

**Family Justice Board Meeting
15 November 2022**

Attendees

Members

Claire Coutinho MP (*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Education*) **Co- Chair**
Lord Christopher Bellamy KC (*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice*) **Co- Chair**
Jacky Tiotto (*Chief Executive, Cafcass*)
Helen Lincoln (*Executive Director for Children, Families and Education, Essex County Council, representing Association of Directors of Children's Services*)
Nigel Brown (*Chief Executive, Cafcass Cymru*)
Sally Ann Jenkins (*Head of Children's Services, Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru - ADSS Cymru*)
Yvette Stanley (*National Director for Social Care, Ofsted*)
Jason Latham (*Head of Business Architecture, HM Courts and Tribunals Service*)
Krish Kandiah (*Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board*)
Ed Lidington (*Director, Court Recovery, Criminal & Family Justice, Ministry of Justice*)
Sophie Langdale (*Director, Children's Social Care, Department for Education*)

Apologies

Albert Heaney (*Chief Social Care Officer for Wales, Welsh Government*)
Jeremy Gleaden (*Senior HMI, Ofsted*)
Isabelle Trowler (*Chief Social Worker for Children and Families*)
Katy Roberts (*Department for Work and Pensions*)
Jake Morgan (*ADSS Cymru*)
Ian Walker (*Director of Safeguarding and Early Help at Bolton Council, representing Association of Directors of Children's Services*)
Katy Block (*ADCS*)

Observers

Sir Andrew McFarlane (*President of the Family Division*)
Representatives of the Family Justice Young People's Board (*FJYPB*)
Judge Gaynor Lloyd (*Designated Family Judge for North Wales*)

Officials

Neal Barcoe (*Deputy Director, Family Justice Policy, MoJ*)
Sarah Jennings (*Deputy Director, Adoption, Family Justice and Children's Rights, DfE*)
Helen Evans (*MoJ Policy*)
Jacqui Frisby (*MoJ Policy*)
Ana Easton (*DWP*)
Lauren Kocan (*DfE Policy*)
Leyly Bogue (*DfE Policy*)
John Hall (*DfE Policy*)
Naomi Simpson (*MoJ Governance and Implementation*)
Ana Popa (*MoJ Policy*)
Tom O'Hara (*MoJ Analysis*)
Ian Sietniekas (*MoJ Policy*)
Grace Hodges (*Acting Private Secretary to the President of the Family Division, Judicial Office*)
Kim Webb (*Deputy Secretary to the Family Justice Council*)
Priya Sharma (*Assistant Private Secretary to Lord Bellamy KC, MoJ*)

Meeting

Item 1: Co-Chairs' Introduction and Opening Remarks

1. Lord Christopher Bellamy KC (LB) welcomed attendees and introduced Claire Coutinho (CC), who has joined government as the new minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing at the Department for Education (DfE).
2. LB provided an overview of key outcomes from the previous meeting (20 June 2022). The group noted key collective priorities which include making the system less adversarial, to improving timeliness and reducing backlogs across the system.

Item 2: Minutes and Actions from the Previous FJB

3. MoJ officials led the Board through the previous meeting's minutes, which were agreed. They updated on the action log with no further comments.

Item 3: Update from the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB)

4. LB introduced representatives from the FJYPB to update the meeting on the work they have been undertaking:
 - FJYPB updated on recent staffing changes, a redesign of their mascot and an audio version of their book, 'In Our Shoes', due in early 2023.
 - FJYPB is developing two resources for parents in family proceedings: information on the importance of identifying alternative carers for children at an early stage, and apology letters to children. In addition, they are supporting secondary school pupils to understand what to expect when involved in proceedings; covering the services used, how to support each other and their friends.

Item 4: Family Justice Overview of Key Issues and Reforms

5. Neal Barcoe (NB) and Sarah Jennings (SJ) presented an update on proposed Governance reforms. SJ stated the public law focus was on the 26-week statutory requirement, while the private law goal is for swift resolution and support to reduce demand in the system.
6. NB proposed high level Key Performance Indicators that the Board will use to track progress against its priorities including a reduction in delay, increased efficiency, and an increase in the number of cases resolving outside of court in private family law.

Item 5: Public Law: Family Justice Priorities

7. DfE Officials provided an update on the reforms being developed to address public law priority 1: identifying and addressing the drivers and impact of children's cases that are in the family justice system the longest.
8. Good practice and lessons learned have been obtained from Stoke-on-Trent, and practice in this area is continuing to inform the reforms being developed at a national level.

Item 6: Private Law: Family Justice Priorities

9. LB introduced HHJ Judge Gaynor Lloyd (GL) who commended the Pathfinder pilot in North Wales.
10. Members noted the following points:
 - The enthusiasm from the judiciary spoke to the Pathfinder's potential effectiveness.

- The issue of how costs are accounted for during the evaluation was raised, and the importance of taking account how the costs of each agency's involvement change throughout the duration of the pilots was flagged.
- Members approved of the child remaining a central point of focus in proceedings and the earlier engagement of agencies.

11. LB asked NB to outline Private law priorities. NB updated on:

- A deep dive into disposal rates to identify regional variance and to explore the influences;
- The development of a package of measures to ensure earlier resolution of cases in private family law.

Item 7: Any other business and closing remarks

12. LB summarised the encouraging and enormous amount of activity across the system to manage down delays in the system. CC thanked everyone present and looked forward to working together.