



Ministry
of Justice

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
Houses of Parliament
SW1A 0AA

Or by email

Dr Jo Farrar CB OBE
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27 March 2026

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

Improving family court services for children

I am writing to provide an update on progress against the Committee's recommendations arising from its report *Improving Family Court Services for Children*.

This letter explains why the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education will not meet the April 2026 implementation deadline for recommendations 3A, 3D and 5, and sets out a revised timeline for delivery. This is separate to the Deputy Prime Minister's letter of 17 March announcing the national rollout of the Child Focused Courts Model (formerly known as the Pathfinder pilots).

Significant progress has been made across the programme, including the development of a cross-system Family Justice Strategy, close working with delivery partners, and preparation for national rollout of key reforms. However, finalisation and implementation of elements of this work depend on two important system factors.

First, the transition in leadership of the Family Judiciary. The current President of the Family Division will retire in early April, with a successor expected to be appointed in May 2026. Given the central leadership role of the President in driving reform across the system, we consider it essential that the incoming postholder is fully engaged in final decisions on the strategy prior to implementation.

Second, engagement with the Welsh government. A significant proportion of the strategy relates to devolved responsibilities, particularly children's social care. It is therefore important that the incoming Welsh Government, following the forthcoming Senedd elections, is appropriately engaged and supportive of the relevant elements. This will ensure effective implementation across England and Wales.

Taken together, these factors mean that proceeding to implementation in April would risk doing so without full system alignment. We have therefore taken the decision to extend the timeline to enable proper engagement and secure a more robust and deliverable outcome.

We now propose a revised implementation date for releasing the strategy by July 2026. We remain fully committed to delivering the Committee's recommendations in full. Work across the system is continuing at pace, including preparations for the Child Focused Courts' further rollout in 2026/27. We will continue to work closely with the Department of Education, HMCTS, the Welsh Government, Cafcass, Cafcass Cymru and other system partners to ensure that reforms are implemented effectively and deliver sustained improvements for children and families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Farrar', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr Jo Farrar CB OBE
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice