



Public Accounts Committee

Dr Jo Farrar CB OBE
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
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By email

29 January 2026

Treasury Minute response – Improving family court services for children

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for your response to the Committee's September 2025 report on improving family court services for children.

I was pleased to see the commitments made by both Ministry of Justice and Department for Education to develop a family justice strategy, and that you expect this to consider where there are opportunities to improve timeliness and efficiency, with a supporting framework for setting and reviewing performance indicators. I was encouraged that you intend to set out a clear vision for improved outcomes for children and families, and that you expect to measure not just timeliness and efficiency but also the quality of service for people experiencing the service.

Recommendation 4, however, asked you to clarify to the Committee: the capacity required for family courts to meet current demand on a timely basis; and how, and by when, family justice partners will resolve the workforce shortages in district judges and social workers, including details for locations where shortages are most acute. The Treasury Minute states that this recommendation is implemented, but it does not address the Committee's recommendation.

The response explains that the previous Lord Chancellor announced sitting days and capacity for the current financial year in March 2025 but it does not, as the Committee requested, clarify whether that capacity is sufficient to meet current demand, or what your assessment is of the capacity needed to do so on a timely basis. The response also provides some detail of what Cafcass and DfE are doing to increase recruitment and retention, but does not explain whether, or when, this will be sufficient to resolve shortages.

I would be grateful if you could write back on these specific points by 29 March.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey Clifton-Brown', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts