



## **Family Justice Review Seminars**

**Thursday 21st March 2013**

**Congress Centre, 28 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS**

### **Programme**

9.00	<b>Registration and refreshments</b>
9.30	<b>Chair welcome and introduction</b> <i>Bruce Clark, Cafcass</i>
9.45	<b>Introduction to the Family Justice Review</b> <i>David Norgrove</i>
10.00	<b>Update from a local authority and the Tri-borough project</b> <i>Clare Ryan, Hammersmith and Fulham Council and Steve Crocker, Hampshire County Council</i>
10.20	<b>Q&amp;A to Clare Ryan and Steve Crocker</b>
10.30	<b>Evidence Matters: Using evidence effectively to support decision making in the family court</b> <i>Dez Holmes, research in practice</i>
10.50	<b>Q&amp;A to Dez Holmes</b>
11.00	<b>Discussion: Implementing the Family Justice Review in your region: a workforce perspective</b>
11.30	<i>Break</i>
11.50	<b>Cafcass' Role in Supporting Delivery of the Family Justice System Reform</b>

	<i>Ana Popovici, Cafcass</i>
12.10	<b>Discussion: Analysing evidence before proceedings</b>
12.30	<i>Lunch</i>
1.15	<b>Decision Making Within a Child's Timeframe</b> <i>Harriet Ward</i>
1.45	<b>Q&amp;A to Rebecca Brown</b>
2.00	<b>Choice of three break-out workshops (see attached sheet):</b>  <b>1. Using and presenting research as part of an analytical approach in the family court</b>  <b>2. Taking an evidence-informed approach to risk, protective factors and capacity to change</b>  <b>3. Multi-professional working and social work expertise in the family court system</b>
3.30	<b>Summing up</b> <i>Bruce Clark</i>
3.45	<b>Action Planning</b>
4.00	<i>Close</i>

## **Breakout workshops**

### **1. Using and presenting research as part of an analytical approach in the family court.**

Evidence is crucial to ensuring positive outcomes for children, in terms of gathering the correct information before proceedings, presenting the evidence behind decisions in court, and using evidence to monitor the effects of those decisions. This is particularly important in light of the Family Justice Review, which facilitates a major change to the court system by restricting the use of expert witnesses by the family court. As a result, the court needs to be able to increasingly rely on strong social work assessments that are analytical and based on the best available evidence to make its decision.

Social workers in court need to use different types of evidence to support their decision making, including evidence from their own experience, the views of children and families they work with, and research. Research evidence can provide a useful base to inform the difficult decision workers have to make, but it is important that workers use an analytical approach to draw on research messages alongside their own professional judgement, experience and observations. This workshop aims to develop practical skills of workers at all levels in using different types of evidence as part of this decision-making process and presenting their recommendations to the court.

The workshop aims to:

- Describe the different types of evidence that can be used in making a decision in the family court.
- Discuss how evidence can be used to inform decisions in pre-proceedings and during proceedings.
- Explore an analytical approach to supporting decision-making in court.
- Introduce tools and approaches for presenting evidence effectively in a courtroom situation.

### **2. Taking an evidence-informed approach to risk, protective factors and capacity to change.**

Social workers rely on those skills that enable them to assess risk and capacity to change. It is important to ensure that all staff working in the family court use the best available evidence from a number of sources, not only to ensure their decision supports the best outcomes for the child, but also to prevent delay or the need for extra experts. To develop a robust report, risk needs to be assessed effectively before proceedings, and social workers need to be able to assimilate new information that may emerge during proceedings.

This workshop aims to:

- Explore how social workers can use evidence to assess risk, protective factors and capacity to change at the pre-proceedings stage to support care applications.
- Discuss how systemised tools can be used effectively to support risk assessment.
- Introduce a key framework from research that social workers and family court staff can use to inform their assessment of risk and parental capacity to change.
- Allow delegates to reflect on the approaches they use to assess risk.

### **3. Multi-professional working and social work expertise in the family court.**

This workshop aims to explore multi-professional collaboration to promote understanding of social work expertise in the family court. It will focus on helping delegates to understand how the role of the social worker fits within the wider court system and interacts with other agencies' roles. As well as this, in line with the recommendation from the Family Justice Review for a more coherent court system, this workshop will also allow delegates to explore strategies outlining how staff from different agencies can work together effectively at all stages of the family court process to prevent delay. The session will look at social work expertise in comparison to the expertise of other professionals in the family court system, highlighting what to expect from social work expertise and emphasising that an understanding of this expertise can help to support better inter-professional working in court.

This workshop aims to:

- Discuss the role of the social worker in the context of the wider court system and in relation to different professional groups before, during and after court proceedings.
- Explore how understanding of social work expertise by different professionals can help to prevent delay in the family court.
- Introduce strategies for effectively articulating expertise in court reports and in the courtroom itself.
- Provide tools that can help delegates to work effectively with other agencies in the family court.