

Family Justice Network for Wales
Summary Note of Meeting
Monday 4 March 2013

The third meeting of the Family Justice Network took place on 4 March 2013, chaired by Albert Heaney following his recent appointment as Director of Social Services, Children and Families in the Welsh Government.

Discussion took place with regard to advocate continuity and it was agreed that further analysis was required to establish whether there were any specific issues in areas and this would be discussed further with the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services group.

The Network noted key data collected from Welsh Government, HMCTS and CAF/CASS Cymru, and in particular the improvement in court waiting times. Discussion took place on the inconsistent measures in the existing data-sets across organisations which meant that it was not currently possible to track a child's case through the family justice system and establish a clear narrative of data in Wales. It was agreed that the data would be presented to the Local Family Justice Boards and All-Wales Heads of Children's Services group. Further consideration would also be given to the potential use of a survey of users in the family justice system.

Work on the development of standards for expert witnesses was progressing through the Family Justice Council, whilst dates had now been set for multi-disciplinary events across Wales to further consider the quality, supply and use of experts in the family justice system.

Proposals for workforce development in response to the Family Justice Review were considered. This included the development of the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) to include such training requirements, whilst in the shorter term, interim arrangements could include a series of seminars on workforce issues and intensive workforce training. The proposal would be further refined and an update would be given at the next meeting.

Discussions had taken place between CAF/CASS Cymru and ADSS on the development of a pan-Wales protocol for private law cases, and whilst progress had been made, work would continue to finalise this. The work on a national public law protocol had been put on hold in light of possible judicial revision of the Public Law outline.

The Network agreed that membership would not be extended any further at this stage and the existing Terms of Reference of the Network would remain unchanged. A representative from the Magistracy would attend as an observer.

Members noted arrangements for the forthcoming Family Justice Network stakeholder engagement event, which would focus on the voice of children and young people in the family justice system. A further report would be provided to the next Network meeting capturing the views and comments from this event.

The development of Expectation Documents through the Family Justice Board was noted. Following the development of these documents, it was agreed that similar documents would be developed for agencies in Wales, which would particularly focus on driving reform and improving system performance. Finally, it was noted that the development of a bespoke Family Justice Network webpage, hosted on the Welsh Government internet website, was now in place and would be used to disseminate key documents and information from the Network to wider stakeholders.