



Department
for Education



Ministry
of Justice

**Family Justice Board Meeting
06 November 2023**

Attendees

Members

David Johnston 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

Ed Lidington, (Director, Courts, Criminal and Family Justice, MoJ)

Isabelle Trowler, (Chief Social Worker for Children and Families)

Jacky Tiotto (Chief Executive, Cafcass) (covered by Teresa Williams, Director of Strategy)

Louise Taylor, (Deputy Director, Family Policy, DWP)

Nigel Brown, (Chief Executive, Cafcass Cymru)

Sarah Johal (National Adoption Lead)

Nick Goodwin (Chief Executive, HM Courts and Tribunals Service)

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

Helen Lincoln (Executive Director for Children, Families & Education (DCS), Essex County Council)

Apologies

Albert Heaney (Director, Social Services, Welsh Government)

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. Lord Christopher Bellamy KC (LB) welcomed the Board and Minister Johnston as its co-chair. Minister Johnston (DJ) introduced himself and stated that he is looking forward to working with the Board to support ongoing work in reforming the Family Justice system.

Item 2: Minutes and Actions from the Previous FJB

2. MoJ officials guided the Board through the previous meeting's minutes and actions, with no comments raised.

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

3. LB introduced representatives from the FJYPB to update on recent work

they have been undertaking.

4. FJYPB highlighted their recent achievements. This included being shortlisted for the Children's Charity Award, opening a new London office, working with Community Care Live and holding the Voice of the Child Conference 2023.
5. FJYPB shared further details on their workplan. This included the work on the impact of delay, safe contact, a children's version of the parenting plan and the drafting of resources for schools. The FJYPB representatives also highlighted their work with the judicial college on language for children and young people, their work with Durham Constabulary on domestic abuse and their plans to attend a conference in Denmark in March 2024.
6. Members shared their thanks for the presentation and the useful challenge and focus it presented to the wider family justice system.

Item 4: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Performance

7. MoJ officials updated members on system KPIs as of November 2023.
8. The Board reviewed key insights from the data on current case duration, closures, and timeliness, cross-checking these against 2022 baselines to identify trends. The group discussed in detail how existing datasets could be used to better understand outcomes in future.

Item 5: Public Law Outline (PLO) Update

9. The Board was taken through emerging positive insights on case progression nine months on from the relaunch of PLO. MoJ officials shared planned and ongoing work to further progress in our understanding of the PLO's relaunch.
10. It was noted that of the 7,000 cases that have entered the system since relaunch, 707 were closed and of those closed, 74% closed within 26 weeks. Members agreed this was positive but given the small sample size it is too early to draw definitive conclusions.

Item 6: Priorities for discussion from the Family Justice Cross System Strategic Plan

11. The Board was taken through the Family Cross System Strategic Plan, with updates on system priority areas and areas with live risks.
12. Members agreed the Family Justice System priorities and Cross System Strategic Plan should be reviewed and brought back to the Board for discussion.
13. The importance of the private law pathfinder pilots was noted, and a shared ambition to roll out nationally was emphasised, subject to a

review of the evidence obtained through evaluation.

Item 7: Private Law Timeliness

14. MoJ officials summarised the key drivers of delay discussed at the Innovation and Efficiencies Policy Group (demand, capacity, and case complexity) along with ongoing areas of reform. The current data position was noted, with timeliness increasing as long-running outstanding cases are closed.
15. Members agreed that two projects should be taken forward to better understand in Private Law Timeliness:
 - End-to-end review of the private law process from receipt to case closure.
 - A dip-sample of cases over 100 weeks to better understand reasons for delay in the longest running cases.

Item 8: Report from Mutual Ventures

16. Following the overview in June's FJB, DfE presented the Mutual Ventures report and recommendations from the project commissioned by DfE. DfE and MoJ highlighted current progress and planned initiatives to take forward recommendations.
17. Members agreed to discuss what worked to improve system performance in the years following the Norgrove review alongside consideration of current performance, using our current data and insights, including recommendations from the Mutual Ventures report, at a future meeting.
18. Members flagged during this item that tackling private law caseloads may be key to creating system capacity in reducing public law waiting times.