



# Cafcass at a glance 2016 - 17

## About Cafcass

We work with over 125,000 of the country's most vulnerable children and young people each year who are going through care proceedings (public law), adoption or whose parents have separated and there is a dispute over child arrangements (private law). Our practitioners are all experienced social workers who work with families following an application to the family court, and will provide judges with the information needed to make a safe decision about a child's future. We are here for children and young people and we provide an opportunity for them to make their wishes and feelings clear. We listen, we don't take sides and we always remain independent.

## Our Performance

- We continued to meet and, in most cases, exceed all of our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in 2016-17. They include allocation in public and private law, time to allocate care cases and filing times for private law.
- Demand for public law work increased in 2016-17, with the number of care applications received 14% higher than 2015-16. The overall number of open public law care cases also rose by 12%, when comparing March 2016 with March 2017.
- Despite the increase in public law care application demand, the average case duration has reduced from 30 weeks in 2015-16 to 29 weeks in 2016-17.
- The number of private law cases received increased by 9% in 2016-17. Despite the increase in cases, we have managed to decrease the time taken to file section 7 reports from 10.8 weeks in 2015-16 to 10.5 weeks in 2016-17.
- The average private law case duration during 2016-17 was 20 weeks, down from 22 weeks in 2015-16.
- Cafcass received several sector and industry awards including Gold for Practice Educator of the Year and Silver for Children's Team Leader of the Year at the Social Worker of the Year Awards.

## Our children

- 18,758 (32%) new cases received in 2016/17 were public law.
- 40,629 (68%) new cases received in 2016/17 were private law.
- Most children we work with are aged ten and under (83%).
- We have 37 offices, and will see children at these offices, at schools, at home, or wherever is best for each individual child.

## Cafcass in 2016-17

In 2016-17 we continued to drive up the quality of our casework in the context of increasing demand across both public and private law. While we have continued to improve and deliver a high standard across our service, to help ensure sufficient resources to manage the increased pressure from growing demand levels, we secured an increase to our budget for the next financial year with our sponsor department, MoJ.

Our programme of thematic audits, area quality reviews and local benchmarking show clearly our further improvements. For example, we continue to produce high quality casework, with 69% of cases audited assessed as 'outstanding' or 'good'; the implementation of our Evidence Informed Practice (EIP) Tools and redesign of our case planning process supporting robust case analysis. Reviews also help us identify areas of best practice and learning to inform and strengthen our future work. A refresh of our Quality Assurance and Impact Framework means there is even greater focus on the impact of our work. Cases are now assessed against four child-focused outcomes: the extent to which the child is safe, heard, better represented and enabled; and learning points are identified for each criteria. We are also exploring how we can further gather service user and stakeholder feedback about the quality of our work and its impact on outcomes for children.

We demonstrated innovation in practice; for example, embedding our National Psychology Service which supports practitioners to enhance their expertise and improve the quality of recommendations through the provision of 1:1 consultations with an accredited clinical psychologist. We also expanded the range of EIP tools, including introducing our Domestic Abuse (DA) Practice Pathway, the first of its kind in the sector, to help improve and structure our analysis of cases featuring DA to ensure systematic review of any risk posed to children.

We continue to support improved services in the wider family justice sector and help shape future sector reform through close working with the MoJ, DfE, sector agencies and through our membership of national and local boards, such as local Family Justice Boards. We continue our work to help manage demand by piloting pre-court advice in private law, and new ways of working in care cases.