



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Dear Valerie,

Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass): priorities for 2011-12

Cafcass has a vital role in supporting children and families in the family courts. The matters considered in the family courts are delicate and important issues which can have a lifelong impact on children and their families. This is true whether the decision is about removing a child from her family into care or whether it is about which parent she lives with after a family split. Where a local authority is applying to take a child into care, Cafcass provides a social worker to act as a Children's Guardian to represent the child's interests. Where the case is a dispute within a family, Cafcass provides advice to the court at the first court hearing about whether the child is at risk of being harmed. In the half of cases where the court asks for it, Cafcass provides a more detailed report to help the court make a decision about what arrangement would be in the child's best interests.

The number of care cases coming to court over the last two years has risen significantly – of the order of 35%. As a result Cafcass has had to change the way it works so that it can help more children and families as efficiently as possible. Cafcass has made good progress over the last year in improving the way it works and is providing Guardians for children in 12,624 cases now compared to only 10,518 cases a year ago as well as providing advice to courts more quickly to help judges make decisions about children's futures. I congratulate you on this progress.

Priorities

I see Cafcass' priority areas in 2011-12 as:

- Building on the progress already made this year to make Cafcass a better-managed and more responsive service. Specifically, a service which is able to adapt to provide the best possible service for children and families using the family courts within the limited resources available. To do this, I expect Cafcass to continue to reduce money spent on back office functions and reduce the number of buildings in the Cafcass estate by 30% over the period 2010-13.
- Taking the necessary steps to address any weaknesses which are identified by future Ofsted inspections of Cafcass services such as improving the way social workers work. In particular, I expect to see all Cafcass teams across the country meeting the risk assessment duty required of Cafcass in law and, where, through this risk assessment, Cafcass finds that a child is at risk of harm from their parents or carers, referring the case to the relevant local authority. The court must be informed of this so that it can make a safe decision about how the child should be cared for.
- In cases where local authorities make applications to take children into care, I want to see Cafcass working with local authorities, the courts service and the judiciary to make sure cases are dealt with as efficiently as possible and without delay. In particular, where the court appoints a Cafcass Guardian to act in the interests of a child, I expect Cafcass to allocate a Guardian to the case quickly and, in 97% of cases, by the time the case goes to the first substantive court hearing. I will be measuring progress through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 1 and 4 at the end of this letter. I also expect Cafcass to continue to operate within the terms of the agreement made on 1 October 2010 with the President of the Family Division which reinforces the expectation of joint working between the courts and Cafcass and the importance of following the published *Public Law Outline* for handling these cases.
- You handle over 40,000 cases a year where family members are disputing the future living arrangements for a child. In these cases I expect you to maintain the current focus on the development of more efficient working practices such as your new intake team which processes applications as they arrive at Cafcass. I also expect you to help as many parents as possible settle problems out of court through 'contact activities', which help parents resolve their disputes by looking at the needs of their children post separation; providing reports to court within the timescales requested by courts; and by commissioning services from contact centres to support children who need to see their parents in supervised settings. I would expect grant arrangements with providers in 2011-12 to cover any gaps in provision so that families across England can benefit from these contact support services.

- David Norgrove has been asked to review the family justice system and to report to Ministers here and in Ministry of Justice in October. He was specifically asked to look at how to improve the system so that it would better meet children's needs. The panel will be publishing its interim report at the end of this month and the final report in October. I know many of your staff have already contributed to the work of this review which has been very helpful. I would welcome your continued co-operation and involvement in responding to the changes which may flow from the review.

REFORM OF PUBLIC BODIES

Cafcass is one of a number of bodies funded by this Department and by Government more broadly to deliver a particular service. Like other Non-Departmental Public Bodies it has its own Board and certain operational freedoms, but it must follow the policy of the Government of the day. As part of our aim to bring greater transparency to the way Government works, we plan to reduce the number of separately constituted bodies of this kind. Those which are exempt are those which perform a technical function, require political impartiality, or need to act independently to establish facts. We have judged Cafcass to meet these exemption criteria, but we will, nonetheless, expect to play its part developing greater transparency by publishing the material on its spending set out below.

TRANSPARENCY

The Government remains committed to greater transparency so that the public can hold politicians and public bodies to account. As part of this you are already publishing information on spending on salaries, organisational costs and services you buy. In line with all Government departments and Arms Length Bodies you have already published individual salary information for your senior staff earning over £100K, along with organisation charts to demonstrate the groups of people your senior staff are responsible for, and the costs of these groups.

We expect you to continue to publish this data and to continue to co-operate with transparency requests, ensuring data is submitted to deadline and in the required format.

EFFICIENCY CONTROLS REMAIN IN PLACE

The Efficiency Reform Group was established by the Cabinet Office in 2010. It has brought together expertise from across Government: from different parts of Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, and the Office of Government Commerce. It aims to make Government more efficient (by reducing operational overheads to give taxpayers better value and allow resources to be focused on key priorities); and to reform

radically the way public services are provided (to ensure they meet rising public expectations, improving transparency and accountability and shifting power to people and creating the Big Society).

The Efficiency Reform Group has introduced a series of financial and management controls to make sure that only essential recruitment and procurement activity is undertaken by Government Departments and organisations like Cafcass which are funded by Government. These controls include:

- a freeze on all external recruitment;
- Treasury approval for appointments with salary packages which total more than the Prime Minister's salary of £142,500;
- a freeze on new advertising and spending on marketing;
- a freeze on new contracts and contract extensions; and changes to ICT projects of over £1 million and a review of all existing ICT projects;
- a freeze on any new spending on consultancy services from outside bodies;
- a ban on new property acquisitions, property leases and lease extensions; and
- all other procurement subject to stringent Value For Money appraisal and reporting of all spend to HM Treasury on a monthly basis.

In certain specific circumstances exemptions can be sought by your Chief Executive. Exemptions need to be cleared by the Department, HM Treasury or the Cabinet Office depending on the nature of the exemption. The details of the various exemption processes were sent to your organisation in July 2010.

NEW TREATMENT OF ADMINISTRATION BUDGETS

You will be aware that there are changes to the administration budget for Department's Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), which include Cafcass starting in the 2011-12 financial year. Most significantly, the administration budgets for ALBs are being met from the Department's own overall administration allocation.

Administration budgets cover the costs of all activities not related to direct frontline service provision or in support of frontline service delivery. The Department has provided Cafcass with detailed guidance on the types of spending which are considered as administrative activity; for Cafcass this will include items such as staff salaries for people providing back office functions like finance, policy and senior management and office space for these staff. It is important that Cafcass works closely with the Department's Sponsorship and Finance teams to make sure this guidance is followed.

GOVERNANCE AND RISK

It is vital that Cafcass has in place robust processes which can help it identify difficulties which might arise which could hamper the delivery of services to children and families. We expect to see both robust processes for spotting such difficulties early and dealing with them effectively so that service delivery is maintained. As in previous years, Cafcass must continue to produce, maintain and manage a portfolio of major projects such as Cafcass' plans to rationalise its estate. It must work with the Department to make sure that there are appropriate external checks on these programmes and projects as required by the Permanent Secretary. I expect Cafcass to raise immediately with the Department any potential problems related to delivery including any arising from organisations with which you are working.

FUNDING AND EFFICIENCY

To deliver the priorities set out in this letter; Cafcass's baseline budget for 2011-2012 is £128m. Funding for subsequent years will be subject to review and confirmed in due course. The resource allocation for 2011-12 is classified as follows:

Programme resource budget 2011-12	£m
Programme	112.50
Admin	14.26
Depreciation	1.24
Total	128.00

In addition, Cafcass will receive £1.9m in 2011-2012 for the provision of contact services (including funding of contact centres).

The DfE will also continue to provide funding to Cafcass to meet the cost of the courses which courts can require parents to go on to help them resolve their disputes. This funding will continue to be demand led since it will be determined by the number of cases in which courts order these courses.

SERVICE DELIVERY

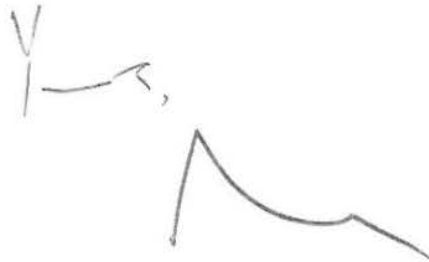
In the context of ongoing high levels of demand, and the prospect of wider changes across the family justice system, I have asked Tim Loughton to continue to take a close interest in Cafcass's performance. Tim will therefore seek to meet with you and the Chief Executive of Cafcass quarterly. These meetings will discuss progress, any areas of concern and they will also provide an opportunity to discuss other issues highlighted by the Public Accounts Committee, such as sickness absence rates for Cafcass social workers which at, an annual average of 12 days in the first

half of 2010-11, is higher than the annual average for local authority social workers at 11.8 days.

CONCLUSION

Either the Department or Cafcass can propose changes to this remit letter during the course on the 2011-12 year if both the organisations are in agreement. Cafcass should seek the prior agreement of the Department before taking on any significant new work during the year.

I am copying this letter to Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive of Cafcass.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Gove', written in a cursive style.

MICHAEL GOVE



Cafcass Key Performance Indicators for 2011-2012

Key Performance Indicator	Definition and Information	Target good ● satisfactory ● inadequate ●
KPI 1 Public Law	<p>Public law care cases should be allocated. <i>Assessed via workload snapshot at the end of each month.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This indicator measures the public law care cases received and ongoing, as a snapshot taken on the last calendar day of the month. The snapshot may also be taken at any other time of the month for up to the minute reporting and monitoring. • A case is defined as a piece of work undertaken by Cafcass that is entered into the Cafcass Case Management System (CMS) and has not been concluded (closed or withdrawn). It can involve multiple children, multiple application types and multiple reports. It is defined by its lead application. • All public law care cases should be allocated on a substantive basis. Cases should remain allocated until all work is concluded and the final legal output has been entered into CMS. • Substantive allocation is defined as cases where the named worker will both react to incoming information and take appropriate pro-active steps and, in addition, will undertake the work that is set out in the case plan, and also in accordance with the courts' requests/directions. The named worker is allocated to appointment by the court. • For this measure a year to date average is reported to build a picture of performance for the year as it progresses. 	<p style="text-align: right;">>= 97% ●</p> <p style="text-align: right;">90% - 96.9% ●</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><= 89.9% ●</p>
KPI 2 Private Law	<p>Private law cases should be allocated. <i>Assessed via workload snapshot at the end of each month.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This indicator measures the private law cases received and ongoing, as a snapshot taken on the last calendar day of the month. The snapshot may also be taken at any other time of the month for up to the minute reporting and monitoring. • A case is defined as a piece of work undertaken by Cafcass that is entered into CMS and has not been concluded (closed or withdrawn). It can involve multiple children, multiple application types and multiple reports. • All private law cases should be allocated either to duty or substantive allocation. Cases should remain allocated until all work is concluded. • Allocation (substantively or fully allocated) is defined as cases where the named worker will both react to incoming information and take appropriate pro-active steps and, in addition, will undertake the work that is set out in the case plan, and also in accordance with 	<p style="text-align: right;">>= 97% ●</p> <p style="text-align: right;">90% - 96.9% ●</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><= 89.9% ●</p>

	<p>the courts' requests/directions. The named worker is allocated to appointment by the court.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty Allocation is defined as cases where the named worker will both react to incoming information and also will take pro-active steps at appropriate points in time to review the status, needs and level of priority of the case. • For this measure a year to date average is reported to build a picture of performance for the year as it progresses. 	
KPI 3 Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare	<p>Quality of practice of safeguarding rated as satisfactory or above for all eligible practitioners. <i>Assessed through performance management framework.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding will be assessed using the Cafcass Quality for Children (Q4C) performance management framework. • This will measure the most recent safeguarding assessment logged for each practitioner since October 2010. If a new assessment is logged during the year, it will overwrite the previous assessment for that individual in the overall count. • All practitioners will have a sample of their case files assessed through supervision at least once within the financial year by their line manager. • Eligible includes all employed Family Court Advisors and Family Support Workers. • Additional satisfactory bracket added to ensure that any area/team recorded above 99% should be investigated to check the correct procedure is being applied. 	99% - 100% ● 97% - 98.9% ● 90% - 96.9% ● <= 89.9% ●
KPI 4 Public Law	<p>Cafcass will allocate (on an ongoing, not a duty basis) all care cases by CMC (Case Management Conference), measured as 45 calendar days from application date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This indicator is a measure of the ability to allocate, on a substantive basis, a Cafcass Family Court Advisor or self-employed contractor as a Children's Guardian to all public law Care cases by point in time which the Public Law Outline (PLO) specifies that the Case Management Conference (CMC) is to take place. 	>= 97% ● 90% - 96.9% ● <= 89.9% ●
KPI 5 Private Law	<p>Cafcass will measure the percentage of section 7 reports that meet their agreed filing times, for each of the four types of reports:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple Issue Single Issue Risk Assessment Wishes and Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These categories of report are set out in schedule I of the President's Revised Private Law Programme. • This indicator measures the rate of each the four types of section 7 report that are filed by the date agreed between the Court and Cafcass. 	>= 97% ● 90% - 96.9% ● <= 89.9% ●