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Mrs Christine Banim  
Operational Director Cafcass Central  
6th Floor  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London, SW1P 3BT

Dear Mrs Banim

### **Inspection of Cafcass in C1 – Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area**

This letter summarises the findings of the recent inspection of Cafcass in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area which was conducted on 12 and 13 January 2011. The inspection was carried out under sections 143–145 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. I would like to thank all of the staff we met for their assistance in undertaking this inspection.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of progress that is being made against the Cafcass Transformation Plan through aspects of the existing published framework for the inspection of Cafcass, focusing on aspects of:

- ambition and prioritisation
- performance management
- safeguarding
- service responsiveness.

Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: information about Cafcass provided by the local judiciary and Local Authority Children's Services Departments ; case records; a range of data and policy documents; observation of the work of family court advisers and a family support worker. Inspectors met with senior and first line managers, family court advisers and family support workers.

<b>Overall progress</b>
<b>Judgement: Good progress</b>

**The quality and effectiveness of local implementation and business planning**

- The leadership provided by the Operational Director for Cafcass Central and the management team in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area is clear and effective. Strategies, policies and procedures support front line practice and comply with statutory requirements to safeguard children and young people. Effective systems are in place to monitor compliance with policy requirements and ensure that staff are accountable for their work.
- The area business plan identifies and prioritises accurately the actions needed to sustain and improve service delivery. The plan is supported by an implementation programme that has strong impact in the effective management of change. For example, service delivery is improved through the implementation of Early Intervention Teams and the introduction of proportionate working across the service area. Early Intervention Teams provide timely risk assessed safeguarding information about children and families to courts when cases are at an early stage in family proceedings. Proportionate working ensures that cases are allocated resources efficiently in relation to the assessed safeguarding needs of each case. These important changes to service delivery and a new culture in front line practice have been managed well and are now successfully implemented.
- Local judiciary and Children's Services departments confirm that relationships are good and liaison is effective resulting in good communication between organisations.
- The performance by Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area measured by compliance with key indicators is outstanding. Almost all performance indicators are better than national averages. Financial management is sound with unit costs remaining constant as more performance indicators are met.
- Quality assurance of front line practice is inconsistent between teams and weak in some aspects. Although the quality assurance system Q4C is applied consistently, the judgements made by managers about the standard of work are often inaccurate and need further moderation. This includes some poor practice and excellent work that is currently judged satisfactory by Cafcass.

**Reducing delays and unallocated cases**

- Key Performance data demonstrates that there is no delay in allocation, intervention and reporting on any case in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area. This improvement in performance is outstanding in the context of previous long delays and an 80% increase in demand for public law work over the last two years. The service area has implemented a range of measures to achieve this level of improvement including increased workloads, proportionate working, changes to working practices, new team structures and effective protocols with courts. Significantly, this level of performance is achieved with the cooperation of a staff group who have a high level of morale.

**Compliance with statutory requirements in the management of safeguarding practice and the assessment of risk**

- Inspectors assess safeguarding practice as satisfactory overall, although the work in some teams is stronger than others. Internal audits of cases across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire service area conducted in July 2010 reached the same conclusion.
- Most cases seen by Inspectors are child focused and all concerned the welfare of children. The practice in one case inspected was outstanding in the attention given to the emotional well being of a child involved in the extreme animosity between the parents in private law proceedings
- Cases are screened effectively for domestic violence and the needs of children are understood and assessed well in most cases. High quality Cafcass assessment tools are used effectively by practitioners to enable children and young people to voice their safeguarding concerns.
- In the sample of cases examined by Inspectors with regards to safeguarding practice most are at least satisfactory. However, one case sampled had to be referred to the Local Authority by Cafcass because safeguarding concerns had not been identified.
- Schedule 2 reports provide safeguarding information to courts at first

directions. Inspectors identified some Schedule 2 reports that made recommendations to court without sufficient information or included unsubstantiated allegations by parties about each other. Through internal audit the service area is already aware of this and steps have been taken to ensure that improvement is achieved.

Any areas of inadequate performance will be specifically considered in any future inspection of Cafcass services in your area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Hunt', followed by a stylized flourish.

Steve Hunt HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector