



**Business Plan  
2007-08**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1**

To establish effective links with and support to the Local Family Justice Councils

<b>Supporting Activity</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1. Secretariat to visit all 42 Local Family Justice Councils (LFJCs)	Secretary/ Local Family Justice Council Liaison Manager	To establish and improve effective two way communication between the national FJC and all of the LFJCs	March 2008	Establish effective networking between Secretariat and chairs of LFJCs and their administrators.
2. Secretariat to hold a conference for Secretaries of all LFJCs	Secretary/LFJ C Liaison Manager	To improve awareness of the issues facing Secretaries to the LFJCs, to gain a greater understanding of what the national FJC can do to help and to make clear what is expected of LFJC Secretaries.	April 2008	Improved two way communication between LFJC administrators and the Secretariat. Exchange of minutes and complete membership lists.
3. Secretariat to provide guidance to LFJCs on form and content of annual reports and to ensure that all 42 LFJCs submit an annual report for the financial year 06/07.	LFJC Liaison Manager	To improve the accountability of LFJCs and improve awareness of the activities of the LFJCs	July 2008	A better quality LFJC contribution to the annual FJC report for 06/07.
4. Secretariat to investigate options for increasing the LFJC input to the national FJC website	Secretary/LFJ C Liaison Manager	To increase and improve the website resource that is available for use by LFJCs	Dec 2008	A better quality LFJC contribution to the FJC website

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2**

To better understand the impact of diversity on the Family Justice System and to identify any action required to better meet the needs of children and parents from BME communities coming into contact with the Family Justice System.

<b>Supporting Activity</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1. Organise the 2007 Dartington conference on the theme of diversity.	Chair of Dartington Committee	To raise a range of diversity issues amongst the professional groups working in the Family Justice System	Sept 2007	A successful (high quality speakers and positive engagement by delegates) conference with action taken on the resolutions agreed.
2. Contribute to Diversity audit of DCA family policies	Chair of Diversity Committee	To advise DCA on the impact of its family justice policies on ethnic minority communities	Sept 2007	Provide input to DCA Diversity Impact Assessment which will inform future policy development and may require amendment of existing policies.
3. Provide advice and background material to Lord Lester on the issue of Forced Marriage	Chair of Diversity Committee	To support the passage of Lord Lester's Forced Marriages Bill through Parliament	To meet Parlt. timetab le	A Forced Marriages Bill to reach the statute book

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:**

To examine the use and role of experts in the Family Justice System

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. Address concerns of supply and quality of experts	Chair of Experts Committee	To work with other organisations to develop appropriate training and educational opportunities	Ongoing RCPCH Course Pilot early 2007	Increase supply and quality of expert giving evidence in the family courts
2. Establish working relationships with professional groups and colleges who provide expert evidence	Chair of Experts Committee	Agree organisations to be included; establish links with relevant disciplines, including (but not limited to) Royal Colleges of Psychiatry, Paediatrics, Radiology and British Psychological Society	Ongoing	Establishment of effective network of relevant professional bodies responsible for training
3. Address the problems of appropriate instructions to experts	As above	Confirm and promote the use of the draft revised instructions to experts within the revised protocol	Ongoing	More widespread use of model instructions for experts
4. To play full role in taking forward the Government's response to the Chief Medical Officer's report	Chair of Experts Committee/ Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee	To assist NHS and DH colleagues in setting up the new system.	Ongoing	A new system for provision of expert evidence which better meets the needs of the family courts for high quality & timely expert evidence
5. To support GMC request for more timely access to transcripts and other court records in disciplinary cases	Chair of Experts Committee	To speed the access of the GMC to relevant court records to assist it in the early identification of vexatious complaints.	October 2007	A Practice Direction, judicial guidance, note or protocol which gives the GMC more rapid access to relevant court records.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:**

To identify and address major issues of concern in proceedings safeguarding children (Public Law and Adoption)

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. To support improvements in the conduct of care and adoption proceedings in the interests of children and families	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee	To contribute to changes in the structure of care proceedings being developed in the DCA/DfES Care Review & by the Judicial Review of the Public Law Protocol; to provide guidance & assistance to practitioners through LFJCs in implementing agreed	In accordance with departmental timetables  Guidance & assistance by early 2007.	Changes to care proceedings which reflect the views and priorities of the FJC.

		recommendations for change.		
2. To consider initiatives not at present on the agenda to improve the conduct of care proceedings	Chairs of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee and Experts Committee	Examining the following: Early involvement of health professionals in the analysis of key issues; Speed of decision making by police and CPS where there are parallel criminal proceedings; impact of LA panel system on delay in decision making; children of asylum seekers and relationship with Home Office.	early 2007	Changes to care proceedings which reflect the views and priorities of the FJC.
3. To play full role in taking forward the Government's response to the Chief Medical Officer's report	Chair of Experts Committee/ Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee	To assist NHS and DH colleagues in setting up the new system.	In accordance with DH timetable	A new system for provision of expert evidence which better meets the needs of the family courts for high quality & timely expert evidence.
4. To examine the range of residential & non-residential assessments used in public law proceedings.	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee/ Chair of Experts Committee	To evaluate the quality of evidence provided by assessments.	March 2008	To identify those assessments which provide valuable evidence to the courts, assist the judiciary in making appropriate decisions in the child's best interests and, therefore, represent value for money.
5. To respond to the LSC's revised proposals on family legal aid.	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee lead/ Chair of Children in Families Cmte	To make the case to the LSC and to ministers for a legal aid regime which provides for high quality legal advice and representation for children and parents in family proceedings	According to LSC timetable for responses	Amendments to the scheme which acknowledge the concerns of the FJC on quality and supply.
6. To play a full role in taking forward the Government's transparency agenda	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Cmte lead/ Chair of Children in Families Cmte	To feed views of FJC to DCA officials and ministers during further development of policy & on implementation	According to DCA timetable	To make DCA ministers and officials aware of the likely impact of the transparency policy on public law cases
7. To organise a seminar on concurrent planning aimed at legal practitioners, judiciary and social workers.	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee	To promote awareness of, and debate on, concurrent planning	November 2007	To hold a successful, well attended, seminar on concurrent planning
8. To examine the role and practice of IROs in public law cases	Chair of Children in Safeguarding	To make the case for changes to the practice of IROs make them more	March 2008	To persuade DfES officials and ministers to amend the guidance to

	Proceedings Committee	active & interventionist in championing the welfare of children in care.		local authorities on IROs
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**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:**

To promote better outcomes for parties and children in Private Law Proceedings

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1a. Assistance to Local Family Justice Councils in awareness raising about the issues raised in HMICA thematic report on domestic violence  1b. To disseminate information on and promote implementation of the Committee's report on DV in consent contact cases.	Chair of Domestic Violence Working Group lead	1a. Dissemination of key issues and good practice and guidance re domestic violence  1b. To secure the support of LFJCs in taking forward the implementation of the report	March 2008	1a. The holding of awareness raising event by LFJCs.  1b. A new Practice Direction embodying the recommendations in the report
2. Consider relevant research evidence and consult with Local Family Justice Councils	Chair of Voice of the Child Committee lead	Provide input to the Voice of the Child lead report to the President of the Family Division on the desirability of enabling judges to see children in the course of proceedings.	Report to the President by July 2007	To support the President in issuing a Practice Direction encouraging judges to see children in appropriate cases.
3. By liaison with local Family Justice Councils and member agencies collate and disseminate practice information	Chair of Children in Families Committee	To promote the development of good practice models in the implementation of the President's Private Law Programme	Report to the President in January 2008	To gain a more detailed picture on compliance with the Programme across the country and use this information to propose any necessary remedial action to the President.
4. To gather information from research and liaison with user groups and with Local FJCs to raise awareness of users' views and experiences.	Chair of Voice of the Child Committee lead/consumer Member/Chair of Diversity Committee lead	To advise and assist those working in the Family Justice system to respond to the views and experiences of users	Research report to be submitted July 2007. Annual meeting with users. Further work on diversity early 2007	To improve knowledge and understanding of user experience of the Family Justice System and to use this information to inform future policy development
5. To seek an interdisciplinary view on the content and implementation of the 'contact activities' provided for in the Children and Adoption Act 2005	Chair of the Children in Families Committee	To influence and stimulate the development of policy on contact activities	March 2008	To put the views of the Committee and Council to DCA ministers on the appropriate content of 'contact activities'
6. To seek input from the LFJCs on the effective promotion of family mediation generally and,	Chair of the Children in Families	To influence the direction of policy on the rules of court so	March 2008	To feed the views of the Committee and Council to the FPR during the rule drafting

specifically, on the use of the Family Procedure Rules to achieve this.	Committee	that they give the greatest possible encouragement to family mediation in appropriate cases.		process and on consultation.
7. To respond to the DCA's revised proposals on Separate Representation	Chair of the Children in Families Committee	To influence the DCA's policy on Separate Representation.	Autumn 2007	To put the case to ministers that greater use of Separate Representation is in the best interests of children and is the most cost effective use of resources.
8. To consider relevant research evidence on and to seek input from LFJC on the impact of greater transparency on private law proceedings.	Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee lead	To feed in the views of Committee during policy development and implementation	July 2007	To make DCA ministers and officials aware of the likely impact of the transparency policy on private law cases.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6:**

To identify and address major issues which affect families in relation to financial and property matters.

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. To seek to influence DWP's response to its public consultation on the reform of the CSA.	Chair of the Money and Property Committee	To encourage an acceptance that the CSA requires wholesale reform and consider if there is a renewed potential for court proceedings	Ongoing	To influence the legislation which established the new arrangements for child support e.g. Scrap the 12 month rule and resist DWP proposals for administrative enforcement.
2. To consider the role of court led dispute resolution in financial matters, including the dissemination of best practice from and through LFJCs	Chair of the Money and Property Committee	To advise and assist the LFJCs to promote a uniform approach to FDRs	March 2008	President to issue new guidance on FDRs
3. To make case for reform of the law on pre-nuptial agreements as part of a wider reform of Section 25 MCA.	Chair of Money and Property Committee	To ask the Law Commission to include enforcement of pre-nuptial agreements as part of a wider review of Section 25 MCA in its 10 programme of law reform.	March 2008	Inclusion of a wide ranging review of Section 25 MCA in the Law Commission's 10 programme of Law reform.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7:**

To Identify changes in policy, practice and procedure that will enable the family justice system to listen more effectively to the Voice of the Child.

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. Provide advice to the President of the Family Division	Chair of Voice of the	To set out the principles of, and	Report to the	President accepts the recommendations in the

on the feasibility and desirability of enabling judges to see children in the course of proceedings.	Child Committee	rationale for, enhancing children's participation in family proceedings to assist the President in arriving at a policy position on the issue of judges speaking to children, directly and privately, during the course of public law and private law proceedings.	President by July 2007	report and issues a Practice Direction setting out guidelines when it is appropriate for judges to see children during the course of public and private proceedings.
2. Provide input to other FJC Committees on voice of the child issues	Chair of Voice of the Child Committee	To advise other FJC Committees on the impact on children of their workstreams e.g. transparency & sep. representation of children	Ongoing	Other FJC Committees take account of the impact on children of any recommendations they make.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8:**

To Identify opportunities to develop and deliver inter-disciplinary education and training to key professional groups working in the family justice system

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. To map the provision of education and training provided for or available to professionals beginning to work in the family justice system	Chair of the E and T Committee	To advise the Council about the likely current levels of knowledge and understanding of those starting to work in the family justice system.	December 2007	Report on the current qualifications and training of new professionals working in the family justice system
2. To develop links with main bodies responsible for education, training and accreditation of professionals working with in the family justice system	Chair of the E and T Committee	To seek to promote training opportunities and requirements relevant to work in the family justice system	On going	Communication between the Family Justice Council and relevant professional bodies
3. To communicate topics identified as training needs by the FJC and its committees to the relevant professional bodies	Chair of the E and T Committee in conjunction with their committee chairs	To develop the knowledge and understanding within the various professionals who work in the family justice system	On going	Awareness in relevant professional organisations of issues where the Family Justice Council has given guidance