Additions	208	1,050	0	0	1,258
Disposals	(140)	0	(911)	0	(1,051)
Revaluations	0	0	14	0	14
Impairments	0	0	0	0	0
Balance at 31 March 2023	396	1,050	990	22	2,458
Depreciation					
Balance at 1 April 2022	328	0	1,584	22	1,934
Charged in year	0	0	90	0	90
Disposals	(140)	0	(911)	0	(1,051)
Balance at 31 March 2023	188	0	763	22	973
NBV at 31 March 2023	208	1,050	227	0	1,485
NBV at 31 March 2022	0	0	303	0	303
Asset financing					
Owned	208	1,050	227	0	1,485
NBV at 31 March 2023	208	1,050	227	0	1,485

2021-22					
Cost or valuation					
Balance at 1 April 2021	328	0	2,488	22	2,838
Additions	0	0	0	0	0
Disposals	0	0	(594)	0	(594)
Revaluations	0	0	0	0	0
Impairments	0	0	(7)	0	(7)
Balance at 31 March 2022	328	0	1,887	22	2,237
Depreciation					
Balance at 1 April 2021	328	0	1,833	22	2,183
Charged in year	0	0	210	0	210
Disposals	0	0	(459)	0	(459)
Balance at 31 March 2022	328	0	1,584	22	1,934
NBV at 31 March 2022	0	0	303	0	303
NBV at 31 March 2021	0	0	655	0	655
Asset financing					
Owned	0	0	303	0	303
NBV at 31 March 2022	0	0	303	0	303

7.2 Right of use assets

	Building leases	Total
	£000	£000
2022-23		
Cost or valuation		
Balance at 1 April 2022	6,991	6,991
Additions	7,169	7,169
Movement due to provisions	(36)	(36)
Remeasurements	136	136
Balance at 31 March 2023	14,260	14,260
Depreciation		
Balance at 1 April 2022	1,910	1,910
Charged in year	1,822	1,822
Balance at 31 March 2023	3,732	3,732
NBV at 31 March 2023	10,528	10,528
NBV at 31 March 2022	5,081	5,081
2021-22		
Cost or valuation		
Balance at 1 April 2021	0	0
First-time adoption of IFRS 16	5,940	5,940
Additions	658	658
Movement due to provisions	393	393
Balance at 31 March 2022	6,991	6,991
Depreciation		
Balance at 1 April 2021	0	0
Charged in year	1,910	1,910
Balance at 31 March 2022	1,910	1,910
NBV at 31 March 2022	5,081	5,081
NBV at 31 March 2021	0	0

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Depreciation	1,822	1,910
Interest on lease liabilities	74	44
Low value and short-term leases	63	0
Amounts recognised in the SoCNE	1,959	1,954

Amounts recognised in the Statement of Cash Flows

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Legal expenses and lease incentives	22	(12)
Interest on lease liabilities	74	44
Repayment of principal on leases	(1,290)	(1,694)
Adjustments for IAS 17 accruals and prepayments	0	(107)
Amounts recognised in the SoCF	(1,194)	(1,769)

8 Intangible assets

	Information technology	Websites that deliver services	Assets under construction	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
2022-23				
Cost or valuation				
Balance at 1 April 2022	2,143	89	0	2,232
Additions	0	0	101	101
Revaluations	3	0	0	3
Impairments	0	0	0	0
Balance at 31 March 2023	2,146	89	101	2,336
Amortisation				
Balance at 1 April 2022	2,106	89	0	2,195
Charged in year	18	0	0	18
Balance at 31 March 2023	2,124	89	0	2,213
NBV at 31 March 2023	22	0	101	123
NBV at 31 March 2022	37	0	0	37

2021-22				
Cost or valuation				
Balance at 1 April 2021	2,144	89	0	2,233
Revaluations	0	0	0	0
Impairments	(1)	0	0	(1)
Balance at 31 March 2022	2,143	89	0	2,232
Amortisation				
Balance at 1 April 2021	2,087	89	0	2,176
Charged in year	19	0	0	19
Balance at 31 March 2022	2,106	89	0	2,195
NBV at 31 March 2022	37	0	0	37
NBV at 31 March 2021	57	0	0	57

9. Financial instruments

As the cash requirements of Cafcass are met through the Estimates process, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body.

Most of Cafcass' financial instruments are consistent with the expected purchase and usage requirements of a non-departmental public body and relate to contracts to buy non-financial items. As such, Cafcass is exposed to minimal credit, liquidity, and market risks.

10. Impairments

	Net cost charged to SoCNE	Release of revaluation reserve to SoCNE	Net impact in SoCNE
	£000	£000	£000
2022-23			
Land and buildings	0	0	0
Information technology and telecoms	0	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0	0
	0	0	0
2021-22			
Land and buildings	0	0	0
Information technology and telecoms	7	(2)	5
Intangible assets	1	(1)	0
	8	(3)	5

11. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Other receivables	1,724	2,799
Provision for bad debts	(1)	(5)
Prepayments	1,797	1,498
Travel advances	1	1
	3,521	4,293

12. Cash and cash equivalents

	Cash	Bank	Total
	£000	£000	£000
2022-23			
Balance at 1 April 2022	4	682	686
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balance	0	1,209	1,209
Balance at 31 March 2023	4	1,891	1,895
The following balances were held at:			
Government Banking Service and cash in hand	4	1,891	1,895
Balance at 31 March 2023	4	1,891	1,895
2021-22			
Balance at 1 April 2021	4	598	602
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balance	0	84	84
Balance at 31 March 2022	4	682	686
The following balances were held at:			
Government Banking Service and cash in hand	4	682	686
Balance at 31 March 2022	4	682	686

13. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Taxation and social security	1	0
Trade payables	903	536
Other payables	24	19
Accruals and deferred income	3,537	3,281
	4,465	3,836

Accruals and deferred income comprise £3.519m accruals plus £0.018m deferred income (2021-22: £3.245m plus £0.036m).

14. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	Employment claims	Annual leave amount	Dilapidations	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
2022-23				
Balance at 1 April 2022	154	466	1,883	2,503
Provided in the year	171	651	198	1,020
Not required written back	(154)	(466)	(140)	(760)
Utilised in the year	0	0	(59)	(59)
Balance at 31 March 2023	171	651	1,882	2,704

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows				
Not later than one year	171	0	1,538	1,709
Later than one year and not later than five years	0	651	298	949
Later than five years	0	0	46	46
	171	651	1,882	2,704

2021-22				
Balance at 1 April 2021	288	961	1,509	2,758
Provided in the year	56	466	464	986
Not required written back	(190)	(961)	(90)	(1,241)
Utilised in the year	0	0	0	0
Balance at 31 March 2022	154	466	1,883	2,503

Analysis of expected timing of discounted flows				
Not later than one year	154	0	1,865	2,019
Later than one year and not later than five years	0	466	14	480
Later than five years	0	0	4	4
	154	466	1,883	2,503

IAS 37 requires the recognition of a provision (a liability that is of uncertain timing or amount) when it exists at the Statement of Financial Position date. It must therefore fulfil the criteria of being a present obligation arising from a previous event, where it is probable there will be a transfer of economic benefits to settle the obligation and where a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. Cafcass makes provisions for legal or constructive obligations (liabilities), which are of uncertain timing or amount at the Statement of Financial Position date, based on the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation.

Employment claims

Employment claims relate to employment tribunal cases that are likely to be brought against Cafcass, which may or may not result in court attendance.

Annual leave amount

The annual leave amount is the monetised value of holiday entitlement approved by management for carry over to the new financial year. It is the liability that Cafcass would have to settle, should it cease to exist as a going concern and accumulated staff leave be crystallised into actual payments.

Dilapidations

Cafcass operates from a number of leasehold properties which include provision for the payment of dilapidations on exit from the premises.

Cafcass considers it appropriate to recognise these liabilities through the creation of a provision whilst premises are in active use, and to accrue for these liabilities once settlement has been agreed.

Provisions have been maintained for these using actual information and industry information on the most likely costs for dilapidations per square metre.

15. Capital commitments

There were no material contracted capital commitments as at 31 March 2023 (2021-22: £nil).

16. Commitments under leases

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Finance lease commitments		
Obligations under finance leases comprise:		
Buildings		
Not later than one year	1,744	1,368
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,510	2,088
Later than five years	6,233	1,518
	11,487	4,974
Less interest element	(581)	(145)
	10,906	4,829

Maturity analysis: Present value of obligations under finance leases comprise:

Buildings		
Not later than one year	1,648	1,331
Later than one year and not later than five years	3,200	2,004
Later than five years	6,058	1,494
	10,906	4,829

17. Other financial commitments

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Not later than one year	2,011	2,613
Later than one year and not later than five years	4,138	378
Later than five years	0	0
	6,149	2,991

Cafcass signed a three-year contract with Littlefish, commencing May 2018, to provide an integrated information and communication technology service across the organisation. The contract's extension option was exercised in 2020-21 and the contract extended for a further two years until May 2023. Subsequently, Cafcass signed a new contract with Littlefish in May 2023, extending the period of service for a further three years.

18. Related party transactions

Cafcass is an executive non-departmental public body that is sponsored by the Department. The Department as such is regarded as a related party. During 2022-23, Cafcass had various material transactions with the Department, including the receipt of £145.358m grant and additional funding from the Department (2021-22: £140.826m).

Transactions with the Department not related to Grant-in-Aid or other funding are considered not to be material. Cafcass does have occasional small transactions with other Central Government bodies and Local Authorities that are considered not to be material.

All payments made to senior managerial staff are disclosed in the Remuneration Report. A register of interest is held for all Board Members and there were no material related party transactions with Board Members or the Corporate Management Team during the year other than those associated with remuneration for normal duties.

19. Events after Statement of Financial Position date

In accordance with the requirements of IAS 10 'Events After the Reporting Period', post Statement of Financial Position events are considered up to the date on which the Accounts are authorised for issue. This is interpreted as the same date as the date of the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

20. Self-Employed Contractors

In 2022-23 we contracted the services of 135 Self-Employed Contractors (2021-22: 138), to whom payments made amounted to £3.274m in the year (2021-22: £2.650m).

As Self-Employed Contractors, they are ordinarily responsible for meeting travel, office and all other expenses related to their work, as well as related tax and national insurance liabilities.

Further to this, agency staff costs amounted to £3.335m in the year (2021-22: £6.498m).

21. Partnership costs

Partnership costs of £1.820m (2021-22: £1.901m) represent the cost of services provided by Cafcass through third party organisations such as contact centres and mediation centres. This expenditure is funded by the Department separately to Grant-in-Aid and in compliance with FReM is credited to the general reserve as other grant funding. In 2022-23 Cafcass received other grant funding of £1.823m from the Department (2021-22: £1.540m).

Cafcass also engages third party organisations for court ordered contact activities.

Expenditure on these activities is shown net of reimbursement claimed back and received from the Department.

22. Pension liabilities

Under the requirements of IAS 19, WYPF's actuary, Aon Hewitt Limited, carried out an accounting valuation for Cafcass as at 31 March 2022, based on a roll forward from the last actuarial funding valuation in 2019. The accounting valuation aims to measure the assets and liabilities of the pension scheme on a best estimate basis in terms of the calculation approach and data used at the end of the accounting period, whilst the actuarial funding valuation carried out every three years determines the scheme's funding position and the cash contribution by employers in future years.

The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of Cafcass and are invested in funds managed externally to Cafcass.

Cafcass accounts for scheme liabilities in accordance with IAS 19 – Employee benefits. The in-year current service cost has been reflected in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Cafcass considers and follows the recommendations from the actuary for significant estimates and assumptions, including future increases in pay levels.

In addition to the disclosures contained in the Financial Statements, the following disclosures are also in accordance with IAS 19.

Introduction

The disclosures below relate to the funded liabilities within the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (the "Fund") which is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (the "LGPS").

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit plan with benefits earned up to 31 March 2014 being linked to final salary. Benefits after 31 March 2014 are based on a Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme. Details of the benefits earned over the period covered by this disclosure are set out in 'The LGPS Regulations 2013' (as amended) and 'The LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014' (as amended).

Funding / governance arrangements of the LGPS

The funded nature of the LGPS requires participating employers and their employees to pay contributions into the Fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension liabilities with investment assets. Information on the framework for calculating contributions to be paid is set out in 'The LGPS Regulations 2013' and the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement.

The employer contribution rate for 2022-23 was 19.4% (plus an additional lump sum payment of £0.190 million). The last actuarial valuation was at 31 March 2022 and the contributions to be paid until 31 March 2026 resulting from that valuation are set out in the Fund's Rates and Adjustment Certificate. Employer contributions over this period will be: 2023-24: 19.1%, 2024-25: 18.6% and 2025-26: 18.1%.

Note: An entitlement of staff to membership of the West Yorkshire Pension Scheme forms part of the constitution of Cafcass. The scheme is a defined benefit scheme and forms a significant financial staff benefit within the Cafcass reward strategy. Decisions on the collection of employer contributions are taken to provide predictability and stability to future budget requirements. The overall performance of the scheme is reported and reviewed annually by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, informed by the work and findings of

both the Government Actuary's Department and the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board. Cafcass continues to engage with the scheme administrators to seek assurance on their management of risk.

The Fund Administering Authority, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, is responsible for the governance of the Fund.

Assets

The assets allocated to the Employer in the Fund are notional and are assumed to be invested in line with the investments of the Fund for the purposes of calculating the return over the accounting period. The Fund holds a significant proportion of its assets in liquid investments. As a consequence there will be no significant restriction on realising assets if a large payment is required to be paid from the Fund in relation to an employer's liabilities. The assets are invested in a diversified spread of investments and the approximate split of assets for the Fund as a whole (based on data supplied by the Fund Administering Authority) is shown in the disclosures.

Note: The valuation methodology for unquoted investments is fully disclosed in the Fund's published Annual Report and Accounts.

The Fund Administering Authority may invest a small proportion of the Fund's investments in the assets of some of the employers participating in the Fund if it forms part of their balanced investment strategy.

Note: The Investment Strategy Statement is available via the wypf.org.uk website.

Risks associated with the Fund in relation to accounting

Asset volatility

The liabilities used for accounting purposes are calculated using a discount rate set with reference to corporate bond yields at the accounting date. If assets underperform this yield this will create a deficit in the Accounts. The Fund holds a significant proportion of growth assets which, while expected to outperform corporate bonds in the long term, creates volatility and risk in the short term in relation to the accounting figures.

Changes in bond yield

A decrease in corporate bond yields will increase the value placed on the liabilities for accounting purposes although this will be marginally offset by the increase in the assets as a result (to the extent the Fund invests in corporate bonds).

Inflation risk

The majority of the pension liabilities are linked to either pay or price inflation. Higher inflation expectations will lead to a higher liability value. The assets are not perfectly correlated with inflation meaning that an increase in inflation will increase the deficit.

Life expectancy

The majority of the Fund's obligations are to provide benefits for the life of the member following retirement, so increases in life expectancy will result in an increase in the liabilities.

Exiting employers

Employers which leave the Fund (or their guarantor) may have to make an exit payment to meet any shortfall in assets against their pension liabilities. If the Employer (or guarantor) is not able to meet this exit payment the liability may in certain circumstances fall on other employers in the Fund. Further the assets at exit in respect of 'orphan liabilities' may, in retrospect, not be sufficient to meet the liabilities. This risk may fall on other employers. 'Orphan liabilities' are currently a small proportion of the overall liabilities in the Fund.

Changes in accounting estimates

The Assumptions Advice sets out any changes made to the methodology for setting assumptions. Auditors may ask for the rationale for these changes to be disclosed. Further information on the change in method and the broad impact of those changes is included within the Assumptions Advice.

Note: In 2022-23 the actuary adopted a change in their approach for recognising the impact of actual inflation being higher (or lower) than previously assumed. This is also a change in their accounting policy that recognises a more recent inflation experience at the accounting date. The new approach is to allow for inflation up to the month ending prior to the accounting date (28 February 2023) to reflect the published CPI index at the accounting date. The previous accounting policy was to recognise the impact of next April (30 April 2023) Pension Increase. However, Pension Increase lags actual inflation because it is calculated by reference to the change in the CPI index ending the previous September (30 September 2022).

More specifically, the defined benefit obligation has been adjusted to allow for actual CPI inflation being higher than assumed, including the impact of the expected April 2023 Pension Increase of 10.1% and the impact of the actual higher-than-expected inflation arising between 30 September 2022 and 28 February 2023. The higher CPI inflation than assumed results in higher increases to pensions in payment, revaluation of deferred pensions and increases to active pension accounts. The impact is recognised as a part of the "Actuarial loss due to liability experience" affecting the defined benefit obligation (pension liability).

The change has been made due to the high inflationary environment and feedback from auditors that they expect liabilities to allow for high inflation incurred before the accounting date but not yet applied to benefits. These changes are applied across the actuary's portfolio of LGPS clients.

Duration of liabilities

The duration of liabilities is the average period between the calculation date and the date at which benefit payments fall due. The calculated duration, based on the output of the most recent valuation exercise at 31 March 2022, is 16.6 years.

Impact of McCloud / Sargeant judgement

Note: The December 2018 McCloud / Sargeant judgement found that transitional protection arrangements put in place during the reform of firefighters and judges pension schemes was discriminatory on grounds of age. The Government launched a consultation on proposed amendments to underpin in July 2020, and a response to the consultation was published in February 2021. The impact of the McCloud / Sargeant judgement was first accounted for in the 2019-20 Accounts under IAS 19, covering an allowance for the service since the scheme's reforms within the past service liabilities in the SoFP and an "underpin" liability within the current service cost. As the period of protection applies from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2022, the McCloud / Sargeant liability has been updated as part of the 2022 valuation within the past service liabilities and no allowance is made within the current service cost over this accounting period. The method for valuing the McCloud remedy is closely aligned with the method proposed by the Government in its consultation and consistent with the method adopted in the previous year.

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Position are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Present value of funded obligations	(701,512)	(917,308)
Fair value of plan assets	689,429	681,041
Net liability	(12,083)	(236,267)

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Current service cost	35,746	37,287
Past service cost	13	0
Service cost	35,759	37,287
Interest on obligation	24,551	19,382
Interest income on plan assets	(18,397)	(12,895)
Net interest cost	6,154	6,487
Expense recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	41,913	43,774

Changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligation are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Opening defined benefit obligation	917,308	930,080
Current service cost	35,746	37,287
Interest on obligation	24,551	19,382
Member contributions	5,956	5,607
Past service cost	13	0
Actuarial gain due to changes in financial assumptions	(342,679)	(48,785)
Actuarial loss / (gain) due to changes in demographic assumptions	4,441	(9,263)
Actuarial loss due to liability experience	78,627	3,247
Benefits / transfers paid	(22,451)	(20,247)
Closing defined benefit obligation	701,512	917,308

Changes in the fair value of plan assets are as follows:

	2023	2022
	£000	£000
Opening fair value of plan assets	681,041	613,113
Interest income on plan assets	18,397	12,895
Re-measurement (loss) / gain on assets	(10,289)	53,467
Contributions by employer	16,775	16,206
Member contributions	5,956	5,607
Benefits / transfers paid	(22,451)	(20,247)
	689,429	681,041

Asset allocation:

	Quoted value at 31 March 2023	Unquoted value at 31 March 2023	Total at 31 March 2023	Total at 31 March 2022
Equities	66.1%	14.7%	80.8%	79.8%
Property	1.1%	2.2%	3.3%	4.0%
Government bonds	6.9%	0.0%	6.9%	7.4%
Corporate bonds	4.6%	0.0%	4.6%	4.8%
Cash	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	2.9%
Other	0.0%	2.1%	2.1%	1.1%
	78.7%	21.3%	100.0%	100.0%

Actual return on assets:

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Interest income on plan assets	18,397	12,895
Re-measurement (loss) / gain on assets	(10,289)	53,711
	8,108	66,606

The major financial assumptions used in the valuation were:

	2022-23	2021-22
Pension accounts revaluation rate	2.70%	3.00%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.95%	4.25%
Rate of increase in pensions	2.70%	3.00%
Nominal discount rate	4.70%	2.70%

Estimated pension expense in future periods

Analysis of amount charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on the provision of services next year:

	Year ending 31 March 2024	Year ending 31 March 2023
	£000	£000
Current service cost	16,936	34,776
Interest on net defined benefit liability	172	6,159
Total estimated pension expense	17,108	40,935
Allowance for administration expense included in current service cost	357	251
Estimated pensionable payroll over the period	89,244	83,700

Reconciliation of re-measurement of pension benefits in the Statement of Financial Position

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Pension liabilities as at 31 March current year	12,083	236,267
Less: Pension liabilities as at 31 March prior year	(236,267)	(316,967)
Less: Expense recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	(41,913)	(43,774)
Plus: Contributions by employer	16,775	16,206
Gain on re-measurement of pension benefits	(249,322)	(108,268)

Reconciliation of in-year additional pension cost in the Statement of Cash Flows

	2022-23	2021-22
	£000	£000
Expense recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	41,913	43,774
Less: Contributions by employer	(16,775)	(16,206)
In-year additional pension cost	25,138	27,568

Sensitivity analysis

The approximate impact of changing the key assumptions on the present value of the funded defined benefit obligation as at 31 March 2023 and the projected service cost for the period ending 31 March 2024 is set out below.

Discount rate assumption:

Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
	£000	£000	£000
Present value of total obligation	690,288	701,512	713,438
% change in present value of total obligation	(1.6%)		1.7%
Projected service cost	16,225	16,936	17,664
Approximate % change in projected service cost	(4.2%)		4.3%

Rate of general increase in salaries:

Adjustment to salary increase rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
	£000	£000	£000
Present value of total obligation	702,214	701,512	700,810
% change in present value of total obligation	0.1%		(0.1%)
Projected service cost	16,936	16,936	16,936
Approximate % change in projected service cost	0.0%		0.0%

Rate of increase to pensions and rate of revaluation of pension accounts:

Adjustment to pension increase rate	+0.1% p.a.	Base figure	-0.1% p.a.
	£000	£000	£000
Present value of total obligation	712,035	701,512	690,989
% change in present value of total obligation	1.5%		(1.5%)
Projected service cost	17,664	16,936	16,225
Approximate % change in projected service cost	4.3%		(4.2%)

Post retirement mortality assumption:

* Adjustment to mortality age rating assumption	-1 year	Base figure	+1 year
	£000	£000	£000
Present value of total obligation	719,751	701,512	683,273
% change in present value of total obligation	2.6%		(2.6%)
Projected service cost	17,546	16,936	16,326
Approximate % change in projected service cost	3.6%		(3.6%)

*A rating of +1 year means that members are assumed to follow the mortality pattern of the base table for an individual that is 1 year older than them.

Mortality assumption:

The mortality assumptions are based on actual mortality experience of members with the Fund based on analysis carried out as part of the 2022 Actuarial Valuation, and allow for expected future mortality improvements. Sample life expectancies at age 65 in normal health resulting from these mortality assumptions are shown below.

	31 March 2023	31 March 2022
Males		
Pensioner member aged 65 at accounting date	21.6	21.8
Active member aged 45 at accounting date	22.9	22.5
Females		
Pensioner member aged 65 at accounting date	24.6	24.6
Active member aged 45 at accounting date	25.7	25.7

23. Contingent liabilities

Cost Management Process in Local Government Pension Schemes

HM Treasury (HMT) and the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) are legally required to undertake periodic reviews of the cost of Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS), to ensure that such schemes remain sustainable and affordable. These reviews are referred to as the 'Cost Management Process'.

The outcomes of both reviews relating to the 2016 Valuations recommended no changes to the provisions of the Scheme. However, the Government reviews to include McCloud costs as a member cost within the HMT process are being challenged by a Judicial Review bought by the trade unions. If the Judicial Review is successful, this could result in changes in benefits or member contributions backdated to 1 April 2019.

As at 31 March 2023, the outcome of the Cost Management Process reviews remain unknown, and it is therefore not possible to determine whether they will impact on the LGPS, nor to determine the materiality or costs of their impact on the LGPS. As such, an allowance cannot be made in the Accounts for any potential costs of improving members' benefits incurred under the Cost Management Process.

24. Contingent assets

There were no qualifying contingent assets as at 31 March 2023 (2021-22: £nil).

Appendix

Glossary

Cafcass and the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) have together created a glossary of the more commonly used terms and words in family proceedings. We thank the FJYPB and other colleagues for co-ordinating this, enabling readers to understand the terminology used in our annual report.

For more information about the FJYPB's word busting project please visit the Cafcass website*

*Word Busting - Cafcass - [Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service](#)

Adjournment – A decision made by the family court to hold the court hearing at another time because things are not ready or people need more time to do something.

Adoption order – A type of order made by the family court which transfers parental responsibility to new, adoptive parents and means that a child or young person is no longer legally the child of their birth parents. It allows them to start a new family.

Agency staff/workers – Social workers who do not normally work for Cafcass but will sometimes do work for Cafcass during busy periods.

Area Quality Review (AQR) – A way of measuring how well an area is working. People involved include the assistant director/heads of service in that area. The AQR findings help form the action and development plans for that area.

Application – This is how a person asks the family court to help them.

Barrister – A legally trained person who advises people going through the family court and speaks for them in court hearings.

Bank workers – Social workers who do not normally work for Cafcass but will sometimes do work for Cafcass during busy periods. These workers do not come through an agency.

C100 form – This is the form used to apply to the courts for a contact or child arrangements order.

Cafcass worker – Depending on what the family court has ordered Cafcass to do, the Cafcass worker (sometimes known as a practitioner or officer) can be known as a family court adviser or a children's guardian (for more detail, look for their descriptions).

Care order – An order made by the family court when the local authority can prove that a child or young person living in their area is not being looked after properly.

Child record audits – Internal audits which are completed by Cafcass managers to ensure consistency and best practice.

Case management conference – This is a hearing where the major issues for a child or young person are talked about and the judge sets out how the family court case is going to proceed.

Child Contact Intervention (CCI) – CCIs are short-term interventions of supervised contact. They are designed to help adults and children establish safe and beneficial contact when this is difficult to do on their own.

Child contact centre – This is a safe place where children and young people can see a parent who they do not live with. Usually, this allows for direct contact, supervised contact or supported contact.

Child arrangements order – When people cannot agree on where a child might live or who they should see, the family court might be asked to decide. The judge will look at what is best for the child or young person and make a decision setting out what people must do.

ChildFirst – Cafcass' electronic case management system which stores Cafcass' case-related information including feedback and complaints.

Children's guardian – Sometimes when the problems within a family are really difficult then the family court will ask for a children's guardian to help them. The children's guardian is an independent person who is there to keep the court focused on what is best for the child or young person. They will also appoint a solicitor to act for the young person in court.

Consent order – Made by the court where all parties in the case have agreed to what it says.

Direct contact – When a child or young person spends time with someone that they do not live with.

Early Intervention Teams (EIT) – EIT operate in service areas, with Cafcass workers carrying out safeguarding checks to inform the safeguarding letter we provide at the first hearing.

Family assistance order – An order which the family court can make to provide short term (usually six months) support to a family who agree to it. This can be from a Cafcass worker or a social worker from the local authority.

Family court – This is where important decisions are made about children, young people and their families. It is different to criminal courts where people go when they might have done something wrong. Decisions in the family court are made by judges or magistrates when people cannot agree about what is best for a child or young person.

Family Court Adviser (FCA) – Sometimes the family court may ask an FCA to meet with a child or young people to talk about their wishes and feelings and to make sure the family court hears what they have to say. The FCA also gives their view to the court about what

is best for the child. FCAs do not need to meet all children and young people because sometimes families can agree themselves on what is best.

Family group conference – All of the important people in a child’s life get together to check that they are safe. It means that everyone knows what is happening and keeps them safe.

Final order – This is the last order made by the family court. The court expects all the people named in the order to keep to it and do as it says and can punish adults if they do not.

Foster carer – People who give a home to children and young people who need a safe place to live. They may have children of their own, or other foster children living with them, in which case you would all live in the same house together.

Guardian’s report – The family court will ask the children’s guardian to write a report to help it make decisions about a child or young person. The report will include information on their wishes and feelings and a recommendation from the children’s guardian on what they think is best for the child. The report will also include information from the other people involved such as the parents and any other individuals such as experts.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) – IROs help to make sure the best decisions are made for children looked after by the local authority. Their main focus is to make sure that the care planning process for each child or young person is meeting their needs, and to ensure that their current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

Indirect contact – A child or young person can use forms of contact such as letters, cards or gifts to communicate with a parent where the court considers it is safe and beneficial for them to do so.

Interim care order – This means that the local authority makes decisions about a child rather than their own parents for the short term, before the family court makes a final order. The child will get a social worker to make the decisions day to day.

Issues Resolution Hearing (IRH) – This is a special hearing where the family court decides which issues need to be sorted out and hears arguments about which is a true version of events.

Judge – Sometimes families have problems which they might find too hard to sort out by themselves. A judge works in a family court, listens to everybody and then decides what is best for the child or young person involved in the case. They have the final say and will make the decision about that child or young person’s life.

Level 1 check – A police criminal record check which is completed by Cafcass’ Police National Computer (PNC) team.

Legal Adviser – A legally qualified person who helps magistrates in the family court apply the law. They do not play any part in the decision-making process but are there to advise.

Litigants in person – A party in a case who is self-representing i.e. they do not have legal representation/lawyer.

Local authority (also known as children’s social care or social services) – This organisation is responsible for making sure all children and young people in their local area are kept safe by the people who care for them.

Magistrate – This person is a member of the community who volunteers to make decisions that affect families, children and young people. They are similar to a judge but are not legally qualified. They are advised on the law by their legal adviser.

Mediation – When people cannot agree, they go to another person to help them sort it out (a mediator). The mediator talks to everyone and tries to help them find an outcome that they are all happy with. This might mean that they do not have to go to the family court.

Non-molestation order – This is a type of order the family court uses to keep adults, children and young people safe from someone who has been abusive toward them.

Operational service area – Cafcass divides up the country into 18 geographical regions called operational service areas, each managed by an assistant director and head of practice.

Parental order – An order which transfers legal parenthood from a surrogate to the intended parents.

Parental responsibility – Parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, and responsibilities that a parent has to a child or young person. A person or the people with parental responsibility can make decisions about a child such as who they will live with and what school they will attend.

Placement order – An order which allows the local authority to place a child with suitable adopters following care proceedings (even if the parents do not agree).

Post-assessment hub – Children’s cases are allocated to a post-assessment hub once the work ordered by the court has been completed and the FCA has no authority to continue working with the family. This means that once a report has been completed and filed with the court, the involvement of the FCA ends until the final hearing, where they may be ordered to attend.

Pre-proceedings – Work that is carried out by the local authority (sometimes involving Cafcass) before a decision on making a care application is made.

Private law – These cases are brought to the family court by private individuals, generally in connection with divorce or parents’ separation. The family court may make a child arrangements order, prohibited steps order or a specific issues order or no order at all.

Prohibited steps order – A parent can be prevented by the family court from doing something the other parent does not want them to do. The most common type is where one parent is stopped from moving abroad with the child or young person.

Public law – Public law cases are brought to the family court by local authorities where they are worried that a child or young person is not being looked after safely. The family court may make a care order, a supervision order, or no order at all.

Relinquished babies and children – term used to describe where parents feel that adoption may be the best option for providing a permanent, safe future for their child (the child is ‘relinquished’).

Rule 16.4 cases – These are particularly difficult or complicated family court cases where the judge decides to make the child a party to the case under rule 16.4 of the Family Procedure Rules 2010. A Cafcass guardian will be appointed to represent the child in the case.

Safeguarding letter – This is a letter that a Cafcass worker will write and send to the family court. They will speak to the parties (usually the parents) and ask about the child or young person’s safety and any worries that they might have.

Section 37 report – S37 is the power by which a judge can order a local authority to investigate a child’s circumstances and report back to the court within eight weeks explaining whether or not the local authority considers it necessary to initiate proceedings that would place the child in local authority care. If the local authority decides this is not necessary, they must set out the basis on which they have reached their decision.

Section 7 report – This report is ordered by the family court and makes either Cafcass or the local authority investigate all the circumstances of the family, often including the wishes and feelings of a child or young person, and send a report to the court.

Section 8 – the court can make four different orders (i) Child Arrangements orders (ii) prohibited steps orders (iii) Specific Issue orders (iv) orders under the Inherent jurisdiction (a special power exercised only in the High Court).

Section 16A risk assessment – a duty held by Cafcass officers to undertake a risk assessment whenever they have cause to suspect that the child concerned is at risk of harm.

Self-employed contractor – social work staff who are offered work on a case-by-case basis to assist in providing additional capacity and have a contract for services for each individual case.

Sessional workers – former Cafcass staff who stay to complete case work which occurs after their departure from the organisation, for example by attending a final hearing and/or closing an existing case rather than having to reallocate that case to a new worker.

Social worker – These specially trained people help to make sure children and young people are safe and properly looked after. They will work with families to help make it possible for children to stay safely with them. If the family court decides that it is not possible, they will help to make sure there is somewhere else that is safe where a child can live.

Solicitor – A legally trained person who provides advice to people going through the family court and can speak for them in court.

Special guardianship order – This family court order allows another person to become a child’s ‘special guardian’. It is for children who cannot live with their birth parents and gives parental responsibility to the special guardian so that they can make decisions alone about the child’s life.

Specific issue order – This order is made by the family court when there is an important issue to be resolved but parents cannot agree on it. For example, which school a child should go to.

Supervised contact – This is a type of direct contact which requires a supervisor to make sure that the child is safe with the other person. This may be done in a contact centre.

Supervision order – A supervision order makes the local authority take responsibility for advising, assisting and befriending a young person, and ensuring that the child or young person is kept safe in the care of their parents.

Supported contact – This is direct contact whereby a child contact centre worker gives some support to the adults so that they can meet the needs of their child.

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