



National Audit Office

**REPORT BY THE  
COMPTROLLER AND  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

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SESSION 2010–2011**

**28 JULY 2010**

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**Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service**

Cafcass's response to increased  
demand for its services

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National Audit Office

## Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

# Cafcass's response to increased demand for its services

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Amyas Morse  
Comptroller and  
Auditor General

National Audit Office

22 July 2010

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service ('Cafcass') looks after the interests of children involved in Family Court proceedings in England.

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This report can be found on the National Audit Office website at [www.nao.org.uk/Cafcass-2010](http://www.nao.org.uk/Cafcass-2010)

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# Summary

**1** The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service ('Cafcass') looks after the interests of children involved in Family Court proceedings in England. At the request of the courts, it works with children and their families and advises the court on the child's best interests. It provides an independent view of children's circumstances and plays an important part in assisting the judiciary with their decisions about children's futures. In 2009-10 Cafcass supported children and families in approximately 57,000 cases and spent £130 million grant-in-aid. It is a non-departmental public body of the Department for Education ('the Department').

**2** Cafcass comprises 21 service areas across England (Appendix Two), organised into three operational regions: North, South and Central. Each service area is led by a head of service, with service managers overseeing teams of family court advisers, almost all of whom are qualified social workers. These teams and their associated family support workers and business support staff work to family proceedings and county courts, and the high court.

**3** Cafcass has two main strands of work:

- **Public law:** When local authorities make care applications, Cafcass provides the court with an employed family court adviser or a self-employed contractor, whom the court appoints to represent the interests of the child and to scrutinise the local authority's care plan. Cafcass also has a role in public law non-care cases, including adoptions. In June 2010, Cafcass reported a total of around 15,000 open public law cases at varying stages, including around 12,500 care cases.
- **Private law:** The majority of these cases arise when separating parents cannot agree on contact or residence arrangements for their children. Cafcass family court advisers give advice to the courts on the interests and wishes of the child. In June 2010 there were around 28,500 open cases.

A public law care case ('care case') involves, on average, around three times the work of a private law case.

**4** Cafcass is one organisation working within a complex system aiming to safeguard and protect vulnerable children and support families. Its partners include government departments, local authorities, family courts, legal organisations, solicitors and third sector organisations. Cafcass cannot directly control or limit the demand for its services, which is determined by the rate of applications to the courts. Decisions by other organisations within this system affect Cafcass's workload.

## The problem

**5** Cafcass experienced a significant and sustained increase in demand in care cases from late 2008 following the publicity around the Baby Peter tragedy. Many local authorities became more cautious and more likely to apply for care orders. Research undertaken by Cafcass showed that despite the increase, local authorities were still referring appropriate cases to the family courts. Cafcass received around 34 per cent more care cases in 2009-10 than in 2008-09. In the same period, new private law cases also grew by around 16 per cent. The number of care cases that Cafcass was unable to allocate a dedicated family court adviser within the three days set out in the Public Law Outline (paragraph 1.4) increased greatly, as did delays in providing advice to the courts.

**6** Between December 2008 and April 2010 Ofsted inspected ten Cafcass service areas, assessing the overall effectiveness of eight as inadequate and two as satisfactory. Ofsted acknowledged the difficulties that the increase in demand had placed on service areas, but found the quality of case work to be variable and generally low. The Department has been supporting Cafcass's management in its planning and implementation of changes to tackle the systemic quality problems, and improve Cafcass's responsiveness to demand.

**7** This report examines whether Cafcass:

- could have forecast the rapid and sustained increase in care cases;
- could have responded more effectively; and
- is prepared for reasonable variations in future demand.

**8** We have used a range of quantitative measures (**Figure 1** overleaf), interviews and documentary evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of Cafcass over time, where possible comparing service areas.

**Figure 1**  
Quantitative measures of performance

Measure	Description	Good performance
<b>Cases</b>		
Unallocated cases	Cases referred to Cafcass by the courts, where Cafcass has not assigned a family court adviser to complete the work required.	Low level of unallocated cases; short duration of unallocated time.
Caseload	Average number of cases fully allocated to each family court adviser.	Caseload at reasonable level.
<b>Public law work</b>		
Duty allocated cases	Cases allocated to a duty family court adviser to react to incoming information and review the status, needs and priority of the case at appropriate points.	Low level of duty allocated cases; short duration of duty allocated time.
Fully allocated cases	Cases allocated to a family court adviser to see the case through to completion. Includes producing and executing a case plan and other work or reports requested by the courts.	Minimum delay in full allocations.
<b>Private law section 7 reports</b> on a child's circumstances, prepared by a family court adviser when ordered by the court.		
Timeliness	Proportion of section 7 reports filed by the filing date set by the court.	High proportion of reports filed on time.
Ordering of section 7 reports	Proportion of cases requiring a section 7 report.	Ordering a section 7 report only if required by the issues in the case. A reduction in the ordering of section 7 reports can represent an improved relationship between Cafcass and judiciary.
<b>General performance</b>		
Sickness absence	Average number of days lost per employee through sickness.	Reducing sickness absence levels.
Spend versus budget	Cafcass's spend against its annual budget, set out in advance.	Spend within budget.

Source: National Audit Office

## Key findings

### Forecasting the increase in demand

**9** Neither Cafcass, the Department nor other partner organisations predicted the sustained impact that the publicity around the Baby Peter case in November 2008 would have on demand for care cases. Demand had temporarily increased then fallen back following previous tragedies involving children, and Cafcass and partner organisations expected the same. By April 2009, Cafcass's management concluded that demand was not falling back and that action to meet the sustained high level was required.

**10** Cafcass and its partners within the system for safeguarding children and administering family justice do not collectively gather and synthesise intelligence on case numbers on an ongoing basis, nor attempt month-on-month assessments of trends. It is uncertain, however, whether additional knowledge would have enabled Cafcass to predict the persistence of the increase given the lack of a precedent.

**11** **We conclude that Cafcass's management could not have been expected to recognise earlier than they did that the increase in demand would be sustained.**

### Impact of increased demand

**12** The available budget limited Cafcass's flexibility to engage additional family court advisers, for example by employing external staff. Unallocated public law cases built up from around 250 to 1,250 between November 2008 and August 2009. Cafcass increased the caseload of its employed staff. Solicitors reported delays in allocating cases in many areas. Increased costs could result when hearings made less progress than would be the case if the family court adviser had already been allocated; for example in private law cases, some courts commissioned advice from outside of Cafcass. Delays put additional stress on children and their families.

**13** In 2008-09 Cafcass spent £3.6 million more than its original budget allocation of £114.9 million. The Department re-profiled Cafcass's funding in September 2009, bringing forward £4.6 million from future years to cover the overspend in 2008-09 and additional demand in 2009-10. The Department provided a further £2.5 million for the London area and for management restructuring. In November 2009, Cafcass sought approval for a predicted overspend of £2.3 million in 2009-10. The Department gave approval, accepting that Cafcass had taken steps to improve its capacity.

**14 We conclude that the budget increases were a necessary consequence of Cafcass's efforts to meet the increase in demand.**

Response to increased demand

**15** Though Cafcass has experienced fluctuating demand over its nine year history, the increase in demand from autumn 2008 was unprecedented. Cafcass was formed in 2001 from three bodies, (the Family Court Welfare Service, the Guardian ad Litem services and the children's division of the office of the Official Solicitor) with different cultures and working practices. Practices still differ between areas and standard management requirements are not always complied with. For example, at 15 July 2010, four of the twenty-one areas had still not submitted business plans for 2010-11 to the Director of Finance. Cafcass only introduced a systematic performance management framework in October 2008. Around the same time as Cafcass had to cope with the increased demand for services, around 150 employees left or chose to retire following assessment of their performance as poor.

**16** Cafcass and other organisations working in the family justice system are interdependent and Cafcass's response to the problems caused by increasing demand needed to complement actions by partners in the system. Cafcass began revising its operating priorities, at the same time as the former President of the Family Division developed Interim Guidance to judiciary.

**17** In August 2009 Cafcass issued revised operating priorities to local service areas which sought to reduce work on cases to a safe minimum. Following the development of local arrangements, these took effect from 1 October 2009.

**18** The President's Interim Guidance also took effect from 1 October 2009. It set out temporary arrangements, for example, to prioritise new and delayed cases according to the welfare needs of children, and to limit the amount of work courts requested of family court advisers to levels proportionate to the issues in each case. The speed and form of the implementation of the Interim Guidance was tailored by local judiciary. Cafcass supported them by providing comparative statistics to illustrate variations in the amount of work requested of Cafcass by different courts. In the majority of areas judiciary implemented the Guidance fully. In a few areas local arrangements took longer to agree, reflecting local circumstances, and in some of these, arrangements have yet to be fully implemented. The President will not extend the Interim Guidance beyond September 2010.

**19** Cafcass's data record that the proportion of unallocated cases fell from peaks of around 9 per cent of care cases in August 2009 and 35 per cent of private law cases in May 2009, to 2 per cent of care cases and 5 per cent of private law cases in June 2010. The reduction is due to initiatives including the revised operating priorities, the President's Interim Guidance and the increasing use of duty allocation in some areas. Improvements vary between areas. The proportion of unallocated public law cases has returned to pre-autumn 2008 levels.

**20** Though duty allocations in care cases provide a means for managing demand, they are unpopular with some Cafcass staff, courts and local authorities, because work on a case assessed as relatively low risk may be delayed. Ofsted inspections and Cafcass's own audits have raised concerns about the effectiveness of some areas' duty procedures.

**21** In private law, judicial cooperation in reducing the proportion of cases where a report is ordered under section 7 of the Children Act (1989) appears to have contributed to improving Cafcass's capacity, but this is not reflected in the other measures of its performance that we have examined, for example timely filing of section 7 reports.

**22** Cafcass has now improved its capacity to manage the increased caseload. In our view, however, Cafcass had not achieved the organisational cohesiveness required to put it in a strong position to respond as demand increased. Cafcass could have reacted more quickly and cost-effectively had management made more and faster progress in resolving the organisational challenges they were aware of prior to November 2008.

### Meeting future demand

**23** Cafcass continues to face an enormous challenge. The number of open care cases, which require the greatest work effort, is steadily building. By June 2010 Cafcass was working on more than 4,600 (44 per cent) more open public law cases than in November 2008. Cafcass estimates that on average, for every extra month in the duration of a care case, staff must input an extra ten hours of work effort.

**24** At the same time Cafcass is undertaking a major programme of service reform. In mid-2009, the Department commissioned a review of Cafcass to assess the gap between its current capacity and that needed to meet the increased demand, and to recommend a course of action to improve efficiency. Subsequently, Cafcass has brought together current and new initiatives into a single transformation programme. The Department granted Cafcass £10 million to begin delivery of the programme in 2010-11.

**25** The transformation programme will require substantial changes to the way family court advisers work but the communication strand of the programme lacks detail and was the last to be developed. Staff morale is good in some service areas but remains low in others. Cafcass has developed existing managers and brought in new managers with the required skills in supporting teams, although some areas still lack leaders with the ability to help staff through change.

**26** Cafcass's staff had a high sickness absence rate in 2009-10 of around 11.6 days on average, an increase of 2.2 days since 2007. Family court advisers missed 16.1 days each on average in 2009-10 – 17,000 days in total. Cafcass has recently begun to address long-term sickness absence.

**27** Historically Cafcass only recruited experienced social workers and now 12 per cent of staff are approaching retirement. Cafcass's response is to develop a broader workforce strategy including a three-year development programme for newly qualified social workers, and increasing the number of family support workers to 85.

**28** Throughout this report we have used Cafcass's case management data for our analysis. Cafcass has found variations in accuracy in its data audits, Ofsted has observed significant examples of data being incorrect, and we identified varying levels of accuracy in our own validation exercise. While data quality is improving and in our view the data are useful for identifying trends, caution should be exercised in the use of absolute values.

**29** The widespread use of paper records in the family justice system limits Cafcass's ability to make optimal use of IT. Cafcass management also have substantial concerns about the fitness for purpose of the main office IT systems, sponsored by the Cabinet Office and run by external contractors. These factors hamper Cafcass's use of IT in its efforts to monitor performance and improve its management and cost effectiveness.

**30** Cafcass is now implementing changes that should allow it to better deal with future demand fluctuations. It needs to improve the planning and communication of the changes, and overcome continuing difficulties with management information, IT systems, and in engaging all staff.

### **Conclusion on value for money**

**31** Cafcass has had to cope with a very large growth in demand for its services, and the consequent cost increases do not represent a failure of value for money. However, management had only partly resolved known organisational challenges by the time demand started to increase in November 2008, which restricted its ability to respond as efficiently and effectively as it otherwise could have done. To this extent Cafcass was not well placed to deliver good value for money, and the negative impact of the increase in demand on Cafcass's performance could have been less.

## Recommendations

**32** Our recommendations are framed around the further work needed if Cafcass is to meet the challenge it still faces and better serve the children and families it supports.

- a** **To be successful the transformation programme requires greater organisational cohesiveness and improvements in staff morale.** Increased workload and high pace of change in working practices over recent years have undermined the morale of some staff, some of whom already had low levels of affiliation with Cafcass. The communication plan for the transformation programme, not yet well developed, is essential to win the confidence of staff. There must be clear communication of the rationale for and implications of the programme, and opportunities for staff to shape implementation.
- b** **Sickness absence remains high.** Managers must provide the high level of staff support needed to manage the tensions inherent in their jobs and the changes they are experiencing. Cafcass should include important related indicators such as staff retention and sickness absence as part of managers' individual accountability.
- c** **Relationships with partner organisations are good in some areas but poor in others.** Areas where relationships are good should pay particular attention to sustaining them, and especially to preserving improved working with the courts when the President's Interim Guidance ends. Cafcass should work with partners to improve relationships in other areas through a combination of developing its managers in building relationships and increasing the timeliness and quality of service, so that Cafcass is seen as a reliable and trusted partner.
- d** **Cafcass faces continuing high demand for its services and pressure to improve responsiveness.** The Department should consider whether it requires additional, formal indicators to oversee Cafcass to add transparency to existing monitoring. All service areas should undertake effective business planning, including contingency planning for challenging scenarios.
- e** **Cafcass's data accuracy needs further improvement to strengthen the reliability of management information and performance indicators.** The Department should request an assessment of Cafcass's data accuracy. Cafcass should make the accuracy of case management data a high priority. Service managers should hold Cafcass staff accountable for data accuracy in supervision sessions.

# Part One

## Could Cafcass have forecast the increase in care case demand?

### Increase in demand for Cafcass's services

**1.1** Cafcass does not control the level of demand for its services. Public law care cases start when local authorities take decisions about children that require the family court to become involved. Most private law cases come to Cafcass when separating parents make applications for court hearings. Demand for Cafcass's services varies from month to month and across its 21 service areas.

**1.2** Throughout this report we have used Cafcass's case management data for our analysis. Though we found that data accuracy is improving, Cafcass's data must be treated with some caution. In 2009-10 Cafcass performed an audit of its case management data, comparing electronic records with case files and recording the proportion of expected fields correctly entered. It found wide variation in average accuracy of data between operational regions, from 96 per cent in North to 87 per cent in South. In South one team's accuracy was just 73 per cent against a target of 95 per cent. Ofsted in its inspections has observed significant examples of data being incorrect and we identified varying levels of data accuracy in our own limited validation exercise. We have concluded that the data are useful for identifying trends but caution should be exercised in the use of absolute values.

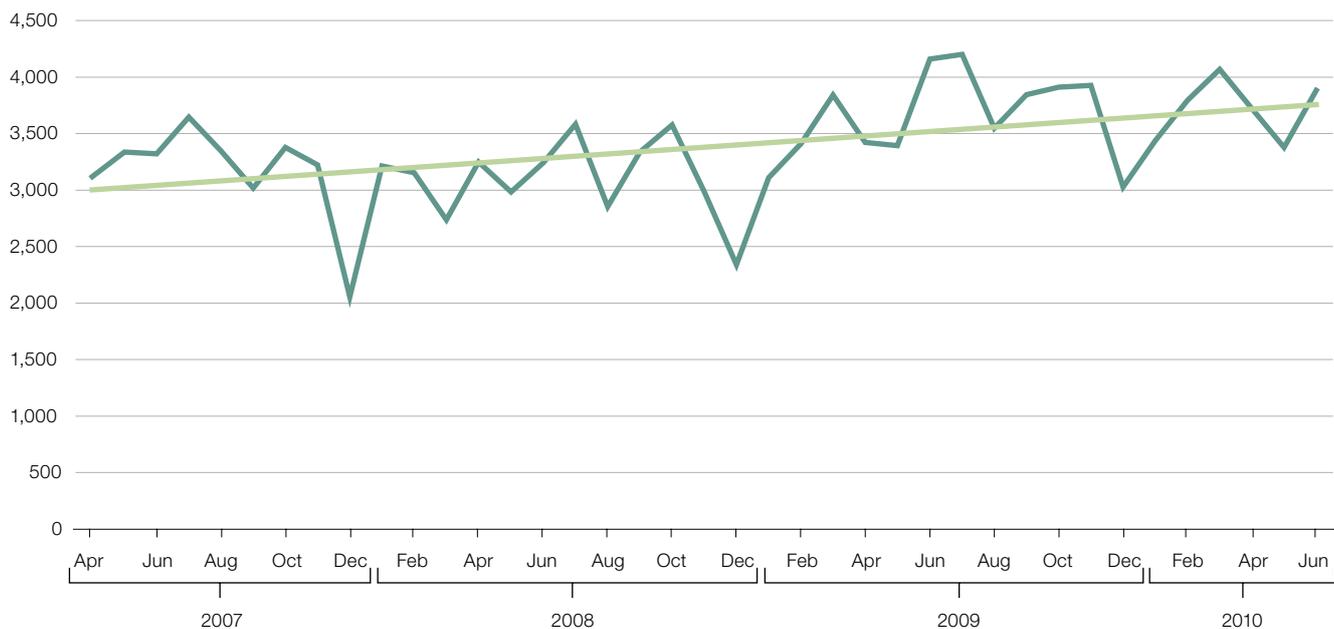
**1.3** The number of new care applications increased substantially from late 2008 and through 2009 (**Figure 2**). Over the same period, the number of new private law applications also increased.

**1.4** The introduction of the Public Law Outline in the family justice system – requiring local authorities to improve their preparation of cases before making applications – demonstrates the influence of external factors on demand for Cafcass's services. Effective from April 2008, it led to an immediate drop in the number of new care cases, with a return to roughly the previous year's level by July 2008.

**1.5** Local authorities' tolerance of risk fell markedly following publicity surrounding the Baby Peter case in November 2008. The then Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to Directors of Children's Services in local authorities in December 2008 requesting that they review all their current cases. Most local authorities became more cautious in their decisions regarding the welfare of vulnerable children, resulting in more applications to the courts for care orders (**Figure 3** on page 14).

**Figure 2**

New care and private law cases, April 2007 to June 2010

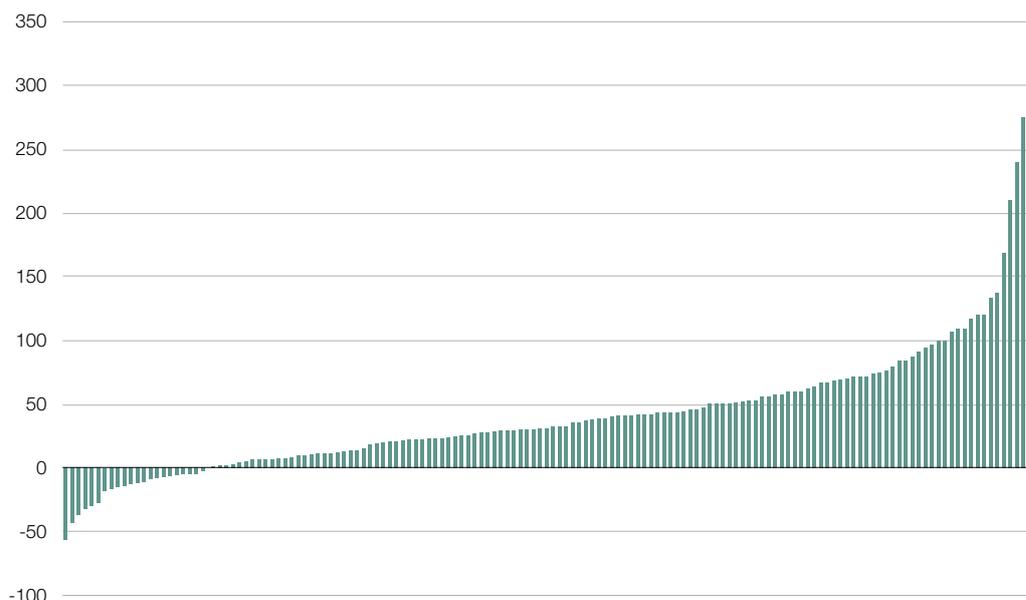
**Care cases****Number of cases****Private law cases****Number of cases**

— Month-to-month variation    — Overall trend (least squares method)

**Figure 3**

Proportional change in number of care cases referred to court by local authorities, 2008-09 to 2009-10

**Change in proportion of cases (%)**



**NOTE**

1 Each bar represents one local authority.

Source: Cafcass

**How far was the increase in demand anticipated?**

**1.6** Though Cafcass did not anticipate the sustained increase in demand from November 2008, neither did the Department nor other organisations in the family justice system. The consensus among professionals and representatives from the sector we consulted was that Cafcass could not have predicted with any degree of accuracy the size of the increase or how long it would last. Most observers anticipated that demand would peak and then return to previous levels within a few months, as happened following the Victoria Climbié case in 2000.

**1.7** By April 2009, Cafcass management concluded that care demand would not return to former levels and that action was required to address ongoing high levels of demand.

**1.8** Cafcass and its partners liaise formally through Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Family Justice Councils, though these bodies do not regularly gather and synthesise intelligence nor routinely attempt assessments of trends in case numbers. The Children Act 1989 guidance requires local authorities to notify Cafcass of the prospect of commencement of proceedings. Communication between Cafcass and the local authority is especially important because local authorities with similar demographics differ greatly in their propensity to refer care cases to court. Though communications with local authorities are effective in some areas, they depend on the quality of individual relationships.

### **Was the Department adequately monitoring Cafcass?**

**1.9** The Department had long-standing concerns about the timeliness of Cafcass's service delivery. In 2004, the Department assisted Cafcass with budget analysis and demand forecasting in order to help manage delays. Early in 2009, following poor Ofsted assessments in two service areas, the Department's attention turned to improving quality. The then Secretary of State mandated quarterly monitoring meetings between the Chair, Chief Executive and Minister. With growing delays, from summer 2009 the Department refocused on timeliness.

**1.10** The Department's monitoring of Cafcass was adequate. It involved monthly tracking of performance against budget and a range of performance indicators as well as attendance at Cafcass's monthly management team meetings and Board meetings. In addition, there were weekly, informal discussions about risk, facilitated by the co-location of Cafcass's and the Department's head offices.

**1.11** For 2008-09, Cafcass had eight key performance indicators, reported to Parliament, covering allocations of public law cases (two), early intervention, quality of case work (no target set), risk identification, service user satisfaction, diversity monitoring and staff appraisals. There were no key performance indicators covering allocations in private law or timeliness of work to courts. The only key performance indicator on efficiency of Cafcass's case management was the target for allocating public law cases promptly, but it was easily met, having been set at just 65 per cent. Otherwise the targets did not reflect management of the increasing demand, and Cafcass performed well against them, only missing the target for staff appraisals.

**1.12** In 2009-10, Cafcass reported on a reduced number of four key performance indicators. Allocations of both public and private law cases were covered, and the indicators on service user satisfaction and quality of case work were retained. The Department expanded the range of indicators for 2010-11.

**1.13** Poor data validity compromised the usefulness of some of the performance indicators. In particular, in 2009-10 the key performance indicator on customer satisfaction had a sample size of only 363 adults and children which, given Cafcass had helped 140,000 children, is too small to represent levels or trends in user satisfaction accurately.

### **Did Cafcass have a contingency plan to manage an increase in demand?**

**1.14** Delays in allocating family court advisers to care cases had existed before Cafcass was formed in 2001. An enquiry by the Committee on the Lord Chancellor's Department in 2003 recommended that Cafcass should improve its forecasting of, and responsiveness to, increases in demand.

**1.15** Though it has a history of variable demand, Cafcass has not historically undertaken planning for scenarios of increased demand as part of its risk management arrangements. It did not have a strategy to handle such a large and sustained increase in demand for its services. Before the increase from autumn 2008, the main way that Cafcass managed peaks in demand was to appoint self-employed contractors.

## Part Two

### Was Cafcass's response to increased demand appropriate and effective?

#### What happened to cases when demand increased from November 2008?

**2.1** The increasing number of care cases presented a challenge to all parts of the family justice system. Total open cases requiring Cafcass's attention accumulated (**Figure 4** overleaf). By June 2010, Cafcass was working on over 4,600 (44 per cent) more open public law cases than in November 2008.

**2.2** Case durations lengthened, for example between 2008-09 and 2009-10 average duration of section 7 private law cases lengthened from around 43 to 58 weeks. Case duration is affected by matters outside Cafcass's influence, for example time between court hearings.

**2.3** In care cases, Cafcass estimates that for every month longer a case takes, it must commit an extra ten hours of work effort to keep the case up to date. The Laming report, *The protection of children in England*, published in March 2009, noted that for many children the length of delay in a care case was unacceptable, and any delay was likely to undermine the child's best interests.

**2.4** As more new care cases came in, the number of cases not yet allocated to a family court adviser grew and peaked at around 980 in August 2009 (**Figure 5** on page 19). Between November 2008 and August 2009, the proportion of public law cases awaiting allocation increased from 3 per cent to 10 per cent of open cases. From April to August 2009, around one third of private law cases were unallocated, peaking at around 10,100 cases in June 2009.

**2.5** In April 2009, Cafcass began to consider changes to its delivery model to handle the new levels of care demand.

#### How was the delivery model changed?

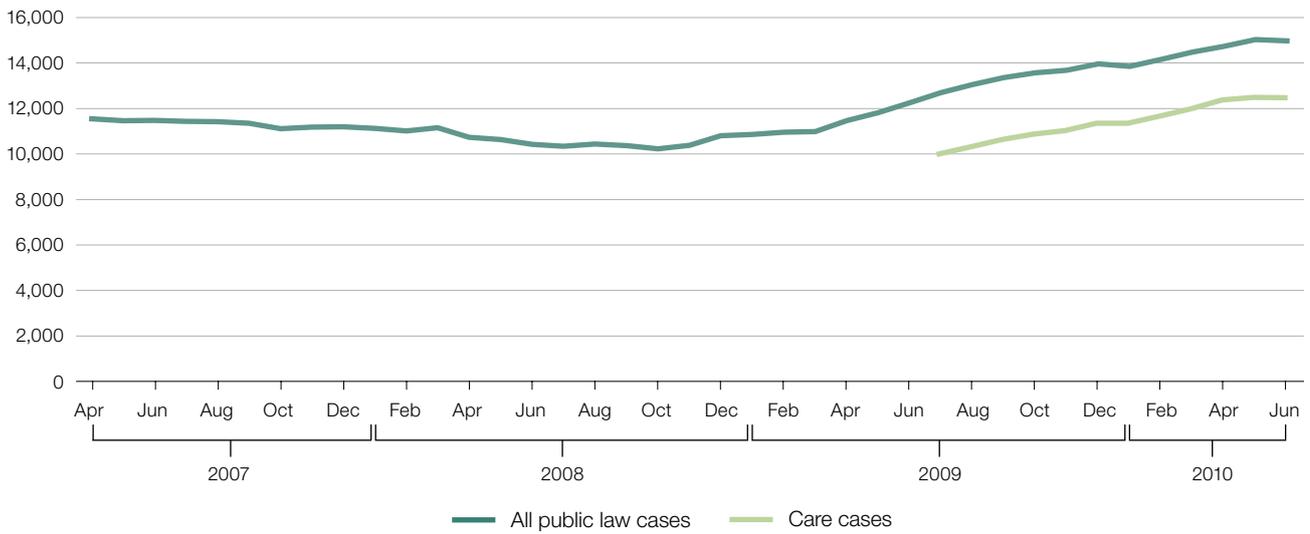
##### Introducing revised operating priorities for Cafcass

**2.6** Cafcass needed the cooperation of judiciary for the changes to work. Between April and June 2009, Cafcass's Chief Executive met the former President of the Family Division and other senior judiciary to discuss possible changes in working practices.

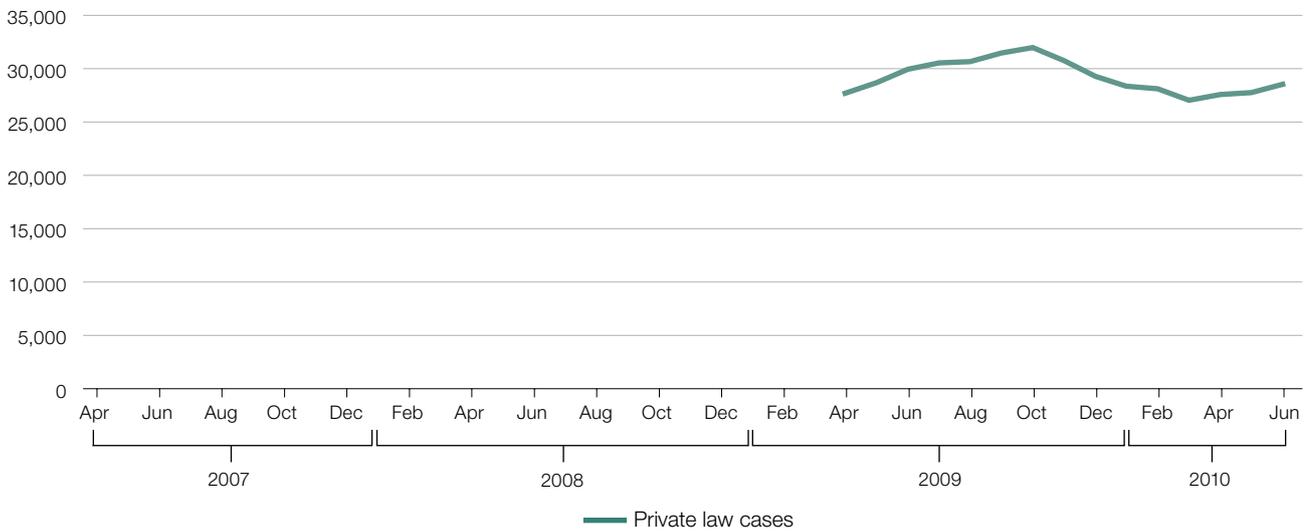
**Figure 4**

Total number of open public and private law cases, April 2007 to June 2010

**Number of cases**



**Number of cases**



**NOTE**

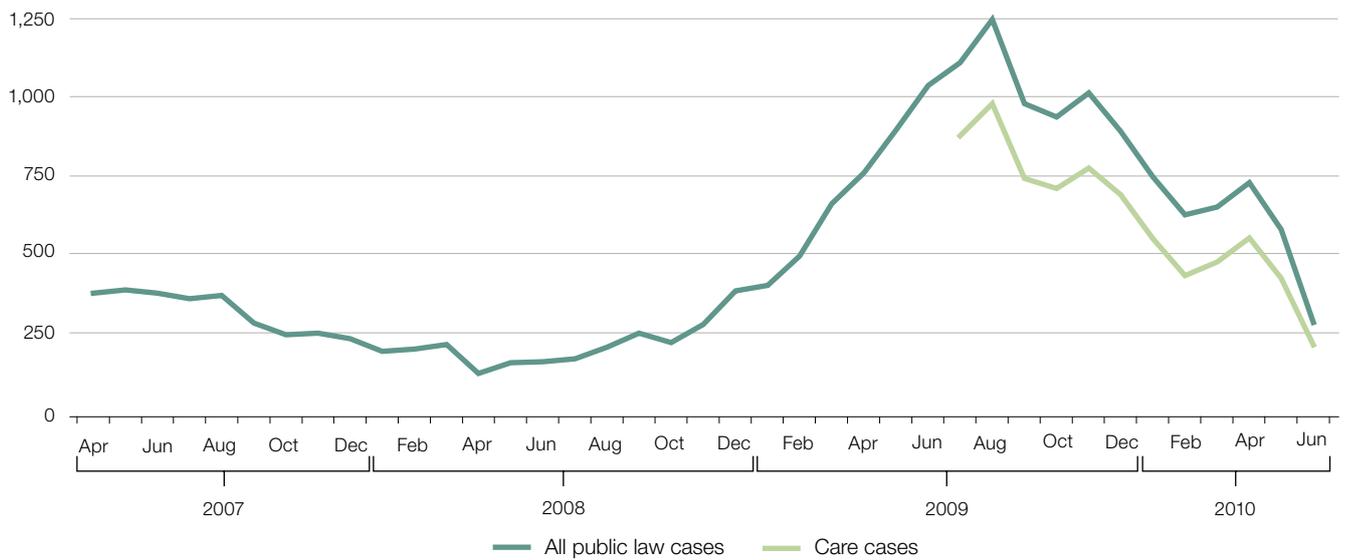
1 Cafcass has no data on total number of open private law cases before April 2009, or separate data on total number of care cases before July 2009.

Source: Cafcass

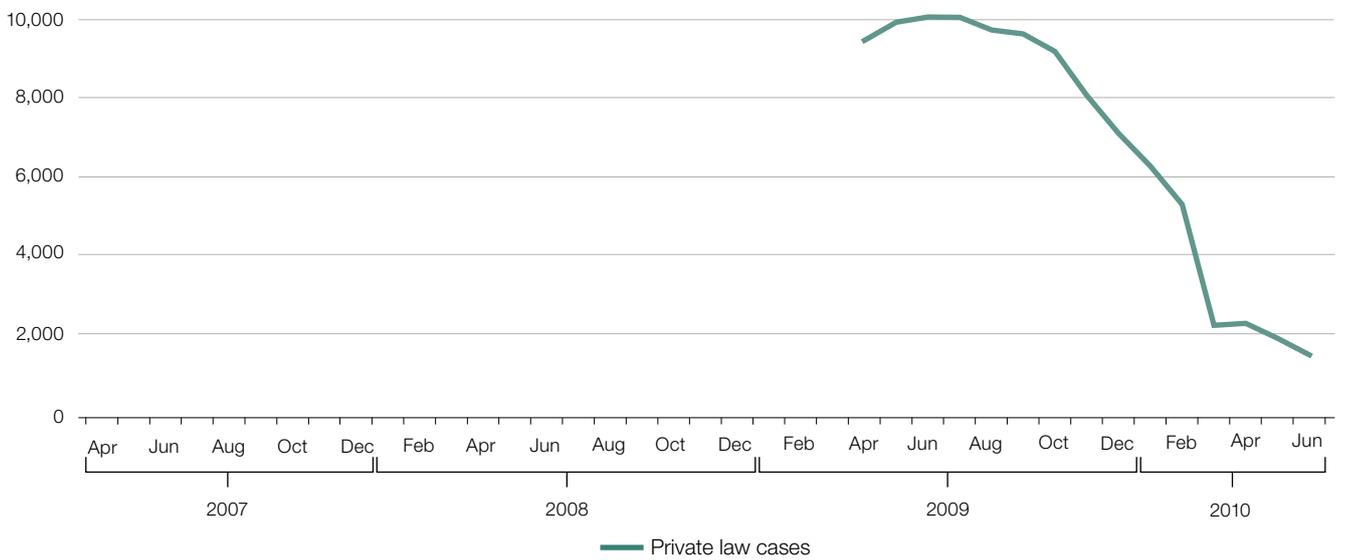
**Figure 5**

Number of unallocated public and private law cases, April 2007 to June 2010

**Unallocated cases**



**Unallocated cases**



**NOTE**

1 Cafcass has no data on unallocated private law cases before April 2009.

Source: Cafcass

**2.7** The former President introduced Interim Guidance for judiciary that was initially intended to apply until 31 March 2010, but he later extended it to 30 September 2010 while re-emphasising that the Guidance was temporary. The Guidance set out interim arrangements for prioritising new and delayed cases according to the welfare needs of children, for extending duty schemes to care cases, and in private law cases for reducing the amount of reporting work requested of family court advisers by the courts to levels proportionate to the issues identified in each case. Adoption of the guidance in each area was at the discretion of local senior judiciary, reflecting their independence. In the majority of areas judiciary implemented the Guidance fully, especially where relations with Cafcass were good and Cafcass was trusted as an effective partner. In a few areas local circumstances, for example high proportions of unallocated cases, caused Cafcass and the judiciary to take longer to agree arrangements. In some areas, for example parts of London, local arrangements have yet to be fully implemented.

**2.8** The President will not extend the Interim Guidance beyond September 2010. He is concerned not to perpetuate arrangements that were intended to be temporary, and that in his view, run the risk of compromising the independence of the judiciary and family court advisers' advice to the courts. He has a particular concern that the duty system has resulted in essential work on some care cases not being undertaken.

**2.9** Cafcass issued revised operating priorities to local service areas in August 2009 requiring fundamental changes in practice from 1 October 2009, the same date as the commencement of the Interim Guidance. The revised operating priorities:

- required staff to reduce the level of work on cases to a safe minimum, defined as always identifying and analysing potential safeguarding risks to children while using professional judgement to reduce other tasks to those absolutely necessary and within budget. Other case work may only be undertaken with managerial approval;
- introduced temporary measures for prioritising work on cases; and
- required discussion with local judiciary to reduce work to the safe minimum.

**2.10** Responsibilities for applying the revised operating priorities were clearly attributed. Final responsibility lay with Cafcass's Chief Executive. Operational responsibility was delegated to heads of service.

**2.11** In our view the document that set out the revised operating priorities gave a clear and comprehensive picture of the changes in expectations of family court advisers and the rationale was set out well. It also benefited from the inclusion of the President's Interim Guidance, so that staff could understand the important connection between the two. However, we felt that the accompanying letter, an important document to rally staff and contractors, was not motivating. It varied in tone between being persuasive and being critical of performance, and could undermine staff's belief that Cafcass valued their professional skills.

**2.12** As the revised priorities were prepared, Cafcass's staff were kept well informed through its staff newsletter, which provided information on the discussions with senior judiciary about changes in the service. Cafcass's Chief Executive is carrying out 30 workshops at offices around England to explain and promote the revised priorities, with feedback shaping the development of a new Proportionate Working Toolkit.

### Implementing the revised operating priorities

**2.13** Given the urgency of action, the creation of lengthy planning documentation to support the revised operating priorities would not have been a sensible use of time or resources. However, Cafcass was not able to provide an implementation plan. Supervision and support of family court advisers in applying the priorities was vital to success because of the advisers' history of independent practice, but there was no detailed assessment of the resources and skills needed to deliver the changes or mitigation of risks, such as damage to staff morale.

## What happened to cases when the revised operating priorities were applied?

### Managing staff caseload

**2.14** The number of public law cases allocated for action to each family court adviser has increased by more than one third since October 2008 (**Figure 6** overleaf). Caseloads vary markedly by area for care and private law cases (**Figure 7** on page 23). In addition to the indicative workloads, advisers may also have duty responsibilities.

**2.15** The number of employed family court advisers fell by 5 per cent (51 full-time equivalent staff) in the 18 months after October 2008, contributing to the increased use of agency staff. The number of service managers increased by 14 per cent and the number of family support workers increased by 11 per cent.

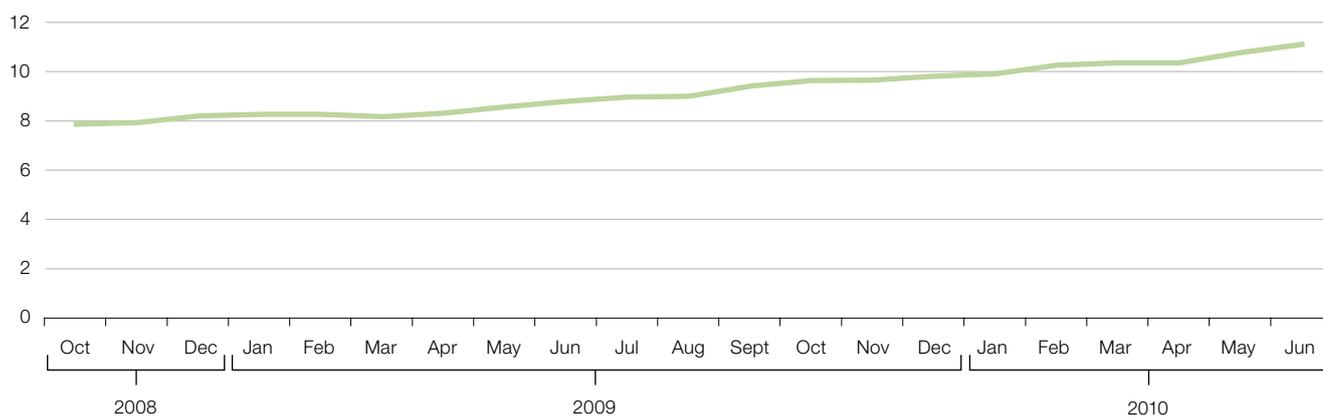
### Allocation of cases

**2.16** Despite increasing levels of new cases, Cafcass's case management data suggested that the proportion of cases unallocated to a family court adviser fell from summer 2009 (**Figure 8** on page 24). Between April 2009 and June 2010, the proportion of public law unallocated cases fell from around 7 per cent to 2 per cent; in private law the fall was from 34 per cent to 5 per cent. Some of this improvement was a result of the Interim Guidance and the revised operating priorities. In both public and private law, the fall in unallocated cases was closely matched by an increase in duty allocations.

**Figure 6**

Approximate family court adviser public law caseloads, October 2008 to June 2010

Average number of fully allocated public law cases per family court adviser

**NOTE**

- 1 Monthly number of open public law cases, divided by number of full-time equivalent family court advisers, plus an estimated number of self-employed contractors, because Cafcass has no time-series data on individual advisers' caseloads.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Cafcass data

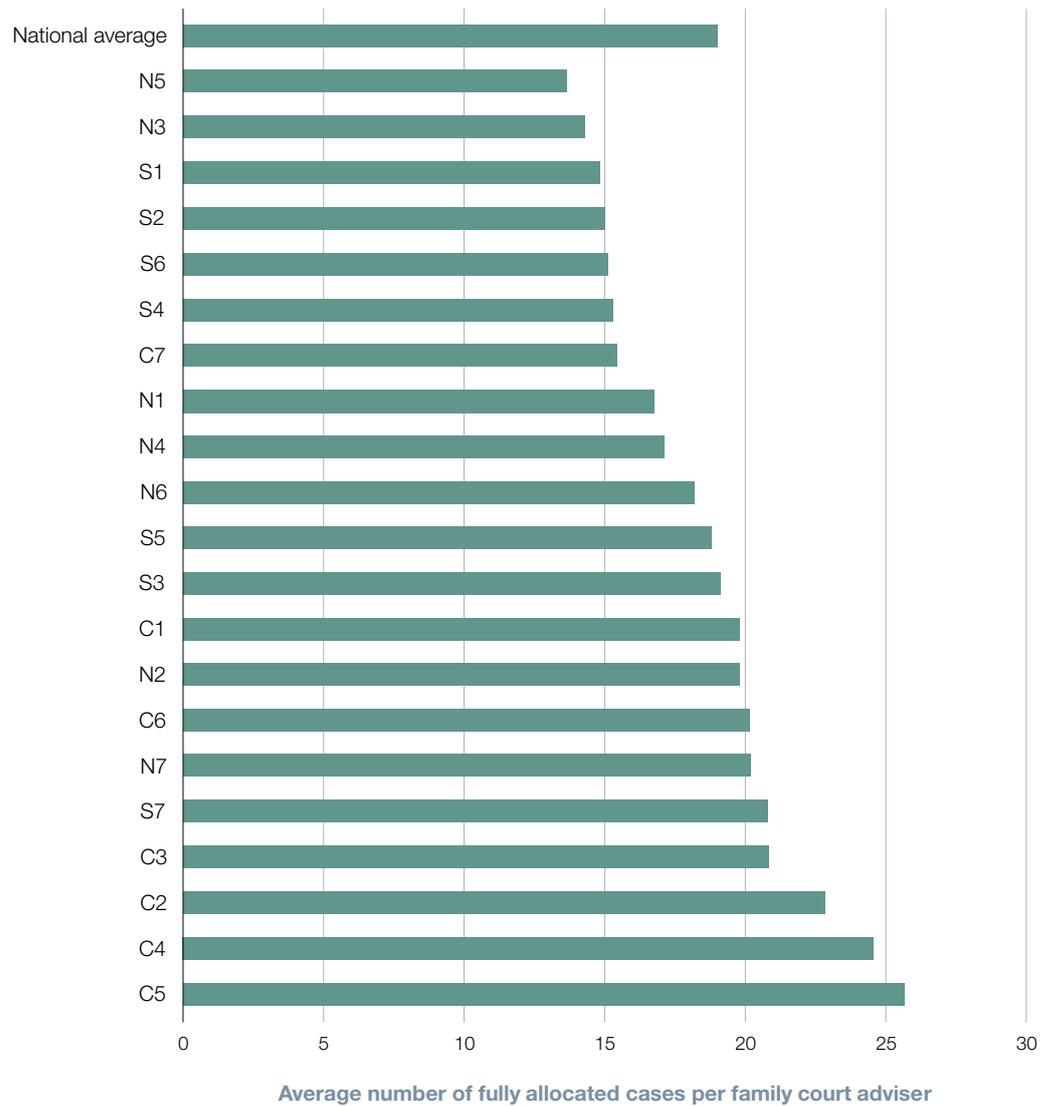
**2.17** Duty allocations are interim allocations to a family court adviser to assess incoming cases and queries. They give Cafcass more flexibility in handling workload and are intended to ensure appropriate attention is given to riskier cases. In private law, the duty allocated family court adviser undertakes the initial identification of safeguarding concerns. In public law, Cafcass has temporarily introduced duty allocations to assess a care case prior to the case management conference. Cafcass plans to discontinue duty allocation of care cases in areas where it is no longer required. In any event, when the President's Interim Guidance ceases to have effect on 30 September 2010, duty allocation of care cases will only occur where it forms part of local arrangements with local judiciary.

**2.18** Ofsted inspection reports identified concerns that duty allocated cases were not always prioritised reliably according to risk, though Ofsted accepts that well-run duty systems should support proportionate working.

**Figure 7**

Average caseload per family court adviser, 7 July 2010

Service area



**NOTES**

- 1 Average of individual, employed family court adviser's fully allocated care and private law cases.
- 2 Service area locations are listed in Appendix Two.

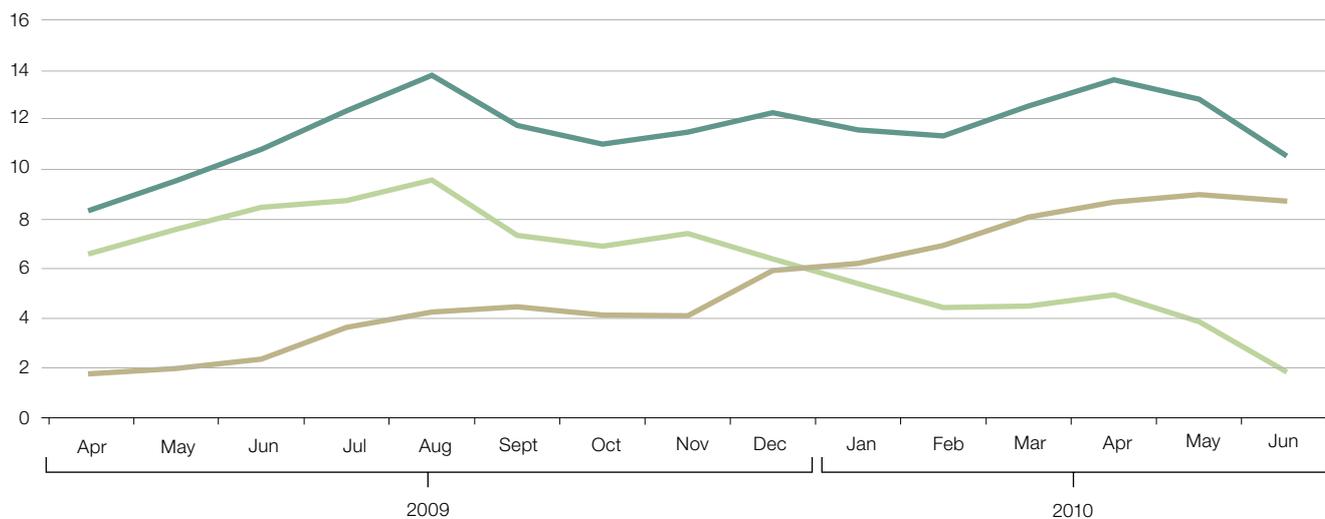
Source: Cafcass

**Figure 8**

Percentage of public and private law cases recorded as unallocated and allocated to duty, April 2009 to June 2010

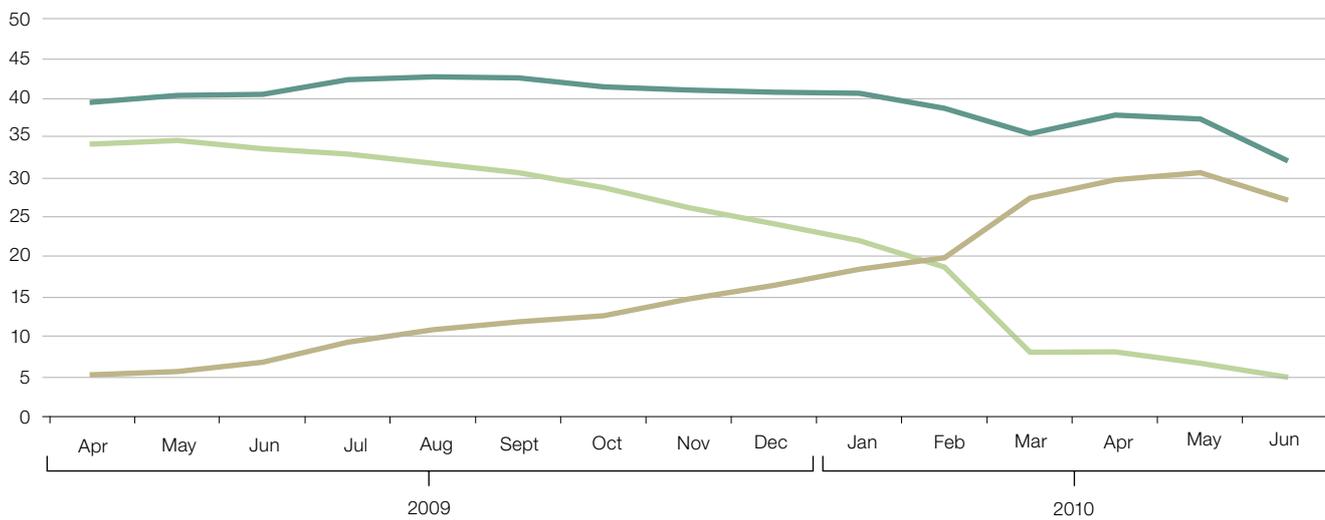
**Public law cases**

Cases (%)



**Private law cases**

Cases (%)



— Total unallocated and duty allocated — Unallocated — Duty allocated

Source: Cafcass

**2.19** Duty allocations in care cases are unpopular with some Cafcass staff, courts, solicitors and local authorities, who related examples of:

- duty advisers having insufficient time to review information;
- disrupted continuity impacting on all parties and partners over the course of the case; and
- inconsistent advice to the courts on a single case as the family court adviser changes.

Cafcass accepts these concerns but emphasises that duty allocation in care cases is preferable to leaving the case unallocated, as it enables Cafcass to have early involvement in a case.

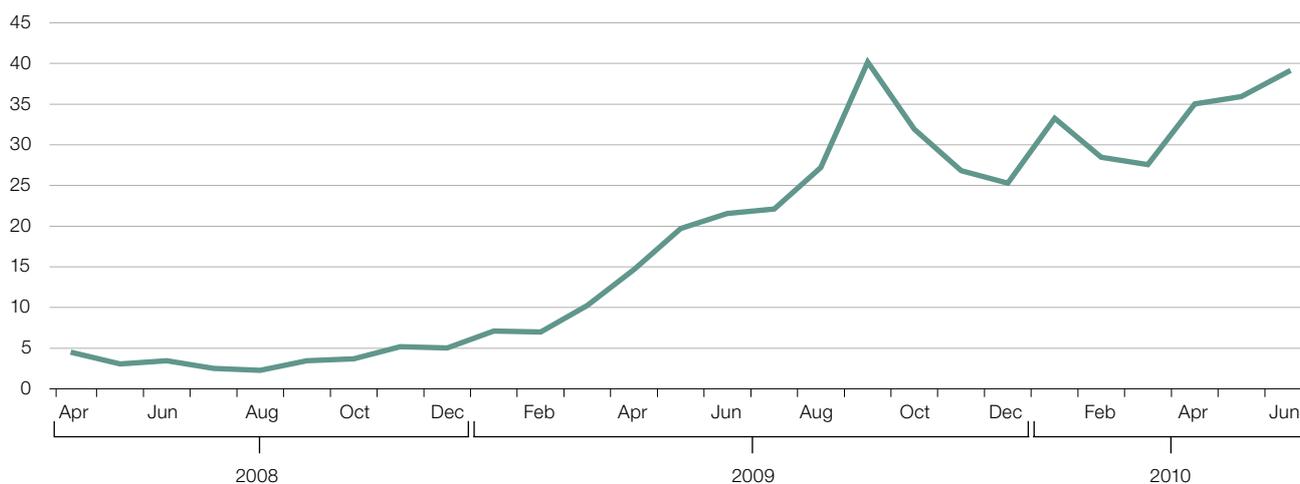
### Time to allocate care cases

**2.20** Prior to autumn 2008, Cafcass had been meeting expectations to fully allocate a care case within three days but from December 2008, as the number of new care cases increased, the time taken rose considerably (**Figure 9**). In June 2010, Cafcass took around 40 working days on average to fully allocate a care case. Service areas varied greatly. The extension in the time to fully allocate has been somewhat mitigated by the introduction of the duty system, meaning essential work can be carried out before full allocation.

## Figure 9

Time taken to fully allocate a care case, April 2008 to June 2010

Working days (average)



Source: Cafcass

## Throughput of cases

**2.21** Since the major increase in new care cases, the number of cases closed by the courts each month has fallen. Care case closures were at their lowest level in June 2010 (**Figure 10**). Equilibrium, whereby one new case arrives as another one closes, has not been achieved since the final quarter of 2008. In June 2010, nearly five new care cases arrived for every one closing. Trends in new and closed private law cases matched more closely.

**2.22** A review of Cafcass's operations in January 2010 by external consultants, commissioned by the Department, indicated that throughput of private law cases was improving. The consultants suggested two causes: that service areas had undertaken activity to close a backlog of inactive cases on the system, and the reduction in the volume of section 7 reports ordered by the courts.

## Requests for private law section 7 reports

**2.23** Following the President's Interim Guidance, the courts ordered initial<sup>1</sup> section 7 reports on a lower proportion of private law cases, falling from 38 per cent in 2008-09 to 26 per cent in 2009-10. The reduction varied between service areas (**Figure 11** on page 28). Additionally, the Interim Guidance suggested that judges could order shorter, more issue-specific reports where appropriate.

**2.24** Where judiciary requested fewer section 7 reports, family court advisers spent on average less time per case and were able to handle a larger private law caseload, improving Cafcass's capacity.

**2.25** Our analysis does not suggest that decreases in section 7 ordering had an impact on other measures of Cafcass's performance, for example, timeliness in filing section 7 reports. Around 37 per cent of section 7 reports ordered in both 2008-09 and 2009-10 (both initial and follow-up), were submitted to the court after the filing date (**Figure 12** on page 29), and service areas varied in average length of delay. The average delay increased by one working day between 2008-09 and 2009-10, to around 14 days, though more than half of late reports were five days late or less (**Figure 13** on page 30), and would have been in time for the court hearing, since hearings are generally set for 5-10 days after the filing date. However, nearly one third of late reports were 11 or more days late.

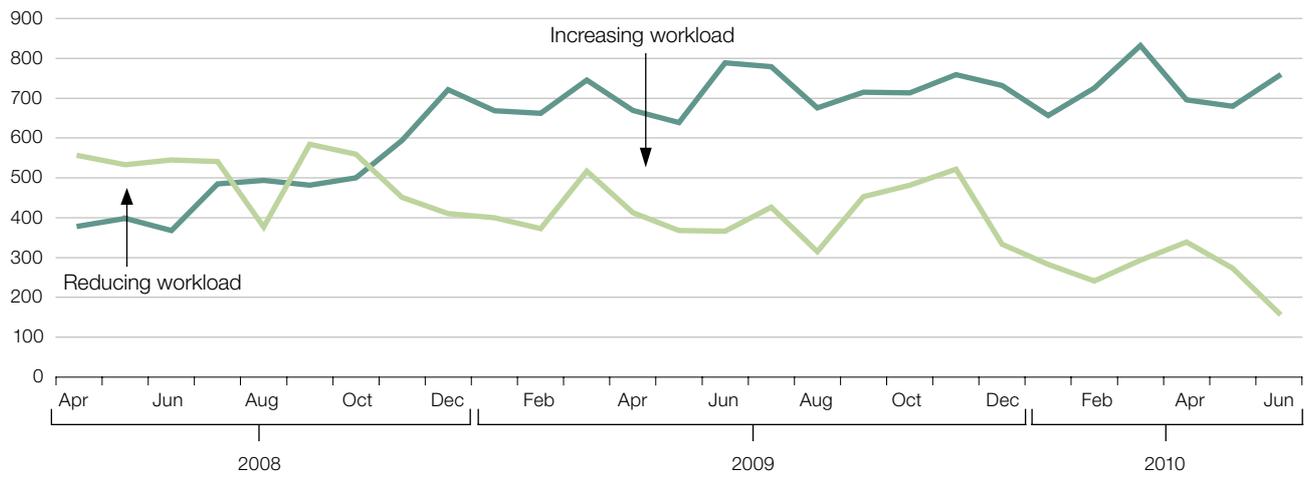
<sup>1</sup> The first report ordered on a case. Judges may subsequently order one or more follow-up reports.

**Figure 10**

Flows of public and private law cases into and out of Cafcass's workload, April 2008 to June 2010

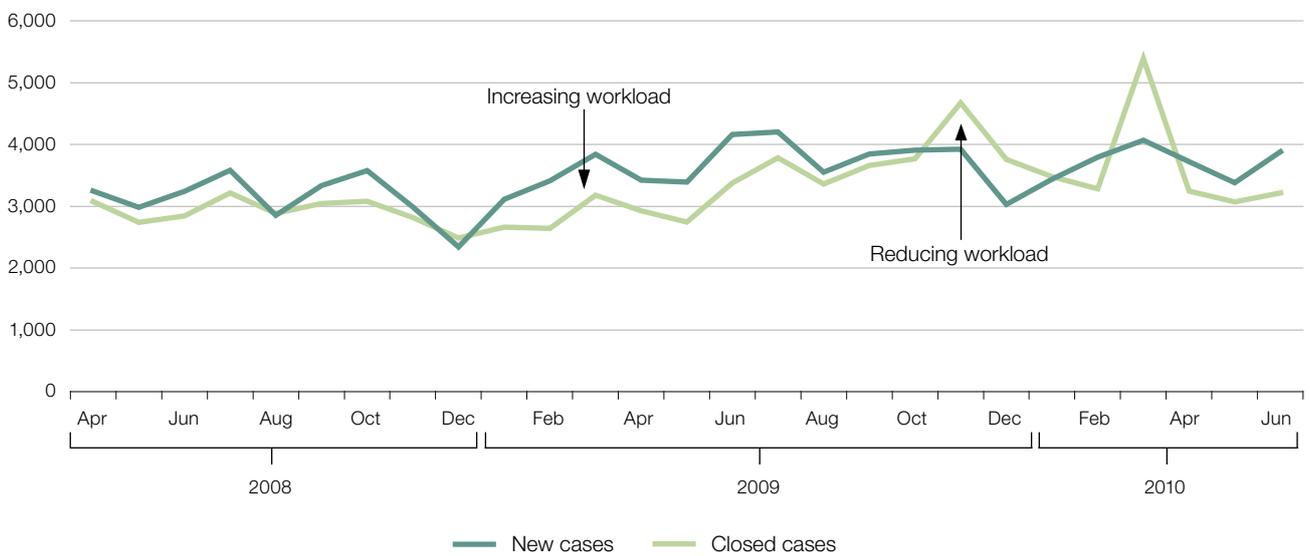
**Care cases**

**Number of cases**



**Private law cases**

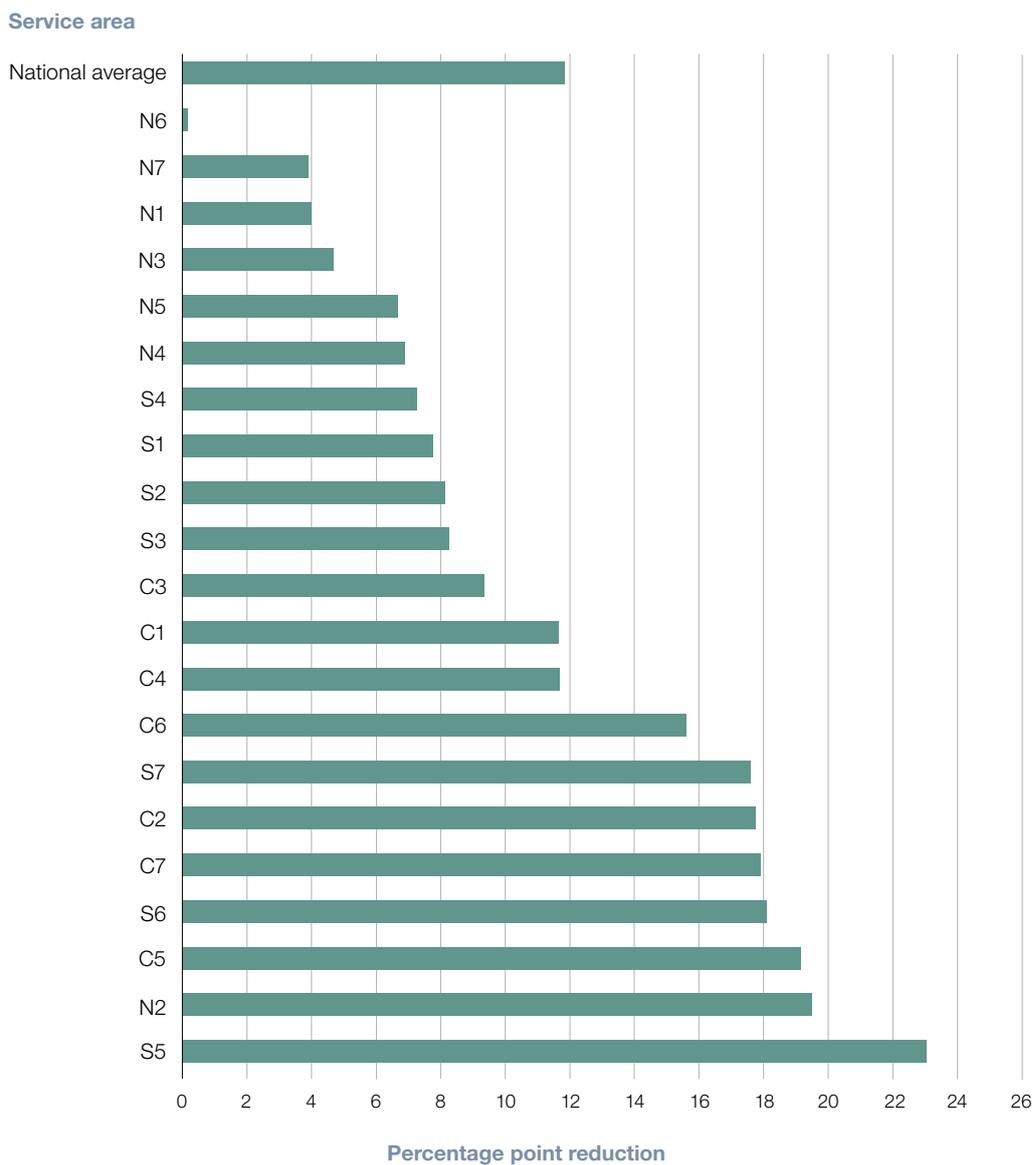
**Number of cases**



Source: Cafcass

**Figure 11**

Reduction in proportion of initial section 7 reports ordered, by service area, 2008-09 to 2009-10



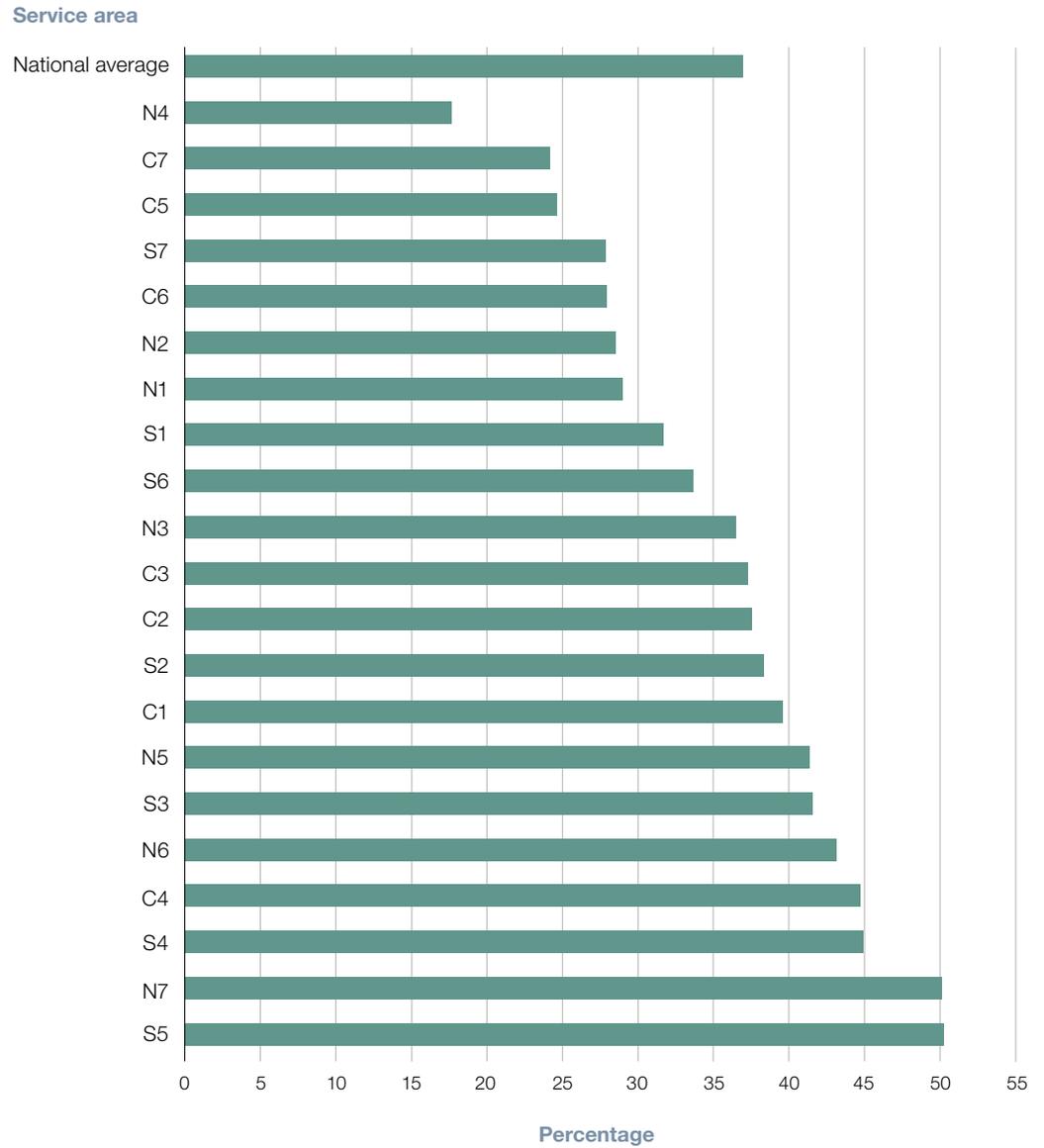
**NOTE**

1 Service area locations are listed in Appendix Two.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Cafcass data

**Figure 12**

Proportion of section 7 reports filed after filing date, by service area, 2009-10



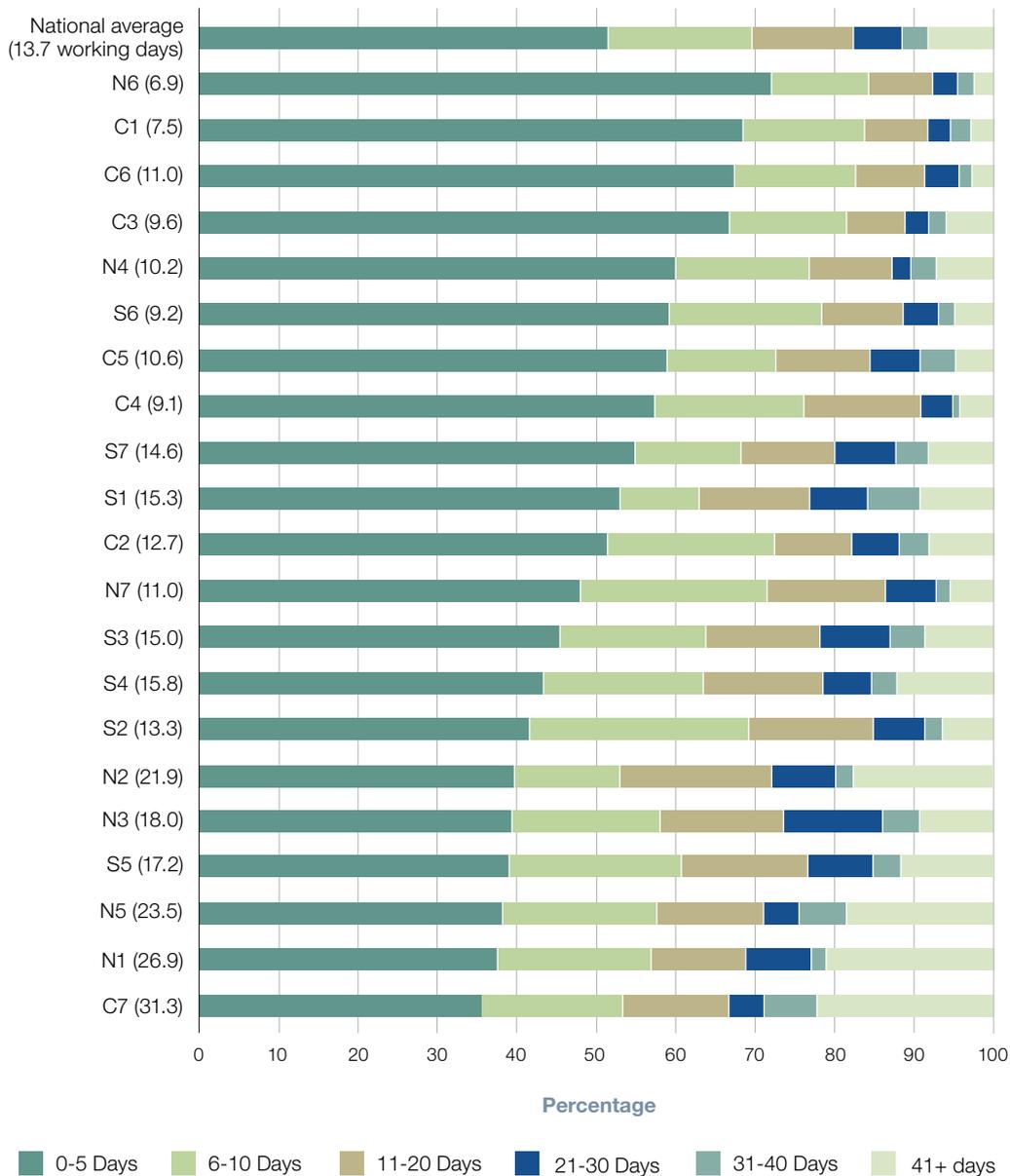
**NOTES**

- 1 Calculated as the number of section 7 reports filed after the filing date set by the court in 2009-10 divided by the number of section 7 reports requested in 2009-10. Reports filed late may have been ordered in 2008-09.
- 2 Service area locations are listed in Appendix Two.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Cafcass data

**Figure 13**

Length of delay in late section 7 reports by service area, 2009-10



**NOTE**  
 1 Service area locations are listed in Appendix Two.

Source: Cafcass

**2.26** Nine service areas are a particular concern as both the proportion of section 7 reports filed late and the average length of the delay increased between 2008-09 and 2009-10. Ofsted found that the timeliness of work, particularly in private law cases, was inadequate in six of the ten service areas inspected, satisfactory in three and good in one.

### How was Cafcass's budget managed?

**2.27** The large increase in workload put substantial pressure on Cafcass's budgets. In particular it incurred additional spending on self-employed contractors and agency workers, which rose from £8.9 million in 2007-08, to £10.0 million in 2008-09 and £13.1 million in 2009-10. **Figure 14** shows the movements in Cafcass's budgets for the current and the previous two years.

**2.28** Cafcass overspent its budget in 2008-09 by £3.1 million, and the Department reprofiled funding from 2010-11 to meet this amount. A further £1.5 million was brought forward from 2010-11 to meet additional demand in 2009-10.

**2.29** In addition, the Department provided £2.5 million new funding to increase capacity in London and for management redundancies. By November 2009 it became clear that Cafcass would exceed its revised 2009-10 allocation and the Department provided a further £2.3 million. It accepted that Cafcass had taken steps to improve capacity, and that the large increase in demand required a relatively small increase in budget (around 2 per cent).

**Figure 14**  
Departmental grants to Cafcass (£m)

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Original Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 allocation	114.9	124.1	132.8
Brought forward to cover additional demand 2008-09 (February 2009)	+0.5	-0.5	-
Brought forward to cover additional demand for 2009-10 (September 2009)	-	+1.5	-1.5
2008-09 overspend adjustment (September 2009)	+3.1	-	-3.1
Reprofiled allocation	118.5	125.1	128.2
Additional funding for London and management redundancies	-	+2.5	-
2009-10 managed overspend	-	+2.3	-
Transformation programme	-	-	10.0
Total grant-in-aid	118.5	129.9	138.2

Source: National Audit Office

**2.30** The budget for 2010-11 has been increased by £10 million for the transformation programme (paragraph 3.3).

**2.31** A 2009 Cafcass internal audit report investigating the 2008-09 overspend recommended improvements to budgetary controls, financial forecasting, and Cafcass's management of the contracts of its flexible workforce. Cafcass has since introduced processes to involve the Chief Executive in monitoring service areas likely to exceed expected budget by more than 15 per cent or £150,000.

### **What was the impact on quality of service?**

**2.32** Since Ofsted initiated its current inspection regime in December 2008, it has inspected ten areas, assessing eight as inadequate and two as satisfactory (Appendix Two). The inspectors acknowledged the difficulties that the increase in demand had placed on service areas, but found the quality of casework was variable and generally low.

**2.33** Ofsted found that the quality of work carried out with children and families was inadequate in five of the ten service areas inspected, but the five latest inspections were satisfactory. For quality of safeguarding, Ofsted rated two of the ten service areas inspected as inadequate.

# Part Three

## How prepared is Cafcass for reasonable variations in future demand?

### The Cafcass transformation programme

**3.1** Cafcass has created a single transformation programme, combining a number of planned and ongoing initiatives with those resulting from a review conducted by external consultants. The Department commissioned the review to assess the gap between current capacity and that needed to meet increased demand. The work was carried out between August and October 2009.

**3.2** The Department granted £10.0 million in March 2010 for the transformation programme. Financial aspects of the programme appear well planned and show some evidence of cost/benefit analysis. For the £10.0 million granted Cafcass expects cashable and non-cashable financial benefits of £2.4 million in 2010-11, £5.0 million in 2011-12, £6.8 million in 2012-13 and £8.0 million each year thereafter.

**3.3** The transformation programme is divided into eight, inter-related projects:

- **The national business centre** will centralise the data inputting initial screening, and identification of safeguarding concerns for all private law applications, with a view to improving speed and efficiency.
- **Tools for effective working.** Cafcass plans to improve existing tools, such as the case management system, and develop new IT to support flexible working. A renewal of the case management system was considered, but at £5 million was deemed too expensive.
- **Frontline First** will provide one-off funding to eliminate delays in areas which put in place new practice models that demonstrate sustainability and have the support of local judiciary. Service areas have bid for a share of £3 million 'cash for change'.
- **Internal and external engagement.** Ofsted has regularly identified weakness in Cafcass's engagement with service users, and Cafcass is seeking to be more inclusive with staff, stakeholders and service users. Cafcass plans focus groups in every area, and to report the results to the Board.
- **Maximising online services.** This project will extend online access and support for service users and for Cafcass's internal functions.

- **Future operating model.** Cafcass is developing a single operating model to address concerns about variations in working practices across the country. It aims to set clear principles for operating procedures, while defining where there is scope for flexibility.
- **Workforce development** redefines career paths for both practitioners and business support staff and addresses the balance between core and flexible workers. It will review quality assurance practices to enhance performance and staff well-being.
- **Estates rationalisation.** Cafcass plans to refurbish or close unsatisfactory offices and relocate services where necessary. There should be fewer premises and a contribution to efficiency savings from 2011.

**3.4** There is some evidence of good practice in programme management: risks and financial implications have been considered and quantified; expected benefits and outcomes have been defined; roles have been allocated to senior staff to drive through change; and Cafcass plans a sensible frequency of reporting.

## **Business management**

### IT and management information

**3.5** Cafcass has not optimised the use of IT in its operations. The predominance of paper files leads to inefficiencies but is common in the family justice system and limits the scope of Cafcass's improvements. IT-literacy is improving but remains an issue for some Cafcass staff.

**3.6** Cafcass's ability to track demand and direct its resources is hampered by the limitations of the case management system. The system records current cases only and cannot be interrogated to produce comparative statistics on previous cases, for example trends on individual practitioners' caseloads.

**3.7** The range of key performance indicators set by the Department for 2010-11 has improved. However, the Department must set indicators in advance. An important measure of current service quality – the proportion of duty allocated care cases – is not a key performance indicator for 2010-11, because when the indicators were set, the President's Interim Guidance not been extended to 30 September 2010, and duty allocations would only have continued in areas where local judiciary agreed. This and other measures of performance are nevertheless reported to the Department at working level and to Ministers at quarterly accountability meetings.

**3.8** The robustness of 2010-11's key performance indicators relating to speed in allocating care cases and meeting report filing times in private law is reduced by inaccuracies in case management data (paragraph 1.2). We found that accuracy was improving where these data were being considered in supervisions with staff.

**3.9** Cafcass management have substantial continuing concerns about the fitness for purpose of the main office IT system run by Fujitsu (the Cabinet Office sponsored 'flex' system). The system absorbs a lot of management time and Cafcass suggests that it is yet to show significant benefits.

**3.10** Cafcass has made progress in aligning its local level performance reporting with national priorities. Cafcass's management information team introduced a new summary report for service managers showing their family court advisers' workloads by stage of case. This report provides better detail on workloads and aligns with an improved area performance summary for the Board and Cafcass's key performance indicators for 2010-11.

### Planning for variable demand

**3.11** Since the increase in care cases there is some evidence that Cafcass has made better use of data from local authorities on numbers of children likely to be subject to care proceedings, to forecast future demand. Negotiating the implementation of the President's Interim Guidance has helped develop stronger communication with judiciary at local level, and shared action to address the problems with meeting demand.

**3.12** The modelling undertaken by external consultants for the Department's review of Cafcass answered the key question at that time, namely to estimate the amount of resources required, but it does not provide information to assist Cafcass in planning for variable demand.

**3.13** The quality and timeliness of business planning is inconsistent across the 21 service areas. As at 9 June 2010, 12 of the 21 business plans for 2010-11 had not been submitted to the Director of Finance. Those available were of variable detail, with some too general to be a useful tool for Cafcass's corporate financial and service planning. By 15 July four were still not submitted.

**3.14** In response to the overspends, Cafcass reduced expenditure on temporary staff and limited the use of agency staff to essential vacancy cover and/or specialist support. As part of the remodelling of services through Frontline First (paragraph 3.3), for 2010-11 only, Cafcass has allocated funding from the £3 million 'cash for change' to call in additional workforce capacity to clear outstanding cases.

**3.15** Cafcass's policy is to use its employed family court advisers on cases, only using self-employed contractors or temporary staff when employees are fully committed. Historically it has been difficult for Cafcass to monitor or influence the number of hours worked by self-employed contractors, who work to two nationally agreed hourly rates. In London, where there is a higher dependence on contractors there is tighter control of contractors' contracts. This practice could be spread. On 13 June 2010, around 1,500 care cases were allocated to contractors, around 12 per cent of all such cases.

## Managing human resources

### Availability of staff

**3.16** On 31 March 2010, Cafcass employed 1,022 family court advisers, 78 family support workers and 116 service managers. It had vacancies in 86 of these posts (6 per cent). Local authorities' social worker vacancy rates are around 10 per cent. South region had the highest level of vacancies at all three practitioner grades, particularly service managers in London. Our quantitative analysis did not find a clear statistical association between the level of vacancies in service areas and performance, for example, on proportion of cases allocated.

**3.17** Cafcass has historically recruited its core professional staff as experienced social workers. The new workforce strategy addresses the recruitment of social workers, which will continue to be a substantial challenge: up to 200 employees are expected to retire during 2010-11, and 58 per cent of family court advisers are aged 50 or over. Around 110 (11 per cent) family court advisers left Cafcass in 2009-10, two-fifths of whom retired. Six service areas currently have both higher than average vacancy rates and an age profile skewed towards older staff. These areas must expect that many of their advisers will retire over the next ten years.

**3.18** Later in 2010, Cafcass plans to recruit newly qualified social workers to a three-year development programme, including secondments to local authorities. The programme is part of a broader strategy to define career pathways through Cafcass, and so encourage staff retention. Under the proposals, managers are to have flexibility about staffing models, within their allocated budget – team restructuring is expected to generate annual savings of up to £9,000 per team.

**3.19** In autumn 2009, Cafcass reorganised its corporate structure to reallocate £2.7 million to front line delivery, improve governance, clarify lines of responsibility and support teams. Cafcass deleted 67.5 posts and created 18.5 new posts.

**3.20** In 2007, following an increase in the sickness absence rate for all staff to 9.5 days in 2006-07, Cafcass set a target to reduce it to 9.0 days, but sickness absence has increased further since then. In 2009-10 Cafcass's sickness absence rate averaged 11.6 per staff member. Family court advisers each missed 16.1 days on average (nearly 17,000 days lost). Cafcass acknowledges that sickness absence has a significant effect on capacity, and has recently begun to address long-term sickness absence.

### Staff engagement

**3.21** Cafcass was formed in 2001 from a multiplicity of bodies with different cultures and working practices. Terms and conditions of staff have only recently been aligned across Cafcass. Throughout the 2009-11 business plan, Cafcass recognised the need to forge a cohesive and cooperative organisational culture.

**3.22** Cafcass has a long-standing issue in achieving compliance with performance standards and management decisions, noted by both Ofsted and the Department. Ofsted has recommended that Cafcass should ensure that service managers understand and implement stated priorities for improvement.

**3.23** Our interviews with heads of service and responses to our consultation confirmed the external consultants' finding that family court advisers' morale has been low across many service areas and remains low in some. This is in common with some social work professionals in other organisations. The transformation programme requires substantial changes to the way family court advisers work, creating a tension between initiative fatigue and the need for change. The staff engagement and communication plans are the least developed strands of the programme, yet they are critical to its success.

**3.24** Cafcass senior management have recognised the need for heads of service to be capable of supporting their teams through change and have developed existing managers. Cafcass has recruited several heads of service externally to bring in the skills required, often from local authorities where there is generally a better established culture of performance management.

## Performance management

**3.25** Performance management of family court advisers has been identified as an issue in six of ten Ofsted inspections. Cafcass has been taking action to address underperformance by some family court advisers through the introduction in 2008 of a performance management framework, Quality4Children. Uptake has not been uniform across all service areas. Its success will depend on the willingness of staff to participate in a performance improvement culture which is relatively new to Cafcass and uncomfortable for some staff. Cafcass's new quality improvement teams evaluate practice using the same assessment categories as Ofsted to measure quality of casework, creating a culture of regular supervision and accountability.

**3.26** The Quality4Children framework requires six-weekly supervision of each family court adviser by service managers, and the use of quality improvement tools to assess aspects of each case. Cafcass has set a target of ten family court advisers/workers to one service manager, whose role is to oversee throughput of cases, develop and support staff, and assure quality. Nationally in March 2010, the ratio stood at nine to one. The ratio varied greatly among service areas, with two having ratios of around fourteen to one or higher. Ofsted has noted that Cafcass has not always achieved an appropriate supervisory load and needs to improve performance management skills.

**3.27** Cafcass service managers have assessed quality of work as inadequate in 6 per cent of observations, satisfactory in 44 per cent, and good or outstanding in 50 per cent. Ofsted considers some case reports rated satisfactory by service managers are still of unacceptable quality. Cafcass's quality improvement teams have also found that service managers are sometimes too generous in their assessments of quality.

**3.28** Cafcass has made extensive use of its performance and conduct procedures to address poor performance. In the 12 months to 13 December 2009, 153 staff (around 10 per cent) were subject to the informal stage of the process, of whom 48 went on to the formal stage. In the year to 13 December 2009, the work of 14 self-employed contractors was assessed as below standard, and no new cases were allocated to them. We understand from Cafcass that over the last two years, around 150 employees have left the organisation because of performance issues. Cafcass linked the newly negotiated pay system to staff performance so that only staff assessed as satisfactory or better were eligible for pay progression.

### Future challenges

**3.29** Cafcass continues to face an enormous challenge. The number of incoming care cases, which generate the greatest work, continues to rise as does the number of open care cases, with an increase of nearly 2,500 fully allocated cases (to over 11,200) at June 2010 compared with a year earlier. The external consultants commissioned by the Department undertook a follow-up review of Cafcass's operations in January 2010. It indicated that an increase in throughput had been achieved, but its extent varied between service areas. The timeframe of the review was short and insufficient to demonstrate a sustained trend, though the consultants estimated that 50 per cent of the improvement would be sustainable. The consultants' figures suggested that a fall in the number of private law section 7 reports ordered by the courts was fundamental to the improvement in capacity.

**3.30** Ofsted has assessed all but one service area of the ten inspected as having the capacity to improve. Its post-inspection reports have, with the same exception, concluded that service areas are making satisfactory progress (Appendix Two). While these results are signs of improvement, the service areas concerned may not yet be satisfactory. Ofsted initially rejected some action plans prepared by service areas in response to its recommendations.

**3.31** Ofsted is recognised by Cafcass's management and the Department to have been an important catalyst for the improvements made so far. Cafcass has argued that Ofsted should refocus inspections, since it considers that:

- Ofsted has identified the main lessons;
- there are diminishing returns from further inspections based on the current inspection model; and
- inspections incur costs – Cafcass claims it spends around £200,000 in preparation and follow-up for each inspection. Cafcass acknowledges, however, that this cost includes fundamental process improvements that should have happened routinely.

**3.32** In June 2010, Ofsted agreed to a ministerial request that during autumn/winter 2010 its inspection activity should monitor improvements achieved through the transformation programme, focusing on progress in reducing delays, compliance with safeguarding practice and risk management. Ofsted expects to resume its full inspection programme on a revised framework early in 2011 and is considering a reduced notice period for each inspection to avoid Cafcass devoting disproportionate resources to preparing for inspections.

**3.33** Cafcass's operating environment could change radically in the future. In June 2010, the Government launched a comprehensive review of the family justice system. The review will examine how the courts and other organisations such as Cafcass manage family law cases, including public and private law cases, and in particular whether there are more effective routes to resolving disputes outside of the courts.

# Appendix One

## Methodology

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### Method

Visits to three offices, one in each region to:

- assess the match between the content of the paper file and the electronic record; and
- interview heads of service/service managers/business support staff.

An analysis of Cafcass's performance data and contextual data about service areas. We used descriptive statistics and tests of significance.

Interviews with chief executive; directors of policy, finance, human resources, transformation and IT; quality improvement team staff; heads of service; service managers; business support managers; family court advisers and representatives from the Department sponsor team.

Interviews with eight key stakeholders.

Written request for information from Cafcass's partners. Twenty-one responses received.

Written request for information from staff representative groups. Five responses received.

Review of Cafcass documents, Ofsted reports and other independent literature.

Shadowing a family court adviser for one morning's casework at a court.

Commissioning a review of the consultants' modelling work.

### Purpose

A limited assessment (64 cases) of whether the case management data are sufficiently reliable for detailed analysis and to understand how data are used within service areas.

Assess and understand trends in Cafcass's performance at national and service area level.

Gain an understanding of the organisation at national and local level and the work roles of personnel.

Explore the inter-relationship between Cafcass and the legal system, and regulation of the sector.

Explore the impact of Cafcass's response to the upturn in demand.

Explore the impact of Cafcass's response to the upturn in demand.

Provide an understanding of key issues and develop and track Cafcass's response to the upturn in demand.

Strengthen our understanding of the demands upon family court advisers.

Assess its quality, strengths and limitations.

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# Appendix Two

## Ofsted inspection results by service area

Operational region and service area	Inspection: overall effectiveness	Post-inspection monitoring visit: progress against recommendations
<b>North</b>		
N1: North and South of Tyne		
N2: Durham and Tees Valley	Inadequate (Feb 2009)	Satisfactory progress (Oct 2009)
N3: Blackburn, Cumbria, Lancaster, Blackpool and Preston	Inadequate (Nov 2009)	
N4: Hull, South Humberside and York	Inadequate (Jul 2009)	Inadequate progress (May 2010)
N5: Batley, Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield		
N6: Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield		
N7: Bolton, Manchester, Rochdale and Stockport	Satisfactory (Apr 2010)	
<b>Central</b>		
C1: Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire		
C2: Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire		
C3: Coventry, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire		
C4: Shropshire, Staffordshire, Stoke and Worcestershire	Inadequate (Oct 2009)	Satisfactory progress (May 2010)
C5: Birmingham and Black Country	Inadequate (Jan 2009)	Satisfactory progress (Sept 2009)
C6: Chelmsford, Colchester, Norfolk and Suffolk		
C7: Cheshire, Liverpool, Southport and St Helens	Inadequate (Apr 2010)	
<b>South</b>		
S1: Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	Satisfactory (Dec 2008)	
S2: Berkshire, Milton Keynes and Oxford		
S3: Greater London	Inadequate (Jan 2010)	
S4: East and West Kent		
S5: East and West Sussex, Surrey and High Court Team		
S6: Dorset, Isle of Wight, North Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton		
S7: Cornwall, Exeter, Plymouth and Somerset	Inadequate (Jun 2009)	Satisfactory progress (Feb 2010)

### NOTES

- 1 Ofsted rates service areas as inadequate, satisfactory, good or excellent.
- 2 Ofsted reports are available from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Source: Ofsted inspection and post-inspection review/monitoring reports



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