



**Business Plan
2009-10**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

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

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. To secure responsibility for distributing the budget for funding training events and incidental expenditure for Local FJCs	Secretary/ LFJC Liaison Manager	To improve the control over and transparency of the Local FJC budgets	April 2009	Greater certainty of the monies available to LFJCs for funding their activities, greater ease in securing the monies and better quality management information on the activities of the LFJCs available to the FJC.
2. To negotiate new arrangements with Bar Standards Board on CPD points	Secretary/ LFJC Liaison Manager	To agree a new arrangement with the BSB on CPD accreditation for FJC training events	July 2009	A global scheme for all FJC and Local FJC training events that will reduce the burden on LFJC administrators.
3. Secretariat to investigate options for providing websites to LFJCs	Secretary/ LFJC Liaison Manager	To increase and improve the website resource that is available for use by LFJCs	October 2009	All LFJCs which request this facility to have access to a website resource

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

To understand better 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.

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. Organise a forum for BME community/NGO groups	Chair of Diversity Committee	To identify the priorities of BME community/NGO groups relating to BME experiences of the family justice system	Jun 2009	Positive engagement with BME groups producing agreed priorities for consideration by the FJC.
2. Contribute to Diversity audit of MoJ family policies	Chair of Diversity Committee	To advise MoJ on the impact of its family justice policies on ethnic minority communities	Ongoing	Provide input to MoJ Diversity Impact Assessment which will inform future policy development and may require amendment of existing policies.
3. Establish links with the LFJCs	Chair of Diversity Committee	To improve participation of LFJCs in the Cmte's work through meetings with LFJC representatives outside London	Jan 2010	Better identification of diversity issues outside London for action by the Cmte and the national FJC.
4. Review quality of interpreter provision for family proceedings	Chair of Diversity Committee	To assess the quality control of interpreter services available in the family courts through HMCS and the LSC	Nov 2009	To identify any problems with the quality and funding of interpreters and, where necessary, to propose solutions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

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

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. Provision of advice and assistance on the piloting and implementation of the recommendations of the report by the Chief Medical Officer (Bearing Good Witness)	Chair of Experts Committee	To assist NHS, DH & LSC 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
2. To examine feasibility of introducing a system for giving feedback to experts on the quality of their evidence	Chair of Experts Committee	To provide experts with feedback on the usefulness of their evidence to the court in order to improve future performance	Dec 2009	If feasible, to produce proposals for feedback mechanism for experts for consideration by FJC.
3. To examine options for researching the quality of experts' written reports in partnership with other stakeholders	Chair of Experts Committee	To secure evidence on the standard and quality of the written evidence provided by experts in the course of family proceedings.	Mar 2010	If feasible, to produce a specification for a research project examining the quality of written reports.
4. To consider the use of overseas experts in family cases and to consider what, if any, procedural steps and guidance are required	Chair of Experts Committee/ Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee	To ensure there are clear guidelines on the use of overseas experts to ensure consistency of approach	Oct 2009	Good practice in the use of overseas experts, including guidelines and regulatory clarity.
5. To consider the impact of the LSC guidance on CRB checks for experts, particularly in relation to self employed experts	Chair of Experts Committee	To consider the problems raised by the necessity for all expert witnesses in legally aided cases to have valid CRB checks.	Jul 2009	Provision of clear guidance on CRB checks for self employed experts

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 support the PLO by: 1) considering the outcomes of research 2) monitoring processes	In accordance with MoJ timetable	Changes to care proceedings which reflect the views and priorities of the FJC.
2. To consider other developments to improve the conduct of care and adoption proceedings	Chairs of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee, Experts Committee and ADR Committee	1) Work with the DCSF on production of Children Act guidance relating to the use of s20 of the Children Act 1989 and kinship care 2) Promote good practice in the use of Family Group Conferences 3) To consider cases in	Dec 2009	Changes to care proceedings which reflect the views and priorities of the FJC.

		<p>which parties lack capacity to give instructions and particularly any proposals which emerge from the Dartington Conference</p> <p>4) Where issues of neglect arise in care cases, to emphasise the importance of good and timely decision making.</p>		
<p>3.To continue to engage with the DCSF and other organisations to promote the recruitment and retention of high quality social workers and to assist in taking forward the relevant recommendations made by Lord Laming.</p>	<p>Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee</p>	<p>1) Responding to Lord Laming's report on safeguarding</p> <p>2) Through membership of the Key Partners group of the Social Work Taskforce, to feed into plans for reform.</p> <p>3) Engage with MoJ/FJB on new targets for public law proceedings.</p> <p>4) To provide input to Francis Plowden's review of public law fees</p> <p>5) Engage with the DCSF in their work on the role and practice of IROs and to participate in formulation of training for IROs.</p>	<p>In accordance with DCSF timetable</p>	<p>Changes in the academic qualifications, training and professional development of social workers which reflect the views, experience and priorities of the FJC.</p> <p>New targets for public law proceedings which promote performance of all the agencies involved in the interests of children.</p> <p>To assist the Plowden review in reaching sound conclusions based on robust evidence.</p>
<p>4. To consider the difficulties which arise in "hybrid" cases, where there is an overlap between the public and private law spheres</p>	<p>Chair of Children in Safeguarding proceedings Committee lead / Chair of the Children in Families Committee/P parents and Relatives sub group</p>	<p>To make recommendations for improved practice and procedures</p>	<p>March 2010</p>	<p>Changes in care proceedings which reflect the views and priorities of the FJC</p>
<p>5. To retain oversight of the impact of LSC reforms on public law proceedings.</p>	<p>Chair of Children in Safeguarding Proceedings Committee lead/ Chair of Children in families Cmte/ Chair of ADR Cmte</p>	<p>To press for a legal aid regime which provides for high quality legal advice and representation for children and parents in family proceedings, particularly by analysing and commenting upon reforms proposed by the LSC</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>Ready availability of high quality legal advice and representation for parents and children.</p>
<p>6.To monitor the working of the new provisions for openness in</p>	<p>Chairs of all Committees/</p>	<p>Monitor the progress of the reforms and provide</p>	<p>March 2010</p>	<p>Identification of any problems arising from the</p>

the Family Courts	Transparency working group	the MoJ with feedback from Local FJCs, and others, on the working of the new system		operation of the new rules on transparency and provision of advice on solutions.
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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
1. To draft the FJC response to the forthcoming consultation on court fees for private law cases.	Chair of the Children in Families Committee	To provide the MoJ with authoritative advice, supported by evidence and experience, of the likely impact of the proposals	In accordance with MoJ timetable	To influence MoJ policy in this area in the direction of ensuring that access to justice is not impaired by excessive fee increases.
2. To examine the role of mental health issues in intractable contact disputes	Chair of the Children in Families Committee	To raise awareness among practitioners of the role of mental health issues in intractable contact disputes	March 2010	To assist practitioners in dealing appropriately with clients who demonstrate mental health issues in the context of child contact cases.
3. By liaison with Local Family Justice Councils and member agencies collate and disseminate practice information and research evidence	Chair of Children in Families Committee	To promote the development of good practice models, supported by research evidence, in private law proceedings	March 2010	Greater compliance with best practice models in private law proceedings
4. To seek an interdisciplinary view on the content and implementation of the 'contact activities' provided for in the Children and Adoption Act 2006	Chair of the Children in Families Committee	To influence and stimulate, the development of policy on contact activities'	Feb 2010	To put the views of the Committee and Council to DCSF ministers on the appropriate content and development of 'contact activities'
5. To review the DV section on the FJC website and draft guidance for Litigants in Person on how to deal with breaches of DV injunctions.	Chair of the DV Working Group	To ensure that the DV section on the FJC website contains accurate and current information and to include accessible guidance to Litigants in Person on DV injunctions	July 2009	A revised DV section on the FJC website providing accurate and up to date information and accessible guidance for Litigants in Person.
6. To promote awareness of civil remedies for DV and the availability of public funding for these	Chair of the DV Working Group	To improve awareness among judiciary, practitioners and police of the civil injunction route and that public funding	March 2010	A reduction in the proportion of unrepresented victims applying for DV injunctions.

		remains available for this		
7. To respond to the Home Office consultation on the Violence Against Women Strategy	Chair of the DV Working Group	To provide the HO with authoritative advice, supported by evidence and experience, of the likely impact of the proposals	July 2009	To influence Home Office policy on the strategy.
8. To address the issue of proof of service when prosecuting for alleged breaches of, or applying for, DV injunctions.	Chair of DV Working Group	To raise awareness amongst family judiciary and practitioners of the importance of securing proof of service of DV injunctions	Nov 2009	A reduction in the number of prosecutions which fail due to a lack of proof of service.

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 monitor the operation of the legislation in Scotland on cohabitants	Chair of the Money and Property Committee	To learn lessons from the operation of the Scottish legislation and to feed them into the debate in England and Wales	March 2010	A better informed debate on the merits of implementing the Law Commission's report on cohabitation in England and Wales
2. To consider the role of court led dispute resolution in financial proceedings, 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 best practice in financial proceedings	March 2010	Greater consistency of practice in Financial Dispute Resolution hearings and other areas of financial proceedings.
3. To contribute to the Law Commission's review of the law on pre-nuptial agreements.	Chair of Money and Property Committee	To make the case for the greater recognition and enforcement of pre-nuptial agreements with appropriate safeguards	March 2010	To influence the recommendations made by the Law Commission in its report towards recognition of pre-nuptial agreements.

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. To follow up the debate held in October 2008 on Enhancing the Participation of Children in	Chair of Voice of the Child	To encourage debate among family judiciary and	Oct 2009	Raised awareness of the arguments in favour of enhancing the participation of

Family Proceedings with a programme of media work and further events.	Committee	practitioners on the issues relating to children's participation in proceedings		children in family proceedings among judiciary and practitioners.
2. To examine the impact of recent changes in immigration rules and procedures on the status of the children of asylum seekers and unaccompanied children when they come into contact with the family justice system.	Chair of Voice of the Child Committee	To evaluate changes to the status of children in the asylum system against the UNCRC criteria.	March 2010	To provide best practice guidance to family justice system practitioners on dealing with children in the asylum system.
3. To tender for a new partner organisation to run the FJC's Children and Young People's Group	Chair of Voice of the Child Committee	To identify an appropriate organisation with expertise in communicating with children to run the Children and Young People's Group	May 2009	The Children and Young People's Group to be reconstituted, and providing the FJC with input on a range of issues, as soon as possible.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8:

To identify changes in policy, practice, procedure and the provision of information to meet the legitimate needs of adult service users (parents, step parents and members of the wider family e.g. grandparents) of the family justice system

Supporting Activity	Owner	Aim	Target Date	Outcome
1. Recruit and support service users to participate in the work of the Family Justice Council	Chair of Parents and Relatives Group	To seek views and feedback from service users on the work of the FJC e.g. responses to consultation	July 2009	Improved input from adult service users into the work of the FJC
2. Review legal and advice information available to service users involved in the family justice system and propose changes as appropriate	Chair of Parents and Relatives Group	Conduct a mapping exercise of existing advice and information provision for service users	March 2010	Improved information provision to service users
3. Respond to issues of concern to parents and relatives raised by the Council and any of its sub-committees	Chair of Parents and Relatives Group	Provision of advice to Council and its sub-committees on issues of concern to service users	March 2010	Council takes account of service user concerns in its responses to consultation and in developing its policy papers.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 9:

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 revise the guide to the family justice system on the FJC website	Chair of Education & Training	To update the guide to the family justice system as several	July 2009	To ensure that the information provided in the guide is accurate and current.

	Committee	sections are now out of date		
2. To examine scope for joint working with SCIE 7 DCSF on training materials for social workers	Chair of Education & Training Committee	To act as a critical reader for draft training materials relevant to the role of social workers in the family justice system.	Dec 2009	To improve the quality and relevance of training materials social workers in preparing for, and giving evidence in, care proceedings.
3. To identify the scope for training on mental health issues	Chair of Education & Training Committee	To promote training on dealing with challenging and Borderline Personality Disorder clients in the family justice system	March 2010	To improve access to inter-disciplinary training for professionals in the family justice system dealing with challenging/BPD clients