

Thursday 27th September 2018 at 2.00pm

MINUTES

Present:

Head of Operations of the Office of the Committee for Home Affairs, Chair
Chief Probation Officer
Family Proceedings Advisory Service Manager
Deputy Children's Convenor.
Representative of the Family Bar.
Legal Aid Deputy Administrator.
Children's Social Care – CfHSC
Education Officer.

1. Apologies

Representative of the Royal Court
Children's Convenor
Alderney Greffier

2. Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of the meeting dated 13th March 2018 were approved. It was noted that the Children First action to contact the Judiciary had been taken forward.

3. Matters Arising

The Head of Operations CfHA noted that currently the Family Proceedings Advisory Service Advisory Group Meeting was meeting some, but not all of the purpose and intention as per the law and ordinance in regard to the function.

The Head of Operations CfHA noted that the meeting needed to be of value, and requested that all attendees of the group take an action away to consider the original intention of the group and the law, and revert at the next meeting with considerations around this. Either the original intention as per the law and ordinance of the Family Proceedings Advisory Service Advisory Group needs to be fully carried out; or alternatively the group need to review if adjustments are required in order to ensure effectiveness and value of all meetings.

It was noted by the Chief Probation Officer that the legal change of name from Safeguarders to FPAS was in progress, within a policy letter being prepared by CfHSC

4. Ofsted inspection. Recommendation 6. 'A cross-agency forum is established with appropriate decision-making powers to address cross-system family justice issues'

A paper on Family Justice Boards ("FJB'S") in the UK had been circulated for discussion/information as a possible model for a way forward in regard to this recommendation.

The proposal was generally thought potentially sensible, however not in the power or remit of this group.

It was agreed that the briefing paper on FJB's be sent to the Bailiff for his consideration/opinion.

5. FPAS Head of Service report (including statistics)

Staffing

The FPAS Manager noted that she had commenced the role of Manager of FPAS in July 2018. The role, supported by the Chief Probation Officer, is to commence the responsibilities of the management role and also oversee the changes recommended by Ofsted.

The FPAS Manager noted that there had been limited capacity as her time was required for casework. The FPAS Manager prioritised supervision for FPA's at this time and attended short notice hearings and tribunals.

The FPAS Manager went on to note that FPAS has had 2 resignations and recruited 2 new FPA's. One FPA commenced work on 17th September and another will commence on 29th October 2018.

The FPAS Manager noted that ideally there would be another member of staff to allow a hand over of the case work and concentration on moving forward with the changes recommended in the inspection report that the staff are ready to engage in.

In order for this to happen, the FPAS Manager noted that she needed to be able to meet with various agencies and discuss working together in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Workloads and Statistics.

FPAS has in the last four months experienced an increase in work load.

The FPAS Manager noted that she had intended to spend further time looking at the statistics in order to understand the increase in the work load. Discussions had been held with Health and Social Care and CYCT and they are also experiencing an increase in work load and are not anticipating that this is going to change in the foreseeable future. Ofsted made some recommendations as to how FPAS could work in future which FPAS would be implementing.

Private law cases have increased and FPAS was seeing more frequent complex cases involving Health and Social care. FPAS was receiving approximately three new cases a week.

Mediation was being prioritised in order to assist in the reduction of court hearings and emotional stress of attending a hearing.

Public law was reported as being under pressure throughout the system.

Short notice hearings continue to be a considerable commitment on FPAS time and this year continue to be at a significantly higher level than the same period last year.

Annual Report.

The annual report for 2017 went before the Committee *for* Home Affairs and was now published on the public access government website.

Training undertaken by FPAs

Training has been limited in the second half of this year due to volume of work pressures.

Training needs to be a priority for the coming year including mediation and child protection training.

6. Discussion on matters arising from the manager's report.

- The Head of Operations explained that, as with all of the Committees, cash limits remained by majority constant, with the 2019 FPAS budget remaining the same as 2018. There are ongoing discussions with Senior Officers about the impact of this on the FPAS team's ability to respond to the requirements of the Convenor, CYCT and family courts in a manner timely for children. The recruitment for a full time FPA post has been put on hold pending these ongoing discussions centralised around identification of funding.
- The FPAS manager and CPO have had meetings with the head of Children's services and contact with the Children's convenor to monitor the impact of increased public law on the family court/ CYCT process.
- The representative from the family bar stated that impacts on the family courts would be monitored and supported the FPAS manager's view that allocations would need to be prioritised.
- The representative from the family bar asked if anything can be passed to the Bar. FPAS Manager advised she was happy to give an overview after her annual leave.
- The meeting was informed that a letter had been sent to the Bailiff advising of the current pressures on the service.
- The representative from the education committee said that schools not clear about liaison with FPAS and how to monitor data. This to be discussed further with FPAS manager.

7. Management Report

The Chair asked if there were any further comments on the Management Report.

Members were advised if there were any proactive thoughts on today's meeting please send them by email.

ACTIONS

- Admin to arrange and circulate date of next meeting.

- All attendees of the Family Proceedings Advisory Service Advisory Group to consider the original intention of the group and the law. To revert at the next meeting with considerations around this. Either the original intention as per the law and ordinance of the needs to be fully carried out; or alternatively the group need to review if adjustments are required in order to serve a clear purpose and add value.
- Chair to consult Bailiff on FJB's.
- Funding pressures on the Service to be kept under review by the Chair/ CfHA.
- Manager of FPAS to meet with Education representative in regard to link with schools.
- Family bar representative to liaise with FPAS Manager in regard to any impact on proceedings from the Bar's viewpoint.
- Feedback from members of the group in regard to any issues raised today to be e mailed to Chair or manager of FPAS.

8. Date of Next Meeting

These meetings are scheduled 3 times a year. Generally after a Family Court User Group. Next meeting of this group should be in February/March 2019.

Meeting date to be circulated.