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Dear

Parliamentary Questions

On Friday 11 December, the Department for Children, Schools and Families passed to Cafcass a number of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) that had been asked by you. As is their usual practice in relation to matters of an operational nature, relevant PQs have been passed to me for reply. Please see below (attached as Appendix 1) the 20 questions to which I have been asked to reply, together with the answers. In addition, a further PQ was asked by you on 15 December (308103), to which I have also been asked to provide a reply. I have asked the Department's Parliamentary Branch to place a copy of this letter in the House Library.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Douglas CBE
Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what change in caseload the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service experienced between June 2008 and December 2009; and if he will make a statement.

(307426)

Data about past caseloads is not held by Cafcass, with the consequence that information is not available about changes across time in the number of cases held by Cafcass staff.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what classification the 2004 Workload Agreement of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service gave of a reasonable time to complete a private law case.

(307477)

The 2004 Workload Agreement used a figure of 25 hours as the time needed to prepare a 'section 7' welfare report for the court in a typical private law case.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the outcomes were of the time recording exercise undertaken during April 2008 on the time being spent on public and private family law cases.

(307472)

The outcome of the time recording exercise was that it enabled Cafcass to estimate the average number of working hours that were being spent on the various types of work being undertaken, using the practice models in force at the time of the survey (Spring 2008).

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the average caseload was for a Family Court Adviser in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service on 31 March 2009.

(307641)

Past information about caseloads is not held by Cafcass. The 'Case Management System' (CMS) is a 'live' system, which means that it only holds current information about the Cafcass caseloads at the current moment in time.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the average caseload was for Family Court Advisors in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in London on the latest date for which figures are available; and what the average caseload was for such advisors on 31 March 2008.

(307443)

In London, as at 26th November, across all types of private and public law work, Cafcass employed practitioners had an average of 22.3 cases fully allocated to them per full time equivalent Family Court Advisor). This comprises an average of 6.0 care cases, 1.1 other (non-care) public law cases and 15.2 private law cases. Cafcass does not hold information about London caseloads as at 31 March 2008.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the average payment made to front-line agency (a) staff and (b) managers employed by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service was in the latest period for which figures are available.
(307473)

Cafcass does not hold information about the payments made by agencies to staff supplied to Cafcass. As at the end of November 2009, the average cost to Cafcass of payments made to the agencies which supply agency Family Court Advisers was £35,33 (plus VAT) per hour and £47.07 (plus VAT) for Service Managers.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many staff of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service have been disciplined because of poor performance in the last 12 months.
(307474)

Cafcass operates a three stage Performance and Conduct process. Its primary focus is ameliorative rather than punitive and its use usually results in improved performance. In the 12 month period ending on 13 December 2009, 153 staff have been subject to the informal stage, of whom 48 went on to become subject to the formal stage.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many staff of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service have been issued with a performance improvement notice in the last 12 months.
(307485)

The performance improvement notice (known within Cafcass as a 'Practice Improvement Notice') is an informal notification system used where performance or practice concerns arise in relation to staff of managers. This can act as a forerunner to the use of the informal stage of the performance and conduct procedure. Staff are supported through this process, and practice normally improves to a satisfactory level as a result. Information is not collected about the number of Notices that are issued.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service staff have been the subject of a quality improvement review in the last 12 months.
(307486)

All Family Court Adviser, Family Support Worker and Business Support staff have been the subject of a quality improvement review in the last 12 months.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many staff of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service have been the subject of formal performance and conduct procedures in the last 12 months.

(307490)

48 staff were the subjects of formal proceedings in the 12 months ending 13 December 2009

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many complaints the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service has received from staff in relation to bullying in the last 12 months.

(307475)

Information about the number of staff who make complaints in relation to bullying is not collected by Cafcass.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many (a) individual and (b) collective staff grievance procedures at the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service were outstanding on the latest date for which figures are available.

(307479)

As at 14 December 2009, there were four individual and two collective formal grievances outstanding. In addition, there were also 3 informal individual grievances currently outstanding.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many agency staff the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service has employed in the last 12 months.

(307480)

Cafcass does not collect information about the number of agency staff whose services it uses.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, whether Cafcass has ceased to commission self-employed contractors.

(307642)

Cafcass has not ceased to commission self-employed contractors. On 26 November 2009, 2,005 cases were allocated to self-employed contractors.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many (a) family court advisors and (b) self-employed contractors have ceased to work for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service in the last 12 months.

(307488)

- (a) 127 Family Court Advisors left Cafcass in the 12 months to the end of November 2009. Of these, 38 (30%) left because of retirement, of whom 21 then returned to work for Cafcass on a flexible basis.
- (b) The effect of the contractual relationship between Cafcass and its self-employed contractors is that they do not cease to be contractors during period in which they have no current cases. However, in the 12 month period to 13 December 2009, Cafcass ceased to give new cases to 14 contractors, whose work had been assessed by Cafcass as being below the required standard.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how much the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service has spent on agency staff in each of its regions in 2009-10.
(307483)

Between April and October 2009, Cafcass' three Operational Areas spent the following sums on agency staff:

North Area	£1,055,770
Central Area	£1,069,794,
South Area	£1,665,919

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, whether family court advisors in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service have been issued with guidance on making telephone calls rather than making family visits in respect of certain cases.
(307478)

Cafcass has not issued such guidance to its staff. However, the President's Interim Guidance, issued by the President of the Family Division, Sir Mark Potter, on 30 July 2009, does provide for telephone calls to be made by Cafcass to adult parties in new private law cases, in advance of the first court hearing in the case.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, whether staff of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service have been issued with guidance on reducing costs in relation to (a) travel and (b) conducting interviews in people's homes.
(307481)

Cafcass' 'Expense Reimbursement Policy', issued in November 2009, makes clear that all employees have a responsibility to ensure that the cost of expenditure being claimed is kept to a minimum without reducing the efficiency with which duties are carried out. In order to bring the expenditure in the current financial year closer in line with the available budget, a number of expenditure reduction measures are being taken by local managers. These include examining the value for money of travel and interviewing arrangements, although no blanket guidance on this issue has been issued.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, whether Family Court Advisers in Cafcass have been directed not to attend local authority review meetings.
(307643)

Information about directions to staff in relation to attendance at local authority meetings is not collected by Cafcass. In individual cases, it is likely that, on occasion, Service Managers might advise or direct individual Family Court Advisers to attend, or not to attend, local authority review meetings.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, how many forms Family Court advisers engaged by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service are required to complete in respect of a (a) private and (b) public law case.
(307425)

Information about the number of forms required to be completed by Family Court Advisers is not collected by Cafcass.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham):To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what progress the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service has made in agreeing with the relevant trade unions a new workload guideline; and if he will make a statement.
(307427)

On 12 December 2009, a new agreement finalised with the relevant trade unions. It recognises that the previously agreed 2004 guidelines are no longer fit for purpose and that case allocations to staff should be based on a collaborative dialogue between the line manager and the practitioner, informed by the needs of the case and the capacity of the practitioner to undertake the work.

Mr Tim Loughton (East Worthing & Shoreham): To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the outcome was of the time recording exercise undertaken in 2004 on the time being spent on public and private family law cases.
(308103)

No time recording exercise was undertaken in 2004, so information about the outcome is not available.