

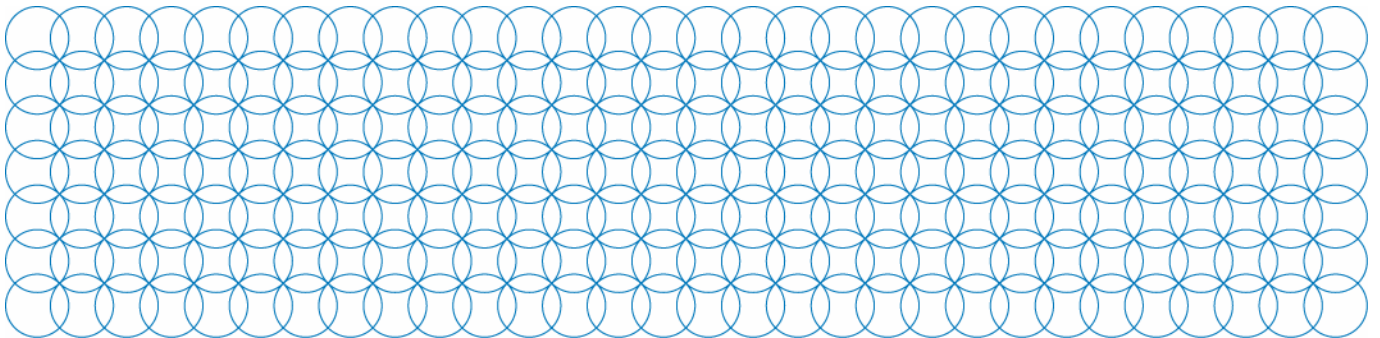


Greater Manchester Family Proceedings Courts

A proposal that all public law Children Act 1989 work in Greater Manchester be heard at Manchester Civil Justice Centre

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This consultation will end on 20 March 2009





A consultation produced by Her Majesty's Courts Service

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Foreword

The advent of Her Majesty's Court Service and a national jurisdiction for magistrates coupled with the availability of the facilities within the Manchester Civil Justice Centre since October 2007 provide the opportunity to reconsider the way in which the family justice system in Greater Manchester is organised to better meet the needs of all relevant participants.

In 2006 following discussions with the Area Director and the Justices' Clerk, it was agreed that a Working Party would be set up to consider the development of a model for the future delivery of family justice in Greater Manchester. A wide range of issues have arisen for discussion. The Working Party representatives have consulted informally with their colleagues on issues which have also been the subject of some consideration by all 10 of the Greater Manchester Family Proceedings Courts.

During the course of the deliberations of the Working Party, there have been significant changes made in procedures within the family justice system including the implementation of the Public Law Outline in April 2008 and the Allocation and Transfer of Proceedings Order 2008 in November 2008. These changes combined with the opportunity to make the best use of the facilities available have the potential to create a greatly enhanced service for those who require to access the family justice system in Greater Manchester. Recognising and drawing on the opportunities available to make effective changes, the Working Party has developed for consideration the proposal that all public law Children Act cases should be dealt with centrally by being heard at the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. This proposal is set out in this consultation paper with consideration of the issues and questions which it raises.

I am grateful to the members of the Working Party and to the members of the HMCS administration who have given their valuable time to assist in the preparation of the paper. It is hoped that as many of you as possible will respond to the consultation with comments, suggestions and answers to the questions it raises in connection with the proposal.

His Honour Judge Iain Hamilton

Designated Family Judge for Greater Manchester

Executive summary

The national context of proposals for Greater Manchester

1. 'The overall national strategy for family justice is part of the Government's wider access to justice strategy and is to assist citizens to resolve family disputes without recourse to courts. Education about parental rights and responsibilities and access to mediation are part of this wider strategy. Where, however, the courts are required to resolve family issues, hearings should take place at the most appropriate tier of court. To that end County Courts and Family Proceedings Courts would work together as one unit to achieve greater flexibility in the use of resources and the seamless transfer of family work between Family Proceedings Court justices, District Judges and Circuit Judges. Parties should be able to use the same processes and procedures, across all tiers and where possible these tiers will sit together in the same building'¹.
2. In accordance with this strategy this consultation sets out proposals for the issue and listing of all public law Children Act work in Greater Manchester in one location, to be dealt with by a specialist Family Proceedings Court which shares accommodation and judicial and administrative resources with the County Court and High Court.
3. This will be complemented by the private law process by which work will continue to be heard at local court sites with improved communication between the Family Proceedings Courts and County Courts ensuring that work is heard at the appropriate tier of Court. This communication will be facilitated in courts where plans exist to realise the benefit of co-location exemplified by Bury where plans to create a unified family section, using both County Court and Family Proceedings Court staff, are ongoing. Arrangements for the relocation of IT equipment have been made and a programme of training for the staff concerned has been completed. Tameside, Trafford and Wigan and Leigh are further examples of where opportunities exist to realise the benefits of co-location. Improved communication and allocation of work will additionally be worked towards in justice areas where co-location is not possible due to estate restrictions.
4. Proposals for both public and private law work satisfy the Ministry of Justice's Departmental Strategic Objective of 'delivering fair and simple routes to civil and family justice'². A principle behind this is to give individuals access to an efficient and effective family justice system and this is a principle that is being

¹ Management proposals to develop a Unified Family Service, February 2005, HMCS

² Page 3, 'Our Ministry of Justice', Ministry of Justice, May 2005

worked towards by centralising judicial and administrative competence and experience in one location and enhancing access to family justice for the area.

The current composition of Greater Manchester Family Proceedings Courts and Care Centre

5. Greater Manchester has a population of 2,482,328 according to the Population Census 2001³ constituting the largest HMCS covered area outside Greater London. Manchester Civil Justice Centre houses the Manchester County Court which is the Care Centre serving all 10 Local Justice Areas and local authorities within Greater Manchester. The Manchester County Court as the Care Centre processes a very high volume of public law Children Act work and is the largest Care Centre outside London. Between April 2007 and March 2008 the Manchester County Court received public law Children Act applications concerning 1030 children. Manchester County Court is a Specialist Adoption Centre having jurisdiction to hear international adoption cases. It is a Court of Protection Centre. It also has jurisdiction to hear cases brought under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007.
6. Greater Manchester currently has 18 family ticketed Circuit Judges of whom 16 have public law tickets. The Manchester County Court in the Civil Justice Centre is the principal base court for 12 of the public law ticketed Circuit Judges. A minimum of 6 Circuit Judges sit daily on public law family work in the Manchester County Court although this number is frequently greater. A family High Court Judge is patterned to sit at the Civil Justice Centre 8-weeks per annum totalling 40-sitting days per year. There are 12 of the family ticketed Circuit Judges who are authorised to sit as Section 9 judges and who will deal with the High Court work which is allocated to them by the Designated Family Judge in consultation with the Family Division Liaison Judge. 10 of the family ticketed Circuit Judges act as liaison judges for each of the Family Proceedings Courts in Greater Manchester. 6 of these Circuit Judges engage in training for the Judicial Studies Board. There are currently 11 family ticketed District Judges who sit permanently at the Civil Justice Centre, 7 of whom have public law Children Act authorisation.
7. There are 10 Family Proceedings Courts located in Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan and Leigh. They each have jurisdiction for public and private law proceedings under the Children Act 1989 as well as proceedings under Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The total of all magistrates and legal advisers who currently deal with work in the Family Proceedings Courts within Greater Manchester is 287 Magistrates and 91 Legal Advisers⁴. Three District Judge (Magistrates Courts) who have public and private law family tickets already sit on an ad-hoc basis at Manchester Family Proceedings Court sitting at the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. On

³ www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pyramids/pages/2a.asp

⁴ Greater Manchester Family Courts Report 2007-2008, HMCS, Page 4

average between June 2008 and October 2008 a District Judge (Magistrates' Court) has sat 5 times per month. The composition of Magistrates and Legal Advisers including Deputy Justices' Clerks and the Justices' Clerk in addition to District Judge (Magistrates Courts) that dealt with family work between 1 October 2007 and 30 September 2008 is broken down in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Family Proceedings Court	No. of Magistrates available to deal with family work October 2007 – September 2008	No. of Legal Advisers dealing with family work October 2007 – September 2008	Sitting days scheduled per week (Sessions)
Bolton	23	8	2 (4)
Bury	24	7	1 (2)
Manchester	61	16	5 (10)
Oldham	34	10	1 (2)
Rochdale	20	6	1 (2)
Salford	28	7	2 (4)
Stockport	21	11	2 (4)
Tameside	22	5	1 (2)
Trafford	16	8	1 (2)
Wigan and Leigh	24	5	1 (2)
Total Per Annum (250 available sitting days per year)			850 (1,700)

Figure 1 additionally outlines the quantity of sitting days per week, totalling 60 hours in Greater Manchester.

Challenges faced by Greater Manchester Family Proceedings Courts

8. The Greater Manchester Future Strategy Working Group which is tasked with exploring proposals for the future strategy of family justice within Greater Manchester has identified challenges faced by Family Proceedings Courts in dealing with public law Children Act cases. These challenges need to be overcome in order to meet national and local objectives of improving access to justice, improving the delivery of justice and ensuring that cases are heard at the most appropriate tier of court.
9. These challenges are outlined below:

Limited exposure to a sufficient volume of public law Children Act work

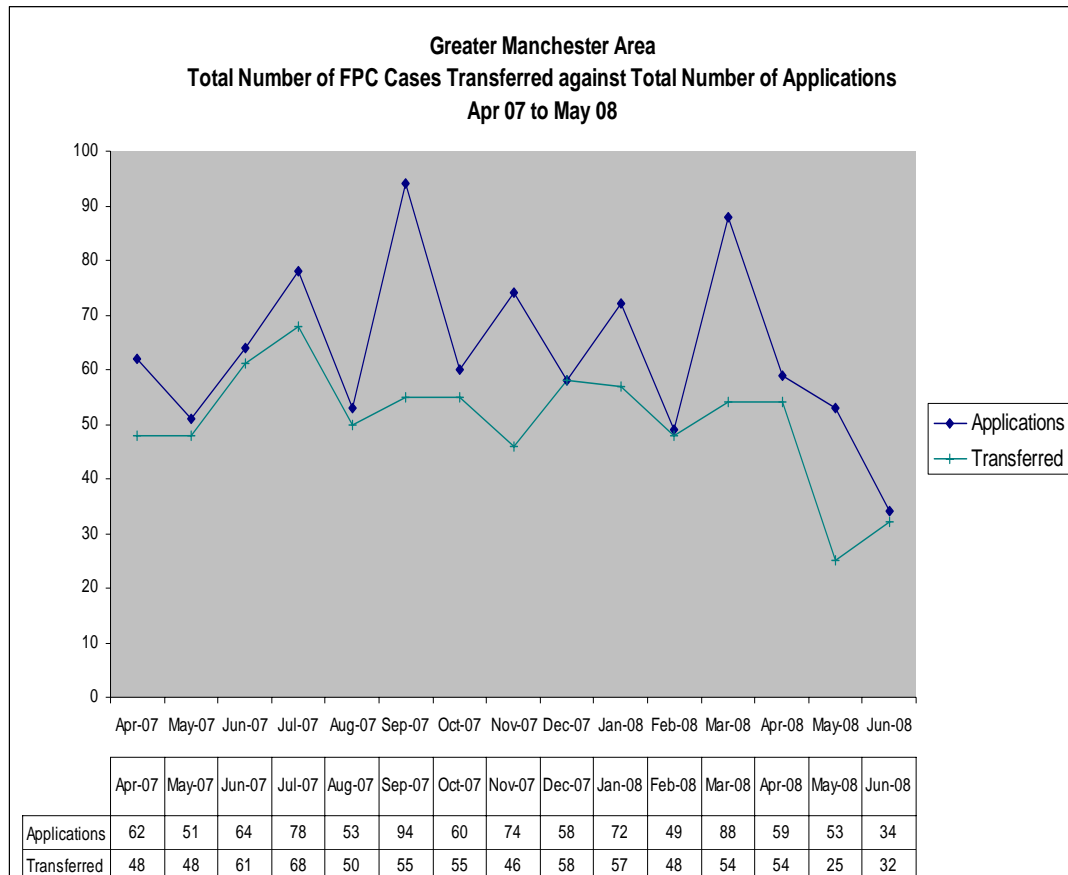
– The Lord Chief Justice announced in April 2008 that Magistrates who sit in both the adult court and in either or both the youth and family proceedings courts should sit a minimum of 15 half days in each jurisdiction, within an overall minimum of 30 half-days, provided there is sufficient work to enable this to be achieved. Family magistrates who are able to do so, and where the wider needs of the business allow, are encouraged to sit above the 15 half-day sittings level, provided this is not at the expense of their availability to sit in the adult court. Family chairs who are able to do so, and where the wider needs of the business allow, are encouraged to sit a minimum of 24 half-days a year in the Family Proceedings Court (with two thirds of sittings being in the chair). Magistrates and Legal Advisers do not generally have such regular exposure to a sufficient volume of public law Children Act work leading to de-skilling, loss of expertise and confidence. Only Manchester Family Proceedings Court has family listing time on each day of the working week with the rest of the Family Proceedings Courts sitting either one or two days per week. The difficulty of exposing Magistrates to a sufficient volume of public law Children Act work is evident in Figure 2. These are the most recent available figures. They outline the average number of sittings of Magistrates on public and private law family work between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008.

Figure 2

Family Proceedings Court	Family Sittings 1.4.07 – 31.3.08	Active Family Panel Magistrates	Average sittings per Magistrate
Bolton	361	21	17.2
Bury	272	22	12.4
Manchester	766	56	13.7
Oldham	218	32	6.8
Rochdale	284	19	14.9
Salford	311	24	12.9
Stockport	403	20	19.2
Tameside	274	21	13.0
Trafford	205	16	12.8
Wigan & Leigh	335	23	14.6

- The letter from the Lord Chief Justice additionally made reference to Magistrates sitting exclusively in the Family Proceedings Court. Those Magistrates who have sat in the Family Proceedings Court for a minimum of 5 years can opt to discharge their sitting obligations by sitting in the Family Proceedings Court alone, subject to certain provisions being met. Perhaps the most significant provision in this context is that the Family Proceedings Court is able to provide sufficient family work to enable the magistrate to achieve the minimum sittings requirement, including back-up work where cases settle. None of the Magistrates or Legal Advisers in Greater Manchester deals exclusively with family cases. The lack of opportunity for Magistrates and Legal Advisers to increase their experience and expertise in public law Children Act work has led some members of the full time judiciary, members of the legal profession and other court users to doubt whether the Family Proceedings Court is best placed to deal with family work. This is evident in the percentage of public law cases which are transferred to the Care Centre from the Family Proceedings Courts. Between April 2007 and May 2008, 76% of public law Children Act work issued in the Family Proceedings Courts across Greater Manchester was transferred to the Care Centre. The figures available on a month on month basis for the same period for all Family Proceedings work are outlined in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3



- **Wasted listing hours** – In smaller courts across the area, it is difficult for listing officers to sustain daily lists exclusively attributed to public law work. Many contested cases that are listed beyond one day can settle on the first day. Additionally, some cases are transferred to a higher tier of court, both instances leaving listing officers with empty lists and missed opportunities for building the experience of Magistrates and Legal Advisers. In addition, as identified and illustrated above by Figure 2, a high percentage of cases are being transferred to the Care Centre, many of these on issue.
- **Appropriate allocation of proceedings** - To improve the method of allocation of public law Children Act cases at the earliest, appropriate time and to the most appropriate level of jurisdiction.
- **Inconsistencies in practice between Family Proceedings Courts** - Currently, Family Proceedings Courts use different systems to collect performance data which results in an inaccurate reflection of performance across Greater Manchester. A single IT system would facilitate an accurate record and reflection of performance of courts and reasons behind the length of public law Children Act cases. Additionally, processes vary across courts in drafting orders and reasons for transfer, which creates administrative confusion when cases are transferred.

As a result of the challenges outlined above, the Greater Manchester Future Strategy Group makes the proposals outlined in this paper.

Introduction

This paper sets out for consultation the proposal that all public law Children Act 1989 work in Greater Manchester be heard at Manchester Civil Justice Centre.

The consultation is aimed predominantly at family court users in Greater Manchester and those who deliver family justice for the area through the courts and externally.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Cabinet Office and falls within the scope of the Code. The consultation criteria, which are set out on page 24 have been followed.

An initial Impact Assessment has been completed and does not indicate that the proposals are likely to lead to additional costs or savings for businesses, charities or the voluntary sector, or the public sector. Consequently, this paper does not contain an Impact Assessment. If you disagree with this conclusion you are invited to send your reasons as part of your overall response to this paper.

Copies of the consultation paper are being sent to:

- Greater Manchester Magistrates
- Greater Manchester Legal Advisers
- Greater Manchester Judiciary
- Greater Manchester Administrative Staff
- Greater Manchester Family Justice Council
- Greater Manchester local authorities and children's services
- CAFCASS Greater Manchester Area
- Children's Panel Solicitors in Greater Manchester
- Resolution Manchester Branch
- Manchester Law Society
- Manchester Family Law Bar Association
- The Legal Services Commission

- Relevant Trade Unions
- Greater Manchester Police

However, this list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive and responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in or views on the subject covered by this paper.

The proposals

The vision for use of Manchester Civil Justice Centre

1. The proposed location of the court for the hearing of all public law children's cases is the Manchester Civil Justice Centre. The Civil Justice Centre, which deals exclusively with the Civil and Family Jurisdiction opened for business in October 2007, providing numerous benefits and facilities for litigants and professionals court users. These include:
 - 47 court and hearing rooms are available across 8 floors of the building which are currently utilised by Manchester County and Family Proceedings Courts, High Court and specialist listing
 - 2 advocates suites
 - 6 vulnerable and intimidated witness suites with video link to court room facility
 - 2 quiet contemplation and prayer rooms
 - 2 baby feeding rooms
 - 2 children and family rooms
 - Ability to connect to any location worldwide with video link technology
 - Power points in all court rooms and advocates suites for the convenience of court users in utilising their own IT
 - IT facilities on the bench in all court and hearing rooms
 - Plasma display screens situated on each public floor of the building
 - Telephone conference facilities in all court and hearing rooms
 - Wi-fi Access
 - Comprehensive court security and improved court environment suitable for facilitating highly sensitive cases
 - Secure entrance separate to the public entrance to the building and separate waiting areas available for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses
 - Training facilities for Magistrates and Legal Advisers

2. The Personal Support Unit (PSU) is currently resident in the building. This is a charity supporting litigants in person, witnesses, families and other court users attending court offering practical and emotional support. PSU volunteers offer advice on court procedure, assistance with completing forms and preparing documents, guidance around the building, accompaniment in court, and someone to talk to. Litigants in person are supported in rehearsing their argument and preparing themselves for court, and are also provided with a note taking service and help to understand legal and procedural terms. PSU volunteers also offer accompaniment and emotional support to vulnerable witnesses making use of the secure facilities available at the Civil Justice Centre. The PSU is available to all court users who require support. Approximately 30% of those using the service are involved in family matters. The Civil Justice Centre, Royal Courts of Justice and Wandsworth County Court are unique in offering this service.
3. CAFCASS have allocated accommodation in the building. These facilities allow CAFCASS practitioners to carry out work in the Court building and offer more flexibility in interviewing and meeting with individuals involved in proceedings.
4. Housing a single Family Proceedings Court for hearing all Greater Manchester public law Children Act cases in the Manchester Civil Justice Centre will bring additional benefits to those Magistrates and Legal Advisers who utilise the building. There will be scope for sitting up to four Family Proceedings Courts each day, with potential to sit more should the work load require it. This will enable Magistrates from different panels across the area to work alongside each other, providing an opportunity to share experiences and best practice amongst a greater number and wider cross section of panel members. There may be up to 9 or 12 sitting on any day dealing exclusively with public law Children Act work. This is a greater number of Magistrates sitting in one location on such work than any currently experience in their local Family Proceedings Courts. Magistrates and Legal Advisers will benefit from being able to deal with cases brought by different local authorities and will gain valuable insight into the working practices of other local authorities separate from those in their respective Local Justice Areas. They will also have the opportunity to see on a regular basis a wider range of advocates, social workers and other professionals including CAFCASS children's guardians than they are used to seeing. Additionally, there will be opportunities for greater interaction with the professional judiciary. Magistrates and Legal Advisers will have access to the communal facilities available on the designated floor for Family Proceedings Court rooms at the Civil Justice Centre where their own refreshment facilities will be available.

Accessing the Service

5. The formation of the single Family Proceedings Court for public law Children Act work inevitably means that some individual litigants, their legal advisers and others may be required to travel further to access the service than if such work remained in each Local Justice Area. The intention behind this is that the service will be vastly improved by making more effective use of resources. Given the volume of public law cases which are already transferred to the

Manchester County Court as the Care Centre, it is apparent that the numbers who will be directly affected are likely to be fairly small. The better use of resources should result in reduced waiting times, increased flexibility for all professionals including lawyers and advocates, social workers, CAFCASS children's guardians and others to do more cases if in the same building. Benefits of locating all court rooms in one building have been realised in the Care Centre in Greater Manchester where prior to all cases being heard at Manchester Civil Justice Centre, public law Children Act cases were heard across three court sites.

6. The court will comprise of Legal Advisers and Magistrates who are willing and able to sit in the Civil Justice Centre to provide a tribunal offering greater experience and expertise to Court users.
7. The availability of suitable accommodation will ensure that those parents who are anxious about the future of their children and other professional court users will not have to share facilities with defendants and their associates involved in criminal proceedings, wait in the same waiting areas or share the same refreshment facilities.
8. Comparisons can be drawn with other services such as that of the Crown Court where two of the three available venues in Greater Manchester are situated within Manchester City Centre as is the Employment Tribunal and other tribunal services.
9. Greater Manchester enjoys extensive access to a comprehensive public transport system ensuring that access to justice is not diminished. Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority (GMPTA), provide the Metrolink tram service, buses and trains across the area which all serve the City Centre's main stations linking to a free bus service to Manchester Civil Justice Centre where public law work will be undertaken. The GMPTA provide an online 'Journey Planner' that details all available means by which you can travel across the area and provides details of departure and arrival times for all forms of transport. Direct services exist between all Local Justice Areas and Manchester Civil Justice Centre. Figure 4 indicates average journey times on any day of the working week between Local Justice Areas and Manchester City Centre.

Figure 4

Local Justice Area	Mean Average Bus Time to Manchester (In Minutes)	Mean Average Train Time to Manchester (In Minutes)	Mean Average Metro Time to Manchester (In Minutes)
Bolton	52	19	N/A
Bury	46	N/A	20
Oldham	35	23	N/A
Rochdale	40	17	N/A
Salford	12	7	N/A
Stockport	31	19	N/A
Tameside	37	13	N/A
Trafford	48	35	22
Wigan	74	37	N/A
Mean Average Time from any Local Justice Area (In Minutes)	42	21	21

Figures taken from <http://nw.aimwebsites.co.uk/> - Manchester City Council Journey Planner

10. GMPTA expect to hold a public consultation outlining initial approval from the Government for a bid of up to £3 billion of new investment in public transport submitted by Greater Manchester last year. This will detail extensive improvements to the Greater Manchester transport infrastructure. The Metrolink network is expected to treble in capacity, stop numbers and distance covered. Overcrowding on trains is expected to be addressed by more carriages on busy commuter services and in some instances double length trains. Stations at Bolton, Stockport, Wigan and Rochdale will become interchanges where other types of transport will be available. The bus network is planned to be extended so that at least 90% of people will be within five minutes walk of a service that runs at least every 20 minutes during the day time and at least every 30 minutes for week day early mornings and evenings and during the weekends.
11. It is appreciated that a minority of individuals will be physically unable to travel to the Civil Justice Centre. The court will accommodate these individuals to the best of its ability as a court does in such instances. Some courts have video link facilities which can be used to enable parties and witnesses to

effectively participate in proceedings from a distance when travelling is difficult. The court will always have discretion to direct, that in an appropriate case, a hearing should take place in a particular location for the convenience of parties who have particular difficulties or disabilities which make travelling a problem.

Workload at Family Proceedings Courts and projection of work available at the Civil Justice Centre

12. It is intended that while public law Children Act work will be centralised to the Civil Justice Centre, private law Children Act work will remain in the Family Proceedings Courts in each Local Justice Area. This body of work is likely to be supplemented further by more work being transferred from the County Courts along with work relating to Family Law Act Injunction applications in accordance with the Allocation & Transfer of Proceedings Order and Practice Direction 2008.
13. The centralisation of public law Children Act work will enable the Public Law Outline to be operated as it was intended in Greater Manchester. Specialist Legal Advisers will enjoy regular exposure to public law family work. They will operate as Case Managers and Magistrates will work in partnership with District and Circuit Judges in the Care Centre facilitating better and more efficient allocation of work. There is accommodation for sitting four Family Proceedings Courts on a daily basis with potential for more. Legal Advisers will be available each day to consider applications, nominate a case manager and give standard directions on issue. The fact that there will exist what will in effect be a dedicated Family Proceedings Court served by Magistrates with a special interest in the work supported by Legal Advisers with more experience and greater expertise will lead to greater confidence in allocating work to them.
14. Moreover, confidence can be further inspired because District Judges (Magistrates' Court) sit at Family Proceedings Court level in Manchester Civil Justice Centre. This will encourage the retention of more work in the Family Proceedings Court. It will be supported by specialist Legal Advisers and administrative staff and will avoid the need to transfer some cases to the Care Centre.
15. In line with the principle of improved and efficient administration, administrative staff from the Family Proceedings Court and County Court in the Civil Justice Centre will have access to and responsibility for the management of one IT system. As part of the HMCS Modernisation Programme, the Service Upgrade Project (SUPS) will provide new versions of CaseMan and FamilyMan. Having one rationalised IT system is integral to dealing with family proceedings in a centre as big as Manchester. All staff dealing with public law Children Act cases will have access to the same information. This practice will be built upon by the Unified Family Service programme with the objective of harmonising practices between all co-located Family Proceedings Courts and County Courts in Greater Manchester.

16. The programme has been initiated successfully in a number of areas including Newcastle, Hampshire, Swansea and Liverpool. There are now 36 co-located administrations nationally. Initial findings have been generally positive and indicate benefits of collocated administrations transferable to the centralising of public law Children Act work in the Civil Justice Centre. The proportion of care and supervision cases completed in 40 weeks has remained stable since the end of 2005 in the co-located Family Proceedings Courts. Over the same period, the proportion of cases completed in 40 weeks in other Family Proceedings Courts has fallen by 10 per cent.

Formation of the court and training

17. It is proposed that the Family Proceedings Courts sitting at the Civil Justice Centre would be constituted by three Magistrates drawn from a group of Magistrates made up of volunteers from the Family Proceedings panels in the Greater Manchester Area. The frequency and timing of sittings of each Magistrate would be determined by a rota drawn up from Magistrates who have indicated that they wish to participate in the rota. The rota would be managed by a designated and experienced member of administrative staff. Consideration will also need to be given to the frequency with which Magistrates will be required to sit in light of the implications of the Public Law Outline such as the requirement for cases to be heard by the same Case Manager, i.e. the same Legal Adviser and at least one of the same Magistrates.
18. It is envisaged that additional training in both public and private law work would be required. The majority of Magistrates and Legal Advisers have had limited exposure to and experience of such work. Separate training in relation to Family Law Act Injunctions has been facilitated by experienced members of the Judiciary. It is likely that some judicial involvement in Magistrates' training will continue, regardless of the location of public law Children Act work in the future.

Provision for support to the court by Legal Advisers and administrative staff

19. How the court will be supported by Legal Advisers and administrative staff is a question that will be dealt with by a project board subject to the outcome of this consultation process and through separate consultation.

Issue of proceedings and Public Law Outline (PLO) issues

20. It is the intention that all public law Children Act applications be lodged and issued at the Civil Justice Centre. Housing both a Family Proceedings Court to hear all public law Children Act cases and the Greater Manchester Care Centre at Manchester County Court will aid compliance with the Public Law Outline and facilitate appropriate allocation of work between the tiers of court.
21. The proposal to have all applications lodged and issued in one location will be complemented by plans to ensure that local authorities and other applicants are able to issue applications electronically via a secure e-mail system or

through the use of document encryption. A protocol dealing with electronic issue of applications and filing of documentation is being developed between HMCS and local authorities across the area. Whilst it is proposed that a counter service at the Care Centre will continue to cater for litigants in person issuing applications such as Discharge of Care orders or Section 34 contact applications, there are many benefits to issuing applications electronically to be realised. Applications in electronic format make the transition of information more convenient and speedier to transfer electronically between applicants, the court administration, Legal Advisers and the judiciary.

Emergency Applications

22. It is not unusual for care proceedings to arise out of emergency situations and an Emergency Protection Order is sought by the Local Authority. It is intended that urgent and/or emergency applications in relation to public law Children Act work during working hours should be dealt with where possible at the Civil Justice Centre. This will remove the need for listing officers in local courts to bring together a bench of family panel magistrates on an urgent basis.
23. Outside of court office business hours the current urgent business arrangements would continue to apply.

Next Steps

24. When responses to the consultation are received, a summary of the responses will be published. Responses to the proposals will be considered by Greater Manchester Future Strategy Group and consideration will be given to any further consultation that may follow on specific judicial and administrative issues. Following this, a project board will work to establish any framework and schedule for implementation.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper.

- 1. Do you agree that all public law Children Act work should be heard at the Civil Justice Centre? If your answer is yes or no, please set out your reasons.**
- 2. What difficulties, if any, do you envisage encountering in accessing the Civil Justice Centre?**
- 3. Are there any barriers to accessing the service that you feel have not been addressed by the proposals contained within the consultation paper?**
- 4. Should the Civil Justice Centre be the venue to hear Emergency Protection Orders during working hours?**
- 5. Do you have any specific concerns/comments to be taken into account, which have not been addressed by this consultation paper?**

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 20 March 2009 to:

**Neil Round
Her Majesty's Court Service
Manchester Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX**

**Tel: 0161 240 5958
Fax: 0161 240 5915
Email: neil.round@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk**

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address.

Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published in 5 months time. The response paper will be available from this address.

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding.

Your personal data will be processed in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances; this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

The consultation criteria

The six consultation criteria are as follows:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the time scale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out an Impact Assessment if appropriate.

These criteria must be reproduced within all consultation documents.

Consultation Co-ordinator contact details

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation **process** rather than about the topic covered by this paper, you should contact Sue Lenihan, Head of Civil and Family Operations, Greater Manchester, on 0161 240 5000, or email her at sue.lenihan@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively, you may wish to write to the address below:

Sue Lenihan
Head of Civil and Family Operations, Greater Manchester
HMCS
Manchester Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M60 9DJ

If your complaints or comments refer to the topic covered by this paper rather than the consultation process, please direct them to the contact given under **the How to respond** section of this paper at page 21.

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