

**Family Justice Board Meeting
27 March 2023**

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)

Jason Latham (Head of Business Architecture, HM Courts and Tribunals Service)

Apologies

None

Observers

Sir Andrew McFarlane (President of the Family Division)

Representatives of the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB)

Meeting

Item 1: Co-Chairs' Introduction and Opening Remarks

1. Minister Claire Coutinho (CC) and Lord Christopher Bellamy KC (LB) welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for their efforts.
- LB introduced Luke Taylor who is the Deputy Director for the newly established Family Justice System Improvement unit at the MoJ. The unit has been established, directly in response to the need to drive forward the cross-cutting programme of work to improve the operation of the system, tackle the systemic issues associated with the backlog and improve outcomes for children and families.

Item 2: Minutes and Actions from the Previous FJB

2. MoJ officials led the Board through the previous meeting's minutes, which were agreed. They updated on progress against actions, with no further comments.

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

3. LB introduced representatives from the FJYPB to update the meeting on the work they have been undertaking:
 - FJYPB updated the Board on their recent work, including their meetings with Ofsted, the Family Justice Council and Mutual Ventures.
 - FJYPB also updated the Board on their work with DfE to develop PSHE

resources to support students experiencing family court proceedings.

- FJYPB announced that the next Voice of the Child Conference will be on 27th July.

Item 4: KPI Performance

4. MoJ officials provided an update on the latest KPIs as of March 2023 and highlighted improvements needed to HMCTS MI data.

Item 5: Cross System Strategic Plan

5. MoJ officials took the Board through the cross system strategic plan and discussed progress against workstreams of particular interest.
6. Members noted the following points:
 - It would be helpful for the Board to get a better understanding, from the plan, of how each workstream will contribute to the agreed KPIs for the system. This includes assessing whether the plan, as a whole is likely to have the desired impact and, if not, where the gaps remain.
 - Cafcass has undertaken work to ensure that timetables for cases feature on children's' plans. This is to audit the discussion between the child's Guardian and the LA on the no order principle, to share recommendations with the child so they are able to share a response, and to introduce a trigger switch to their case management system if an expert is recommended. Cafcass will update on this work at the next Board meeting.
 - Members were invited to confirm that their key work-strands which support delivery against KPI's were included in both the list of top initiatives, which were circulated with papers, and within the plan. Where this is not the case, members agreed to ensure the plan and list is updated.

Item 6: Spotlight – Action to deliver against KPIs – Public Law delays

7. DfE officials presented on DfE projects currently in development, aimed at reducing delays in public law cases. This includes a pilot to bring the child's Cafcass Guardian and the LA Social Worker together before the first case management hearing, after the Guardian has been appointed. This pilot is due to begin in summer 2023.

Item 7: Spotlight – Action to deliver against KPIs – Private Law delays

8. MoJ officials announced that the consultation on 'Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements' launched on the 23 March. The consultation is seeking views on how the Government can support families agree their child and financial arrangements without going through the family courts

9. MoJ will hold roundtables with interested and impacted representative groups and organisations to obtain views on the proposed reforms which aim to; reduce demand and pressure on the court and protect children from the impact of lengthy court proceedings.
10. Members were invited to put forward suggestions for groups/organisations that could be invited to roundtables to ensure response reflect feedback from a broad range of voices.
11. Members noted the following points:
 - Cafcass expressed concerns about delays and backlogs in private law and wanted to better understand the work being undertaken to tackle this.
 - The consultation has potential to have real impact on the experiences of families and the judiciary are pleased that it's been launched.

Item 8: Any other business

12. The national adoption lead will join the Board, starting from the next meeting