

**CAFCASS Cymru Advisory Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2017
CAFCASS Cymru Offices, Cathays Park, Cardiff**

Present:

Jackie Murphy	Tros Gynnal Plant (Chair)
Paul Apreda	FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru
Denise Inger	SNAP Cymru
Dawn Jeffery	Welsh Women's Aid
Gareth Jenkins	ADSS Cymru
Sharon Lovell	NYAS
Her Honour Judge Helen Mifflin	Judiciary
Sean O'Neill	Children in Wales
Zoe Richards	Learning Disability Wales
Rakhshanda Shahzad	BAWSO
Hugh Simkiss	HMCTS
Rachel Thomas	Children's Commissioner for Wales
Sue Thomas	Magistrates Association
Samantha Williams	Learning Disability Wales
Nigel Brown	CAFCASS Cymru
Matthew Pinnell	CAFCASS Cymru
Rhianon James	CAFCASS Cymru (secretariat)

1. Welcome by Jackie Murphy

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. This was Jackie Murphy's first meeting as Chair of the Committee and she particularly welcomed Sean O'Neill, Rakhshanda Shahzad and Rachel Thomas who were attending for the first time.

2. Introductions and apologies

Round the table introductions were led by the Chair.

Apologies were received from:

Sarah Coldrick	AFA Cymru
Catrin Cracroft	Law Society Representative
Des Mannion	NSPCC Cymru
Mutale Merrill	BAWSO
James O'Reilly	Legal Services Commission
Jane Robey	Family Mediation Council
Suzanne Burgoyne	CAFCASS Cymru

3. Minutes of meeting held on 6 December 2016 – sign off prior to publication on CAF/CASS Cymru website

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising

Conflict of Interest Forms and Bibliography: Nigel explained that the conflict of interest form was in the process of being produced and checked to ensure that it is in line with Welsh Government guidelines.

Action: Secretariat to send conflict of interest form to all members

5. Referrals and Performance

Nigel presented an overview of referrals and performance and highlighted that section 31 (care cases) for April 2016 – February 2017 are 27.2% higher than the same period last year. These remain the highest level of such applications received by CAF/CASS Cymru. It was noted there has been a 22% increase in private law referrals in the 12 months ending in February compared to the same period last year.

To respond to the increase in referrals, CAF/CASS Cymru ensure that its 5 operational areas work together and Family Court Advisers (FCA) work flexibly across areas to provide a timely response to new referrals.

CAF/CASS Cymru is implementing a Fee Paid Practitioner Framework that will provide additional capacity when necessary for the organisation to respond flexibly to referrals during busy and demanding periods.

Judge Mifflin clarified that the first hearing in public law s31 cases (CMH) is the most important hearing and that a case analysis from CAF/CASS Cymru is critical to enable to Court to make an informed decision.

6. Family Justice Reform Update

Matthew Pinnell stated that the concerns and attention in Wales regarding the increase in public law cases is also reflective of what is happening in England such that Whitehall is focused on 1) trying to understand the reasons for this increase and 2) whether there are opportunities within the system itself to reduce pressures and improve efficiencies/outcomes.

Where the private law system is concerned Matthew said that CAF/CASS Cymru had met with officials from MOJ and Cafcass England in December 2016 to explore the current system and what a new system could look like. Matthew explained that this is still at the exploration stage. The MOJ is currently exploring an approach focused upon providing early information and support services to parents who have separated with the aim of reducing the need for cases (where there are no safeguarding issues) to come before the Family Court.

MoJ are in the early stages of developing a Green Paper to include reform of both public and private law and it is hoped that more information will be available at the next meeting of CAFCASS Cymru Advisory Committee.

7. Presentation: Learning Disability Wales – Working Together with Parents Network

Sam Williams is Policy and Network Co-ordinator for the Working Together with Parents Network in Wales at Learning Disability Wales, Cardiff. Sam delivered an interesting and informative presentation and there followed a question and answer session. The Chair thanked Sam for her succinct presentation.

8. CAFCASS Cymru Modernisation Programme

Private Law Work

Matthew provided a brief update on the work CAFCASS Cymru is currently undertaking in exploring the potential of a pilot to develop the current section 7 report into a “Child Impact Analysis” that will focus on the impact of the family’s circumstances upon the child.

Public Law Project

Matthew clarified the work being undertaken by the project group in reviewing and refining the report templates, developing a range of expectation statements (similar in style to what has been produced for private law) and reviewing our practice guidance. He reported that he met with Judge Parry recently to discuss the initial analysis report template which was very helpful. Progress will be shared with the Advisory Committee at the next meeting.

Participation

The project board has been instrumental in recently developing a children’s pack and a jargon buster - this has come about following effective engagement with children and young people. Copies of the Jargon Buster booklet are available on CAFCASS Cymru’s website. The next stage in the participation journey is to embed the values that underpin participation across the whole organisation.

CAFCASS Cymru Branding and Logo

The new CAFCASS Cymru’s logo and branding was distributed during the meeting for comment.

CAFCASS Cymru has been working with the Family Justice Young People’s Board (FJYPB) and Welsh Government designers to develop the logo and branding with the aim of creating a new logo for the organisation that reflects the organisation’s focus and aspirations, engages children and young people but still maintains CAFCASS Cymru’s unique identity in the Family Justice System in the UK.

Comments made by members of the Advisory Committee were noted by Nigel and will be communicated back to the design team and young people.

9. CAFCASS Cymru – Office Reviews by Family Justice Young People’s Board

This report was circulated to the Advisory Committee in advance of the meeting. As part of the CAFCASS Cymru “Your Voice” participation programme, CAFCASS Cymru engaged the assistance of the FJYPB to complete a review of six CAFCASS Cymru office facilities with the primary aim of further improving the service the organisation can provide its young service users by implementing, where possible, the suggested changes identified.

Judge Mifflin said that schools used to visit courts regularly and was one way of introducing children and young people to the judicial system. Judges would then visit schools to see the children’s environment. However this stopped about 5 years ago. Hugh Simkiss agreed that it was probably the right time to re-visit these arrangements and will look into this further.

Nigel informed members of the Advisory Committee that as part of the Welsh Government strategic review of office accommodation, CAFCASS Cymru is managing a number of office moves over the coming months. All stakeholders will be notified of the changes and provided with new contact details.

10. CAFCASS Cymru Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework

Nigel stated that CAFCASS Cymru is committed to creating an environment of continuing learning and improvement for its staff. The new Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement Framework (QALI) brings all elements of quality assurance together making the necessary connection to internal learning and organisational improvement with the outcome of the child at the centre of everything the organisation does. It also provides a structure for collating and sharing key information with external bodies in order to contribute towards identified change and improvements for future generations, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It is hoped that the framework will be completed for implementation by September 2017.

One element that the project group is currently focussing on as part of the framework is investing in the voice of the service user and ensuring that CAFCASS Cymru adopts contemporary methods to encourage service user feedback that will assist the organisation to further evidence what it does well and any areas it needs to focus on for improvement.

CAFCASS Cymru is considering using a simple text based survey on communication and satisfaction at the end of all telephone safeguarding interviews with adult service users in private law. CAFCASS Cymru is also considering using a simple text type survey at the end of its work with all adult service users in both public and private law cases. Members of the Advisory Committee discussed the various options and provided useful suggestions and comments.

It was noted that the participation group are working on improved feedback methods for children and young people which will also feed into to the framework.

As part of improving feedback CAFCASS Cymru is also considering seeking stakeholder feedback from the judiciary.

11. Parental Alienation – Paul Apreda

Paul Apreda circulated a paper and delivered a brief presentation on parental alienation. Nigel responded by stating that CAF/CASS Cymru recognises that parents can behave in a way that alienates the other parent from their child's life and that this is one of many behaviours that parents who are separated can exhibit that can have an emotional impact upon children. There are a range of tools available for CAF/CASS Cymru staff to use when working with children to enable them to identify when parents behave in a way that alienates the other parent from their child's life.

12. Any Other Business

The Chair thanked members of the Advisory Committee for their valuable contribution to the meeting.

13. Dates for 2017

11 July 2017

14 November 2017

ACTION SHEET

Agenda item number	Action	Lead
Item 4: Matters Arising	Secretariat to send conflict of interest form to all members.	Secretariat